

Module 7 Handouts

The following handouts are included in this module:

1. Preschool-Age Development
2. Exercise Worksheet: Supporting Children in Preschool
3. Changes in Child Care
4. Tips: Reading Aloud to Children (optional)
5. Tips: Helping Children Build Language Skills (optional)
6. Tips: Helping Children with Social and Emotional Growth (optional)
7. Recommended Resources for Volunteers Assisting Preschoolers (optional)
8. Training Feedback Survey



Preschool-Age Development

Keep in mind that all children are individuals and development occurs over time, and at different paces. Below are examples of some typical things that children are doing during their 3rd and 4th years.

Language Development:

- Building new vocabulary
- Using simple sentences
- Using grammar
- Improving pronunciation
- Talking about themselves and things that interest them

Literacy (getting ready to read and write):

- Learning their letters
- Noticing print in everyday situations
- Realizing that text in books is telling a reader what to say
- Writing some letters
- Reading some short words

Logical Reasoning:

- Doing simple puzzles
- Understanding “same” and “different”
- Sorting objects by a simple characteristic
- Describing objects and shapes

Mathematics:

- Recognizing numbers
- Counting to 10
- Adding and subtracting numbers up to 4

Physical Abilities:

- Improving finger skills
- Playing with toys that have smaller parts
- Holding writing utensils
- Riding a tricycle
- Using a swing
- Getting better at running and climbing, hopping, skipping, galloping
- Improving kicking, throwing and catching a ball

Emotional Development and Social Skills:

- Developing relationships with other children
- Learning about feelings; will offer comfort (a hug) to those in distress
- Learning how to deal with negative emotions (e.g. talking it out, drawing a picture)
- Joining group activities

Creative Arts:

- Playing simple rhythm instruments
- Singing songs they made up and ones they memorize
- Dancing and getting better at moving to the music
- Making artwork that starts to show recognizable forms
- Getting involved in imaginative dramatic play using real objects, costumes, and specific acts such as taking the baby to the doctor.

Exercise Worksheet: Supporting Children in Preschool

As you work with children in preschool, you may find yourself in the situations described below. This exercise is designed to help you mentally prepare for those situations. However, the preschool teacher/staff will always be there to provide guidance; never be shy about asking for help when you need it!

Instructions: Read through the example the facilitator has suggested for your group (A, B, C, or D). With your group, answer the three questions below and be ready to discuss.

A. The preschool teacher, **Ms. Miranda**, has asked you to read a storybook to a group of children. She wants them to enjoy the story and see reading as valuable. Do you have some ideas to hold their attention and make the most of this time?

B. James is playing on his own, working on another new creation using different materials. He is trying to figure out how the pieces can go together and starting to get a little frustrated. What should you do?

C. Luis and Julia usually have fun together, but today they are having a disagreement over whose turn it is to play with a favorite toy. It has now escalated to pushing, pulling, and yelling. What should you do?

D. Tamika seems very shy around you and other children in the classroom. What kinds of things could you do during the day to help her feel more comfortable?

Questions

Which example are you discussing with your group?

A. Ms. Miranda's class B. James C. Luis and Julia D. Tamika

1. What are some steps you can take to assist this child/children? _____

2. What are two behaviors that you can role model as you provide support (e.g. enthusiasm, listening skills)? _____

3. What is one thing you hope the child/children will learn? _____

Changes in Child Care

Thinking about today’s discussion, take about 10 minutes to jot down some answers to the questions below. (It is okay if you don’t finish.) You may want to share your ideas with a partner.

1. How is child care (attitudes, practices, or child care settings) different from when you were a child, or when you were raising your children?

Name 1-2 differences: _____

Given the differences, what is one thing you might do differently during your preschool service? What do you plan to try?

2. What are two things you heard today that surprised you?

a. _____

b. _____

3. What do you want to learn more about?

Tips: Reading Aloud to Preschool-age Children

When you read aloud to children, you are modeling how to read, how to use books, and showing children that reading is valued. You are helping children build language skills, learn about new things, broaden their imaginations, and find characters with whom they can relate. Below are some tips to help you make the most of this shared reading experience.

