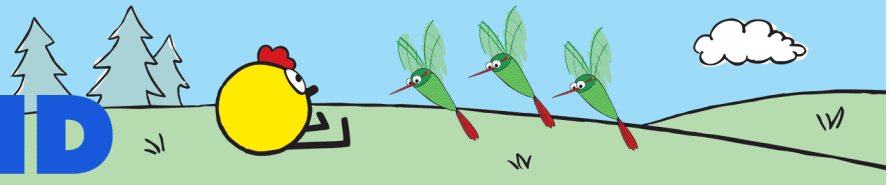




Explore SOUND



Teaching Strategies Individualized Instruction

What Is Individualized Instruction?

- It's a way of teaching that takes into account each child's unique characteristics, including age, developmental stage, interests, and learning styles.
- With an awareness of children's differences, an educator can plan learning centers and activities, offer instructions or explanations, and encourage children to express their ideas and experiences in a way that's effective and appropriate.

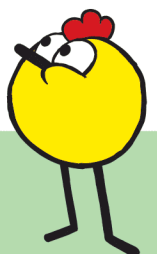
Why is individualized instruction important?

- Responding to children's varied needs, experiences, and interests is critical to teaching.
- Science is well suited to individualized instruction because it offers children the chance to explore in hands-on ways at their own level.
- By carefully observing children, educators can plan a wide variety of activities that address a range of skills and learning goals.
- Recognizing children's unique learning abilities, interests, strengths, and challenges will increase their engagement, help them to think and learn, and make them feel valued and competent. Children who are recognized in this way are more likely to persist in questioning and problem solving.

Teaching Strategy: Planning for Children of Different Ages and Developmental Stages

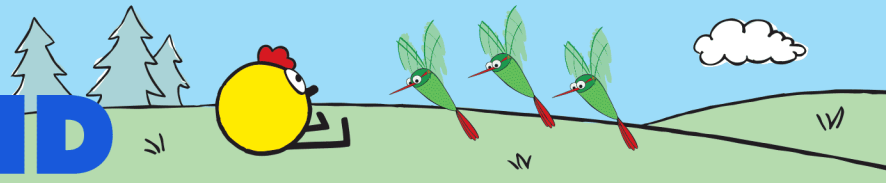
Why is planning for children of different ages and developmental stages an effective teaching strategy?

- In a family child care setting, children's ages often vary greatly. It's not uncommon for an educator to care for a toddler and a five-year-old, and it's a challenge to offer group activities that work for children at widely different developmental stages.
- Even among children of similar ages, not all mature at the same rate. Children who are close in age can be quite different in terms of development. Attention span, prior experience, and interest level will affect their ability to focus.



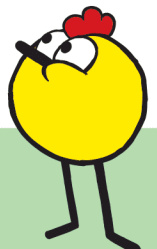
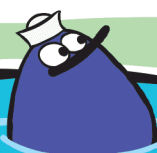


Explore SOUND



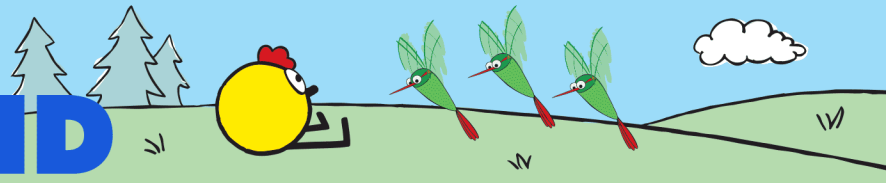
Some ways to take age and development into account:

