

10 Strategies for Extending the Learning

1. Help Children See Themselves as Thinkers

When you think aloud with children, you can extend their learning by encouraging them to tune in to their own thinking, to think in new ways, put their thoughts into words, and appreciate the thinking of others. In turn, you will grow more skilled at asking questions and posing challenges that support higher-order thinking.

2. Respond to Curiosity

Curiosity motivates children to learn and explore. When you see children being curious, it's a rich opportunity to encourage and extend their learning. Supporting children's curiosity will raise your own curiosity level and you'll be a strong learning model for children.

3. Use Mirror Talk

Providing children with feedback makes them feel that they noticed and their work is valued. Reflecting back what you see and hear them doing can extend learning by helping children become aware of their actions and thinking. Using mirror talk also gives you time to carefully observe to see what a child knows and can do.

4. Have Conversations

Whether verbal or nonverbal, conversations strengthen relationships and at the same time can extend children's language awareness, understanding and thinking. Conversations are also an enjoyable way for you to interact with and teach children.

5. Inspire Imaginative Play

Children's imaginative play develops their symbolic thinking - thinking about people, places and things that aren't right there in front of them. In addition, you are practicing the valuable skill of perspective taking when you see the world through children's eyes, and you may rediscover the joy that comes from pretending!

“The combination of intentionally building your relationship and extending a child’s learning is the essence of a powerful interaction.”

Dombro, et al 2011

“The greatest opportunity for learning lies in moments of teacher-child interaction, when the teacher crafts learning experiences that stretch children just beyond their current skill level.”

Munro 2008

“Each child is unique and the protagonist of his or her own growth. Children desire to acquire knowledge, have much capacity for curiosity and amazement, and yearn to create relationships with others and communicate. ”

Malaguzzi 1993

6. Solve Problems Together

By collaborating with children, you can help them think through the steps of solving a problem, use multiple strategies, and develop a positive attitude toward problem solving. Collaborative problem solving with children will contribute to a strong sense of community in your classroom, which will make your work feel more fulfilling.

7. Use Rich Vocabulary

The more complex and different words you use with children, the bigger their vocabularies will grow! There's a strong relationship between children's vocabularies and their success in school, so this is a critical way to extend their learning. Not only will children's vocabularies grow, yours will too!

8. Laugh with Children

When you bring humor into your interactions with children, you extend their learning by exposing them to new ways of thinking and playing with language. You also teach them life skills, such as how to get along with others, laugh together, and relieve stress. Adding more laughter and humor makes your classroom a nicer place to be, which can really reduce the stress level that often comes with working with young children.

9. Ask Questions

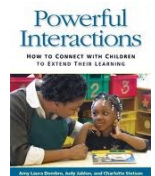
The right kind of questions asked in just the right way can achieve so much, including igniting children's curiosity and pushing them to think in new ways. Really skilled teachers have a wide repertoire of questions to rely on. The more you use this strategy, the larger your repertoire becomes and the more effective you'll be as a teacher.

10. Link the New to the Familiar

Helping children relate new concepts and information to what they already know and *are interested in* makes it more likely they'll remember and use what they learn. As you become more skilled at creating links for children, they'll begin to feel closer to you because you know them so well. With that closeness comes a desire to cooperate with you, making the classroom life more manageable.

“When they feel the comfort and security that comes from a trusting relationship, children are more willing to explore, to ask questions, solve problems, try new challenges, and express their thinking.”

O'Connor & McCartney 2007



Powerful Interactions

How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning

Amy Laura Dombro, Judy Jablon, and Charlotte Stetson

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