

## Joyful and Engaging Environments for Infants and Toddlers

[Video begins]

Teacher: You're going to help her? I got you. I help you. There we go. There's some more right there. How many more? Whoa, is there one under me? I'm sitting on it. You did it. There's one right here that fell. You got him? Oh, you got two hands full. Whoa.

[Video ends]

Mike Browne: I love it. I absolutely love it, and I enjoy it so much. Good morning, everyone. Good afternoon. Good evening, depending on where you're coming from. Hello, everyone. Can you believe it? I can't. We've been renewed for another season. Let me be the first to welcome you to our first episode of the new season of Teacher Time. I'm Mike Browne, and I'm joined by the intelligent — she can just introduce herself.

Becky Sughrim: Hi, I'm Becky Sughrim.

Mike: We are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. Let's talk about that video we started with. Wasn't it just joyful and fun to see two toddlers engaging in play together and really to hear the warmth and the excitement in the educators' voices? Such a reminder that toddlerhood is full of joy, and it's our jobs to create this environment. Hence the title for today's webinar: *Joyful and Engaging Environments for Infants and Toddlers*. We're so excited to have you here with us. Tell us using that purple Q&A widget — we're just going to get right into it. How are you feeling today? If you couldn't tell, I'm a little coffeed up. Becky, how are you doing? How's your mental health?

Becky: I'm good. I am excited to be here for another season with you, Mike, and all of our viewers, and I am so excited to talk about joy and playful learning.

Mike: Once again, I am coffeed up, and I've had some ups and downs. But I got a community holding me together, including the Teacher Time community, MyPeers community. Knowing I got you makes life a little easier. Enough about me, let's get to it. What are we going to be talking about today? Today, we're going to be looking at the Framework for Effective Practices and how joy and play connect to the foundation. We're going to be talking about the importance of play, specifically guided play. We're going to be focusing on how to center families in this work. We got a lot of practical strategies for y'all to about how to engage in guided play in our teacher toolbox segment. Sounds new? It is. Stay tuned for that.

We're going to discuss ways to individualize supports for children and Small Changes - Big Impact. Then, we will check in with our Teacher Time librarian during BookCASE, where we connect our topic to books you can share with children and families. We will wrap all this up with some ways to promote your wellness and all about you. The best thing about this is, as we go along or even use afterwards, it's a special little thing that we like to call the Viewer's Guide.

You can find it in the resource widget. This season, our Viewer's Guide includes information from each of our segments. It includes note-taking spaces, book lists, and a resource list. If you want to include anything else, just drop us a note using the Q&A purple widget, and my lovely team behind the scenes will capture it. We heard a lot of feedback from people who were with us last year. Welcome back if you are back with us again. We made a lot of updates to it. We would love to continue to hear all of your input on what works best for you. You can download the guide and use it throughout our time together for taking notes, for reflecting, and planning how to use Teacher Time practices in your settings. As always, please share it with a friend.

Becky: Thanks so much, Mike. We are so excited to hear from you. We would love for you to type in the Q&A widget what does joyful teaching and learning look and feel like with infants and toddlers? What comes to your mind? Is it a moment? Is it a feeling? Is it a specific teaching practice? Let us know. While we are waiting for responses to come into the Q&A, Mike, what do you think of when you think about joyful teaching and learning with infants and toddlers?

Mike: I think of two things. The first thing is a big old belly laugh, laughter, laughter, laughter, just like that, that one that you had that right there. I love laughter, and that's joyful to me. I think another thing that's right off the top of my head is children exploring and discovering things for the first time. Sometimes we want to get into our routines, but remember, these are the first time that a child might be experiencing a butterfly. What a magical moment that is for us as educators, as well as for the children to witness that. Becky, what about you?

Becky: I was thinking about being able to hear the infants and toddlers and the educators in this space where you can hear a little bit of everyone, just like in the video that started us off, those little vocalizations from the two toddlers playing. It gets me every time, the little sounds and then the educator bringing in the positive, warm tone and comments. Our Q&A has so many responses. Some of the things I'm seeing are children laughing, playing, being curious, seeing our students have their aha moment, laughing excitement when they develop a new skill.

The faces of infants and toddlers and just seeing all the little faces, oh my gosh, and the round cheeks. I love seeing their growth when they have a big aha moment. I think what you were talking about, Mike, that discovering something for the first time and seeing that wonder in an infant and toddler's eyes is just so amazing. We love seeing your comments in the Q&A. Today we're going to be thinking about the Framework for Effective Practice. NCECDTL uses a house to represent six integral elements of quality teaching and learning for children ages birth to five in all program options.

