THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Quality Teaching and Learning

PRESENTER NOTES
MATERIALS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

This guide walks you through presenting ***Managing the Classroom: Materials to Support Learning***. Please use the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (13)
- Optional PowerPoint Slides (4)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
  - » *Link to Learning: Engaging Children* (Refer to Slide 7)
  - » *Link to Learning: Social Interactions* (Refer to Slide 9)
  - » *Link to Learning: Displaying Materials* (Refer to Slide 11)
- Optional Learning Activities:
  - » *Where Does It Fit?*
  - » *Strengths and Needs*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- This is one in a series of in-service suites on a well-organized and managed classroom.
- The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with an opportunity to select and then use materials so that all children have access to quality teaching and learning.
- Optional slides concerning *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) are included to inform participants how UDL applies to materials selection.
- Participants are encouraged to share materials they use in the classroom and how they have used those materials with all learners.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to evaluate how materials support teaching and learning.
- There are three learning activities embedded in the PowerPoint presentation—on Slides 7, 9, and 11—with directions in the *Presenter Notes* for those slides.
- Optional learning activities and slides are described in detail at the end of this document, after the closing slide.

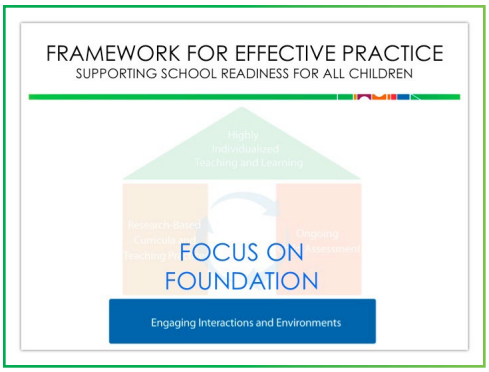
SLIDE 1:
MATERIALS TO SUPPORT LEARNING

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.
- Conduct a warm-up/ice-breaker activity:
  - » One option for a warm-up activity would be to ask participants to share one material in their classroom that is highly engaging for the children.

Introduce the topic:

- *Materials to Support Learning* focuses on:
  - » How classroom materials support learning for all children.
  - » Three guidelines for choosing appropriate classroom materials.



SLIDE 2:
FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Review NCQTL framework for effective practice:

- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.

Materials to Support Learning fits into the foundation of the House. The foundation of the House represents the fundamental elements of quality preschool practice, including a well-organized and -managed classroom. Part of a well-organized and -managed classroom is having materials that engage children, support interaction, and encourage learning. The qualities of materials are important for effective and engaging environments.

SLIDE 3:
OBJECTIVES

Open the session by describing the goals for this in-service suite.

Participants will learn:

- How materials in the classroom support all children's learning
- Three main guidelines for teachers to consider when selecting materials for their classrooms.

EMPHASIZE

Materials are tools for teaching and learning.

SLIDE 4:
HOW MATERIALS SUPPORT CHILDREN'S LEARNING

A teaching team needs to carefully select classroom materials to maximize opportunities for teaching and learning.

- An underlying principle of developmentally appropriate practice is that children learn best when they are engaged in active learning. Select materials that keep children **engaged** in learning experiences and activities:
  - » Materials need to represent children's interests, sustain their attention, provoke curiosity and allow children to explore, manipulate, extend, and expand on their learning.
  - » Open-ended materials are materials that can be used for a variety of purposes (e.g., sticks, rocks, play dough, clay, sand, and water). These materials encourage creativity, symbolic representation, and higher order thinking skills. For example, children can use recycled materials (e.g., plastic bottles, boxes, straws) to create buildings and vehicles.
  - » Materials can offer experiences that support children's learning across a variety of key domains (e.g., Creative Arts Expression, Language Development, Physical Development & Health).
  - » Materials can offer experiences that encourage children to explore and construct knowledge. For example, mechanical toys, pulleys, magnifying glasses, flashlights, and mobiles encourage logical reasoning and problem-solving.

