

DISCOVERY ZONE: SUMMER

Study Investigation:

Community Quests



Infant Edition



STUDY EXPLANATION

Community Quests



This topic focuses on deepening connections within us and within the community around us. Activities aim to build self-awareness, agency, confidence, and forge a stronger sense of community within our programs. Infants will start to explore connections with others, building the bridge to understanding the benefits of teamwork and creating a sense of spirit and unity within their programs. Mindfulness with respect to our communities, our environment, and our personal wellbeing will also be a focus.





Educator Questions:

I wonder how I can support infants to learn about their community?

I wonder how I can help infants feel like they belong?

I wonder how I can showcase community helpers?

Building Connections

Activity One

Title of Activity: Peek-a-Boo!

Skill(s) Focus: Connection/Object Permanence/Prediction/Facial Expressions

Objectives: Infants will learn about prediction through joyful repetitive actions with educators.

Materials:

- A small blanket
- Infant toys

Process:

- While engaging with infants, sit face to face with them and cover your face with your hands, or use the blanket to cover your face.
- Pause, allowing the infant to take notice of the change.
- Pull your hands back and say, "Here I am!", with a big smile!
- Keep the engagement going by saying, "Where did I go?" from behind the blanket.
- Make different facial expressions each time you "appear", taking notice the infant's responses and attempts to mimic you.
- Use hand over hand guidance to encourage the infant to "hide" and "appear" by covering their face or gently placing your hands over the infant's face. When they reappear, say "There you are!" "I found you!".
- Consider the following variations for older infants:
 - Present a familiar toy to infants. Then, slowly place it under the blanket.
 - Say to the infants, "I wonder where the toy went?".
 - Allow the infants to think and explore their surroundings for a moment.
 - Guide the infants to find the toy. Repeat again!
 - Invite infants to play peek-a-boo with each other by covering their hands over their eyes and saying "peek-a-boo!" to each other.
 - Invite infants to play with each other by ducking behind a shelf and popping up in surprise! Model once or twice for your audience, then invite the infants to take a turn!

Building Connections

Activity Two

Title of Activity: I'm in the Band!

Skill(s) Focus: Connection/Engagement with Peers/Creativity

Objectives: Infants will sing with their caregivers and explore musical sounds with common materials as makeshift instruments.

Materials:

- Infant safe, common household materials which can be used as an instrument:
 - Mixing bowls, spoons, whisks, plastic containers, etc.
- Optional: infant safe instruments to supplement

Process:

- Present the materials to a small group of infants, allowing them to explore and manipulate them.
- Model how to use the materials to make musical sounds, like banging two spoons together or hitting a mixing spoon on the back of a container.
- Sing and make music with the children, singing their favorite songs.
- Notice and narrate the interactions of infants with each other, and how they react to each other.

Younger Infants:

- Sit facing the infant. Sing songs to the infant, and pair singing with facial expressions and hand gestures.
- Allow younger infants to manipulate materials, but stay close to ensure safety.
- Sing while holding younger infants, allowing them to be part of the action!

Learning Discovery

Activity One

Title of Activity: Mirror Play with Props

Skill(s) Focus: Awareness of Self and Others/Problem Solving/Teamwork/Object Permanence.

Objectives: Infants will explore mirror reflections and engage in small group interactions to connect with their peers and develop peer relationships.

Materials:

- Balls and blocks
- Container/box
- Small cloth or blanket
- Infant safe mirror

Process:

- Invite a small group to the mirror. Explore through touch and sight.
- Point out and say the name of each infant you see in the mirror.
- Describe something positive about each infant!
- Invite infants to explore the blocks and balls with you by placing them in front of the mirror.
- Hide the balls and blocks in the container and under the blanket. Ask the infants, "I wonder where the ball went?". Offer lots of clapping and cheering when they find it.
- Narrate the excitement and facial expressions of infants in the mirror. "I see Charlie clapping, you found the ball!".
- Encourage infants to take notice of the mirror as well.
- Invite infants to work together and fill the container with balls or stack the blocks together!
- When an object rolls over or lands in front of the mirror, take notice and narrate out loud to the group.

