



Transcript for the Video: ***Investigating Babies***

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Kaitlin Thibodeau, Preschool Teacher Associate: I wanted to do something new that we hadn't done before, so I was thinking, what are our children really interested in? I watched how they played, and what I noticed was that they enjoyed taking care of babies and each other.

Child 1: She's got a boo-boo.

Child 2: Do you want me to pull the splinter out of her finger?

Kaitlin Thibodeau: We knew a lot of the families had babies at home, and a lot of them were expecting babies.

Heather Standish, Preschool Teacher: A lot of the children had a lot of background knowledge. There was some interest, even with children who might not have had experience with babies. We first did a lot of research on which books might be appropriate for children that give enough information but don't over-give information. We interviewed each of the families so that we could really include all of the family's values.

Betsy Chieffo, Parent: When she let me know they were doing the investigation, I was still pregnant, and I thought it sounded like, really, a good thing. My son, you know, he had a lot of questions about babies. He was wondering how babies eat, when babies start talking. I think he kind of thought that babies were born and started talking not long after.

Caring for Babies (1:31)

Kaitlin Thibodeau: We initiated the investigation with "Peter's Chair" by Ezra Jack Keats. We were able to look at the different things that the family was getting for the baby. So we were able to talk about the things that a baby needs.

Heather Standish: We really talked about babies' needs, how to take care of a baby. So we had a water table with baby shampoo. And we cleared off another table that they were able to use to dry the babies.

Child: She's wet.

Heather: She's wet.

Child: Yeah. We need to dry her.

Heather Standish: And get the babies dressed as well.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: They're learning how to care for a baby, and they're also learning hygiene for a baby.

Heather Standish: It really allowed them to use empathy and to just be careful. They were being gentle. And then it went all the way to dramatic play, when they dressed them and got them ready.

Heather: Okay. Nice, warm feet now.

Child: Warm feet.

Learning About Growing (2:27)

Kaitlin Thibodeau: A big thing Heather and I talked about before we started babies was that this would be a great investigation to show them how they themselves grow. A lot of teachers will, you know, do a plant, and they'll do the seed and how it grows, but to see that they could see they themselves grew, and that they, you know, didn't used to be able to pick up a pencil, and now they can write their name. Just to show them that they were growing and that living things grow, and they are a living thing.

Heather Standish: We brought in the baby pictures so we could talk a little bit about what babies look like, but also to get the families talking with their children at home about what they were like as a baby. And then we ended up making a book, which had a baby picture and describing what you were like as a baby and then what you are like now that you're older.

Diaper Experiences (3:18)

Heather Standish: When we did our diaper experiments, we talked a lot about absorbency and how much the diapers could hold. One of the first experiences we had with the diapers was to open it up and just see what was inside.

Heather: I'm going to bring it around, and yes, you can feel it. Do you want to feel what's inside? And I want you to think about what that makes you think of.

Child: Can we smell it?

Heather: You could smell it. You're thinking like a scientist.

Heather Standish: And we put it in the sensory table with some dye.

Heather: You're doing it on the outside, too.

Child: I do it right here?

Heather: What's happening? Is it absorbing? Is it going inside?

Child: No.

Heather: No? What if we do it on the inside of the diaper?

Heather Standish: The second part of the experiment was to see just how much could a diaper hold.

Heather: Alright, Jackson's going to put in the first scoop.

Heather Standish: Each child had a turn to add a cup. They estimated beforehand how much cups did they think it would hold, and you could see some of the children's number sense, if they understood quantity.

Heather: What do you think, friends? Is it still holding all of that water?

Child: No.

Heather: What's happening?

Child: It's dripping out.

Heather: It's dripping out, so I don't think we can fit any more. Let's check how many cups we put in.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: And they, we know, saw that a diaper can hold a lot more than they thought.

Heather Standish: Later on in small groups, they each had a different diaper. They made their own estimates of how much each one could hold. And finally, they came back to the whole group and shared which one held the most.

Exploring Baby Food (4:45)

Heather: Lily, you weren't here yesterday. What do you think babies eat?

Child 1: Ummm... goldfish.

Heather: Goldfish? Do you think babies eat goldfish?

Child 2: No, they don't eat goldfish!

Heather: What if they get a little bit bigger? Do you think? At what age can you start eating goldfish?

Child 2: One.

Heather: Maybe one years old?

Kaitlin Thibodeau: The children tasted five different types of baby food.

Heather Standish: I didn't tell them what it was. We put it on little plates, and I just marked a number on each paper plate.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: A lot of them enjoyed guessing.

Kaitlin: What vegetable is orange?

Child: Or... Carrot?

Heather Standish: So they talked about the properties; they talked about what flavors they tasted.

Child: This one tastes like banana yogurt.

Heather Standish: Whether they liked it, whether they thought it baby would like it.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: A lot of the children did not want to try the baby food, but some of the friends did try, and they were very, very excited.

Child: Mmm!

Heather Standish: Some of the children were interested in reusing the baby jars to make their own baby food. We listed some ingredients we might use. They mashed it up; we blended it; and most of the children tried it. Our first batch didn't come out so tasty.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: So we went back to it, and we said, "How can we change the recipe to make it taste better?"

Heather Standish: Most of them chose fruits, so it made it a little bit sweeter.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: We tasted it again, and then it was a success. They loved it.

