

Chapter 1 : Teaching 2 and 3 Year Olds - Playful Learning Ideas for Toddlers and Preschoolers

This best selling publication from Early Education explores: How best to support practitioners to work with the parents of 2-year-olds; Early childhood development and the impact of developmental delay.

Babies begin to use vowel sounds to coo during the first months of life. Then babies begin to add consonant sounds and combine them with vowels to begin babbling between months. Babbling is using a string of consonant-vowel syllables. Near the end of the first year or shortly after, many babies begin to use approximate real words. They also become more sophisticated in their babbling and can sequence syllables with different consonant-vowel combinations. Jargon emerges in most children between months. Jargon is defined as unintelligible strings of sounds that mimic adult speech. Actually jargon is an indicator that a child is learning to sequence sounds and is trying to copy conversational speech. Other advice is to encourage your child to **SHOW** you what he wants or is talking about. This is one reason I love signs or even pictures, especially for difficult words your child asks for routinely that you never get on his first or seventh attempt. Being understood is an important part of communicating. Let me interject a word of caution: What should you do when your child mispronounces a word? Model the word correctly and move on. You want a cookie? Is my child using the correct number of syllables in a word? Tips for working on syllables – clap or pat the floor as you say the word to help him hear and feel the difference. Try words with repetitive patterns reduplicated syllables such as bye-bye, Mama, Dada, boo-boo, Bubu for bubble or brother , and nana for banana or grandma. Is my child using correct vowel sounds in words? As stated previously, most children with typically developing communication skills use vowel sounds correctly by age two. If your child is substituting vowel sounds or leaving off vowel sounds in words, this can be an indicator of motor planning problems, or apraxia. I use lots of animal sounds to work on vowels and really exaggerate the vowel sound. Can my child use two different vowel sounds in words, or does he always copy the first sound for the next syllable? Work to help him hear and say those differences. Again modeling exaggerated vowels is the best way to do this. Some children have difficulty using different consonant sounds in words until age two-and-a-half, but most have mastered this by age three. Is my child learning consonant sounds in the beginnings of words and syllables? Usually, beginning consonant sounds come first, but in some children, they continue to omit beginning sounds while adding some ending consonant sounds. It is very difficult to understand children who use words and phrases with predominantly vowel sounds. I have several children doing this at any given time on my caseload. Children who are using mostly vowels absolutely need speech therapy to help them learn to use more consonant sounds. These names can be found in many early articulation books. Is my child using ending consonant sounds? Final consonant deletion occurs in many children until two-and-a-half to three years of age. Once your child is using unvoiced sounds, the voiced sounds should emerge on their own. This can be attributed to prolonged use of sippy cups or pacifiers. Save the sippy cups for the car. Your child should **NEVER** go to bed with a sippy cup or bottle, no matter how convenient it is to help him to sleep. Straw drinking is great for oral motor and sensory skill development. Sports water bottles are also a good option. If your child has sensory issues and using sucking to help him regulate, keep the pacy without feeling guilty. If your toddler is addicted, try to limit it to naps, bedtime, and when he really needs it to see if having an open mouth will help him vocalize more. Many parents of children I see need them to have it for times when no other option works to wind down a jacked-up toddler and end a tantrum. If you have other questions, please feel free to post a comment. Laura Need some help understanding those first words?

Chapter 2 : Working Toward Intelligible Speech in Toddlers - calendrierdelascience.com

Activities for 2 Year Olds. These are toddler activities that are perfect for toddlers that are 2 years old.. Start the 7-Day Challenge with Your Toddler. Please note: This is just the age that we tried these activities in our house.