- **Adjust the materials.** During science explorations, children need to be “hands-on” at whatever stage of motor skills development they’re at.
Example: Stretching a rubber band and strumming it like a guitar is fascinating and fun, but younger children may not have the necessary coordination. Help little ones by stretching rubber bands over other boxes and other objects for them. That way they can also experience the sounds rubber bands make.
- **Explain the same concept in different ways.**
 - For some children, a simple explanation will be sufficient. For other children, you will need to ask many questions to gauge their understanding.
 - Even children who quickly grasped the concept can benefit from hearing different explanations and watching demonstrations.
 - You can encourage peer-to-peer learning—having children explain concepts to each other.
 - The more ways you explore an idea with children, the more likely they will be able to understand and remember it.
- **Offer independence—or more support.**
 - **More independence.** Some children may finish an activity quickly. Have additional materials and extension activities ready.
Example: If a child easily completes an activity about listening to sounds through a tube, you might challenge him to find ways to block the sound. Have him hold a piece of paper, a pillow, and other objects to one end of the tube to see which is most effective at blocking out sound.
 - **More support.** Some children may need more guidance and thrive on the support you give them.
Example: If children are not yet able to create a sound pattern, do it with them several times, repeating *clap-clap, stomp, clap-clap, stomp*. Say, *That's my sound pattern*. Then say, *Clap-clap, what comes next?*
- **Engage the youngest children.** Family child care educators often have an infant or toddler in tow while leading science explorations with preschoolers. There are always creative ways to make it an interesting and fun learning experience for the very little ones.
Example: While older children play “telephone” with cardboard or plastic tubes, let younger children use these tubes any way they wish, occasionally talking to them about how the tubes make sounds: *Oh! Did you hear the loud*





Explore SOUND

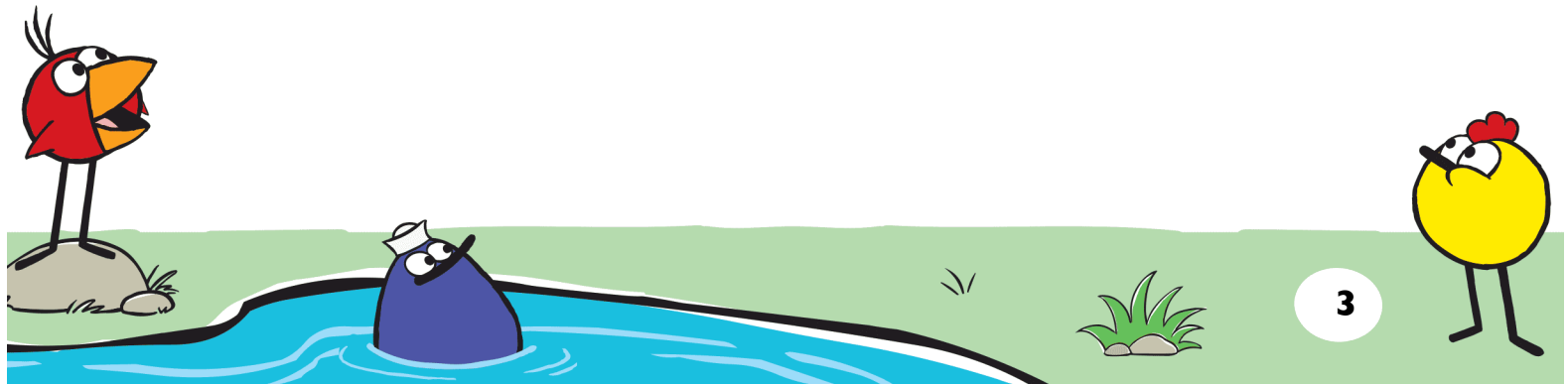


sound that tube made when you hit it against the cardboard box? You made a loud sound! Can you make that sound again?

- **Plan different social groupings.** The way you group children during activities can enhance individualized learning.
 - **Pair children so that an older child mentors a younger one.** Younger children will be inspired to push their abilities when they see older children in action. Older children will develop language skills and social skills (and a sense of pride) as they explain things to a younger partner. They may also learn how to share and compromise.
Example: You might create a sound lab where one child makes a noise using an object or instrument and the other tries to guess which object made the sound.
 - **Working with groups of the same age is also important.** There will be some activities that you'll only want to do with older children and some that will work best with a younger crowd. To ensure that this happens, you might set aside a time each week for same-age peers to collaborate.
 - **Offer whole group activities for mixed ages.** Most science activities easily work for all ages and give children the chance to collaborate. These activities also help children learn from one another, develop patience, and appreciate others' perspectives.
 - **One-on-one attention.** Find opportunities throughout the day to check in with individual children to gain insight into their abilities, strengths, and weaknesses. Connect with students who may be having difficulty with an activity or trouble interacting with other children—your attention can make all the difference.

