Children Learn to Learn Through Play—
Promoting Creative, Confident and Capable Learners

Teaching young children requires creativity, initiative, confidence and an inquisitive nature. It also requires teachers to be reflective and inventive! Project Construct emphasizes the importance of these dispositions toward learning. Dispositions are not skills but are tendencies to respond to learning opportunities. Dispositions toward curiosity, initiative, confidence, and inventiveness facilitate children’s construction of knowledge and values while a reflective disposition helps children integrate new constructs with their prior knowledge. (DESE, 2013) Children who approach learning tasks or novel situations with these positive approaches to learning are better able to regulate their learning experiences and are more quickly able to acquire general knowledge and cognitive skills. (Conn-Powers, 2006, 2)

Teachers can model and intentionally introduce opportunities for acquiring these dispositions through children’s play. Since children are generally more relaxed and feel more secure while engaged in play, they will usually sustain their play for longer periods of time and engage in more complex interactions with peers. These interactions can be extended by teachers modeling questions and scaffolding more complex thinking. For example: As a small group of boys are racing cars down a low ramp some are becoming frustrated that a few of the cars are stopping before they get to the finish line. As a teacher I can offer my thoughts such as “I wonder what we could do to make the cars go faster down the ramp?” I can support their suggestions and offer materials and ideas to support their thinking.

We could also organize ways to collect data related to their successes and failures. We could measure how far the cars went with each try. Excitement about results promotes persistence and builds confidence. Reflecting on what they have learned from the experiences allows children to see themselves as competent learners.

Seeking out opportunities for children to think more deeply related to their interests fosters creativity, initiative, and confidence. Children engaged in play where they have control over their own learning promotes desire, motivation and mastery. (Hurwitz 2009).

Can you imagine the future for a child with no creativity, initiative or confidence?

Bibliography:
Welcome to Lambie’s Library!
Sharing books with children builds rich vocabulary, high level language skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, as well as, great imaginations! We are sharing our wonderings and our knowledge about the world with each other.

Sticks
By Diane Alber
ISBN: 978-1-7329346-1-0
We often hear children say I can't! This book offers children opportunities to see possibilities. The book also fosters opportunities to develop persistence and creativity.

Spoon
By Amy Krouse Rosenthal
ISBN: 978-0-545-44894-9
Lighthearted story about self-acceptance and considering the perspective of others. Filled with humor and fun vocabulary you will want to share with your children such as “spooning”.

Professional Resources:

Upcoming Project Construct Training
Foundations of Project Construct for Early Childhood Educators:
At St. Charles Community College CDC:
Module 1 The Young Child & The Learning Environment—March 21 & April 25, 2020
Module 3 Young Children’s Mathematical & Scientific Thinking—March 28, 2020

In Columbia, MO, at West Middle School:
Module 1 The Young Child & The Learning Environment—July 9-10, 2020
Module 2 Early Literacy & The Expressive Arts—July 21-22, 2020
Module 3 Young Children’s Mathematical & Scientific Thinking—July 23, 2020

Foundations of Project Construct for Educators of Infants and Toddlers:
At St. Charles Community College CDC: April 4 and May 9, 2020

Check our website for additional training opportunities: www.projectconstruct.org