Moving Beyond Empty and Fill to Deep Investigations

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Curriculum Considerations

♦ Discovery and divergent learning

♦ Brain functions optimally in a high challenge and low threat environment

♦ Brain likes novelty

♦ Brain works best in a social situation

♦ Manipulatives enhance learning

♦ The environment must allow for “play” and exploration as well as inquiry

♦ Environment must be appealing and stimulating

♦ Set up of classroom is critical

♦ Environment supports resiliency skills—child has opportunities to be successful

♦ Teachers respond to child’s promptings and questions

♦ One of the teacher’s main objectives is always safety: physical, verbal, emotional
Projects With Toddlers
(adapted from *From Handprints to Hypotheses: Using the Project Approach with Toddlers and Twos* by Todd Wanerman)

**Phase One—Getting Started**

**Phase Two—Developing the Project Work**

**Phase Three—Concluding the Project**

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- Has a beginning and ending
- More than one step
- Involves planning
- A goal or vision for a result
- Use of tools
- Put elements together into something larger
- Requires observation to adjust between the start and the finish
- Negotiation, communication, and collaboration
- Skills, knowledge, and capacities
- Improves certain skills, knowledge, and capacities
- Involves both work and play
- Usually consists of a culminating product or event
Questions and provocations to stimulate dialogue, language usage, and cognitive development in young children—

- Tell me about what you’re doing . . .
- How did you do that?
- What do you think will happen if . . .?
- I was wondering if there’s another way we can . . .
- How many did it take to do that?
- Is there anything you would like to change?
- What other pieces do you think we could include?
- Where do you think we can put this so other people can enjoy it, too?
- What are you making?
- Let me know if you need anything else to . . .
- What do you think will happen if you changed this?
- I see you used ____ , ____, and ____ . Tell me the reason you chose those.
- How many more do you think you could make?
- Who else could we ask to help us with this?
- I see you’re dressed like a(n) ____ . Tell me about your job.
- Since we can’t take this out of the classroom, what can we do to let other people know what this looked like?
- Who all worked on this project? What did they do?
- If you work here again tomorrow, will you do the same thing or something different?
- Let’s make a list of all the pieces you used.
**SEAL**

*Stimulus* (any sensory provocation)

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*Emotion* (positive or negative)

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*Attention* (positive emotions drive executive functions—negative emotions drive survival)

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*Learning* (the response to the attentional variant)

(adapted from Robert Sylwester’s *A Biological Brain in a Cultural Classroom*)