Choosing a book

- Offer suggestions, but let children pick the book. Sometimes they will want to hear the same story over and over, but that's okay; repeating the story helps them remember the words they learned.
- Notice what the children seem to be interested in when they play, and offer books that are related (e.g. if they are playing with toy trains, suggest a story that includes trains).
- Read stories that reflect the children's lives and experiences, but also introduce stories that help them learn about the world.
- Choose different kinds of books:
 - Alphabet and counting books can reinforce what the children are learning.
 - Storybooks help children learn about other people and places, and build their imagination.
 - Nursery rhymes and stories that have a pattern (e.g. a word or phrase is repeated throughout) are fun to read and help children build memory skills.
 - Picture books allow children to tell the story with a little prompting from you. "Who is that?" "What happened there?" "Where did the snowman go?"

Get comfortable

- Find a comfortable spot and have the children sit near you. If possible, let a child turn the pages for you or hold the book.
- Some children like to hold a favorite toy or fidget with something while they listen. Others might want to sit in a certain place or on a special cushion.

Before you start reading

- Read the cover, using your finger to follow the words as you read. Show the cover and ask children what they think the story is about. Point out letters they might know.
- If the story takes place in another place and time period, give the children some age-appropriate background information.

As you read

- Be enthusiastic about what you are reading. Your attitude is contagious and you are passing on your love of reading to the children.
- Pronounce words clearly. Children are learning to recognize sound patterns in words and you can reinforce this important new knowledge.
- Be a drama queen! Use gestures and exaggerated facial expressions for emphasis. Switch voices for different characters.
- Show them how the pictures tell the story or give clues. “What happened there?” “What do you think will happen next?”
- Use the characters to help children understand emotions. “Why is the bear frowning?” “Why did the girl laugh?” Talking to children about how characters feel builds vocabulary and understanding of emotions. Younger children will know basic emotions (happy, sad, mad); older preschoolers can understand more subtle emotions like embarrassment, surprise, and confusion.
- Explain words and emotions the children might not know. Give examples using situations they do know.

A Word of Caution: Sometimes children lose interest if the story is interrupted with too many questions. You might want to read a new story through without interruption the first time, and then read it again to ask the children questions about it.

After you finish reading

- Have a conversation about the book after you read it. Ask children to say their favorite parts. Ask children to retell the story in their own words.
- Compare the story to children’s own experiences. “Did anything like that ever happen to you?” Let the children be the storytellers.

Tips: Helping Children Build Language Skills

Did you know that, given the opportunity, the average preschooler can acquire 4-6 new words a day? And children understand more words than they use. The encouragement and example that you and other adults provide helps them build vocabulary, improve pronunciation and grammar, and learn to express themselves. Below are some everyday easy tips to help children build language skills.

- Follow the teacher's lead. For example, s/he will point out different sounds in words to help children develop phonic awareness. Talk to the teacher about specific things you can do to support classroom learning.
- Talk to children one-on-one, face-to-face, at their level. Use eye contact and a calm pleasant voice.
- Use simple language and speak clearly. Listen carefully so you can respond appropriately.
- Ask "why" and "how" questions and give them time to think and respond. Ask about things that you know the child enjoys. Repeat what the child says, substituting correct pronunciation and grammar, as needed.
- Children are focused on the here and now. Ask children to talk about what they are doing and help them build vocabulary through your conversation. For example, you can help them learn the names of things they are playing with, what the toys/materials are made of, look like, feel like, sound like. During meal time, ask about the food's tastes, colors, and shapes.
- Build on words children know by showing them other things that are related and naming them (e.g., words involving fastening clothing: button, zipper, shoe laces, buckle, snap; words about weather: cloudy, rainy, drizzle, sunny, windy, breezy). You can also help them learn opposites: big and small, full and empty, happy and sad, etc.
- As children build a more complex vocabulary, they use words they know to describe things (e.g. "the bones in your body" for skeleton). You can help them identify and remember a new word by repeating it, clearly and in different situations, and talking about it.
- Play with language in ways that children enjoy. Children like tongue twisters, rhymes and repetitive songs; they like to play with words that sound funny to them. They like a string of words that start with the same sound, and simple phrases and poems that have a rhythm (e.g., Dr. Seuss rhymes, "one fish two fish red fish blue fish").