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- Select materials that **support social interactions** by encouraging back-and-forth exchanges among children as they work and play together.
  - » An important goal in early childhood programs is the development of social behavior. Cooperative play is promoted when the teacher chooses items that require children to work together. Examples include games, dramatic play materials, and blocks.
- Arrange and present materials to promote children's **independent use**.
  - » Materials can be purposefully arranged and presented to promote children's independence in making choices and using materials.
  - » Allowing children to make choices and decisions regarding activities and materials helps them develop confidence in their abilities.

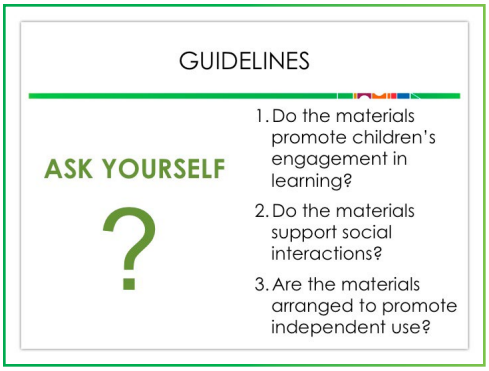
OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: WHERE DOES IT FIT?

In this activity, participants select materials that support learning across domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.

NOTE

Presenter notes for the optional learning activities are located at the end of this document, after the closing slide.



SLIDE 5:
GUIDELINES

Following are three main guidelines to consider when selecting materials:

- Materials need to enhance children's engagement in learning.
- Materials need to be engaging to support interactions and cooperative play.
- Materials need to be arranged in an orderly manner and presented to children in a way that promotes independent use.

EMPHASIZE *

Select materials that support children's learning.

SLIDE 6:
ENGAGE CHILDREN IN LEARNING: FEATURES OF MATERIALS

The **first** guideline for selecting materials is to ensure that materials engage children in learning. Engagement is when children are attracted to, actively involved with, and focused on the current activity.

Materials need to be linked to learning:

- Select materials that address all areas of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework.
- Select materials that support adopted curricula.

FEATURES OF MATERIALS

The following features are important to consider when selecting materials that support children's engagement in learning.

Linked to learning

Use materials that support children's learning goals, provide the right amount of challenge, evoke curiosity, and allow children to manipulate and experiment.

Consider the characteristics of the children:

- Age
- Abilities
- Learning patterns

Open-ended materials (e.g., blocks, clay, paints) that children can use in many different ways have several advantages over materials such as puzzles and stringing beads that have a "prescribed" outcome.

- Open-ended materials promote creativity and intentional representation. Clay, play dough, and paints encourage children to experiment and learn to represent their ideas through various media.

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- Open-ended materials allow for flexible use. Flexible use is the opportunity to use the same material for a variety of purposes. For example, small wooden cubes placed in the dramatic play area can be used in appropriate ways by children at different developmental stages. A three-year-old child may use the cubes to represent cookies in a simple pretend kitchen play. A four-year-old child may use those same cubes to build a zoo, while a five-year-old may use the cubes as "magic beans" to reenact a fantasy *Jack and the Beanstalk* play.

NOTE

Materials that have a "prescribed" outcome also have their place in a preschool classroom depending on the purpose for their use. Stringing beads using an alternative color pattern, for example, provides children with practice in both math and fine motor skills learning goals.

Meaningful

Use authentic materials that relate to children's everyday lives and experiences:

- Authentic materials are those that represent common objects used in children's home and outdoor environments.
- Authentic materials may include phones, menus, telephone books, empty food boxes, and clothing.
- Materials that are found outdoors reflect local settings.

