

Fostering Essential Dispositions in Young Children



Below are examples of strategies that promote development of the Essential Dispositions from the *CT Early Learning and Development Standards*:

Creativity

- Whenever possible, honor children's unique ideas; don't require conformity
- Provide open-ended play opportunities and props
- Support children in following through on own ideas
- Model doing new and different things with common objects
- Encourage children to develop different uses for familiar objects
- Provide blank paper and mixed media for art
- Have children brainstorm lists of needed supplies or materials for a project
- Provide materials for children to create own props for dramatic play
- Sing a familiar song, allow children to share ideas for new lyrics
- Invite children to create their own ending to a story

Inquiry

- Follow children's lead, be responsive to their questions
- Provide opportunities for children to explore
- Give access to highly engaging materials that support investigation
- Don't interrupt an engaged child
- Encourage children to ask questions
- Don't always provide the answers, explore ideas with children
- Provide blocks of time for play that are sufficient to allow children to make choices and explore deeply
- Engage in research with children – learn something new together

Flexibility

- Provide a consistent daily schedule and be available as a base of support so children can be comfortable with variation
- Add novelty and complexity to familiar routines and activities over time
- Rotate some materials while maintaining some familiar and popular materials
- Plan changes in the daily schedule once a child is comfortable, providing prior warning and support
- Follow the child's lead, model flexibility and capitalize on teachable moments
- Allow children to combine unrelated materials in play
- Allow children to use materials in unusual ways
- Model calm approaches to unexpected events and changes
- Structure opportunities for involved dramatic play with peers

Critical Thinking

- Provide hands-on, meaningful experiences that promote investigation and probing questions
- Provide opportunities to explore cause-and-effect, varying actions to achieve different results
- Talk about what you are doing and describe children's actions
- Help children make connections between new ideas and own experiences
- Build upon prior knowledge
- Identify children's current understandings and address misconceptions
- Engage children in solving real-life problems
- Talk about what you are thinking
- Ask children to describe their thinking ("Why do you think so?")
- Expose children to various viewpoints (e.g., read multiple versions of stories)
- Use KWL charts and create webs with children
- Use higher-order thinking framework (e.g., Bloom's Taxonomy or Webb's Depth of Knowledge) when planning experiences

Planning and Reflection

- Describe routines and what is going to happen next
- Take photos/videos of children's work throughout the day then view and discuss
- Have children plan for where they are going to play each day (e.g., choice boards)
- Have children draw or sketch what they plan to do
- Allow structures to remain intact (e.g., blocks) and for children to return and add to them the next day
- Engage children in long-term projects and discuss the process throughout the experience
- Have children share their ideas, creations, and learning with peers
- Meet as a group and review learning at the end of the day
- Model – talk about your plans and reflect aloud
- Discuss mistakes or accidents that happen as opportunities for learning

Social Learning

- Encourage relationships as a context for all learning (adult-child and peer to peer)
- Provide opportunities for children to observe the actions of others
- Encourage peer-to-peer interactions and conversations
- Partner children to complete tasks
- Encourage children to help each other and learn together
- Structure mealtimes as social opportunities
- Plan for cooperative learning in small groups
- Provide materials that support cooperative games – both indoors and outdoors
- Use a Think-Pair-Share strategy, having children share ideas with each other and then a larger group

This document was developed to accompany a [video](#).