Their little brains absorb all kinds of information, but they love demonstrating their independence as well. Toddlers require patient teachers willing to let them explore, while still providing safe boundaries. A two year old loves to test their independence and never stops learning. If you have a class full of children in their third year of life, there are certain things you should know about their development and learning capabilities. Sometimes those tasks are obviously too difficult for their skills and they become easily frustrated. Although two year olds have language skills that allow them to construct simple sentences, they still have difficulty expressing their thoughts. The frustration can cause them to have temper tantrums. Allowing children a single comfort item in the classroom can help them deal with strong emotions and meltdowns, suggests the article, "Your Two Year Old" on PBS. Around this age, however, children also develop the ability to express a sense of humor. They seek adult intervention during any peer conflicts and have difficulty sharing toys. Children begin frequently imitating parental behavior by playing make-believe. At this age, however, they often act shy around unfamiliar adults. They also begin practicing fine motor skills by scribbling pictures and squeezing play dough. Teaching fingerplays like the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" helps develop fine motor skills. During this year, they learn to construct two to three word sentences and love listening to books. They also begin singing songs at this age, like the "ABC" song. Math skills for teaching two year olds include learning to sort shapes, and completing short puzzles 8 pieces or less, according to PBS. Instead, give the toddlers acceptable choices to simple questions. Also, allow preschool children to explore and create at this age. Modeling clay, paper, and crayons help them develop their fine motor skills and creativity at the same time. These encourage adult imitation, which children at this age love. Also, these toddlers can jump, run, climb, and throw an overhand ball. Outdoor games like catch encourage children to practice these developing gross motor skills. Toddlers want to learn as much as they can. With proper guidance, two year olds thrive in a preschool environment.

Chapter 3 : 20+ Learning Activities and Printables for 2 Year Olds

Early Foundations Â© Discovery Preschool Your Two-Year-Old's Day. Your child will build skills and confidence through games, songs, movement and art, as Knowledge Beginnings' experienced teachers provide an outlet for creative expression.

Pin1K 1K Shares When your child is two, there are so many exciting activities you can do with them. Not only can you have lots of fun but you can start helping them learn things about themselves, as well as the world around them. Take some time to learn through play with your little one. Math Activities and Printables for 2 Year Olds Get toddlers interested in a variety of math concepts with these ideas. Sort leaves into different colors and learn while you play. Your child can have fun copying the cards and recognizing shapes as they play. Kids use different color snowman cards and a range of colorful crafts for the buttons. Children use a fishing rod and some cute cut out, printable fish. Have lots of fun playing find the number or naming what you catch. Learn to recognize numbers 1 to 20 with these pretty printable numbers which you can laminate. Arrange in the correct order before helping your child trace them with a finger or felt tip pen. This 5 little monkeys jumping on the bed printable activity is a fun activity to do while singing the song. Learn to count and word recognition! This beautiful number train will help your toddler practice color and number recognition. The pieces are large and can be laminated, or put together as an art piece. Learn to count and match number names and numbers to number cards with these gorgeous Match and Count 1 - 10 number cards. Have some coloring fun with this cute Five little ducks printable activity , and learn to count to five while being creative! Learn to count with this fun Counting Caterpillar busy bag , and get creative counting on the caterpillar with crafty goods. These printables are gorgeous and easy to take anywhere as a busy bag! Use these fun 1 - 10 printable pages to practice counting to ten with dot markers, stickers or toys. Even More Activities and Printables for 2 Year Olds These laminatable hat matching printable cards are a fun way to mix and match character heads and hats with bodies. Print these printable alphabet gross motor cards. Then exercise your way through the alphabet with your toddler while having lots of fun learning letters! This Very hungry caterpillar mini unit pack is a great way to explore the alphabet using bits from the book. It has some beautiful coloring pages with letter as well as sequencing cards and Day of the Week signs Learn all about farm animals while you create and play with this cute Peek-a-Boo Farm animals activity set. Arrange animals in the barn and practice making their animal sounds. Learn with letter of the week and help your child with letter recognition! Use a mirror and help your child identify different body parts. Body parts match up, stages of life match up and My Body Can Move counting activity are a few fun activities you can find here.

Chapter 4 : What itâ€™s like to think like a 2-year-old.

Teaching two year olds isn't an easy task. Their little brains absorb all kinds of information, but they love demonstrating their independence as well. This combination sometimes leads to frustration if the teacher doesn't have proper expectations.

