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ITEM A Making choices and plans

LEVEL A-1 Child indicates a choice by pointing or some other action.

The following strategies will help you support children at level 1 as they express a choice by pointing or using some other gesture or action.

- **At planning and recall times:** At planning time, ask the focus child what he would like to do at work time. At recall time, ask him what he did at work time. Accept and acknowledge his simple gestures. For example, when asked what he would like to do at work time, he might point to the block area. You might respond by saying “Oh, you plan to work with the blocks today. I’ll come see what you’ve decided to do with them after I finish planning with the rest of the children.”
- **At work time:** Watch, listen to, and play alongside the child. Comment on what you see him doing. Give him plenty of time to respond to you with a gesture. For example, he might come up to you in the book area, thrust a book at you, sit in your lap, open the book, and look at the pictures. You might say, “You’ve chosen the book *What Shall We Do With the Boo-Hoo Baby?* Would you like me to read it to you or do you want to look at the pictures first?”
- **At large-group time, choices:** If the child offers a movement idea like jumping and actually does a jumping movement, acknowledge his choice by saying something like “Max has an idea. Let’s try his choice, jumping, for moving to the next verse.”

LEVEL A-2 **Child expresses a choice in one or two words.**

The following strategies will help you support children at level 2 as they express a choice by saying one or two words.

- **At planning time:** Anticipate and acknowledge the focus child's briefly stated plans: "Block area." "Paint." "Puzzles." Acknowledge them and let the child get started right away rather than try to prolong her planning: "Oh, you're going to play in the block area today. I'll come and see what you're doing." "You're going to paint like you did yesterday." "Your plan is to dump out some puzzles and put them back together. I'll stop by to see which ones you're doing!"
- **During work time:** Again, observe and comment on the child's choices. For example, she might hold up a container of toy trains and say, "Trains!" "Oh," you might reply, "You're going to use the trains now." "Uh huh," she replies, "Play" she says, handing you one of the trains. "OK," you might say, "I'll drive this blue engine."
- **At small-group and large-group times, choices:** Support the brief expressions of choice this child makes as she works with materials and participates in activities. For example, if she is painting at small-group time, then pauses, looks around, and says, "Red!" or "Me red!" you can acknowledge her choice by saying something like "You want some red paint now." She will likely act on her choice by reaching for the nearest available red paint. If not, you might offer a couple of strategies for getting red paint: "I see some red paint next to Jody, or you can pump some red paint out of the jug of red paint."

LEVEL A-3 **Child expresses a choice with a short sentence.**

These strategies will help you support children at level 3 as they use a short sentence to tell about what they want to do, where they want to do it, which children they want to play with, and so forth.

- **At planning time:** Ask the focus child what he plans to do at work time. Anticipate these kinds of answers: "Trucks. . . play with the trucks." "Do something with clay." "Play in the toy area." "Play with Christy." "Do what those guys are doing." Acknowledge his plan: "Oh, I see. You're going to play with the trucks" or "You're going to work with the clay in the art area" or "You're going to do what Bessie and Jamal are doing. You're going to saw wood." Following your acknowledgment, the child may either leave to get started, say something else about his plan, or respond to a question you ask about his plan.
- **At recall time:** Ask the child what he did at work time. Anticipate brief verbal answers that touch on something he remembers and wants to say about work time: "We got all the trucks!" "I cut." "We made piles." What he says may or may not be directly related to what he said he was going to do at planning time: "We see'd a squirrel!" Acknowledge his recall statement, give him a chance to add to it, and if you have a question about what he did, ask it and acknowledge his response.
- **At small- and large-group times, choices:** Listen for and acknowledge this child's choices and decisions about what to do, what materials to use, and whom to sit or work with at small- and large-group times. For example, while working with collage materials at small-group time, the child might say, "I'm taping just the tube things." You might acknowledge his choice by saying "Oh, you're taping just using the tubes and not the pipe cleaners."