

PLAY PATTERNS IN PRACTICE



Ten Tips for Early Educators

OBSERVE WITH CURIOSITY

Pause and notice what children repeat (not just what they finish). Let curiosity lead the way.

NAME & REFLECT

What did you notice? How did your observation compare with any expectations you might have held about what was likely to unfold? How can this information help inform how you plan and respond in the future?

HONOR REPETITION

Appreciate repeated actions as practice, mastery, and comfort. Repetition is often a helpful cue that something about this play is important for this child.

PARTNER WITH PLAY

Be a collaborator in children's play. Extend ideas and offer observations about their efforts. Share curiosities and open-ended questions.

CO-CREATE THE ENVIRONMENT

Offer materials that build on what you see children doing. Think ramps for trajectory, or baskets, carts, or bins for transporting.

VALUE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

Remember that schemas aren't random. They're a valuable insight to what children are engaged in testing and practicing as they learn about their world.

REFRAME BEHAVIOR CHALLENGES

Consider play schema patterns when redirecting behavior and offering choices. Being grounded in the root of the behavior will help you guide and support each child.

NOTICE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Tune into your responses. Are particular schema explorations frustrating for you? Plan ahead to make space for this work while acknowledging what's difficult about it for you.

SHARE INSIGHTS WITH FAMILIES

Send photos or share stories of play patterns so families can see the learning. Pass along tips that help you support important play in ways that are aligned with your classroom's safety and community expectations.

CELEBRATE JOY & CONNECTION

Understanding play patterns can be a powerful way to connect with children. Let this new lens be a tool to strengthen your relationships with children!

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