Younger Infant Variations:

- Bring infants to the mirror, placing them on their stomach or holding them and facing them near the mirror by sitting in your lap.
- Be sure infants are close enough to see each other and the reflections in the mirror, noticing their eye and head movements.
- Use hand over hand guidance to allow infants to touch and manipulate the balls and blocks.
- Narrate your actions as you guide the infant.

Learning Discovery

Activity Two

Title of Activity: Where I Eat at Home Book

Skills) Focus: Inclusion/Concept of Self/Awareness of Others

Objectives: Children will recognize similarities and differences between their individual environments at home where they eat.

Materials:

- Ask families to bring in a photo of their child eating in their highchair or where they eat at home.
- Photo album or makeshift book

Process:

- As the parents bring in pictures, create a page for each child on cardstock and insert both into a photo album.
- Be sure to include the child's name.
- For older children you can include some of their favorite foods.
- If a child does not have a picture brought in from home for the book, take one at school to ensure everyone is included.
- Take a photo of younger infants being held by their family member or being fed a bottle to add to the book, ensuring to showcase their special space!
- Share the book with the children as they are eating their food, and narrate the different children's names in each photo.
- State excitedly "That is you at home, and this is you at the centre", pointing to them.
- Set the book out in the learning environment, inviting children to explore.

Expressive Language

Activity One

Title of Activity: Getting to Know You

Skills) Focus: Language Development/Facial Recognition/Self-expression

Objectives: Infants and educators will explore photos of infants' families, themselves, and other cultural or community references.

Materials:

- Photos of the children and their families
- Photos of the educators in the classroom
- Photos of any local cultural or community references:
 - Examples: Iconic building, statue of a local person of significance, a well-known local park, swimming pool, etc.

Process:

- Prior to the day, ask families to send a family photo via Connect app or to bring a copy into the centre.
- Print and laminate the photos.
- Educators may wish to string or bind them into a simple book.
- Invite the children to gather and look at the photos with you.
- Encourage the infants to respond to each photo by asking questions or narrating details from the photo.
 - "I wonder who is in this family?"
 - "This is a photo of Emily! Where is Emily? Let's say Hi to her!"
 - "Is this the Zoo? I wonder what animals we see there?"
- Prompt infants to attempt to say each others' names, and family names. "This is your mama, lets say 'hi mama!'".
- When asking questions, pause and allow time for a response even if the infant does not have language.
- Notice their behaviour cues and narrate their actions and responses to you. ("You know this is your family, I see your smile!")

Variations:

- Rotate the photos out to include animals, photos of current weather patterns, etc.
- Play a hide and find game with older infants. Place the photos around the room, perhaps laying them on a shelf or taping them to the wall. Then, invite the infant to find the photos with you!

Expressive Language

Activity Two

Title of Activity: If You're Happy

Skill(s) Focus: Expressive Language/Engagement/Connecting

Objectives: Children will connect action words with movements while singing and performing the actions named.

Materials:

- Soft blanket or mat to place on the floor/ground

Introduction:

- Place the baby on the blanket so that they can see your face.
- Smile and ask the baby how they are feeling today. Speak with a soft, soothing voice.
- Demonstrate mindfulness by avoiding interruptions, being completely attentive and maintaining eye contact.

Process:

- Gently take the baby's hands in yours and sway from side to side while singing the song and gently help them do the motions:
 - "If you're happy and you know it clap your hands."
 - (Clap hands.)
 - "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands."
 - (Clap hands.)
 - "If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it!"
 - (Smile and point to mouth.)
 - "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands."
 - (Clap hands.)
- Slowly repeat several times. Add in different actions each time such as rubbing your belly, patting your head, touching your knees, tickling your toes, etc.
- Be sure to use big facial expressions and change your voice while singing (higher/lower pitch, faster/slower tempo, etc.) to bring more fun and engagement.
- Invite other educators to support you in singing with a small group of infants, showcasing connections with others.

Variations:

- Older infants may be able to follow along, mirror or repeat the movements independently. They may also be able to speed up some as the repetitions continue.

Physical Literacy

Activity Two

Title of Activity: Obstacle Course

Skill(s) Focus: Gross Motor/Self-Awareness/Persistence/Safe Risk Taking

Objectives: Infants will crawl, walk, step, and move their body to overcome small obstacles in their path.