These six elements include a foundation of providing nurturing, responsive, and effective interactions, and engaging environments, which is where we're going to be focusing on today. There's a pillar of implementing research-based curriculum and teaching practices and another pillar using screening and ongoing assessment of children's skills. Then we have the roof of embedding highly individualized teaching and learning. At the middle, in the center, we have engaging parents and families.

Then we have this navy-blue sighting of strengthening equity-focused practices. When all of these elements are connected, they form a single structure that surrounds the family and the center. The family is at the heart of the framework because each element is implemented in partnership with families in their cultural and community context. Infants and toddler staff and educators may use the Framework for Effective Practice to foster children's development and learning.

If you're familiar with the Framework for Effective Practice, you might have noticed that the siding is new. Equity-focused practices now not only surround the House as the sixth element. They are embedded throughout each of the five elements to ensure equitable access, belonging, high-quality nurturing, and joyful experiences, and positive outcomes for all children and families. I'm going to launch a poll. We would love to hear from you, how familiar are you with the Framework for Effective Practice? I'm going to stay on this slide for a bit so everyone can put in their answer.

Are you new to the Framework? Are you familiar with the Framework? Do you use the Framework in your work? Do you have deep knowledge of the Framework, and you use it in your work daily? Go ahead and select on the screen what your response to the poll is, I'm just going to look back at some of these Q&A responses while we give people time to put in their response.

Mike: My favorite one by far is definitely giggles.

Becky: We'll give some people some more time. It looks like we have about 25% of attendees who have responded. We've gotten some Q&A responses in here that people are new to the Framework.

Mike: I guess I'm very familiar with the Framework myself only because I've seen it a couple of times in practice.

Becky: You do have this information about the Framework for Effective Practice in your Viewer's Guide, as well.

Mike: Absolutely.

Becky: There are resources to find out more. I'm going to move to the next slide to see our results. It looks like most people — 42% are familiar with the Framework. Coming up next, 37%, who are new to the Framework. Thanks for giving us that information and for joining us today.

Mike: When we think about play, what comes to mind? If you guessed it, yes, I'm going to ask you to type your thoughts in the purple Q&A widget, and let's see what people come up with. Becky, when I think about it myself, it's a hobby I have, like the aerial silks class I am taking that I mentioned in last season's Teacher Time. But maybe, for others, when they think of play and what comes to mind, they think about the hobby they are enjoying or an organized sport they play, or maybe it's just being in a room full of infants and toddlers. Maybe when you think

about play, your mind goes to a toddler filling and dumping materials or an infant mouthing a stacking cup. The point I'm trying to make is this: Play is different for everyone.

Three tenets of play that we generally agree upon are that it includes these three things. It is intrinsically motivated by the child. A child engages in an activity out of their own desire to engage in it, like an infant turning their head towards an educator. The child also shows positive affect during the play. There is joy and contentment in the play and just being in the moment. Once again, this will look different for every infant and toddler. It could look like, for example, a toddler engaging with materials, with that concentrated expression, or maybe with a visible smile. Last but not least, it is flexible, and it's adaptable.

Choices within the play exist. Like should I stack another block? Or like most of the children in the classroom I work with, should I knock down the tower? Playful experiences — speaking of blocks, the LEGO foundation says, "playful experiences offer a unique context for supportive and rich learning in early childhood. These enable the responsive social interactions with caregivers that help build healthy brain connection." In other words, through play, we can connect with infants and toddlers. We can develop nurturing relationships, and we can engage in responsive interactions that support building brain architecture for our foundation of lifelong learning.

Becky: Let's keep thinking about this foundation of lifelong learning. There are so many benefits of play. It's foundational. As we can see in this graphic on the screen, play is the foundation for so many skills, and the act of play comes naturally. It comes so naturally that it seems so simple and joyful, just like many of the comments in the chat; it's fun. Play expands our mind as we explore the joy of things and places. It's as simple as that. As we know and research shows, play is how infants and toddlers learn about their world. It provides children with the opportunities to learn about relationships, language, math, science, problem-solving, their bodies, just to name a few.

