

Approaches to Learning: Persistence, Effort, & Attentiveness

Standard: Children demonstrate the ability to remain engaged in experiences and develop a sense of purpose and follow-through.

Children use sensory exploration and social interaction to learn about their world. While young children do not have the capacity to attend to objects or people for very long periods of time, they are building this skill with early experiences. Children demonstrate an initial interest in their world by simply observing. They focus on faces, high-contrast patterns, sounds, and eventually, specific objects. As they get older, children start to physically explore their environment. They use their hands to twist, shake, and move objects. They find delight in repeating actions that they enjoy, such as shaking a rattle or banging a toy drum. Engagement in these experiences promotes the development of persistence, effort, and attentiveness.

After 12 months of age, children become increasingly focused on completing simple tasks. For example, they may sit for brief periods of time, drop objects into a bucket, dump them out, and then repeat the entire process over and over again. Children also start to become very persistent when trying to accomplish a goal. They do not have the language or the regulatory capacity to control their emotions and will act out in frustration when they encounter challenges. Caregivers are there to support children through this process and encourage them to keep trying, while helping them problem-solve along the way. While children's ability to remain focused is increasing, they are still easily distracted. Caregivers can support children's learning by setting up an enriching learning environment that promotes interaction and minimizes disruptions.

Birth to 9 months

7 months to 18 months

16 months to 24 months

21 months to 36 months

Real World Story

Ava is 13 months old. She is sitting in her play room, placing blocks, one by one, back into a basket. She remains engaged in this particular activity until she puts all of the blocks back in where they belong. After she is done, she walks over to the corner of the playroom and attempts to move her push toy away from the wall. Her mom, Liz, is sitting on the floor, observing her. Ava pushes the cart forward; unfortunately, this action just moves the cart into the wall. She tries the same action and gets the same result. Ava stops, kneels down, and looks at the buttons on the cart. She stands up and again attempts to move the cart by pushing it forward.

After hitting the wall once again, Ava shakes the cart and grunts. She looks at her mom and points at the cart. Liz moves close to Ava and says, "Let's try moving it this way." Liz places her hands over Ava's and guides her in moving the cart backward. Ava is not yet steady on her feet, so walking backward is extremely challenging. Ava falls. Liz stops and says, "Mommy is going to turn it around for you." Liz turns the cart around, and Ava stands up. Ava walks behind the cart and places herself in the correct position to push the cart forward. She moves the cart and smiles. Liz claps her hands and says, "You did it, my big girl!" Ava continues to walk forward, successfully pushing the cart as she moves.

IN THIS EXAMPLE, Ava demonstrates her ability to accomplish two tasks. As Ava places all the blocks back in the basket, she shows how she is able to attend for a brief period of time by putting all of the blocks away. Ava demonstrates the beginning of number concept and quantity as she reaches back each time for another block until there are no more. The second task that Ava engages in highlights how she attempts to solve a challenge repeatedly to achieve her goal. While she is not able to turn the push cart on her own, she tries a few times before communicating for help. Liz supports Ava's emerging abilities by placing her hands over Ava's to guide her. However, she recognizes that Ava is not quite ready, and moves the cart around so Ava can push it successfully. Once Ava is successful, Liz shares in her accomplishment.

Discover how this Real World Story is related to:

- Self-Regulation: Foundation of Development
[Attention Regulation \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attention/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attention/)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
[Attachment Relationships \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attachment/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attachment/)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
[Self-Concept \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/self-concept/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/self-concept/)
- Developmental Domain 2: Physical Development & Health
[Gross Motor \(https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/gross-motor/\)](https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/gross-motor/)

- Developmental Domain 2: Physical Development & Health
Fine Motor (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/fine-motor/>)
- Developmental Domain 2: Physical Development & Health
Perceptual (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/perceptual/>)
- Developmental Domain 4: Cognitive Development
Quantity & Numbers (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/quantity/>)

Discover how Persistence, Effort, & Attentiveness is related to:

- Self-Regulation: Foundation of Development
Attention Regulation (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/attention/>)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
Relationship with Adults (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/relationship-adults/>)
- Developmental Domain 1: Social & Emotional Development
Self-Concept (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/self-concept/>)
- Developmental Domain 4: Cognitive Development
Logic & Reasoning (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/logic/>)
- Developmental Domain 4: Cognitive Development
Quantity & Numbers (<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/quantity/>)

Related Resources

Early Learning Moments Videos
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/resources/videos/ielg-moments/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Standards
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ielg-standards/>)

Guidelines Videos
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/resources/videos/videos-guidelines/>)

Guidelines
Brochure
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-brochure/>)

Guidelines Poster
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-poster/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: A Guide for
Parents
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-parents/>)

Interactive Guidelines Flip Book
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/guidelines-flipbook/>)

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Crosswalks
and Alignments
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ielg-crosswalks/>)

Illinois Prevention Initiative: Implementation
Manual 2013
(<https://illinoisearlylearning.org/ielg/ielg-resources/ipi-manual/>)

Reviewed: 2012