Culturally appropriate

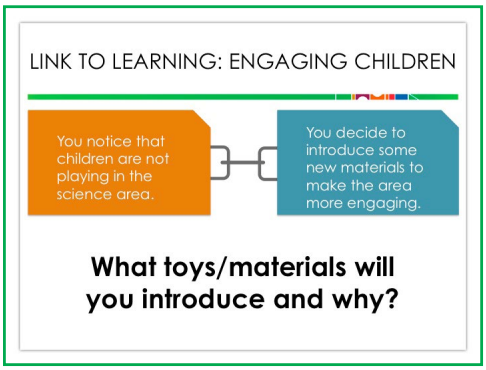
Use materials that represent cultural, linguistic, gender, and ability diversity. Materials should look familiar to children, and reflect what they see at home.

- When familiar materials are present in a classroom, continuity is created between a child's home and a classroom environment. Therefore, familiar materials create a sense of comfort and may lessen stress for children.
- Program staff and teachers can work with families to identify materials for the classroom that represent the diverse cultures of children's homes.
- Consider the language(s) spoken at home (e.g., when choosing books and songs).
- Avoid any preconceptions that classroom materials are gender specific (e.g., blocks for boys and cookware for girls).

Attractive

Use materials that are pleasing, charming, and provoke children's interests and thoughts:

- Materials that are colorful and fun
- Materials that children talk about
- New materials that help spark children's interest



SLIDE 7: LEARNING ACTIVITY: LINK TO LEARNING: ENGAGING CHILDREN

This activity may be conducted using partner activities (e.g., think-pair-share) or as a large group.

Pose the following scenario:

- You notice that children are not playing in the science area.
- You decide to introduce some new materials to make the area more engaging.
- Which toys/materials would you introduce and why?

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share ideas. Write ideas on poster paper, if desired. Possible responses:

- Spice jars with fresh herbs/organic materials that have distinct smells (basil, mint, lavender, lemon peel, pine needles, etc.) because children have been interested in exploring smells on the playground.
- White paper, eye droppers, and glasses of different colored water because the bright colors are appealing to the children and they have been learning about how colors can be mixed to form other colors.

SLIDE 8: SUPPORT SOCIAL INTERACTIONS: CHARACTERISTICS OF CHILDREN

A **second** guideline in materials selection is that materials need to support peer interactions. Choose specific materials that invite children to play and learn together. Children tend to engage in more interactions and back-and-forth exchanges when they play with social toys such as dramatic play materials and blocks.

Characteristics of children

Teachers can create opportunities for children to interact and collaborate by selecting materials that bring a group of children together around a shared interest or goal. Cooperative projects and games that require multiple participants invite children to communicate and work together.

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When planning activities and selecting materials that encourage back-and-forth exchanges among peers and cooperative play, it is important to consider the characteristics of the children such as interests, experiences, backgrounds, learning goals, and abilities.

Interests

Children can form groups and interact with each other around a shared interest.

Materials that match the interests of multiple children support peer interactions. For example, blocks and balls come in a variety of sizes and colors and lend themselves to different uses depending on a child's interests. Books also address a variety of topics and come in many different formats.

NOTE

- Children learn best when they are interested in what they are learning.
- As teachers interact with children, they get ideas about children's interests. Some teachers find it helpful to keep a list of children's interests that arise during the week, and refer to this list when lesson planning.

Experiences

Teachers can gather information on experiences that children have had outside of the classroom. This information can guide teachers in selecting meaningful and appropriate materials based on children's common experiences.

Some possible aspects to consider related to children's experiences:

- A child's familiarity with the school setting
- A child's participation in activities outside of school (e.g., sports, music, drama)
- A child having been in another state or country

Additionally, teachers can build on the shared experiences of the classroom community.

- Class field trips
- Special classroom events
- Specific classroom projects or activities

Home background

Knowing something about the home background of children helps teachers select materials that may promote interaction around a common or familiar, activity or topic.

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EMPHASIZE

Use materials that support peer interaction and cooperative play.

SLIDE 8 CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Some possible considerations are:

- What a child does for fun at home
- If a child has siblings/extended family
- What materials a child has access to at home

Learning goals

Choose materials that support social interactions around similar individual learning goals.