Let's look a little bit more closely at three areas of development that play contributes to. First, play builds relationships, and that could be relationships with the caregiver through that back-and-forth interaction or serve-and-return interactions that support brain development and building that brain architecture like you just talked about, Mike. It also, play, builds relationships between peers. When infants and toddlers have many opportunities to play together, they begin to form early friendships.

Play is also the foundation for social skills because children get to practice what they see the adults around them do and practice new skills like language and communication or waiting and taking turns, which is a big thing in toddlerhood. Play is also the foundation for executive function skills and developing skills like impulse control, problem-solving, working memory, and flexible thinking. Of course, these are just to name a few. We hope that you will check out your Viewer's Guide to read more about some of the fascinating research that connects directly to our everyday learning environment experiences and how play is vital for healthy development.

Now that we have this larger view of play and how it plays the foundation of many, many, many important pieces of child development, let's take a closer look at what we mean when we say playful learning. In the *Developmentally Appropriate Practice, or DAP, in Early Childhood Programs*, the fourth edition, playful learning is defined as, "a learning context in which children learn content while playing together freely or free or direct self-directed play with teacher guidance, like guided play, or in a structured game." This definition has come from years of research done by Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Golinkoff and many of the other members of their research team. Let's dive a little deeper into these three types of play. The first is free play, which includes child-led play involving exploration, imagination, and investigation, which I saw lots of comments on that in the Q&A when we talked about what is play.

We see in this picture, on the far left, the toddlers are exploring special concepts like sorting, size, color, motor development, just to name a few as they stack and nest those cups together. Then in the middle, we have adults or older children interact with younger children, and it involves allowing the child to lead where that conversation and the play goes. We layer in opportunities for extension of the learning through learning goals. When engaging in guided play, it's really helpful to keep various learning goals in mind as we set up the materials or our environment and activities so that we can support children's learning and their interest.

Let's talk about this picture in the middle. This educator, we can see, has joint attention with the child. Their eyes and their gaze are both looking at the same thing, and the educator has a learning goal in mind when engaging in this activity about color mixing and the exploration that is happening. I also want to comment on this, how joyful it looks. They both have this positive affect that you talked about, Mike. It just looks like a great toddler experience, and everyone is enjoying it.

And then the last piece of playful learning we have is games, or gameplay, or board games, group games, or other rule-based play, and that can help children develop cognitive and socioemotional skills. This type of play is typically seen in preschool years. We know that every child develops in their own unique way. You might work with some toddlers who find a lot of joy in this game play, like we see in this picture where there's a matching or a memory game. Let's hear from you.

We want to hear from you, again, what comes to mind when you think of guided play? Go ahead and type in the purple Q&A widget. Maybe you're thinking about a specific moment where you engaged in guided play. We want to hear about that. Maybe you think about specific teaching practices that come up. We want to hear about that too, anything that comes to your mind when you think of guided play. As we wait, Mike, what do you think of when you think of guided play.

Mike: I'm going to follow what's happening in the chat. I'm going to just say what people have been saying. That's following the child's lead. It's pretty easy and simple one. But it can never get old. It never gets old. It's something that I love doing all the time. I think another one for me

is probably interactions. Just genuine and that's where that really encapsulated, genuine interactions with the child, with the environments. What about you, Becky?

Becky: I'm looking at the chat, and I saw open-ended questions. Connections also came up in the Q&A, and that really resonates with me about that relationship building. It always comes down to relationships. Let's see. A lot of following the child's lead, sharing thoughts. Intentionally planning that's another one that came in. I'm just going to scroll down back. They were coming in so quickly. We love it. We love that thoughts [inaudible]. Letting the child choose what they want to play with, providing opportunities, scaffolding.

Mike: You know, my favorite part about all of this engagement is that we can learn from each other. It's not just say, "oh, here's what we think." I'm learning so much from a lot of people in New Jersey, New Mexico, all these other places. Keep it coming, everyone.

Becky: Yes, thank you so much.

Mike: Guided play is when the educator follows the child's leads and supports the child's exploration through props and interactions that really scaffold a child's interest in learning. The educator is really going to note, because we are reflective practitioners, what the child is interested in or is playing with. Then they're going to add in a specific learning goal that matches the child's natural interest and curiosity, while also supporting them and taking their learning to the next level. Responding to children's interest in a curious, open, genuine, playful way supports children to further develop their questions and their curiosities. It offers a deeper exploration, engagement, and learning opportunity.