Children who are learning two languages (e.g. English and the language spoken at home) may have difficulty expressing themselves, responding to questions, and following directions at first. They may not participate in activities right away. Instead, they will watch others and figure out how to communicate. Some tips:

- The teacher will likely know where the child is with their home and second language development and have a plan. Ask for specific ideas on how you can help.
- Value the child's home language. Learn a few phrases and ask the child to help you learn words in their home language. It is okay if your pronunciation is off; let the child teach you the right way to say it.
- To help with comprehension, use gestures when you talk, or point to pictures and other cues while you repeat key words and phrases.
- Try to build on what the child already knows in the same way you would for children learning one language. Comment on what the child is doing, repeat what they say and build on it. Talk about what is happening in the here and now, speak clearly and repeat.

Tips: Helping Children with Social and Emotional Growth

As one of the caring and trusted adults in the preschool classroom, you are an important role model for the children. Below are some tips for helping them with social and emotional development.

Self confidence, self esteem

- Show children that you take their ideas and thoughts seriously. Give them your sincere attention and listen to what they have to say. Model good listening skills.
- Show you are interested in their achievements. Ask children “how” and “why” questions about what they are doing and comment in a neutral way (not positive or negative). For example, “Tying your shoes can be difficult”.
- Allow children to do things for themselves even if they can’t do it perfectly. Resist the urge to do it for them because children learn through trial and error. You can help them think through the process and figure out a solution by asking them to describe what they are trying to do. If a child is getting too frustrated, ask if you can offer suggestions.

Feelings, self awareness

- Help children build a vocabulary to express feelings. Play a game where you make a face and the children guess the feeling. Talk regularly about your own feelings in language children can understand, and use body language: “I am so happy to see you,” “I feel a little sleepy today.”
- Encourage children to talk about how they feel. Give them a lot of time to think and respond. Validate and name their feelings. Show that you understand and are listening through your facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language.
- Point out examples of different feelings in books or pictures, or when discussing something that is happening.
- Pay attention to emotional moments during the day and comment on them. This helps children develop a vocabulary and increase their ability to correctly identify their own and others’ feelings.
- Use songs and books that talk about emotions. Point out facial expressions or body language that show emotions in pictures and ask questions: “What do you think the boy is feeling?”

Respect for others, peer relations, self control

- You are the children’s role model for respect and courtesy. Recognize other people’s contributions, efforts and abilities. Acknowledge the needs and feelings of others, and take extra care not to make disapproving remarks about others when children can hear you.
- Help the children develop friendships. Ask another child to join an activity, or help a lone child to join a group activity.

- Encourage children to listen when others are talking (not easy for a squirmy preschooler).
- **Remember that it is not your responsibility to discipline the children!** However, you can role model kindness, calmness, and self control. Talk about how you will handle negative feelings and come up with solutions: “I am feeling worried because I forgot my umbrella and it is starting to rain hard. I better take a deep breath and think for a minute... Maybe Ms. Jones has an extra umbrella that I can borrow.”
- Point out and praise the positive ways that children handle difficult feelings when they are sad, angry, frustrated, or disappointed. Say that you know that this isn’t easy to do.
- Never belittle children’s reasons for being upset. Try to understand their point of view. Show concern, because to them, the situation is important.
- Use positive language instead of “no” and “don’t”, which children tend to tune out. For example, say “use your walking feet” instead of “don’t run”.

The teacher will have a plan. Ask how you can support the plan, and follow the teacher’s lead so children don’t get mixed messages.