- For example, if multiple children are working on early writing skills, provide numerous writing materials across the classroom for children to practice writing together. Possible examples include:
  - » Drawing paper in the block area
  - » Sign-in sheet at the computer
  - » Order pad in the dramatic play area
  - » Alphabet strip in the writing center

Abilities

Choose materials that allow for ALL children with their diverse abilities to participate and learn together in a classroom activity. Use materials that:

- Represent information using multiple methods (i.e., auditory, visual, tactile).
- Allow children means to demonstrate what they know using multiple means of expression (i.e., verbal, sign language, pictures, or photographs).
- Allow children to engage in activities in various ways (i.e., drawing, moving, building).

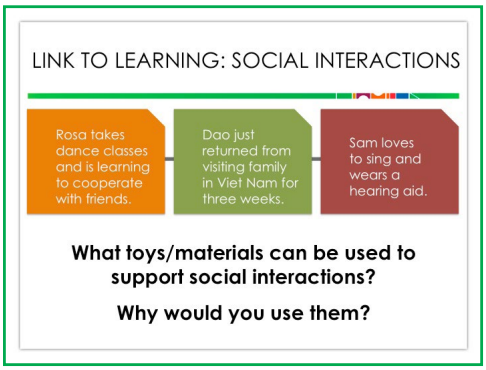
NOTE

Show Optional Slides 1–4 *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL) here.

These slides provide additional information on guidelines to help teachers select materials so that all young children with their diverse, individual characteristics have meaningful learning experiences in the classroom.

NOTE

Presenter notes for optional slides are located at the end of this document, after the closing slide.



SLIDE 9: LEARNING ACTIVITY: LINK TO LEARNING: SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

The purpose of this learning activity is for participants to think about ways in which materials support social interactions. Three short scenarios are provided on this slide. For each scenario, participants discuss materials they might use to support the child's engagement in a cooperative activity with peers.

This activity can be conducted in a large group where participants discuss all three scenarios.

Another option is to divide participants into smaller groups and assign each group one scenario.

DISCUSSION

Ask participants to share ideas. Write ideas on poster paper, if desired. Possible responses:

- Rosa – music with hula-hoops and scarves that are shared while dancing
- Dao – clothing and food representative of Vietnam in dramatic play
- Sam – one microphone to be shared in the music area

SLIDE 10: ARRANGING MATERIALS TO PROMOTE INDEPENDENCE

Finally, the **third** guideline for materials selection concerns how a teacher arranges the materials and presents them to children. How materials are organized and presented will spark children's interest and give them information on how to use the materials independently.

NOTE

If appropriate, remind participants of general considerations related to materials regarding safety and health, as well as program policies and applicable regulations.

Setting the stage

Teachers play an important role in setting the stage to facilitate children's use of materials.

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The way materials are arranged, displayed, and presented influences how children engage with those materials.

Providing opportunities to access and use materials independently in an age-appropriate manner helps children develop confidence in their abilities and in making decisions about activities and materials.

Ordered materials

Order gives children a sense of security and teaches them independence. A cluttered environment may be a problem for children who are easily distracted.

- Carefully arrange materials to help children plan how they will engage with materials.
- Clearly label displays and storage containers (e.g., buckets, baskets, and clear boxes) so that children know where materials belong.
- When labeling:
  - » Use home languages of children in classroom.
  - » Use pictures and simple words.
- Associate symbols with real objects, thereby promoting early literacy skills.
- Clearly separate teacher's materials from children's materials, and use specified storage for "extra" materials.

Accessible

Easy access to materials helps children learn to make independent choices. Materials need to be accessible for all children including children with disabilities. To ensure access, teach children where new materials are located in the classroom and how to open storage containers, if needed.

- Place materials within children's reach.
  - » Shelves not too deep
  - » Containers that may be opened
- Plan for how to present materials and teach children how to use them:
  - » Present materials in a way that makes sense to children (e.g., start by presenting items that are most interesting).
  - » Explain how to use materials in a safe manner.
  - » Computer programs and other technology materials may require an explanation and/or modeling by the teacher or another child.

