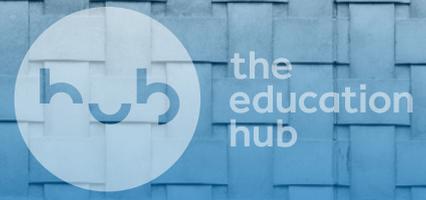


# Strategies for intentional teaching and when you might use them



ECE resources

Intentional teachers need to have a range of pedagogical strategies and tools from which to select, moment by moment, to meet their intentions for children's learning. Some of these strategies are very subtle and used very intuitively. They highlight that being intentional can involve simple yet thoughtful action, rather than detailed preparation. Here we provide a list of strategies and suggest a some of the intentions that they may support.

## Intentional environments

### Positioning materials

Positioning materials involves creating an intentional environment by placing specific objects in relation to each other or to people. You might put materials together that are not usually combined (such as clay with wooden blocks), or you might suggest a particular activity by what you put together (a picnic set; toy dogs, ropes and blankets; cut flowers, vases, scissors and string).

Position materials intentionally to:

- extend children's role play scripts
- encourage children's participation in a specific experience, for example, adding a child's favourite toy to a specific area
- encourage children to combine materials or activities (such as drawing and block building)

### Collecting materials

Collecting or gathering things together might be performed by children and/or teachers. Making groups of objects available can afford certain kinds of play.

Use collections intentionally to:

- encourage children's sensory exploration
- support children's knowledge of and skills in counting and seriation

### Documentation and display

Documentation can be created to provide children with a written or pictorial record of previous experiences and learning that can support them in revisiting or extending that learning.

Use documentation and display intentionally to:

- develop and deepen children's interest in a project
- support children's understanding about their own learning
- help to build communities of learners

### Scheduling time

Time can be intentionally scheduled in order to prioritise and extend particular learning activities, as well as to make time for planned and intentional experiences and interactions.

Use scheduling intentionally to:



- organise time to support children's changing interests and levels of concentration and energy
- ensure a balance of activity and experiences across the curriculum
- get involved with children or have in-depth conversations

## Intentional teaching interactions

### Encouragement

Encouragement involves reassuring and supporting a child when they are having difficulties. The best types of encouragement and praise are very specific.

Use encouragement intentionally to:

- motivate children's learning
- transform a frustrating or disappointing learning activity or outcome into a satisfying and enjoyable one
- increase the likelihood that children will behave in pro-social ways, persist with a task, and extend their ideas

### Facilitation

When you facilitate children's learning, you make the learning process easier for children through the thoughtful use of equipment, time, materials, space, people and interactions.

Use teacher facilitation intentionally to:

- encourage children to be independent learners and to learn through self-discovery
- increase children's social and co-operative play
- increase the confidence of children learning English as a second language

### Positioning oneself

Positioning yourself can also be highly intentional. You can place yourself near individuals, groups or objects in ways that support children's learning and enable active engagement and interactions that involve listening, describing, and questioning.

Position yourself intentionally to:

- promote an atmosphere of warmth and caring through eye-to-eye contact, cuddles and smiles
- encourage children's participation or concentration on particular experiences
- enrich children's planned and spontaneous experiences by, for example, modelling language

### Grouping

You might intentionally think about grouping children, deciding how and when to bring children together to assist their learning, for activities such as group discussion and collaboration.

Use grouping intentionally to:

- develop children's cooperative skills
- enhance children's cognitive development and understanding of concepts through the exchange of ideas
- enable scaffolding between more capable and less capable peers

### Listening

Genuine listening means paying attention to children, concentrating on and thinking about what they are saying as well as what they are showing you through their non-verbal communication. When conversing with children, it helps to wait a few seconds before responding, as this helps children realise their comments are taken seriously and enables you to really think about and understand their words.

Use listening intentionally to:

- encourage children to share a thought or experience, or explain their ideas
- help you decide if and when to intervene in children's play
- help you learn about children and develop curriculum based on their interest and inquiries

### Description

Describing as a teaching strategy is about using words to help children notice or picture how something or someone looks, feels, sounds, tastes or moves, and can support children to see increasingly more complex and detailed distinctions between people, places and things.

