



# Early Learning and School Readiness: Cognition Development and General Knowledge Tip Sheet

For Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS); Refugee Resettlement; Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS); Early Care and Education Providers

All providers can support families as they help to build their child's cognitive development by encouraging children's exploration and learning based in everyday routines and activities.

This Cognition and General Knowledge Tip Sheet corresponds to page 25 of the [Raising Young Children in a New Country: Supporting Early Learning and Healthy Development Handbook](#).

## Conversation Starters: (or staff, families, and partners can design program-specific questions)

- What do you and your child like to do and play?
- What learning do you notice when your child is engaged in everyday routines (e.g., shopping, cooking, laundry, walking in neighborhood)?
- How do you use your home language with your child in your daily routines?

## Cultural Considerations:

- Refugee families come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, ranging from no formal education to graduate and professional degrees. It is important not to make assumptions about how much education a refugee parent may have received in his/her country of origin.
- Refugee families have “funds of knowledge” from their homes and communities that can be used for concept and skill development.
- Some families with limited or interrupted formal education may not be accustomed to thinking of everyday experiences as learning opportunities. Some families whose knowledge has come more from life experience than from formal schooling may not think of learning in terms of “math,” “science,” “logic & reasoning,” etc .
- Parents from some cultures, especially those with defined adult and child boundaries, may not be accustomed to sitting down on the floor to play with children.
- Some refugee parents may be unfamiliar with typical U.S. toys or common household items (e.g., pots and pans, containers, recyclables) that can help children play and learn. Toys may not have been a common possession in refugee camps and may therefore be viewed as more of a luxury than a norm.



## Remember to Mention:

- Cognition and general knowledge refer to children's ability to think about and understand the world around them, including: knowledge of people, places and things; math concepts; science concepts; problem-solving skills; and logic and reasoning skills.
- Children's cognitive development is supported in the context of their culture and through guidance and interactions with others, such as family members and members of their peer group, neighborhood, and early care and education community.
- Children who are dual language learners should and do acquire knowledge, build skills, and demonstrate their abilities in both their home language and in English.
- Adults can help children to develop thinking and observation skills (e.g., by describing and comparing color, size, texture, sound, and shape) at home and during walks or other routine activities.

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## Remember to Mention:

- *Everyday routines* (e.g., preparing a meal and doing laundry) are opportunities to build skills, such as counting, measuring, matching, naming, grouping, identifying patterns, estimating, predicting, comparing, and problem-solving, etc.
- *Social studies knowledge and skills* (e.g., learning about self, family, and community; people and the environment; and history and events) help children to understand the world around them, including themselves, their families, their neighborhood, and their community.
- *Math knowledge and skills* (e.g., identifying numbers and shapes, counting, comparing, classifying, relating, patterning, measuring and problem-solving) help children to connect ideas, develop logical and abstract thinking, inspire inquiry, and analyze and understand the world around them.
- *Science knowledge and skills* (e.g., discovering the natural world by gathering information through exploration — asking questions, organizing data, and establishing theories about how the world works) foster a sense of curiosity, expand vocabulary, and encourage collaboration with peers.
- *Logic and reasoning skills* (e.g., thinking through problems, reasoning, finding multiple solutions, and acquiring a new understanding) help children to attain knowledge they need to identify and understand problems, interpret their circumstances, and arrive at an appropriate decision or make the best choice.



## Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspss/1304>

- 45 CFR 1304.21 (a)(1)(i)(iii)(iv)
- 45 CFR 1304.21 (a)(4)(i)(ii)(iii)(iv)
- 45 CFR 1304.21 (b)(1)(i)(ii)(iii)
- 45 CFR 1304.21 (c)(1)(i)(ii)(v)(vi)(vii)

## Resources on ECLKC:

Early Head Start National Resource Center

- **Early Head Start National Resource Center. 2012. "School Readiness Goals for Infants and Toddlers in Head Start and Early Head Start Programs: Examples from the Early Head Start National Resource Center." Early Head Start National Resource Center.**  
[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early Head Start/early-learning/curriculum/school-readiness-goals-infants-toddlers.pdf](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/Early%20Head%20Start/early-learning/curriculum/school-readiness-goals-infants-toddlers.pdf)
- **News You Can Use: Foundations of School Readiness: Cognition and General Knowledge.**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/school-readiness/nycucognition.htm>



# Early Learning and School Readiness: Cognition Development and General Knowledge Tip Sheet *(cont'd)*

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## Early Head Start National Resource Center

- **Does Early Head Start Support Math and Science Development With Infants and Toddlers?**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/curriculum/DoesEarlyHeadS.htm>

## National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

- **Dual Language Learner Institute Webcast Part 6: Cognitive Development.**  
[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/prof\\_dev/conferences/CognitiveDevelop.htm](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/Dual%20Language%20Learners/prof_dev/conferences/CognitiveDevelop.htm)
- **Funds of Knowledge Video**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/spring/funds-knowledge.html>

## National Center on Health

- **Cognition and General Knowledge - What is the Link Between Health and Cognition and General Knowledge?**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/link-between/cognition.html>

## National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

- **Mathematics Knowledge & Skills Domain: Toolkit for Teaching**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/curricula/MKandS.html>
- **Science Knowledge & Skills Domain: Toolkit for Teaching**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/curricula/SKandS.html>
- **Creative Arts Domain**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/curricula/CAE.html>
- **Tips for Families — Fostering Children’s Thinking Skills: Solving Problems Together**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/fostering-thinking-family-tips.pdf>