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- In order for some children to access certain materials, assistive technology may be required.

Rotated

Rotate materials so that children have access to many different materials. Rotating materials also makes them seem novel to the children:

- Observe children and take notes on what materials children choose to play with more often.
- Introduce new materials or make changes to familiar items.
- Trade with other teachers, possibly on a regular basis.

When rotating materials it is important to keep in mind the need to balance novelty with children's need for familiarity and continuity in play.

Sufficient

It is important to have plenty of materials available to children. This allows:

- Children to freely choose materials they would like to use. Choice-making is central to implementing developmentally appropriate practice.
- Enough materials for all children who want to play and prevents children from breaking rules or fighting over toys.
- For increased engagement as children can play with their preferred materials

EMPHASIZE

Materials need to be well-arranged and carefully presented to children to enhance choice and independent use.

NOTE

It is also important to allow children sufficient time to play with materials. This allows children to take full advantage of the materials available in the classroom and become deeply engaged.

Durable

Durable materials are materials that resist wear, don't decay, and are long-lasting. These materials will be available for children on a long-term basis.

Typical examples of durable materials are:

- Wooden blocks and toys
- Metal pots and pans
- Outdoor items (e.g., rocks, tree stumps, rubber tires)

SLIDE 11:
LEARNING ACTIVITY:
LINK TO LEARNING: DISPLAYING MATERIALS

Introduce the slide.

Here are some authentic, natural materials that offer multiple uses to children.

This activity offers participants an opportunity to think about how to display and present materials to children to maximize engagement and learning.

HANDOUT

Distribute and review the *Link to Learning: Displaying Materials* handout.

DISCUSSION

Participants discuss materials and complete the table on the handout in small groups or teaching teams. Have participants share their suggestions. Record answers, if desired.

NOTE

This activity can also be conducted in the large group.

SLIDE 12:
MATERIALS SUPPORT LEARNING

Let's review the main considerations when selecting materials for your classroom.

We know that materials need to support children's learning. Careful selection of materials can:

- Increase children's engagement and learning.
- Support social interactions.
- Promote children's independence and confidence in learning.

Select materials that:

- **Engage** children in learning.
  - » Use materials that are developmentally appropriate and meaningful to children.
- **Support** back-and-forth exchanges among peers.
  - » Consider the characteristics of children.
- **Promote** independent use through purposeful arrangement and presentation.
  - » Display and storage of materials
  - » Access to materials
  - » How materials are presented

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY:
STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

In this activity participants share ideas for materials in classroom learning centers and areas for routines.

NOTE

Presenter notes for optional learning activities are located at the end of this document, after the closing slide.

HANDOUT

Distribute handouts if not distributed during presentation. Based on participant roles:

- Distribute and review *Tips for Teachers* – a handout designed as a reminder of important points when selecting classroom materials.
- Distribute and review *Tools for Supervisors* – a short checklist to assist supervisors in determining if materials selected follow guidelines outlined in presentation.
- Distribute and review *Helpful Resources* – further information about selecting classroom materials for classroom staff and/or supervisors.

SLIDE 13:
CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- Ask participants to observe children to determine if materials in the classroom engage children, support interaction, and enhance their learning.
- Ask participants to look at the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework. Make a list of materials that may support the Framework.
- Letter to myself. Give participants stationery and an envelope or a post card. Have them address the envelope to themselves and write a letter to themselves indicating what they plan to do as a result of the workshop. Mail the letter 4–6 weeks after training.

PRESENTER NOTES FOR OPTIONAL SLIDES.

In the Optional Slides file, there are three separate sets of slides, as follows:

- *Universal Design for Learning* (Optional Slides 1–4).
- *Optional Learning Activity: Where Does it Fit?* (Optional Slides 5–9).
- *Optional Learning Activity: Strengths/Needs* (Optional Slides 10–16).

