Webinar A2 – Supporting the Intuitive Understanding of Early Math in Infants and Toddlers

Question and Answer

Question 1 - Is there a written developmental progression for Early Math?

Answer: There are a number of them. One suggested example is located at PBS Parents: click here to access the page

Question 2- What are a few common observations one might make about infants and toddlers that demonstrate their understanding of a math concept?

Answer: For infants and toddlers, it's less about understanding concepts (other than "more" and "one") at that early age, although, they do use mathematics and interact with their world mathematically. The following are some ways to observe children to see how they are interacting with their world:

- Watch how they compare objects when playing with them.
- When they put objects in containers or dump them out, observe how they decided when there was "enough."
- How they make pile of objects.
- When eating, when do they begin thinking about "more" or understanding that their bottle has a top and bottom.

Question 3- What are some suggestions for how typical toys/ household items that we would see in a classroom (i.e. blocks, pop up toys) or in a home (pots, pans, utensils) can be used to facilitate math?

Answer: Anything can be used to facilitate math. The pots and pans are good examples, but not just to pretend to cook, but because they are good to bang on. Musical toys like drums, tambourines and squeaky things are good for making sounds and a great way for children to begin patterning. Blocks of all sizes are great; especially the small cubes that fit in their hands.

Question 4- What can staff do to recognize any negative attitudes toward math they may have so they don't 'rub off on children?

Answer: The first thing staff can do is to recognize that their perceptions and attitude toward math could be a challenge. Teachers can reflect upon their own feelings toward mathematics and its effects that it has on their decisions. A reflective process can help teachers to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and how it affects the children in their classrooms. Second, in-service training specifically on math can help to build confidence. Professional development is vitally important to develop a teacher's or home visitor's knowledge base about appropriate methods of facilitating mathematics with infants and toddlers.