Use description intentionally to:

- heighten children's awareness of the properties of materials and characteristics of objects and events
- extend children's vocabulary
- give children skills to share knowledge and understanding with others

### Modelling

Modelling involves presenting children with examples (models) of the dispositions, actions, attitudes and values which are valued in the setting and community.

Use modelling intentionally to:

- help children learn to play co-operatively
- help children learn to solve problems
- build children's interest in, for example, eating healthily, or literacy practices

### Demonstration

Demonstrating involves modelling a task, breaking it down into steps and using clear, unambiguous language to describe your actions. Demonstration is most successful when it is brief and children are provided with plenty of opportunities to practise.

Use demonstration intentionally to:

- show children how to use materials and special tools, or how to achieve a particular task, particularly when exploring a new activity or equipment
- extend or enrich children's play, for example, by demonstrating using a recipe book in the family corner

### Questioning

Questions are used to seek information or an increased understanding about something or someone. Open questions find out what children are thinking about and how they make sense of the social and natural world.

Use questions intentionally to:

- excite interest in an event, information or object, provoking thought and curiosity, and initiate learning about it
- help children reflect on information, feelings and experiences
- identify children's current knowledge and difficulties
- extend children's communication skills and language

### Suggestion

Suggestion means to offer children advice, ideas and recommendations about what to do next. It is optional for children to follow the suggestion or not.

Use suggestions intentionally to:

- develop children's persistence and reduce frustration
- direct children's attention to salient features of a problem
- enrich children's storylines in play

### Telling or instructing

Telling or giving instruction involves using a verbal account or description to explain to children what is happening or what should happen. This strategy allows little opportunity for children's participation, but it can support learning in specific situations.

Use instruction intentionally to:

- support children's safety using equipment
- reduce frustration or embarrassment
- develop independence in using a new tool or technique

### Prompting recall

You can ask children to recall or remember something by asking 'What happened when you tried that?' or 'What do you remember about...?' These questions are most effective when they help children to meet their own goals, or when children have a high level of interest and enjoyment in the topic or experience.

Use recall intentionally to:

- help children to solve problems
- reinforce ideas, concepts and knowledge
- support children to report on their experiments and observations
- develop concentration and memory

### Feedback

Feedback involves providing information (before, during and after an experience) about that experience, which can be either verbal (a comment on how the child approached the task) or non-verbal (a smile to show appreciation of the child's efforts). Feedback encourages children in what they are doing as well as providing pointers about what to do in the future.

Use feedback intentionally to:

- positively reinforce aspects of children's learning behaviours
- encourage children to persist with difficulty

- develop children's self-efficacy and confidence
- support children to understand themselves as learners

### Scaffolding

Scaffolding involves helping a child to become more competent in a task by offering temporary guidance and support. It draws on a combination of teaching techniques including questioning, encouraging, prompting recall, describing, suggesting and modelling.

Use scaffolding intentionally to:

- develop children's skills and capabilities, particularly those that are just emerging or are just slightly above the child's current level of competence
- shape children's construction of knowledge about a phenomenon or experience

### Shared problem-solving

You might intentionally work with children to try to solve a problem together. This will involve shared attention and shared understanding, or intersubjectivity.

Use shared problem-solving intentionally to:

- develop children's initiative, creativity, and thinking skills
- enable leadership and develop confidence
- encourage collaboration

### Co-construction

Co-construction involves forming meaning and building knowledge about the world in negotiation with children. It emphasises listening to and understanding the meaning of objects and events for children, rather than on transmitting facts about those objects and events.

Use co-construction intentionally to:

- teach children how to problem-pose and problem-solve with others
- emphasise that there are multiple ways of explaining and representing the world, or many ways to explore a problem or phenomenon

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## Further Reading

McNaughton, G., & Williams, G. (2004). Techniques for teaching young children: Choices in theory and practice. Frenchs Forest, NSW, Australia: Pearson Education Australia.

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