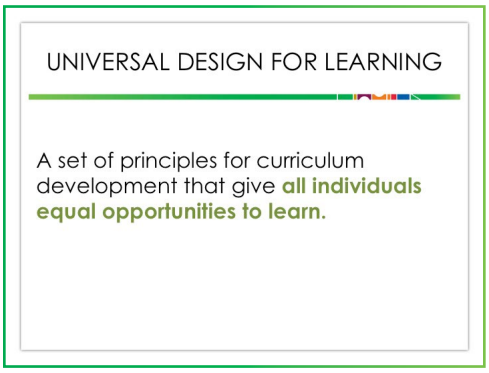
OPTIONAL SLIDES
UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Suggested placement after Slide 8.

Following are four optional slides that describe the principles of universal design. These principles serve as useful guidelines for educators in designing classrooms and activities that meet the needs of all learners.

NOTE

More information on *Universal Design for Learning* is available at the Center for Applied Special Technology at http://www.cast.org/.

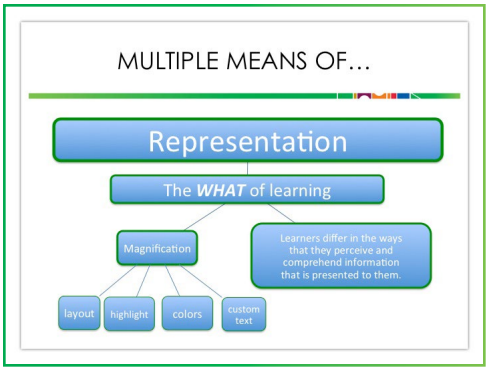


OPTIONAL SLIDE 1
UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

There is another concept to consider when selecting materials: *Universal Design for Learning* (UDL).

The definition of UDL is "a set of principles for curriculum development that give **all individuals equal opportunities to learn**."

Teachers need to make sure that every child can find multiple ways to access, engage in, and learn from classroom experiences and activities. This includes making sure materials in the classroom are used to give every child opportunities to learn.



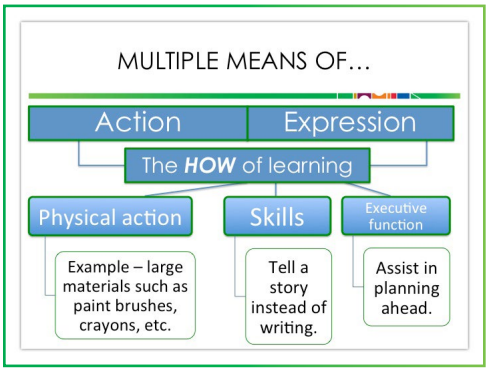
OPTIONAL SLIDE 2
MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION

The **WHAT** of learning:

- Learners differ in the ways that they perceive and comprehend information.
- This principle ensures instruction, questions, expectations, and learning opportunities are provided in various formats and at different levels of complexity that address a range of **ability levels** and visual, auditory, and kinesthetic needs.

One way to provide opportunities for learning is through *magnification*:

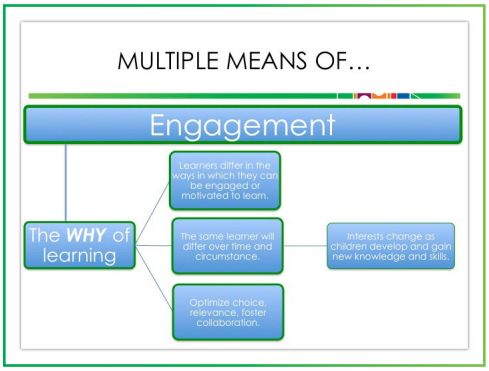
- Customize text (enlarge print, add dotted lines, increase size).
- Use colors (attention getting, e.g., red).
- Highlight (assist in tracing).
- Layout (individual blocks for letter names)



OPTIONAL SLIDE 3
MULTIPLE MEANS OF ACTION AND EXPRESSION

The **HOW** of learning:

- This principle ensures children have a variety of formats for responding, demonstrating what they know, and for expressing ideas, feelings, and preferences. In addition, children have options in their use of resources, toys, and materials that address individual strengths, preferences, and abilities.
- Physical action
  - » Example: Large materials such as paint brushes, crayons, etc.
- Skills
  - » Tell a story instead of writing.
- Executive function
  - » Assist in planning ahead.



