



Approaches to Learning

How Do Preschoolers Approach Activities, Challenges, and Learning Opportunities?

Children's earliest relationships and experiences directly impact their approach and feelings about learning. Preschool children think and learn about their world in a variety of creative ways. Nurturing environments and positive relationships with people contribute to positive attitudes toward learning. The way a child approaches learning is a strong predictor of later school success. Through playful inquiry, children discover different ways of problem solving and develop curiosity and confidence while trying new ways of doing things. Early care and education providers can encourage a growth mindset by allowing opportunities for children to engage in developmentally appropriate experiences that challenge and delight young learners.

Approaches to Learning

Engagement: engage in new and unfamiliar experiences; take risks; exhibit imagination and curiosity; complete complex tasks; and play and work with others

Persistence: attentiveness; attention to detail; concentration; critical thinking; and perseverance

Mindset: positive thinking; growth mindset; trial and error; flexible and adaptive thinking



Books to Promote Growth Mindset

Anything is Possible by Giulia Bellon

Be Brave Little Penguin by Giles Andreae

Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg

Brave Irene by William Steig

Everyone Can Learn to Ride a Bicycle
by Chris Raschka

Flight School by Lita Judge

How to Catch a Star by Oliver Jeffers

I Can Be Anything (Don't Tell Me I Can't)
by Diane Dillon

I Can't Do That, Yet: Growth Mindset
by Esther Pia Cordova

It's Okay to Make Mistakes by Todd Parr

Jabari Jumps and *Jabari Tries* by Gaia Cornwall

Ruby's Wish by Shirin Yim Bridges

The Carrot Seed by Ruth Kraus

The Magical Yet by Angela DiTerlizzi

The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires

The OK Book by Amy Krause Rosenthal

When Sophie Thinks She Can't... by Molly Bang

Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats

Y Is for Yet: A Growth Mindset Alphabet
by Shannon Anderson

Examples of Integrated Learning

How children may exhibit these skills	How early care and education providers can encourage these skills
<p>Collect and explore loose parts from all areas of the classroom (rocks, beads, feathers, buttons, counters, etc.) and design a self-portrait using the materials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage children to explore the classroom and materials and provide ample time to engage in complex play or projects until they are satisfied. Allow work to continue for several days. ▪ Offer open-ended materials and experiences that foster inquiry and imagination and ask questions that invite children to explain what they are doing and why. ▪ Use language to celebrate and encourage trying something new. <i>Example:</i> “I noticed that you explored loose parts at the art area today. What materials did you choose?”
<p>Make several focused attempts at completing a new alphabet puzzle while quietly singing the ABC song and referring to the alphabet chart while working.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Celebrate when children sustain attention to task and detail <i>Example:</i> “Wow! You worked so hard building that tower and adding windows. How did you decide you were going to put it together?” ▪ Encourage children to learn and practice new skills by themselves for extended periods of time. ▪ Respond to children in ways that let them know you appreciate the creative ways they approach tasks and solve problems when things are challenging.
<p>Help a friend who is having difficulty zipping her coat and says, “You almost did it! Want me to show you how?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create an environment where children feel supported and encouraged to help others. ▪ Show delight when children work together to solve problems. <i>Example:</i> “I saw you holding Sam’s hand on the slide today. Thank you for helping him when he was feeling nervous.” ▪ Praise effort and persistence. <i>Example:</i> “You worked hard on that puzzle today and didn’t give up!”

Tools and Resources

[First Five Years: Why Children’s Mindset Matters](#)

[NAEYC: Why Making Mistakes Now May Benefit Us Later](#)

[NAEYC: What Are You Thinking? Scaffolding Thinking to Promote Learning](#)

[University of Nebraska-Lincoln: Curriculum and Approaches to Learning](#)