Materials:

- 'O ball' (or an empty and cleaned wipe container)
 - An 'O Ball' is a ball with a lattice like covering for easy handling by infants.
- Fabric swatches or dancing scarves
- Tape markings of any kind (ex: small colored circles taped to the floor)
- Stepping stones or small floor balance beam
- Tunnels, and/or a large box with sides opened to crawl through
- Streamers
- Large, soft blocks

Process:

- Set up the various "obstacles" around the room.
- Tape the fabric lengths or scarves at the edge of the tunnel or box, creating a hanging curtain effect, being sure you are meeting safety parameters for length.
- Stack the blocks up for children to run or crawl through and knock them over!
- Invite children to explore the different obstacles, in any order they wish.
- Add in your favorite music to engage the group and get everyone moving!
- Offer prompts to the infant of encouragement, "You are crawling through the tunnel! Look, you made it through! Yay!".
- Help as needed to guide children. Repeat for as long as they are engaged!

Younger Infant Variations:

- Bring an 'O ball' with fabric or dancing scarves inside to the infant. Allow the infant to manipulate the ball.
- Invite the infant, if possible, to pull out the fabric pieces.
- Allow the infant to explore other elements with you. Explore the block tower together and the textures of the stepping stones together as well.
- Find other toys in the environment which could offer an "obstacle" or "risk taking" for the infant. Consider nesting cups or a bowl transfer activity.

Physical Literacy

Activity Two

Title of Activity: Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes

Skill(s) Focus: Physical Movements /Engagement /Connecting/
Expressive Language

Objectives: Infants will be supported to integrate preliminary movements to link with the song, "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes."

Materials:

- Soft blanket or mat to place on the floor/ground

Introduction:

- Support infants to sit or lay on a blanket, being sure to smile and display joyful enthusiasm.
- Inform them they will play 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes'.
- Demonstrate mindfulness by avoiding interruptions, being completely attentive and maintain eye contact with each of the participating children.
- Speak with a soft, soothing voice. Smile throughout and enjoy being with the baby.

Process:

- Gently take the baby's hands in yours and raise them slowly up so that the baby touches their head. Let the baby feel the top of their head. Smile and sing, "Head."
- Begin singing the rest of the song very slowly, "Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes."
- While singing, move the baby's hands to each part of their body and pause, giving them time to hear the word while feeling where their head, shoulders, knees, and toes are and how each part feels (warm/cool head, soft socks/rubbery bottom socks, etc.).
- Take care to be very gentle when helping the baby move.
- For very young infants, use your own hands to tap the knees and tickle the toes.
- Slowly repeat several times.

Variations:

- Add in other parts of the body such as the heart (feel it beating), stomach (is it hungry or full?), nose (is it warm or cold?), etc.
- If doing this activity with very young infants, use your own hands to gently brush their heads, shoulders, knees, and toes.
- Place the babies by a mirror so they can watch themselves.
- Older infants may be able to follow along, mirror or repeat the movements. They may also be able to speed up some as the repetitions continue. Finish with one more slow repetition.

Educator Reflections: *optional*

I wonder if I successfully observed and responded to the cues of the children to lead further investigations?

I wonder how I could improve upon my teaching practices in the future?

I wonder what support I may need to better foster child inquiry in my learning environment?

I wonder what went well, and what could be improved upon regarding child-led learning?

Investigation Materials

Building Connections

- Small blanket
- Infant toys
- Infant safe common household materials:
 - Mixing bowls, spoons, lids, whisks, plastic containers, etc.
- Infant safe instruments

Learning Discovery

- Balls
- Blocks
- Smooth cloth/blanket
- Infant safe mirror
- Photos of children of where they eat at home
- Photo album/makeshift book

Expressive Language

- Photos of children and their families
- Photos of educators
- Photos of cultural/community references
- Soft blanket/mat

Physical Literacy

- 'O Ball'
- Fabric swatches/dancing scarves
- Tape markings
- Stepping stones/small floor balance beam
- Tunnels, and/or a large box with sides opened to crawl through
- Streamers
- Large, soft blocks
- Soft blanket/mat