

Discoveries of Infancy

Indicators of Cognitive Development and Learning Activity

Duration : 10-15 minutes

Intention: To support participant understanding that careful observation of everyday interactions and behaviors of infants and toddlers will reveal much about a child's knowledge and understanding.

Materials:

- Infant Toddler learning and Development Foundations DVD Disc 2
- DVD Player
- Projection Screen

Preparation:

Prepare a vignette of an observation of an infant or toddler or ask a participant to share an observation (there is a sample vignette included here; you may use this one or any other).

Set up the foundations DVD so the menu that lists the indicators for cognitive development appears on the screen.

Process:

1. Tell participants you would like to tell them a story, such as the one below:

Edgar is 8 months old, he lives with his mother, who is a high school student and his grandmother, who provides much of his care. Edgar and his grandmother both get up early in the mornings and they sit together at the kitchen table. She feeds him some of her homemade canned peaches. She puts up peaches every year, she learned this from her own grandmother and she tells Edgar about canning peaches as she gives him carefully strained bites. Edgar sits on her lap, and thoroughly enjoys the warmth of her embrace and the sweet juicy peaches. This is a special quiet time for the two of them before the hustle and bustle of the day. One day at child care, his teacher, Bella, holds him in her lap for a meal and Edgar sees a dish of carrots on the tray. The carrots look juicy, orange, and delicious. Edgar's little legs start to pump, his eyes get wide and he eagerly opens his mouth for a bite. After the carrots go into his mouth, what do you think happens?

2. At this point the whole group usually calls out that he spits them out because he thought they would be peaches.

That's right he spits them out and then he looks up at Bella with a grimace on his face as if to say, "Yuck, do NOT give me those again!" Bella laughs and says, "I guess you don't like carrots Edgar!"

Later that afternoon, when his grandmother comes to get him, Bella relates the story to her. Edgar is there in grandmother's arms and listening carefully to the story about him. His grandmother begins to laugh and explains about the peaches.

Now let's pause the story here because Bella is presented with an opportunity. First of all she has a chance to validate the grandmother's connection with Edgar and say, "I just learned something about Edgar that you already knew." Also, she has a chance to consider his developmental profile.

3. Ask: What did Bella learn about Edgar through this experience? Let's look at this list of indicators on the screen to help. Ask a few prompt questions if needed like, how did Edgar solve his problem? What was he expecting to happen?

- Cause-and –Effect
- Spatial Relations
- Problem Solving
- Imitation
- Memory
- Number Sense
- Classification
- Symbolic Play
- Attention Maintenance
- Understanding of Personal Care Routines

4. At this point, participants will likely call out several of the indicators and explain how Edgar showed his development in this area. This can be a fun discussion.

5. To wrap up, let participants know that they can do this with any observation of a child, and they can do it with any domain as well. If we did the same exercise and looked at the social emotional indicators we could have picked out many of those as well. The better we get at observing, the better we can understand a child. This tends to be more effective than trying to set up activities to find out what Edgar knows.