Even by just looking at this photo on our screen, we can see here that the educator has probably noticed that the toddler has been interested in block play, and who isn't? I'm still interested in block play. The learning goals for this child that emerges naturally here are fine motor skills, stacking, which are all connected to our Early Learning Outcomes Frameworks, ELOF for short, perceptual motor and physical development domain. And you know what, Becky?

As I continue just to look at this photo on the screen, I really can't help but wonder what else is this child curious to know about? What materials might the educator provide to further notice this curiosity? Luckily, I know what's coming up in the next few slides and [inaudible] answers to my wonderings as we round out the section on guided play and then march forward to our teacher toolbox segment, where we discuss more about intentional environment to support children's lead in a little bit.

Like I said, to help round out this section on guided play, we're going to take a quick look at what guided play looks like in action. As you are watching the video, type in using the purple Q&A widget how you see the educator following the child's interest and curiosity in guiding the infant's play. That was a mouthful. I'm going to say that again. As you're watching the video, type into the purple Q&A widget, how are you noticing? What are you noticing? What are you

seeing the educator do as they follow the child's interest and curiosity and guiding the infant's play?

[Video begins]

Teacher: Yeah. We don't have to just eat our hands. Yeah, we can taste other things like our car wheels because your wheels are still moving. That one is softer, isn't it? That one is really not for chewing. Yeah, you like those wheels? Those wheels are bigger than these wheels too. I think they're helping your teeth more.

[Video ends]

Mike: You can definitely see a lot of things are coming into the chat: eye level, leans into the engagement, brought attention to the wheels and textures. Let's see, am I missing any? Asking questions, lots of open-ended questions. Did I miss anything, Becky? Then you can take it away.

Becky: Getting on the floor, noticing what the child was noticing, describing words, verbalizing observations, expanding with the second vehicle, noticing that the child was interested, and then expanding on the second vehicle, talking about the wheels and the different sizes. I really enjoy that video. Wonderful, talking about the importance of mouthing toys and all the things that you can learn. Let's jump into our next segment. Please continue to put in your responses in the Q&A. We love the engagement, and we're going to take a moment to think back to the Framework for Effective Practice.

The visual of the Framework for Effective Practice is in your Viewer's Guide, where we have parents and families at the heart and at the center of the Framework. This is what we want to do. We want to center families, and we want to discuss ways to ensure that we are keeping families at the center and heart of our work. It's really important that we remember parents and family members are a child's first teacher and they shape a child's growth and development. It's important to build relationships and partners with partnerships with families from the very beginning. These are things that you already know; you're probably already doing, and I think it's always nice to have a refresher.

It can be helpful to remember and honor that families are, again, the first and most important teacher of their children. They are our partners with a critical role in their child's and family's development. They're experts about their child and their family, and they are valuable, important contributors. Among many reasons, this is why it's important to create and maintain open lines of communication and a welcoming learning environment that invites families in. When we invite families into the environment, we can find out things like their values around play or what their child has been engaging in. What has been bringing their family joy? What has been bringing their child joy? And support that continuity between home and program.

One of the ways that we can honor families as experts and learn about play and joy that could be happening at home is through our daily sheets. When we think about creating a daily sheet, we can intentionally create and include questions that help to inform your care and education

practices and again, support that home-to-program continuity. In addition to questions about eating, sleeping, and diapering, you might add questions that, again, will support you in informing your care and education practice and help and support you in learning more about the family and about the children. It's also helpful to include a blank space for families so that they can share any other important information, like what type of play their child has been engaging in, what kind of explorations have they been doing?

This space can also be used for educators to write a note about the child's day, outside of eating, sleeping, and diapering. It could be specifically about what the child explored that day. What brought them joy that day? What did they play with? Or who did they engage with that day? This back-and-forth communication offered through the daily sheet can help deepen our relationship with the family, as you both share observations about the child and go beyond the daily care routines. I want to share this one story about daily sheets. When I worked in an infant group care setting, I once wrote a note home on the daily sheet about how a child, how an infant was so visibly excited when we read *Goodnight Moon*.

He was sitting in my lap, and we had the book on our laps, and he was patting the pages, and he was kicking his feet. I wrote a quick note about that on the daily sheet. A few weeks later, mom came to drop off, and she said, "you know, I don't know who wrote that note about *Goodnight Moon* the other week, but I cried, and we put it up on the fridge because that's the book we read every night before bed." I think that was a really joyful and powerful moment for mom to get this glimpse into their child's day, and I'm so glad she shared that with me because it was a really powerful enjoyment and joyful moment for me, seeing how impactful sharing such a small moment in the day was to this family.

