



# Natural Learning Environment

## Practices: Child Interests

Child interests are the keys that can open up a treasure of learning opportunities. When a child is interested in an object, person, or activity, they pay attention for longer periods of time. The longer the child is focused on the person or activity, the more time the child has to learn new skills and practice existing ones.

### Keys to Using Child Interests

Help caregivers recognize the child's personal interests and interests in specific situations – Who or what does the child like, favor, or prefer? What makes the child happy? What holds the child's attention? What does the child try really hard to do? For example, animals, balls, dinosaurs, water, big brother, music, dancing, silly faces, mom's voice, or being teacher's helper.

Support caregivers in knowing how and why to use the child's interests to teach them things. For example, a child is more likely to learn a new word to ask for a favorite food at snack time or cruise along the couch to try and get to the family pet, and they are more motivated to try and try again until they are successful.

Work with caregivers to use the child's interests to help them participate in an activity they may not ordinarily like to do. For example, use the child's interest in water to get them to brush their teeth, take a bath, or help wash the dishes.

Using child interests makes learning fun and natural!