On the one hand, you know a lot about things like trucks. It was just a fact he knew. The bug was named Silly. He also knew that brontosaurus are vegetarians and that construction trucks make a noise like this when they back up: Bits of information an adult would find unimportant or unlikely are held in equal regard with facts that are critically important. Some tasks that come automatically for adults, like understanding the nature of a secret, are not possible for 2-year-olds. Other functions, like absorbing new information, are in surprisingly high gear. Waismeyer compared 2-year-olds to adults visiting a foreign country: Everything is really new and exciting. Viewed through the right lens, all that change can be exciting rather than terrible. And this is where the heat comes out. And this is where it moves, if the engine is on. Not once did he stop to wonder if I, his guest, might find such behavior awkward. Exactly what can be expected of a 2-year-old is a question that plagues many parents during this year of rapid growth and change. And while the exact timelines for these developments vary for each child, the trajectory of the third full year of life bends sharply toward independence. Others I say it once and he remembers it. When children turn 2, most are producing some language. How much a child can verbalize is only one indication of what they can understand, cautions Waismeyer. Advertisement A 2-year-old should be able to follow a set of directionsâ€™touch your nose, give me a high fiveâ€™but may not be able to explain in words what he or she has just done. Even a quiet 2-year-old, or one who prefers to practice his or her new language skills at home and not in front of strangers, is likely learning loads of language all the time, Waismeyer said. What you can do: Significant delays in oral language during this year could be cause for concern. A month-old with fewer than 50 words, a child who has trouble interacting with same-age peers, or a to month-old who shows no interest in storybooks or drawing may have a language disorder and should be seen by a speech-language pathologist, according to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. When children turn 2, many have been walking for less than a year and are still quite unsteady on their feet. Ask a month-old to jump with two feet together, and the result is likely to be comical. By 36 months though, most have learned to run fluidly, climb confidently, and balance well. Everett Duncan, 2, is several months younger than his cousin Clark. At the park one sunny day, Everett landed on two feet at the bottom of a slide and started running for the other side of the play structure to get back to the top. His steps up the stairs were ungainly, but he handled the kid-size rope ladder with ease and pushed himself off the top of the slide without hesitation. Many studies tie physical fitness to brain health in children. One Texas school district even found that offering four recesses a day improved academic outcomes. For younger kids, an increased ability to explore their environment may be the biggest benefit of more sophisticated movements: What happens when I push this block tower? How does the world look different if I lay on the bed with my head hanging back and my feet in the air? As with every type of development, kids change at different rates. Most children still move fairly awkwardly at age 2 and most sports-type skillsâ€™like kicking and throwingâ€™are quite beyond children this young. Research has shown that less than one-third of children ages 2 to 5 are able to throw and catch effectively, according to the AAP. Two is the age when kids begin to exhibit distinct personality traits and interests. Why is the grass green? Why is mommy a girl? Why is the dog sticking his tongue out? What is this called? What is the dog doing? And while Clark loves trucks and dinosaurs and can talk about either at length, his cousin Everett prefers guitars and music and, since his little sister was born in February, the color pink. Waismeyer says parents often complain that their child is being manipulative by, for example, faking crying in order to get attention. He just knows that the behavior of crying results in the adult behavior he wantsâ€™cuddling or Band-Aid giving, for example. To trick someone, you have to have the intent of giving them false knowledge. To change this behavior, parents should explain to kids that Band-Aids are for getting hurt, not for crying, Waismeyer said. Though that may sound obvious, 2-year-olds often make incorrect connections between behaviors and outcomes and they are worth explaining.

Make sure that, as a parent, you are offering attention for more positive behaviors too, Waismeyer said. And telling kids the best ways to get your attentionâ€”and then following through when they do those thingsâ€”is another good tactic.

Chapter 5 : Overland Park Early Preschool - Brookridge Day School - KS Preschool for 2 Year Olds

This is no small task, because the emotional lives of 2-year-olds are complex. This year they are beginning to experience feelings like pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment for the first time. Older toddlers are a lot like teenagers.