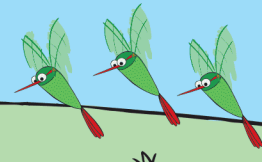
Your Experiences

- What are some of the differences you notice among the children in your program?
- How have you adapted activities to meet the needs of children who are at different levels of development? What have been your greatest successes? What has been a struggle?
- What are some ways you make learning experiences engaging for infants and toddlers?





Explore SOUND



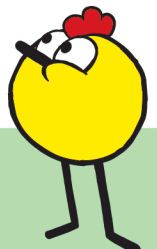
Teaching Strategy: Planning for Children with Different Interests and Learning Styles

How does planning for children with different interests and learning styles benefit your teaching?

- When children are given opportunities to follow their own interests and learn in their own ways, their engagement and sense of personal investment in the learning deepens.
- An educator's awareness of children's passions, motivations, temperament, strengths, and weaknesses can significantly affect how a child learns and grows.

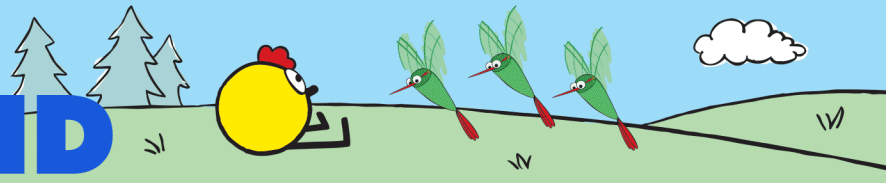
Some ways to address children's different interests and learning styles:

- **Get to know each child.** Engage with children to learn their interests, strengths, and weaknesses. The best way to do this is to observe children in action.
 - **Keep an observation journal** on hand. Dedicate a page to each child in your group. Take notes on what children like, what they already know, and what you hope to teach them more about. Make notes about children who work well together and observe how children play and interact. Use these insights to shape your teaching.
Examples: If you notice that a certain child loves to be outside, you might plan an activity in which the group goes on an outdoor sound hunt and searches for certain sounds in nature. If a child is uninterested in hunting for sounds, suggest that he or she draw a picture of the sounds that the group hears.
- **Identify learning styles.**
 - **Most children have particular styles of learning they respond to best;** they may gravitate toward visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learning. Over time, you will become familiar with whether children prefer to learn by hearing, looking, moving, or a combination of these sensory aptitudes.
 - **Address learning styles** in your instructions by explaining, demonstrating and, if appropriate, letting children try the activity or participate in the demonstration in a hands-on way.
 - **Offering visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences** doesn't just benefit the child who prefers to listen, look, or move. Research shows that the more ways in which an idea is presented, the more children understand and retain the idea.





Explore SOUND



Example: All learning styles can be addressed regardless of the science topic. An auditory learner may enjoy listening to music and identifying the different instruments he or she hears, a kinesthetic learner might enjoy dancing to the music, and a visual learner may enjoy drawing a picture of the feelings music conveys.

- **Offer Choices.** One effective way to address the unique needs and interests of each child in your program is to devote your learning centers to different aspects of learning.

Example: In one center children might explore making soft and loud sounds by banging with different degrees of force on “drums.” In another, they might drop objects onto a hard floor, a metal pan, a rug, and a pillow to see which make soft or loud sounds.

Your Experiences

- What strategies do you have for getting to know individual children in your program? What's an example of an observation about a child that's informed your planning and teaching?
- Are you always able to tell if a child prefers to learn through listening, looking, or moving? What would you say is your own preferred way of learning?
- What are some challenges you have faced when trying to offer many choices to the children in your program?
- What are some unique activities that have come out of children's interests?

Additional Resources

For more information on individualized instruction

There are additional Teaching Strategy PDFs on the PEEP Web site along with instructional videos. These illustrate individualized instruction related to the other PEEP science units: Plants, Water, Shadows, Ramps, and Color.

For more videos and information on other topics

In addition, the Web site offers Teaching Strategies and videos on other professional development topics: Learning Environments, Documentation and Reflection, and Science Talk.