To help children learn self control: The teacher may want children to learn and practice strategies for calming themselves: “take 3 deep breaths, 1...2...3...”; “relax your shoulders, relax your arms, relax your hands, relax your fingers, relax your toes” etc.; think happy thoughts (“Where is your favorite place? Pretend you are there”).

The teacher may ask them to try the “Turtle Technique”: Step 1. Recognize that you feel angry. Step 2. Think “stop”. Step 3. Go into your “shell” and take three deep breaths. Think calming thoughts (“it was just an accident”, “everybody makes mistakes”). Step 4. When you feel calm, come out of your “shell” and think of solutions.

To help children resolve conflicts: Often children can solve disputes on their own, but sometimes adult assistance is needed. You may see the teacher use this technique:

1. The teacher would approach the children calmly so as not to upset them further.
2. Acknowledge everybody’s feelings; children can think more clearly when their feelings are acknowledged.
3. Find out from the children what happened, allowing each child to explain, and remaining neutral.
4. Restate the problem, but without hurtful language (e.g. “I don’t like you” becomes “I don’t want to play with you right now”).
5. Ask children how the problem should be solved, giving them time to think, listening to all suggestions and helping them think through consequences of their suggestions until they come to an agreement, and then restating the solution so everyone understands.
6. Finally, the teacher will be ready to provide support if the situation flares up again.

Recommended Resources for Volunteers Assisting Preschoolers

This is just a sample of some of the many resources available to caretakers of preschool-age children. If you like to browse the internet, organizations with an educational mission often have a section on their website “for parents” that contains helpful information in plain, jargon-free language.

Child Development

PBS Parents’ Child Development Tracker describes “‘widely-held expectations’ for what an average child would achieve within a given year”, from a panel of experts. The information is provided for the first eight years, by year and by area of development (e.g. mathematics, literacy, language). <http://www.pbs.org/parents/childdevelopmenttracker/>

Preschool Language and Literacy

Doing What Works (DWW) is a website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education that provides resources on research-based instructional practices. Materials include videos (with transcripts) that explain and demonstrate practices in the classroom. The website was developed for education professionals; however, you may find the information useful because you may see teachers use these techniques in the classroom.

http://dww.ed.gov/topic/?T_ID=15

Books:

Title: Reading Magic: why reading aloud to our children will change their lives forever

Author: Mem Fox; illustrations by Judy Horacek.

Publisher: Harcourt (2008)

Title: The Read-Aloud Handbook

Author: Jim Trelease

Publisher: Penguin Books (2006)

Booklists and Activities

Mr. Rogers Neighborhood at www.pbs.org has a section for parents with suggestions for books and activities to do with children, by theme. Themes include: the arts, growing and changing, individual differences and disabilities, school readiness and learning, rules and self control, and others. <http://www.pbs.org/parents/rogers/theme/>

The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) has a Children’s Book List for helping children build social-emotional skills. Books are listed by age level under general topic areas: being a friend, angry or mad feelings, problem solving, self confidence, good behavior expectations, family relationships, bullying/teasing, and others.

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/booklist.pdf>

Military Families

Sesame Street has a website for military families that helps explain how young children experience deployments, homecomings, changes due to family members' injuries, and grief. The website includes information and resources on how trusted adults can help children cope and adjust. The resources include videos to watch with children and one-page printouts for children to help them express their feelings.

<http://www.sesamestreetfamilyconnections.org/grownups/>

Training Feedback Survey

Please help us improve our training sessions by providing feedback on the training you attended. Thank you!

Training/Session Name: _____ Date: _____

Lead Facilitator: _____

Program you serve with: Foster Grandparent RSVP Other: _____

Please rate this session using the following scale:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. The subject matter was presented effectively.					
2. The facilitator was knowledgeable.					
3. The facilitator responded to questions.					
4. There were enough opportunities for discussion.					
5. The written materials are useful.					
6. The session met my expectations.					
7. As a result of this training, I gained new knowledge applicable to my volunteer assignment.					
8. I plan to apply what I learned at this session.					

9. What did you like best about this session?

10. What would have improved this session?

Thank You! Your feedback will help us to improve our training!