Although children develop through a generally predictable sequence of steps and milestones, they may not proceed through these steps in the same way or at the same time. The information in this guide explains what child development experts consider to be "widely-held expectations" for what an average child might achieve within a given year. Below is a snapshot of this year. For more in-depth information click on the specific areas of development in the menu at the left. How your child may develop this year Two-year-olds enjoy using their senses and motor skills to explore the world and are highly curious about unfamiliar objects, events and phenomena. They can solve simple problems with the "trial and error" method and will practice an activity many times to master it. Children this age also pretend more during play, using familiar objects and situations to process their daily experiences. During the year, children this age pick up most parts of speech to form more complete sentences. They can understand and say hundreds of words, but familiar adults may need to "translate" for others due to immature pronunciation skills. They also understand simple directions and many common phrases used in routine situations. Children this age are laying the groundwork for reading and writing. They enjoy having books read to them and may pretend to "read" as they independently look through familiar books. They also make a variety of scribble marks anywhere and everywhere and may even attempt to write the first letter of their name. As they play and complete their daily routines, two-year-olds learn important math skills. They can use a toy to represent another object, recognize patterns with daily activities and understand concepts of time like, "tomorrow" and "yesterday. They can sort shapes, complete puzzles with eight pieces or less and stack a set of rings on a peg by size. They also understand addition and subtraction with the numbers "one" and "two. They can also kick a small ball forward, catch a rolled ball and throw a ball overhand but with little accuracy. Two-year-olds love finger play activities e. They can turn doorknobs and unscrew lids and have improved their skills using eating utensils. Two-year-olds also use their motor skills to explore the creative arts. They make sounds by banging and shaking instruments and household items. They enjoy dancing upon request, doing finger plays and acting out chants and songs. Children this age are also gaining control over their voices and will join in singing the refrains of their favorite songs. With art, they enjoy the sensory pleasures of the art materials and focus on the process of creating art, rather than the final product. Two-year-olds enjoy playing alongside other children, but usually keep to themselves. When conflicts arise, adults need to step in to prevent aggression and teach appropriate behaviors. Children this age are beginning to label feelings that they recognize in themselves and others. Controlling emotions is still difficult, however, so frustration may trigger emotional meltdowns. Comfort objects like blankets or teddy bears help two-year-olds cope with new situations or strong emotions. Support for PBS Parents provided by:

Chapter 6 : About Your Privacy on this Site

In order for two year olds to become life-long learners and to be resilient, prepared, and motivated for future learning opportunities, the foundations for all parts of the brain need to be integrated and capable of working together.

For instance, can you tell if he or she is learning and mastering age-appropriate writing skills? The questions and tips that follow will help you understand what type of early writing skills your 3- and 4-year-old child should be developing and how you can support her budding writing skills. Is your child developing age-appropriate writing skills? The most important thing for parents to remember is that writing during the preschool years is, well, messy! The goal is to help children understand how writing works, that it connects in meaningful ways to reading, and that it communicates information, through words and symbols. Do you know what basic writing skills your child should be learning and mastering at ages 3 or 4? Review the following questions, and note how your child is doing in each area. Express ideas and stories through pictures she draws? Use pencils, crayons, and markers for drawing and writing? Attempt with some success to write some of the letters in her first name? Show an understanding of how writing and drawing help us communicate and function in everyday life? Encouraging early writing skills at home Now that you understand some of the beginning writing skills your child should have, you can reinforce those skills and help her make further progress. Here are some activities to try: Let your child use writing tools such as pencils, washable markers, chalk, and crayons. Gather and organize these materials, along with some paper, in a box that your child can decorate and have access to. Encourage your child to use drawing to express ideas and tell stories. Show your child that written words are a part of daily life. From grocery lists and email messages to billboards and signs in stores, writing is everywhere! Teach your child to print her first name. Be patient, as this will take practice. This is very empowering for a preschooler! And, let your child label some of her own things such as a notebook or crayon box. Let your child mold clay letters for hands-on practice shaping letters of the alphabet. Help your child create a pretend menu using pictures of food from newspapers and magazines Note: If your child has a regular babysitter or daycare provider, be sure to pass these tips along to the caregiver. Find out what specific early writing skills your child will need to master in order to have a successful start in kindergarten. Encourage your child to talk about school and learning, and try to gauge how she feels about writing. However, you may want to seek help if your child: Dislikes and avoids writing and copying. Is late in learning to copy and write. Has trouble remembering the shapes of letters and numbers. Frequently reverses or otherwise incorrectly draws letters, numbers, and symbols. And, be sure that your child has undergone vision and hearing screenings. Read it a new way: Ask the child questions about what they think will happen next and encourage them to tell you what they see in the illustrations.

