

## Following Children's Lead Highlight Video

Narrator: Hello. Welcome to this short presentation on following children's lead. This presentation highlights the ways that teachers can maximize learning opportunities by following children's interests, ideas, and curiosities. In shorthand, we call this following the child's lead. Following the child's lead fits into the foundation of our house. The house framework shows the teaching and learning components that are needed to support children's school readiness. This short module is a part of the foundation. It reminds us to pay attention to children's interests in order to engage children in learning and help them learn even more.

What does it mean to follow a child's lead? Well, all children have interests. They have ideas. Certain toys or activities or events or people capture their attention and make them wonder. Teachers can watch and listen, and then respond. Following the child's lead means that the teacher is flexible enough to adjust the plans to respond to children's interests but still remember the goals for the activity or lesson. Remember that all those teacher-child interactions matter. By following children's lead, the teacher takes advantage of children's interests. This leads to more participation, greater motivation, and even more learning.

We'll talk about the three ways to follow the children's lead: build on children's interests, provide choices, encourage ideas. How can a teacher build on children's interests? First, the teacher watches and listens carefully in order to know what captures children's attention. It might be all the mud puddles on the playground, a toy that spins, or a friend's new haircut. Just watch and listen. Then, help and encourage a child to follow their interest. Show your own interest and delight to support children's curiosity. Then, extend or build on the children's interest by adding resources or materials or another idea. Let's take a look at some examples of teachers noticing children's interests and stretching their thinking.

Teacher: Green.

Girl: Yellow. Red.

Teacher: Red.

Girl: Blue.

Teacher: Blue! Good job. Now, let's see if you can sort them by shapes.

Girl: Arizona.

Teacher: You went to Arizona? With who?

Girl: With my mom, dad, grandpa.

Teacher: Do you what to know where is Arizona? Yes? Okay, look it. California, Arizona.

Narrator: Another way that teachers follow children's lead is by providing choices. Children tend to be more engaged and attentive when they get to make choices and be as independent as possible. Teachers can insert choices in simple ways, like providing an opportunity to choose the red paper or the blue paper or singing a song really fast or really slow.

And teachers can even insert some choices into more structured lessons, like letting children choose the words to rhyme in a literacy lesson or choosing what tool to use in a lesson about measuring. Providing choices: it's a way for teachers to allow children greater autonomy and encourage learning. Another strategy that teachers use to follow children's lead is to encourage ideas. There can be lots of opportunities to express ideas, but sometimes children need encouragement. Watch and listen, but also comment on what you see children doing. Join the children in their play and conversations, and comment or ask questions that inspire more talking and more ideas.

Teachers can say things like, "Let's find out," or, "What else do you see?" Let's look at some more examples of teachers encouraging the thoughts and ideas of their children.

Teacher: Where did you find this? Where did this come from?

Boy: That's a pecan.

Teacher: A pecan? Where did the pecan come from?

Boy: Over there.

Teacher: Did this pecan grow out of the grass?

Boy: Yeah.

Child: Some fell off the tree.

Teacher: What kind of song, Tristan, did you say we could sing?

Tristan: A rock-star song.

Teacher: What's a rock-star song?

Tristan: It's a song where you do cool tricks and what is really cool.

Teacher: Okay, you go ahead and do those cool tricks, and then maybe we can learn, and then we'll do them with you.

Narrator: There are lots of chances during the classroom day for teachers to follow the children's lead and promote their curiosity as well as their autonomy. It can happen during meal time or snack time, indoors or outdoors, at small group or large group, anytime at all. Teachers need to be flexible and willing to adjust the activity to take advantage of children's own interests and ideas. There are three ways that teachers can follow children's lead. They can build on children's interests, provide choices, and encourage children's ideas.

This short presentation highlighted the ways that teachers follow children's lead. This is one in a series of modules on interest-based learning. For more information about this topic and to see more examples, check out our longer modules on following children's lead. See our tips and tools and resources to use these strategies in your own classroom. Thank you, and get ready to be excited by your children's thoughts and ideas.