Mike: I love that. Thank you for sharing. Super impactful. One of my favorite R&B groups, Dru Hill once said, "never make a promise you can't keep." Like I mentioned earlier today, it is time for our new segment, Teacher Toolbox. Our Teacher Toolbox is full of practical strategies to support teachers with ease and joyful learning. Joyful learning, joyful teaching, I mean, the list can go on and on and on. Our Teacher Toolbox also includes strategies to support our roles as researchers and tinkerers. I know that's a really tough word for me to say. I've been practicing in the mirror all day, tinkerers. When we say teachers, as researchers, we mean the role of the teacher as being present or in the moment.

As researchers, we are observing what's happening to really understand where to go next, to form our teaching practices, and support the child's development and engagement. Now, when we say my favorite word tinkerer, we mean the play and exploration of teaching and learning. We focus on the process and make small shifts in our practice to better understand the learning styles and needs of individual children and the learning community. We'll be discussing all of these more and more in depth as we go along in our next infant teacher, toddler Teacher Time episodes and throughout the year. Make sure you check out all the resources in the Viewer's Guide to really help build your toolbox.

Let's see what's happening in our toolbox today. One way we can tap into the joy and wonder of teaching is through following the child's lead. What does this mean to follow a child's lead? What does it require? Following the child's lead involves being present, involves being aware of what is happening. Notice what the child is curious about, what they are exploring and playing with. Being in the moment, pausing, and joining the child in their joy and wonder of exploring their surroundings, is such a powerful teaching tool. It involves ongoing observation, thoughtful and careful planning, and reflection on children's behaviors and learning.

When we follow the child's lead, we can then build on their interests by providing play materials, learning opportunities, and really further information that extends children's thinking and learning. Following the child's lead, once again, takes a great deal of flexibility. We can adjust our plans to meet and to match that child's joy, their wonderings, their ideas, and their interests. This really means listening carefully to infants and toddlers, to being responsive to the cues about what they are motivated to do and play with.

You may be wondering how do, Mike, like how you listen to a young infant before they're verbal? Infants communicate to us with their body language, like showing interest by gazing at something, like we see right here in this photo. They're letting us know that they're done with a bottle by maybe turning their head away. They're reaching for a toy that they want to explore with. Let's watch what it can look like to follow a child's lead. As you're watching the video, type into the purple Q&A what ways you see the educator following the child's lead in their play with water.

[Video begins]

[Speaking in Spanish]

Teacher: Quickly, quickly. More water. More water. In the cup. Quickly, lots of water. Aaron, you have two cups, two cups full of water. One two.

Aaron: One, two.

Teacher: And they have water. What are you going to do with the cups? Are you going to fill this up? Whoa. That's a lot of water.

Aaron: Water.

Teacher: Water. You filled your cup with water again. More water, more water, more water.

Aaron: Water

Teacher: Are you going to use the other cup? To fill it up? Hi, Dylan. Are you going to play here? No? Ok. Your cup fell.

Aaron: Water

Teacher: Water

[Video ends]

Mike: Love it. You can really see it even if you don't speak Spanish, you can see just through their interactions, through their body language, just to join the excitement I'm seeing in the chat that people are beating me to, right, the excitement and tone.

Even when she, the educator, was going, [Speaking in Spanish] "ah, dos vasos de agua, sillena mucha agua," describing things that are happening, secay el vaso, things like that, which are really super helpful and really following that child's lead and continuing the education. That really gets to the naming and narrating what the child was doing and then, the educator repeating and expanding on what the toddler was saying. You can hear them say over and over again, [Speaking in Spanish] "agua, agua, mas agua, sillena mucha agua, otra vez de agua," things of that. What are you? What are you noticing in the chat, Becky?

Becky: A comment about connecting the experience to mathematical thinking, so volume, and number of cups, the amount of water, again, repeating and adding language, counting, participating in the activity with the child. Yes, using the child's home language, leaving time for the child to communicate, so having that pause or that tarry time where we give a moment to let the child take in what we said and then decide how they're going to respond. Then this other comment, which I always noticed, too, was that the second child who came up to the water table decided not to join, and the teacher said, "OK," and that was that. That she followed that child's lead as well, that he was not interested in playing in the water.