Child: Pretty good, right?

Designing Baby Toys (6:08)

Heather Standish: One of our biggest key experiences was designing a baby toy, which we had to build some background knowledge with first.

Heather: What do we know about baby toys? What do babies like?

Kaitlin Thibodeau: We talked about what were the characteristics of baby toys?

Child: Toys with squishy.

Heather: Squishy toys.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: And what we did is we explored baby toys.

Child: Oooooo!

Kaitlin Thibodeau: And we had different stations put out of different baby toys, so we had baby puzzles, baby cars, music toys, like rattles and jack-in-the-box.

Child: I'm matching them!

Kaitlin: You are matching them.

Child: I'm matching the colors.

Heather Standish: The second day we also brought in some of our toys that were parallel to those. So they were able to play with those side-by-side and really start to notice those

differences and how a baby might use a toy differently, but that they're learning the same kind of skills.

Kaitlin: How are these cars different from our cars?

Child: They're soft.

Kaitlin: They're soft?

Child: And big.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: After the exploration was done with the toys, we went back to the web, and we talked about different aspects of what a baby toy would have. It led into the key experience of making the baby toy.

Heather Standish: We worked individually with the children during center time in the art center. They each decided what kind of toy they might want to make.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: Each child was able to brainstorm and plan and then execute it. You know a lot of them are colorful; a lot of them made noise.

Heather Standish: We had rattles; we had mobiles; we had xylophones.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: It was just really cool to see it go from a story to exploring to making their own.

Inviting Families to Share Expertise (7:54)

Heather Standish: One of my goals as a teacher is always to engage the families as much as possible. I was actually really excited to get a lot of parents involved, including some dads.

Heather: Take a look at our friend, Niko! What do you see?

Child: He has socks on.

Heather: He has socks on.

Betsy Chieffo: Miss Heather contacted me, and she asked me if I'd be willing to bring the baby in. It seems like preschoolers are very interested in babies. We had their attention, and they seemed to really want to know about Niko and what he was interested in.

Heather: My friends, we asked, "Does Niko play with..." What did we want to know? "Does Niko play with blocks?"

Betsy: Not yet. Niko still is learning how to use his hands, so he can't pick anything up yet.

Noah: And legs.

Betsy Chieffo: They got to see him eat; they got to see him interact. He was awake for a little bit of the time.

Heather Standish: We had one family who does some baby wearing, and so I invited them to come share about how they wear a baby.

Father: You hold the baby, and you put it over your shoulders.

Heather Standish: They came in and showed us, and they were all so excited to see how they wore a child.

Mother: Make a cross over your chest like this, and then you tie it in the front.

Heather Standish: They even had a doll that that child was able to wear with a pretend baby carrier. And then a lot of the children got to try it too, boys and girls.

Kaitlin: What do you see in the mirror?

Child: Holding my baby.

Kaitlin: You're holding your baby.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: Gianna's parents also talked to us about different types of diapers.

Father: Do you know what's different between that kind of diaper and this kind of diaper?

Child: That one's made out of paper, and that one's made out of cloth.

Father: Yes. So when these diapers get dirty, you take them off of the baby, and you put them in the washing machine. And they get all clean, and then you can use them again.

Heather Standish: We had it set up so that each child would have a doll that represented them and that they could put the diaper on the baby.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: It was really awesome for us to have the support of families. Children are definitely more engaged when they see a parent from a child come in and talk about something that is important to them.

Child: Legs.

Heather: Legs. I can't see the legs in the picture.

What We Learned (10:20)

Betsy Chieffo: I liked how a lot of it was interactive with the students. They got to experience all of the different aspects of being around babies. My son, Noah, was able to learn what to expect a little bit with having a baby at home.

Child: And he cannot use his feet and hands. He doesn't know how to control his body yet.

Betsy Chieffo: And then I think it was good because he could compare what he learned in class to what he's seeing at home. He would talk about the different things that he learned and if his brother is doing them or not doing them.

Heather Standish: They became much more self-reflective, especially after talking about what they were like as a baby and what they're like now. They are much more aware of each other's needs.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: They learned how to be empathetic. They learned how to care for somebody else, seeing how things, how little things—like bathing a baby, changing a diaper, feeding a baby—really impacts the baby.

Heather Standish: It definitely affected how they were interacting with each other.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: It wasn't just like we were seeing girls hold them and love them and care for them. We were seeing boys and girls, which I thought was really awesome, too.

Heather: They talked about what they used to think about babies and then what they've learned. They're really engaging in thinking about the past, getting a sense of time.

Child: My mom had me in her tummy, so that was kind of weird.

Kaitlin Thibodeau: They learned that they grew. They used to be a baby, and they used to, you know, drink from a bottle; they used to eat food that was all mashed together. And now they, you know, can use a fork, or they can write their name, or they can run around on the playground. So they learned that they, themselves, grew from a baby to who they are now.

Heather: What kind did you like, Lily?

Heather Standish: If you're doing this investigation, or planning any investigation with your class, really take into account their background knowledge and really follow their interests and their needs. You might want to do one thing, but their interest might be in something else, and it, that happened in our classroom, and it made such a difference in how engaged the children were, how much they were learning, and how excited they were for coming to school every day.