Two-year-olds are just beginning to use logical reasoning to solve everyday problems. They can sort shapes, complete puzzles with eight pieces or less and stack a set of rings on a peg by size.

I am one of those parents. My baby is approaching that mark and I need to stack my toolbox with appropriate activities so that I can keep him busy, my house calmer, and my sanity in place. Here I have gathered ideas that can be modified to suit different levels of development and the personality of your little one. No need to break the bank, right? Things to remember as you go over the activities: Keep your mind open, you might get more ideas as you go over these. Adjust each activity to the complexity that your child is able to handle at the moment, as they further develop, you can up the complexity. Do not give up on any of the activities just because they did not seem interested the first time around. They usually change their minds as often as we change their diapers. My list of simple yet fun activities for 2 year olds: Children learn as they play. Most importantly, in play children learn how to learn. Fred Donaldson Tweet this Sorting objects: This is an activity that most toddlers enjoy and it can be modified in many different ways. At the beginning, they can just put things inside containers. Later, you can make it more interesting by sorting out the objects by a characteristic such as color or size. Legos are a good choice to play this game. Start little piles by color, for example, and get them excited about taking over to finish sorting them out. This one can be a lot of fun and it can also be done anywhere! The idea is to have them find certain things. At home, you can make a game by hiding one of his stuffed animals and helping him look for it until he gets the idea. Another way of playing this game is to have your toddler point at different things you ask him to find. This is useful for when you are out and about for a stroll or even when grocery shopping to keep them entertained. We found the red car! Another way to help build their vocabulary is by singing! There are many songs out there that mix actions and words. Pick a couple each week. Sing and act them out with them. Make sure to get really involved. Repetition is something that children this age appreciate, so yes, it might get a bit boring for you but remember you are teaching them and keeping them happy at the same time. More singing about head, shoulders, knees and toes beats a screaming two-year-old any day! This one is super simple and most kids enjoy it a lot. Save up and clean empty containers of milk, little mini boxes of cereal, and any other type of safe, unbreakable containers to make a little pretend store at home. You can guide him a bit by asking him to get you a specific item or let him just use his imagination. This one will help them not only pass the time, but also exercise some motor skills. Get a couple of boxes and fill them with funny and colorful clothing and accessories, and have a go at taking turns trying silly combinations. Some old costumes can be a nice addition. Boxes, rockets, and forts, oh my!: You can have some fun with your toddler by decorating them. Turn them into a rocket, a clubhouse, or even a fox den! The sky is the limit. Most kids play and play with them for an hour which is something children and cats seem to have in common. Gather some empty plastic bottles. You can fill them with some dry beans, rice, or water with food coloring to add some weight if needed. Glue the cap on for extra security and voila! You have some pins. Get a ball and have a blast. He might not even use the ball at all. This one is good for the older kids to practice more fine-motor skills. Toddlers are still a bit rough with their movements, so for this to work you need big holes and thicker cord. Shoe laces and toilet paper rolls are perfect for this game; just have the kids thread the cord through the tube. It might seem like a very simple task but when you are developing your muscle-brain connection this can be a nice little challenge. Tired of all the junk mail cluttering your mail box? Think of them as free toys for your two-year-old. Make a pretend mail box with cardboard and watch them put the mail into the slot and take it out the back, time and time again. Time to explore the senses, especially touch. It can get a bit messy so you can use some plastic or paper to cover the area for easier clean up, or if the weather is nice just head outside. In some plastic trays, you can put things like flour and rice for them to explore with their hands. Mixing a bit of food coloring into some yogurt makes awesome paint for finger-painting creations. Time will pass so much faster once they are having fun, and you will have far less tantrums by avoiding boredom. Do you have your own favorite activity to do with your toddler? Share it in the comments. The more the merrier! Play is the beginning of knowledge.