Mike: The educator really following the child's interest in playing with the water by sticking with what they're focusing on. I just love that. I think it's time for us to move to our next slide.

Becky: Thanks so much, Mike. Let's think about when we are setting up an environment when we're setting up our space for joy and engagement. We want to think about not only joy and engagement for the child but for ourselves as well as the educators. Setting up an environment that reflects the learning community can provide ample opportunities for exploration, interaction, and joyful experiences. When we are curious and engaged in the environment ourselves, we are more likely to respond and interact with children in ways that can extend the learning and children's interest. Having that moment of like, "oh my gosh, I'm going to put out these water bottles on the light table with some clothespins, and I cannot wait to see what happens!" having that joy and that curiosity ourselves.

When we can view ourselves as a teacher, as a researcher, we are using intentional observations of the children's play to inform our teaching practice. We are noticing what's happening and using this to inform. Using this as information and evidence to show us where we might go next in setting up the environment to extend the learning. Like researchers, we collect data by taking notes of what the child is playing with, their interactions, their words, their interests, and then we use that information to select or switch out or set up materials in

the environment that can support infants and toddlers in deepening their learning through play.

When we are present and aware and intentionally noticing, in these moments, teaching can become somewhat of an opportunity to return to that very moment in front of us and experience the materials and their surroundings with a childlike curiosity and joy. Following the child's lead, we experience joy through noticing what is happening in the here and now and becoming genuinely curious about where we could go next to support the adventure of learning.

When we're thinking about setting up the environment, open-ended materials like the water bottles and the clothespins and the containers we see in this picture allow for children to engage with them in their own unique ways. They can be used in so many different ways there is and support a variety of learning and exploration. I think about, in this setup, a non-mobile infant might bang or roll the plastic bottles or mouth on the plastic bottles, or an infant who's learning to pull up might pull themselves up on that low light table to see what up there?

Those materials up there could give them some motivation to get over to that light table. Or if we think about a toddler who is walking. They go through a phase where they're all about transporting things from one space of the room to the other space of the room. Maybe they're going to practice carrying those water bottles around, or what does it feel like when I put a bunch of clothespins inside this water bottle and then carry it around? Lots and lots of things, lots and lots of things, that can happen from open-ended materials. Let's watch a video of one toddler educator explain how she set up an environment based on the child's interests in a group care setting.

[Video begins]

Teacher: I watch the children for a while. And then I just decide to incorporate what their interests were into the rest of the classroom. Did you see this? I put out a Keurig carousel that would normally hold the Keurig cups as more of an inserting tool. Last week, we were all about inserting. Now it's in and out now that they have the ability to remove the object. It's not just inserting. We've moved to that next step. I did the Keurig carousel in a variety of different size curlers. What are you going to do with the curlers? I want them to problem solve.

I want them to figure out this doesn't fit. Well, what can fit? Yesterday, in fact, I took a picture with my iPad because we do document everything for our journeys of discovery. And one child had put a paint stir stick in their Keurig carousel while another one was putting the curler while another one was putting one of those plastic tubes. And they were all working together with all different objects. It was my validation that, yes, they are into this. This is engaging. I need to continue this.

[Video ends]

Becky: One of the things I really appreciate about this video and this interview with a toddler teacher is that it talked about how they watched the children for a while before setting up the environment. They took that time to be a teacher, as a researcher, to collect that data that they could inform their practice for where to go next and truly set up the environment based on what the child was interested in.

Another thing that I thought was really interesting and so important to think about when we're setting up an environment for infants and toddlers is their — educator noticed the progression of the child's skills that it went from putting the materials into objects to putting the materials in and then taking them out. We all know there's so much skill progression in those first three years of life; you constantly have to be thinking about, okay, how am I adapting these materials and environment to fit their needs now? How are they using the materials differently? And how am I supporting them? Let's see, we were just looking at the Q&A, Mike, she knows the child's development and her group. It came through that she knows these children.

Mike: Give children opportunities to explore so it wasn't teacher directed. It was going to put these out, and I'm going to see what they do, and I'm going to follow their lead.

Becky: Thank you so much. I'm going to pass it back to you, Mike.

Mike: Yay, my turn. Another important piece of guided play is providing individualized attention. The key to this, once again, is observing the child, being present with them in their play, and then commenting on what you see is happening. It's super important to be specific, acknowledging what the child is doing, and saying lets them know that they see and you hear them, that they're important, that their play is important.

