



**Kanton Zürich  
Bildungsdirektion**

LEARNING  
OPPORTUNITIES  
FOR CHILDREN  
UP TO AGE 4

# I SEE SOME- WHAT THING DO YOU SEE?

40 short films on  
everyday learning in  
early childhood

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Opening your eyes to the world as children see it

In their early years, children learn more than in any later stage of their lives. They are curious. They explore the world with all their senses. Everyday life is full of opportunities to discover new things. The 40 short films illustrate what happens on these explorative journeys.

Revealing the meaning of everyday life

When parents and other carers accompany children in their early years in an attentive manner, they support them in a crucial phase of their development. The 40 short films show that there is no need for anything extraordinary: Learning opportunities present themselves in countless moments of everyday life.

Supporting the work of professionals

In particular, the short films are designed to support professionals who work in early childhood education, care and upbringing: In the areas of family support, parental counselling and education. For this reason, the short films are available in 13 languages; there is extensive expert commentary, communication tools and a box which contains all products, including all films on a USB stick. Moreover, the films and expert commentary are available for the training of experts or for the quality work of family support facilities.

### Giving children a good start to life

The Department of Education of the Canton of Zurich places great emphasis on early childhood development. The project 'Learning opportunities for children up to age 4' helps making sure that every young child has a suitable place to live and learn. The first and most important of these is the family.

'Learning opportunities for children up to age 4' is a partner project of the Orientierungsrahmen für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung of the Swiss UNESCO commission and the Netzwerk Kinderbetreuung Schweiz.

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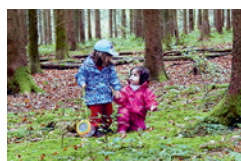
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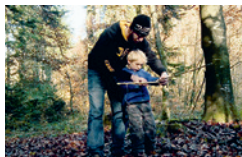


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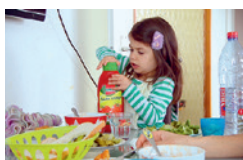
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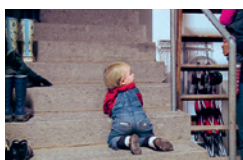
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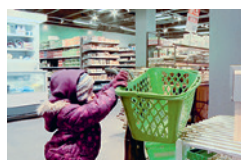
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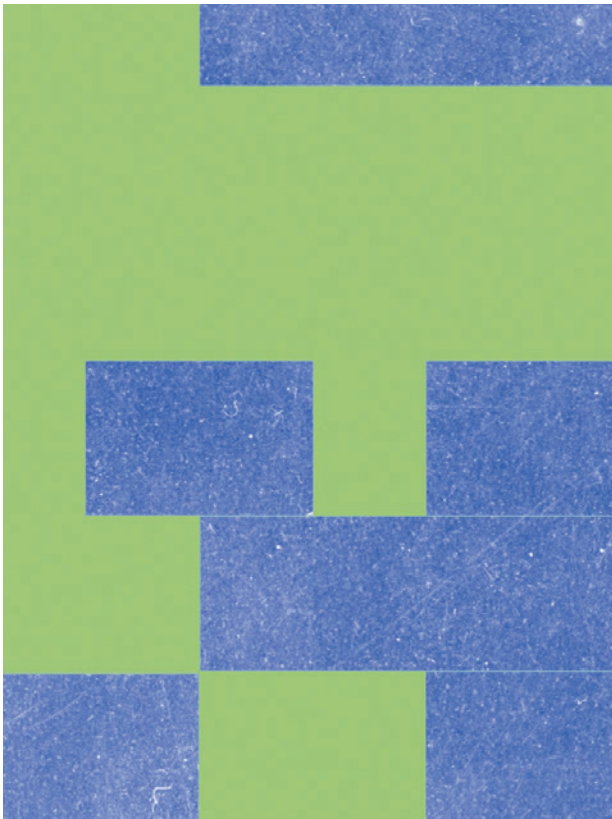


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## BUILDING BLOCKS

Here the family living room carpet is a place for play and learning. Every single day, over and over again: Playing is learning and learning is play.

IREM / 2 years 10 months

ILKE / 4 years 9 months

Ilke, his little sister Irem, and their father are engrossed in playing. They have to talk to one another, otherwise they won't succeed in building the tall building out of so many different blocks. / The living room becomes firstly a venue for negotiations, secondly a building site and thirdly a playground. / Six hands, six eyes, three mouths and one building under construction. A joint effort. / How nice that there are enough blocks for everyone. And enough time for a little bit of mischief! / A blue block becomes a ball. There's a back and forth between Papa and Irem. / Back and forth with catching and throwing. Back and forth with words about catching and throwing. What's better? With one hand? With two hands? / In any case, with father's smile and his facial expressions accepting the situation. Even when something doesn't work. Coordination needs to be practised. And the best way to practise is through play. / Ilke continues to build whatever way he likes.

### Learning is play, and play is learning

Irem, Ilke and their father are building a house with colorful building blocks. As they play together, the children are learning all kinds of things. Play and learning are not different things: to a large extent they are the same. Play is the main occupation for young children and can be seen as an elementary and extremely multifaceted form of learning. To build the house they must think, try things out and communicate with each other. Which block fits where the best? Where is the block that is needed right now? What comes next? The children are training their logic, dexterity, coordination, fine motor skills, spatial thinking and creativity as well as applying and expanding previously gained knowledge about houses. When she tosses the blocks, Irem is practicing her coordination and fast reactions. Building the house and playing catch with the blocks both require teamwork. Everyone has to decide who will build what and where, whose turn it is to throw or catch, and when they have to be alert and ready. Dad is also asked for his help in finding the right block. This expands and develops Ilke and Irem's social abilities and skills. As they play, children develop a perception of the world and of themselves. They construct their knowledge and understanding of meaning and interact actively with the world around them. Their father recognizes the importance of playing together. He shares his children's enthusiasm and takes ample time to be with them. This strengthens the relationship among the three of them.

