

Supporting Concept Development: *Extending Exploration*

Use these ideas and questions to build on what you have learned and extend your practice.

THINK ABOUT IT!

■ Self-Reflection

Use these questions to think about your own practice.

■ Reflect with Others

Supervisors, directors, coaches, and teachers/providers can be reflective partners.

■ The Power of Practice

Invite a colleague to join you; observe or record each other and share ideas.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- What materials do I typically use in the set up of the environment? What small changes can I make in my practice to choose more open-ended and varied materials?
- What do I notice about children's exploration when I provide them with open-ended and varied materials?
- How can I develop daily routines and schedules that ensure children have opportunities for both hands-on exploration on their own and adult-guided investigation?
- How often do I join the children in investigations? How can I stretch myself to more fully engage with children in exploration, experimentation, and investigation of materials?
- How can I turn hands-on explorations into opportunities to build children's vocabulary and support language development? How does posting lists of key words in English and children's home languages support adults working with dual language learners?

TRY IT OUT!

Extend children's exploration in one of the following areas of your early learning environment:

Dramatic play | Art | Science
Writing | Block | Choose your own!

- Provide materials that are open-ended, varied, and relevant to the focus of your group's current exploration.
- Spend some time observing children exploring these materials. Pay attention to how they use the materials. How do their actions reveal their thinking as they investigate?
- Think about a way to extend children's learning. You might invite them to communicate their own ideas, model language, or encourage children to think more deeply. Print and post these prompts in your program to support adults' engagement with the children's learning:
 - Why do you think...?
 - How can you...?
 - What might happen if...?
 - I wonder what happened when....

How Did It Go?

After observing and investigating with children, reflect on their learning and record your interpretations. What do you think the children learned through hands-on exploration? How did you deepen their thinking? What worked and why? What might you try next time?

What Next?

Practice again! Try this activity in other interest areas of your classroom. Work with your colleagues to maximize both hands-on and mind-on learning experiences. Use the next pack in this bundle, *Deep Learning*, to think about how to provide children multiple opportunities to explore a concept and deepen their learning.