OPTIONAL SLIDE 4
MULTIPLE MEANS OF ENGAGEMENT

The **WHY** of learning:

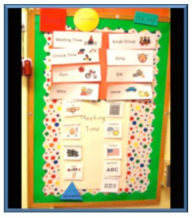
- This principle ensures various opportunities are presented for arousing children's attention, curiosity, and motivation, and that they address a wide range of interests, preferences, and personal styles. Engagement is then maintained by providing various levels of scaffolding, repetition, and appropriate challenges to ensure successful learning:
  - » Learners differ in the ways in which they can be engaged or motivated.
  - » The same learner will differ over time and circumstance.
  - » Interests change as children develop and gain new knowledge and skills.
  - » Optimize choice and relevance, foster collaboration.

WHERE DOES IT FIT?
LEARNING ACTIVITY

- View the following pictures of classroom materials.
- Use the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework to determine which domains can be addressed with the classroom materials shown in the picture.

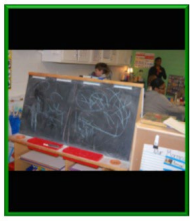
WHERE DO THEY FIT?

- Schedule Board
- Tricycles



WHERE DO THEY FIT?

- Magnifying glass
- Chalkboard



WHERE DO THEY FIT?

- Hand Washing Station
- Castle Building Components

WHERE DO THEY FIT?

- Magnetic letters
- Sensory bins

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: WHERE DOES IT FIT?

Suggested placement after Slide 4 in PowerPoint presentation.

In this activity, participants practice selecting materials that support learning across domains of the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework (HSCDELF).

HANDOUT

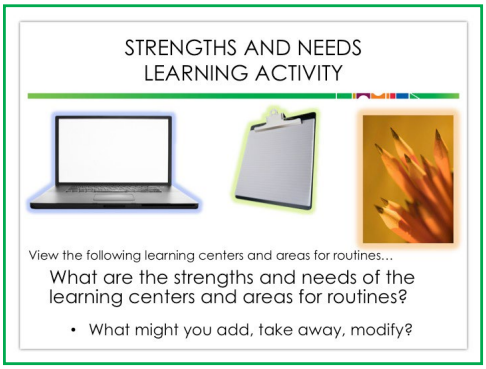
Distribute and review *Where Does It Fit?* (with the HSCDELF handouts).

Show Optional Slides 5–9.

Review directions described on Optional Slide 5. Have participants work in teaching teams or groups to complete the table on the handout.

DISCUSSION

After each slide with pictures or after Optional Slides 6–9 have been viewed, have participants share their thoughts.



OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: STRENGTHS AND NEEDS

Suggested placement after Slide 12 in PowerPoint presentation.

In this learning activity participants work alone or in small groups to identify strengths and needs of the learning centers and areas for routines shown in the slides.

Remind participants to consider the variables discussed so far when identifying strengths and needs.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Strengths and Needs* handout.

Show Optional Slides 10–16.

Review directions described on Optional Slide 10.

- View the following learning centers and areas for routines (Optional Slides 11–16).
- Based on what you learned about appropriate use of materials, what are some of the strengths and needs of the learning centers and areas for routines? (i.e., What would you add, take away, modify?)

DISCUSSION

Have participants share their ideas with the larger group.

NOTE

If the in-service takes place in a classroom, this activity could be done as a "tour the classroom" with the teacher's permission.

DRAMATIC PLAY AREA

BLOCK AREA

MEAL TIME AREA

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FALL 2013