Chapter 8 : Understanding Beginning Writing Skills in Preschoolers

12 Fun Activities for 2-Year-Olds. "The stage from 2 to 3 is major because language is really beginning to develop," says Robert Myers, Ph.D., a child and adolescent psychologist, founder of.

The year between age 2 and age 3 is an exciting one. Toddlers are realizing that they are separate individuals from their parents and caregivers. This means that they are driven to assert themselves, to communicate their likes and dislikes, and to act independently as much as they can! Toddlers are also developing the language skills that help them express their ideas, wants, and needs. At the same time, toddlers do not understand logic and still have a hard time with waiting and self-control. Two-year-olds want what they want when they want it. Learning to Handle Strong Feelings As a parent, your job is to help your young toddler navigate the tide of strong emotions she is experiencing this year. This is no small task, because the emotional lives of 2-year-olds are complex. This year they are beginning to experience feelings like pride, shame, guilt, and embarrassment for the first time. Older toddlers are a lot like teenagers. Their feelings may swing wildly from moment to moment. They may be joyful when getting a popsicle and then despair when it drips on their hands. So toddlers really need your loving guidance to figure out how to cope with their emotions. Your child is struggling with this when:

- Uses words or actions to get your attention or ask for help
- Talks to himself in a reassuring way when he is frustrated or frightened. For example, he might say to himself, "Daddy will come back, after you drop him off at child care." For example, your child might say no to herself as she does something off-limits, like opening the fridge. What helps your child learn is when your response shows her a different, more constructive way to handle these feelings.

Learning to cope with strong feelings usually happens naturally as children develop better language skills in their third year and have more experience with peers, handling disappointment, and following rules. Talk about feelings and how to cope. Read books and notice aloud how the characters are feeling: "The dog is really happy that he got a bone. And share your own feelings: "I feel really frustrated! Will you help me wipe it up? Wow, it feels so good to have your help. When your child can label how he is feeling, it helps him gain control over his emotions and communicate them to others. Once your child has named his feelings, you can suggest what he might do to feel better or solve the problem. This helps him learn what to do in the future when he faces a similar challenge. For example, if he is sad because his grandparents just left after a 2-week visit, you can suggest looking at photos of them or drawing them a picture. Offer your child ideas for how to manage strong emotions. Young children need guidance when it comes to figuring out how to deal with big feelings like anger, sadness, and frustration. So when your child is really angry, validate what he is experiencing: "You are really angry right now because I said no more television. Then suggest that he jump up and down, hit the sofa cushions, rip paper, cuddle up in a cozy area for alone time, paint an angry picture or some other strategy that you feel is appropriate. Empathize with your child. "We have to leave now to go to Ms. I know you want to stay home with Daddy. You miss me and I miss you during the day. But staying home is not a choice today. Daddy has to go to work. But when we get home, we will finish the puzzle we started and have a yummy dinner. Do you want to get into the car seat yourself or do you want me to put you in? If your child has to wait until his oatmeal has cooled down, show him the steam rising from the bowl. Tell him that when the steam goes away, you can test the oatmeal on a spoon to see if it is cool enough. If you need to help your child brush her teeth for 2 minutes each day, use an egg timer so she can watch the countdown. Need 10 minutes to fold some clothes? Set a kitchen timer so that your child can keep track. Timers are also great tools for helping children learn to share. Give them each a few minutes using the timer to play with a toy they both want, like the shiny new tricycle parked out back. Let your child make choices appropriate to her age. You can have an apple, a string cheese, or a bagel for snack. What sounds good to you? There are many daily moments when you can teach your child this skill. For example, games that require turn-taking are great for practicing how to wait and share. Rolling a ball back and forth is an example. This game gives children the chance to wait and control their impulse to grab the ball. You can also take turns hitting a soft foam ball off a tee. Or try acting out a story. Pretend play offers many chances to wait, take turns, and negotiate as children decide how the

story will unfold. When the timer goes off, switch instruments and set the timer again.

