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CASTL

# Exploring Curiosity and Achievement

**INSTRUCTIONS**

This handout was designed for use with the article, "Exploring the Link Between Childhood Curiosity and School Achievement," from The Michigan Health Lab. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

**Goals**

- Discuss the relationship between curiosity and early achievement across socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Describe how "effortful control" impacts academic achievement and strategies to support children's curiosity.
- Develop a plan to promote children's curiosity and active exploration.

**Activity**

- Read the article.
- Use the questions below to guide your reflection and action plan in supporting infants and toddlers' curiosity through active exploration.
- Implement your plan and adjust as needed to encourage active exploration through curiosity for all children regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Promoting curiosity in children, especially those from environments of economic disadvantage, may be an important, underrecognized way to address the achievement gap.**

**Prachi Shah**

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**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- What caught your attention from the article? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- The article suggests that the more curious the child, the more likely they may be to perform better in school – regardless of their socioeconomic status.
  - Discuss how infants and toddlers in your care show curiosity at such an early age.
  - What are families sharing about their child's curiosity level at home? If they are not, how can you learn more from families about this?
  - What similarities or differences do you notice about the ways children show curiosity at home and in the learning environment?

- Another factor to consider when nurturing curiosity is the quality of the environment.
  - How are you currently supporting and encouraging curiosity in your learning environment?
  - Although socioeconomic statuses are often confidential, how can differences in statuses influence children's early exposure to more stimulating environments?
  - What can you do to create an environment that nurtures curiosity? Are there any supports that would help you meet this goal?

- The article defines "effortful control" as the ability to stay focused in class. For infants and toddlers, their attention spans are just beginning to develop, and, in most cases, that will vary widely from child to child. Be mindful that young children may pay increased attention to the world around them because they are interested or curious about what they see, feel, smell, hear and taste.
  - Taking all of this into consideration, how can you foster their curiosity?
  - How can you support each child depending on the individual needs?
  - What activities or materials would children in your care find interesting? How can you introduce new items and help children extend their exploration?

- Create an action plan that nurtures children's curiosity and active exploration. Use the Additional Resources on the next page or the tips below to support your planning.
  - Consider how you will:
    - Ask and answer open-ended questions. For example, "What will happen next? I think we'll see…"
    - Narrate children's exploration by "sportscasting." Talk about what you're both seeing and experiencing.
    - Encourage children to problem-solve. Let them know that it is okay to try and create opportunities for children to harness their curiosity about the event and learn from it.

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