

Photographs:

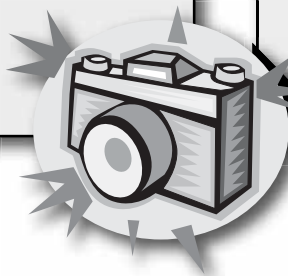
Meaningful Uses in Early Education and Care

Why Use Photographs?

There are many reasons to use photographs in our work with young children. One is magic! We have all seen the magic that occurs when a child observes himself in a photograph. It is as if he climbs outside of himself and into the photograph to discover more information. Photographs can also be used as a tool to aid in visual representations and visual learning. How does all this happen?

Photographs Support a Sense of Belonging

When children find their photo in the child care environment, they feel special. Seeing themselves with their friends and caregivers will make them feel part of the group and add to their sense of belonging. Make an ongoing scrapbook or photo journal of the children (individual and/or group). Have the photo books available for children to look at and to share with families. Also, use photos to label a child's basket or special place for their belongings.



Tip

When photographing children, capture the natural work. Don't ask them to stop and smile; instead, photograph the child in action.

Photographs Support Learning

There are moments with children that we wish we could just freeze. Often these moments are opportunities for learning and teaching. For example, maybe you saw a child say goodbye to her parent without crying for the first time in weeks. A photograph will capture that trust and smile, as well as reassure the parent. Another example may be two

children who normally challenge each other, but are now getting along beautifully. Click and save the moment to show the children how much fun they were having and how they were using their cooperation skills! Photographs also help show the children's work in progress. Often the end result of a project, such as a block building, does not show all the steps the

child went through to get the finished project. Maybe the building fell down five times. Maybe they asked a friend or two to help. Photographing the steps will show the value of their important work and tell the story or the process. (Children can help in sequencing the photos according to their ideas).

Photographs Help Connect to Family

A child's primary source of comfort is her family. Bring that comfort into child care by asking families to bring in photographs of their child and their family to be displayed. Also, photograph children with their families when the opportunity arises, such as pick-up and drop-off time or when families volunteer.

Let families borrow photo books from child care to share at home. Using photographs with families builds bridges between home and child care, and also shares with families the important work and experiences the children are having.

Photographs Help us Revisit

Photographs help revisit meaningful moments and experiences, such as a field trip, a new discovery (a beautiful spider web), or a special visitor. Find opportunities to display these photos or have on hand for the children to look at.

Important:

Before taking any child's photograph you must have a written consent form signed by parents, stating that the child is permitted to be photographed. You must also have parents' permission to display the photos in your early education environment.



They could be placed on a low bulletin board, in a photo book, or simply placed on a table. Recalling events helps children process and organize information, use recall and memory skills, or simply revisit pleasurable moments.

Photographs Support Language

Children will learn to make a connection between photos and written print when photos are

displayed with labeling or documentation. Many children who are not yet speaking can use photos to share their message. Try photographing materials and areas in your child care, as well as children, for use in aiding language for children. Label photos and display them in a book or bulletin board, or simply place photos on an object or area. For example, the word Blocks can be written under a photo of blocks and then placed on the block shelf, or a picture of markers with the word Markers could be placed on the marker basket.

Photographs can support routines and experiences of the day; a schedule of the day shown in photographs could be displayed, a helper chart with job photos and child photos can be used, and mailboxes could be labeled with photographs. Anywhere written language is used is a good place to also use a photograph.

You do not need to know a lot about photography to get started. Disposable, automatic, and digital cameras make taking pictures easy and fun. You can pick up great picture-taking tips on film boxes, your local developing center, and the local library, as well as on the Internet.

Share with families your ideas for using photographs and add a wish list (disposable cameras,

processing fees, film, paper, ink, photo albums, etc.). You may have families willing to help share some of the costs or even share their photographic skills.

Using photographs in our work with children is a fantastic means of enlightening, highlighting, documenting, and sharing all the wonder and magic that occurs in our everyday experiences.

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