We can name and acknowledge children's play, for example. You found a bug in the paper, or you picked up a red beetle with the tongs. Be mindful of tone of voice and body language as well. Let's see how this one teacher, this one educator in this video provides individualized attention to an infant. If you see it, type it into our chat using the purple Q&A widget.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Oh, look, there's more over there. What is it? You see the mermaid and the fish? You're rocking and rolling? Yeah, yeah. Do you see her [inaudible]? You have Llama Llama Red Pajama. Goodness, you getting tired? Are you getting tired? You're working so hard up there on your knees, working so hard. You've been working so hard up there on your knees.

[Video ends]

Mike: I think my favorite comment is the educator is saying you are rocking and rolling, and then what's key there is that they pause, and then the infant responded to them. Beautiful. Type into the purple Q&A widget what's coming up for you. I'm seeing narrating the child's actions, and repeating the child's noises, gives direct eye contact, and directly talking to the child, yes.

Becky: I also see a question in here about can we get a copy of these videos? All of the videos will be posted in the Teacher Time community on MyPeers. So later this evening or afternoon, depending on where you are at in the United States, I am going to post the videos on MyPeers.

Mike: As you do that, you can go back and be like, "yeah, that educator did turn to the other child and acknowledge them in the book that they're looking at." Or you can look at the other things that you might have noticed or at least I noticed is that the educator turned back to the infant and said, "you're working so hard to get up there on your knees."

Becky: It's time for our segment Small Change, Big Impact. This is where we share how small adjustments to the way that we set up our learning environment, modify our curriculum, or engage with children can make a huge difference or a big difference in a child's learning. We know that children vary in their learning characteristics and how they engage with the people and materials in their learning environments. These small changes, also known as curriculum modifications, are made based on the individual needs of a child to help promote their engagement and participation.

We know that when children are more engaged, they have more opportunities to learn. Some children might need more highly individualized teaching to help them fully participate and engage, such as embedded teaching or intensive individualized teaching. Making curriculum modifications based on a child's individual learning needs can be a really great place to start to support engagement. Let's see one example of what a curriculum modification might look like in a learning environment with infants. This educator used curriculum modifications based on a child's preference and provided adult support.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Can you turn the spheres? You want to turn with this hand too? There. That might be easier. That might be easier. Now you're getting it to move. You figured it out. Whoa is that really far down?

[Video ends]

Becky: Some of the comments that came into the chat were, you know, I love how she models the skills and how patient and calm she is. We saw during this interaction that the educator first noticed that the child was interested in turning the spheres. Then she supported the child by trying to turn the spheres for them and then helped the infant grasp the toy with both hands. There's where that adult support came in. With a little bit of time, if you notice, the video kind of jumped a little bit.

After a little bit of time, we saw that she stopped providing that adult support, and the infant started batting the spheres on his own. This is a really important thing to remember when we're providing adult support as a curriculum modification: we need to find that sweet spot where we offer just the right amount of help to support the child with engagement and then

slowly minimize the support that we provide as a curriculum modification. That's one of the comments that came in from the Q&A not over-supporting immediately but waiting and seeing.

Mike: Now it is time for our segment, the BookCASE. The BookCASE is where we highlight books relating to our episode's theme. I'm so excited to hear about the books this month from our Teacher Time librarian, Emily Small.

[Video begins]

Becky: Hi and welcome to our BookCASE segment. I am so excited to be here today with our Teacher Time librarian, Emily Small.

Emily Small: Hello.

Becky: This month, Emily has picked out a number of infant and toddler books for us on play and joyful learning and teaching. You can see all these wonderful books right here behind us, as well as in your Viewer's Guide. If you are new to Teacher Time, or this is the first season you joined us, we use the CASE to help us intentionally choose and intentionally use books in the learning environment. CASE is an acronym.

C stands for connection to the ELOF where we make connections to the Early Learning Outcomes Framework and the content in the book. A is for advanced vocabulary, how we can use the book to introduce novel words and provide child-friendly definitions. Then there's S for supporting engagement and ways that we can support children and being active participants during the reading of the book. E, extending the learning, where we plan learning beyond the book, and we create activities or experiences that help children make connections to the content.

