

## Introduction and Preparation for the Focus Area – About Me

During the first three years of life, children begin creating a picture of who they are, what they can do, and what they feel. Consider reviewing the Social and Emotional Development domain in *The Arkansas Child Development and Early Standards* for information that will help you be better prepared for including the Topics of Study in this Focus Area, **About Me**, as you plan for toddlers. The Social and Emotional domain addresses children's relationship with others, their emotional expression and understanding, and their self-awareness and self-concept.

During the first 18 months of life, children are usually referred to as young infants (birth to 8 months) and mobile infants (8 to 18 months). Children between the ages of 18 and 36 months are usually called toddlers.

While each toddler is a unique individual, typically developing toddlers share many common characteristics. They are beginning to assert their independence. They are learning to do many things for themselves and to make simple choices. They use language to refer to themselves and others and to express a need. They can learn to use words to express their feelings.

Toddlers are becoming aware of their bodies and what their bodies can do. The five senses of touch, taste, smell, seeing and hearing are the information-gathering tools of toddlers. Through their senses, toddlers get in touch with their world.

Through both planned and spontaneous activities, caregivers can provide opportunities for toddlers to discover many things about themselves, their world and others in their lives.

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### Teacher Notes

- *In the Focus Area, **About Me**, there are four Topics of Study:*
  - **My Name – I'm Growing**
  - **My Body**
  - **My Senses**
  - **Feelings and Emotions**
- *Many of the experiences in the Topics of Study have a designation of either Younger Toddler (YT) or Older Toddler (OT). However, these two designations do not specify age in months.*
- *Use your knowledge of individual children to determine which activities are appropriate for which children in your care.*

*Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements* (Rev. 1.1.15) requires the following:

**400 PROGRAM – 401 Program Requirements for all ages**

5.a The facility shall have an approved curriculum with weekly activity plans appropriate for the developmental needs of each group of children.

To assist your program in meeting this requirement, refer to Developing Weekly Activity Plans for Adventures for Toddlers for information on how to develop your plans. In addition, 2 different examples of blank Weekly Activity Plan sheets are included. Feel free to make copies of the plan sheet you select and use it each week. To help you in planning, there are also 4 samples of completed weekly plan sheets that you may use as guides when developing weekly activity plans for your group of children.

## Resources

- Children’s books can be purchased online, from school supply catalogs or local book stores.
- Check with your local library for the availability of children’s books.
- Infant /Toddler Photo Library from Lakeshore Learning (50 photo and activity cards focusing on the following topics: Transportation, Farm Animals, Nature, Pets, Home, Food, Community Helpers, Emotions)
- CDs which can be ordered online or from school supply catalogs:
  - Start Smart Songs for 1s, 2s & 3s – Brain-Building Activities by Pam Schiller, KIMBO Educational
  - Toddlers on Parade, KIMBO Educational
  - 50 Toddler Sing-Along Songs (2 CDs with 50 activities), Twin Sisters

## Picture File

- Collect pictures that relate to this Focus Area – **About Me**. Examples of pictures to collect include:
  - children from infancy through preschool – pictures to reflect diversity
  - families that reflect diversity
  - body parts such as faces, ears, noses, mouths, eyes, hands, and feet
  - children involved in activities such as running, riding a wheel toy, building with blocks, feeding a doll, looking at a book, eating, playing with a ball
  - people expressing different emotions.
- Include small (index card size) as well as larger pictures.
- Consider mounting the small pictures on index cards. Laminate or cover all of the pictures with clear, self-adhesive paper for durability.
- Post some of the pictures on the wall at toddler’s eye level. Observe to see if toddlers look at the pictures and point to and/or name the objects or people in the pictures. Join them and expand on what they say. For example, say to Megan who has pointed to a baby and said “baby” say “Yes Megan, that’s a baby playing with a rattle.”
- Put some of the small pictures in a container and place it in the library area so that it is accessible to children. Observe a child as he takes the pictures out of the box. Should the child bring a picture to you, involve him in discussing what he sees in the picture. “That’s a girl playing with a ball.”
- Keep some of the pictures in a basket or tote bag within easy reach. Use the pictures with an individual child or a small group of children. Invite them to name objects and to talk about what is happening in the pictures. Allow children to look at the pictures on their own. Model and talk with them about the proper way to handle the pictures.
- Determine if funds are available to purchase The Infant /Toddler Photo Library **from** Lakeshore Learning.