Chapter 9 : Toddlers and Challenging Behavior: Why They Do It and How to Respond – ZERO TO THREE

Beginning Sounds; Preschool Reading Curriculum Check out these fun letter A activities for 2-year-olds! my kids have gotten very frustrated about working with.

This adaptation of project work, called project practice, engaged toddlers in developmentally appropriate activities that involved exploration, representation, and the search for understanding. Eton is a private, coed, multicultural, bilingual Spanish and English institution for children ages 2 to 18 prekindergarten to grade We would receive comments from teachers that ranged from it being a wonderful experience to it being frustrating and not very meaningful for the children. It was the teachers of the 2-year-olds who repeatedly expressed their concern and discomfort with project work. We felt puzzled that teachers of older children found project work so engaging for themselves and the children, while the teachers of our very young children did not. At first we thought that the latter lacked knowledge about the Project Approach, its framework, and its features. We decided to give them further training and to work in closer collaboration with them. It was after we spent time in their classrooms, observing and accompanying them in the development of several projects, that we were able to determine the cause for their feelings. We could see that we needed to work with 2-year-old children in a different way than we were working with our older children. It was then that we began looking for ways of adapting features of the Project Approach to the needs and interests of our youngest learners. Initiating Toddlers in the Project Approach Our first step was to work at becoming more proficient listeners and better observers of young children to improve our understanding of how these young learners explore their environment and build their knowledge about things that are close to them. We spent long periods of time watching how they interacted with different provocations, how they explored materials, and how they made sense of the world. We became more aware of nonverbal cues, and we attained a better understanding of their interests than we had previously. After several periods of discussing our observations with teachers, we decided to experiment with and analyze specific features of each phase of the Project Approach as a separate entity before taking on a full project. This process, which we call project practice, introduces toddlers to specific elements of project work to help prepare them for participating in formal projects when they are older. We think of projects that involve sensory exploration, taking advantage of their interest in the colors of things around them, their fascination with water, or their perceptions of their bodies. For example, from the broad topic of plants, one teacher might choose to study trees, while another teacher might decide to study flowering plants. But because the vocabularies and the experience of toddlers with the world around them are so limited, it is very difficult for them to share stories about their previous knowledge related to a topic. There is always a clear intent behind a provocation. Example of an initial experience that reveals a misconception: On a sunny day, we filled up different large colored tubs with water and set them out on the playground. We invited the children to explore and then sat back and watched. All of the children started exploring without needing directions. What is the color of water? Older children will be able to tell personal stories through discussions, drawings, or models. Toddlers will more likely express their previous knowledge through interactions with objects, through dramatic play, by voicing comments through short phrases, or by reproducing sounds. His movements and the sound that accompanies them cue us to his thinking; he has the motion of tires on his mind. Drawing that represents the motion of tires. Usually, teachers plan several provocations in relation to the topic before they can determine whether the investigation will be worthwhile. Phase 2 During the second phase of a project, children try to find answers to their questions. Older children may be able to get information from primary and secondary sources; however, toddlers get most of their information through direct exploration that involves their senses. Based on their analysis, they decide on which experiences to provide next. These experiences will be different for practically every child, because at this age they are still primarily focused on their own individual interests. Teachers may decide to plan new experiences or to revisit a previous one. Field Visits One of the ways that children find information is by going on field visits. For the toddlers in our school, these take place within the campus. The topics that teachers select lend themselves to firsthand exploration in the context of our school. Teachers may conduct a field visit to the bathroom or