Emily: Today, we're going to make a CASE for *My Heart Fills with Happiness* by Monique Gray Smith, and it's illustrated by Julie Flett. This book is also available in Spanish, so take a look for it in Spanish. As you mentioned, we're talking about joy, good relationships, playful learning. This is connecting to the ELOF domain of social-emotional development. For some advanced vocabulary, this one is full of advanced vocabulary. We have words like drum, sing, baking, barefoot, just to give a few examples. But you can also add vocabulary to a book, such as descriptive words. For instance, if you're on this page, you can talk about what you see, and we see them using a brown guitar. That's a way to add some advanced vocabulary as you're reading.

Then, for supporting engagement, a similar thing. Talk about what you see the children noticing on the page as you're reading together. Julie's illustrations are absolutely beautiful. Spend some time on them just looking at them slowly. Ask them open-ended questions such as, "What is a song you like to sing?" is another great way to bring in some supporting their engagement.

For extending their learning, call out specific things you see children enjoying throughout the day. For instance, Jeremiah, I see that you love to play with Play-Doh, and that fills your heart

with happiness would be one example of a way to do that. Encourage families to bring in pictures of the things they enjoy doing together as a family, post them up in the classroom, maybe make a little photo book, and encourage children to look through them. Talk about what kids are seeing in those photos, both for children's - their own photos and then the photos of their friends and classmates. So just a little bit of a CASE for "My Heart Fills with Happiness."

[Video ends]

Becky: Thank you so much, Emily, and we can't wait to see you next month. Thanks.

Mike: Well, my heart is happy just watching that. I can't wait to check out all of those books. That's more in your resource guide. I'm really looking forward to heading to my local library. See if those books are available. Remember to check out your Viewer's Guide once again for complete book lists for infants and for toddlers. Emily has made the case for all the books she has shared with us, so make sure you check it out. Let's turn our attention to you. This month got to meet with preschool Teacher Time host, Dr. Gail Joseph, and let's hear about the tip that she has to share with us.

[Video begins]

Becky: Now it's time for All About You segment, and I'm so excited to be here today with a special guest.

Gail Joseph: I'm Gail Joseph, and I'm so happy to be here with you. Thanks for inviting me.

Becky: Our All About You segment focuses on caregivers, and we know we do our best caregiving when we feel well, ourselves. When we can engage in self-care practices, we can build more social-emotional capacity in ourselves to be present with the infants and toddlers we care for, and we can experience that joy of teaching and learning.

Gail: Absolutely. I'm so happy to be here today to just provide one little tip that might help people out with taking care of themselves and reducing some stress and increasing some more positivity in their life. I brought a prop with me to get excited, you know, probably in every early learning setting that we're in, every space. That is right now it looks like a toilet paper tube, but this is going to be my telescope because today's tip is called Moving Your Telescope. This is what it's about. It's pretty simple. But sometimes when there's a change, when something happens, all we do is focus on the negative part of that change. You're nodding.

Becky: Yeah.

Gail: Like this happens. In fact, on my way here today, they said the road is blocked. You're going to have to park really far away and for a moment, all I can think about is, "oh, my gosh, I'm going to park far away." I've got to carry a lot of things. I was just focused on it negative. But this is what happens with Move Your Telescope. Move Your Telescope is when you're finding yourself just focused singularly on the negative thing that's happening that it's a signal to you to move your telescope and see if there's something positive that you can find in that situation.

For me, coming in, it was, all right, I'll get some steps in. That's fine. It's a little inconvenient, but I'm going to get my steps in.

Once I started to recognize and move my telescope to something a little bit more positive, I started to feel better about the situation. I started to feel better when I came in here today. That's the practical strategy. It's just when you start to focus on something too negative, and you feel yourself kind of spiraling in, closing in on that negative, is to move your telescope. It's a really great strategy to share with others because they can then say to you, "hey, move your telescope a little bit." Or I have a friend that says, "telescope up!" when I start to get a little bit too negative. That's it.

Becky: I love that so much. Thank you, Gail.

Gail: Yeah, absolutely.

[Video ends]

Becky: Wow, thank you so much for joining us today, and that's all we have time for today. We have so enjoyed it. Thank you again for joining us, and we hope that you will join us next month with our next episode. Teacher Time Host Dr. Gail Joseph and Sami Soleimani will be here, November 2, and they'll be presenting on Playful Learning and Joyful Teaching in Preschool.

Mike: Thank you so much, everyone. It was a pleasure, and we can't wait to see you next time.