**Teacher Note:** *The photo cards are to be used to support children’s language development and the concepts in the Topic of Study. **They are not to be used as flash cards!***

**Teacher Note:** *Refer to **Curriculum Tips and Techniques** – Picture File, for additional information about how to organize a picture file.*

## Toddler Environment

The toddler environment should always provide equipment and materials for language experiences, manipulative exploration, gross motor and block play, sensory exploration, pretend play and outdoor exploration. The following additions to the environment are intended for the entire topic: **About Me**. Indicate on your **Weekly Plan Sheet** which materials to add for that week.

### Library Area

- Add books: **See How We Have Grown** and **We Are Friends**
- Add container of pictures that have been laminated or covered with clear self-adhesive paper. (See **Picture File**, page 2 for examples of types of pictures to collect.)

### Manipulative Exploration

- Add **Texture Book**
- Large stringing beads with different patterns and textures
- Picking Up Cotton Balls
- Knob puzzles with 2 to 5 pieces
- Pegboards (wood or plastic) with large, blunt-ended pegs

### Gross Motor & Blocks

- Textured blocks/cubes
- Tape down large pieces of bubble wrap to the floor in block area.
- Collect and add large firm pillows for stacking and for crawling over
- Make grocery bag blocks as follows: 1. Involve toddlers in scrunching newspaper to fill the bags and make them stable. 2. Fold down the tops of the bags to create a flat top. 3. Tape the flat top securely.
- Add small people figures (wood, rubber, or vinyl) and small vehicles

**Teacher Note:** *Store people figures and vehicles in clear plastic tubs that are labeled with both pictures and words.*

### Sensory Exploration

- Hang wind chimes in classroom. Locate them so that air moves them. Observe to see if children look for the source of the sounds made by the chimes.
- Add scented playdough (one scent a day).
- Add Sensory Bottles.

### Pretend Play

- Add large soft dolls that have clothes that can easily be taken off and put on.
- Have dress-up clothes such as vests and shirts that children can put on and take off. Shorten sleeves of shirts to fit children.
- Include clothes of different textures.
- Include gloves of different textures, such as cotton gloves, leather gloves, fleece gloves, and rubber gloves.
- Have dress-up clothes with large buttons and snaps. Demonstrate buttoning and snapping. Encourage children to button and snap, assisting as needed.
- Have unbreakable full-length mirror that is securely fastened to wall.
- Add unbreakable hand mirrors.
- Add toy telephones (at least 2).

### Outdoor Exploration

- Hang wind chimes and windsocks outdoors. Locate them so that children can see and hear them. Observe to see if children look for the source of the sounds made by the chimes or if they notice the movement of the windsock. If children do not notice the wind chimes, for example, make a comment such as, "I wonder what is making that sound. Let's see if we can find out what it is."
- Go on a sensory walk with the children. Invite them to touch safe items in nature: the bark of a tree, the leaves of a shrub or tree, a rock, a pinecone. Use tactile words to describe the items. "Feel how rough the bark of this tree is." "This rock is really hard."

**Safety Note:** *It is the responsibility of the child care program and each employee to ensure the safety of toddlers in the program. This includes the materials and equipment provided for children's use. Should you have safety questions, the developers of this curriculum suggest that you consult with your Child Care Licensing Specialist for technical assistance.*

Curriculum books such as *The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & 2s, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*, contain safety information. See **Curriculum Tips and Techniques**, **References** and **Resources**, for additional resources.

### **Family Connection and Engagement**

Send home a note to families stating that for the next few weeks the children will be involved in the Focus Area: **About Me**. They will participate in experiences that focus on who they are, what they can do, and the feelings they can express. How families can be involved in this Focus Area will depend on the situation of each child and his or her family.

Consider some of the following ways to involve the families:

- Invite families to send 2 or 3 photos of their child; photos that show the child from infancy to now.
- Invite families to send photos of their child and family members and to indicate on the back of each photo the name and relationship of each person.
- Include the titles and authors of some of the child's books that relate to the Focus Area: **About Me**. Suggest that they look for these books in the local library, check them out and read them with their toddler.