arrange a trip to water the plants in the playground. Gathering information and taking notes on a field visit to the bathroom. During field visits, the class is divided into small groups, and visits are conducted at different times. Each small group is accompanied by two adults, one to lead the visit and one to document the experience. Children usually record field experiences that catch their attention. These include the handling of a clipboard and the ability to connect what they are looking at with what they are attempting to record. Class discussions with the children follow the field visit, but teachers of toddlers need to be especially attentive during the visit to identify things that children were drawn to. Notes and photographs taken by the teacher are helpful to analyze the experiences that took place. It is worthwhile to mention that class discussions at this age usually consist of open-ended questions by the teacher. Some children can answer these questions, even offering additional comments; other children simply listen because they lack the language skills needed to hold conversations. A class discussion about our faces. Representation For older children in Phase 2 of a project, the story of the project unfolds in their representations of their new understandings after they have conducted research. For toddlers, the process of representation takes on a whole new meaning. These youngsters need ample time to simply explore materials and tools, such as clay, paint, paintbrushes, glue, and pencils, before learning representational strategies. We help the children practice skills that will lead them into being able to show their understanding in different ways. Some of the representational skills that teachers practice with toddlers include 1 observational drawing and painting, 2 making models, 3 collages, 4 block building, and 5 dramatic play. Observational Drawing and Painting. At first, youngsters are basically testing materials, tools, and their own skills; or they might be representing a movement, a sensation, or a sound. Once children feel comfortable with tools and materials, teachers invite them to observe an object set out for them. Working with a few children at a time, the teacher guides the observation by pointing out features of the object. For example, she may draw attention to flowers in a bouquet, emphasizing their color or the way they are arranged. After some months of practice, the children attempt to represent the objects, and we are able to see the connection to what they observed. These representations will usually include striking features of the object, such as its shape or the combination of colors it presents. Observational painting of flowers. Most children are intrigued by the properties of clay and the sensation this material produces. Many sessions are dedicated to exploration without the expectation of having children produce a representation. Clay is offered in subsequent sessions, always with a specific purpose. During one session, clay may be presented in thick slabs; at another session, it may be offered in coils and balls. Sometimes the teachers provide tools; sometimes they do not. Some children are able to make things with intention, reflecting understanding. Free exploration of clay. Teachers provide photographs or materials that are connected to the topic. Toddlers like to combine different materials in their representations, and they achieve interesting compositions. Young children use blocks and other building materials very naturally. Not much guidance or modeling is necessary for this type of representation. They seem to take to these materials spontaneously. When exploring a topic, the teachers set up a dramatic play area with items that relate to what children are learning about. The children use the props and add words to their play. It is in this area that we often see some of the first interactions children have with one another. It is also here that we can more easily see understandings of the topic. In some instances, dramatic play can take the place of class discussions. Role playing during a project on cats. Children can also represent their experiences by making timelines that consist of three steps. In order to make timelines, the children need to go through the process of what will be represented. After the experience, and with the use of photographs, children are able to sequence an event. The teacher accompanies a small group of children to water the plants. She demonstrates and verbalizes the process in three steps. Then the children go through the steps. The teacher documents the experience with photographs of each step. Finally, she revisits the experience by reminding the children of what they did, and the children make their understanding visible by placing the photographs of the process in the correct order: Then you water the plants. Finally, you place the watering can on the table. Watering the plants, then organizing the pictures in the correct order. Another way to represent their experiences is through drawings, paintings, or models that encourage comparisons of very obvious attributes. These representational strategies will be meaningful to toddlers only if they are very concrete, and they will be even more meaningful if they involve action. As we concluded the project, we asked

the children to draw themselves and a fish. This drawing allowed us to assess their understandingâ€”most of the drawings of the fish that children drew were different from the drawings that they drew of themselves. Drawing from memory showing clear understanding of differences between a fish and a child. During project work, we often see older children working collaboratively on a representation. They plan together, negotiate, combine their skills, and problem solve. In project practice, individual work is put together into a group product. For example, in a mural, each child concentrates on an area of what will ultimately become a group representation.