→ 1

### Responding to children's interests and ideas

In the middle of building the house, Irem gets the idea to toss a block to her father. She now wants to play catch. Her father responds immediately to her idea for play and joins in happily. He even gives her

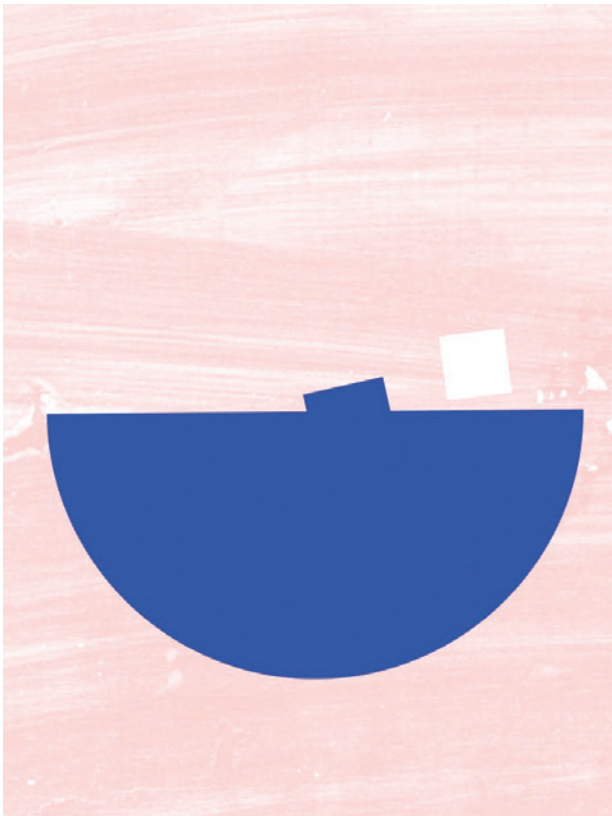
tips on how to do it better: “Use your other hand” and “Look how I catch it”. When adults respond to children’s interests and ideas, they make use of the potential that young children bring with them from birth: the enthusiasm and motivation to learn new things. Children’s curiosity is the engine of all learning processes. Only learning that is fun has a long-term impact on young children. Irem’s face is filled with that pleasure.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.);  
Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich  
und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit  
anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.);  
Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen  
und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).





## CAKE

Doing it yourself. Trying it out yourself. Observing. Being supported. Talking about it together and sharing the experience. These are rich opportunities for learning! And they make the cake especially delicious.

KRISTÓF / 9 months  
ZALÁN / 4 years  
CSONGOR / 6 years 3 months

Bake a cake, bake a cake! The baker has called! If you want to bake good cakes, you must have seven things: Eggs and lard! Butter and salt! Milk and flour! Saffron makes the cake yellow. / But of course, you need more than the seven things in this old German children's nursery rhyme! / Zalán needs his mother's instructions. It takes a steady hand to get the sugar out of the container with the spoon and then into the bowl. / Kristóf wants to be carried, and Csongor, the oldest of the three boys, wants step-by-step information about the process. / A lot of language is needed. A lot of supervision is needed. A lot of support is needed. It's difficult to use the scales and the mixer. By including her three sons, this mother is giving them many different opportunities for learning. / All three boys respond with interest. What does butter feel like? What about flour? And sugar? And what happens, when everything is put together? What comes first, and what comes next? Does vibration of the mixer tickle your fingers? / Csongor wants to know, too. But only if Zalán holds onto the bowl. In this way, the two older boys learn about division of labour. Job sharing when baking a birthday cake!

### Holistic learning

Today is Zalán's birthday. He has asked for a cake shaped like a hedgehog. Zalán and Csongor are allowed to help with the baking. Baking a cake together gives the children a multitude of learning opportunities. They learn not only what ingredients go into a cake and how a cake is made but also how a scale and a hand mixer work. Adding sugar by the spoonful, turning on the scale and holding the hand mixer require fine motor skills. Now and again the children are allowed to nibble, so they learn what cake batter and individual ingredients taste like. Csongor is especially interested in numbers and weights, so his mother explains that 12 dekagrams equal 120 grams. As he writes down the recipe he is also practicing written language. But the brothers are benefitting in the social domain as well: they are learning to work together, to take turns and to coordinate with each other. The list of learning experiences could go on and on. This kind of everyday situation allows children to expand their knowledge in so many different developmental domains.

→ 1

### Participating and contributing

Zalán and Csongor participate eagerly in the baking activity. Zalán thinks about what he is doing and asks a question if he is unsure or does not understand something: "Why do we use such a big spoon?", "Is this much good?", "May I put it in?". Csongor wants to know precisely how the cake is made and writes down the recipe. Their mother

supports his self-initiative by answering his questions. Kristóf is also there in his mother's arms and can watch what is happening. The boys' mother is making it possible for all three children to participate in the family activities in age-appropriate ways. Participation is a process that demands a basic attitude of acceptance and appreciation of the value of children's contributions and influence of adults. By including her children in everyday situations like baking a cake, this mother is giving them an active role in shaping their daily life. This gives the children a sense of belonging and the feeling that they are helpful and valuable.

→ 2

#### Experiential learning in the child's everyday life

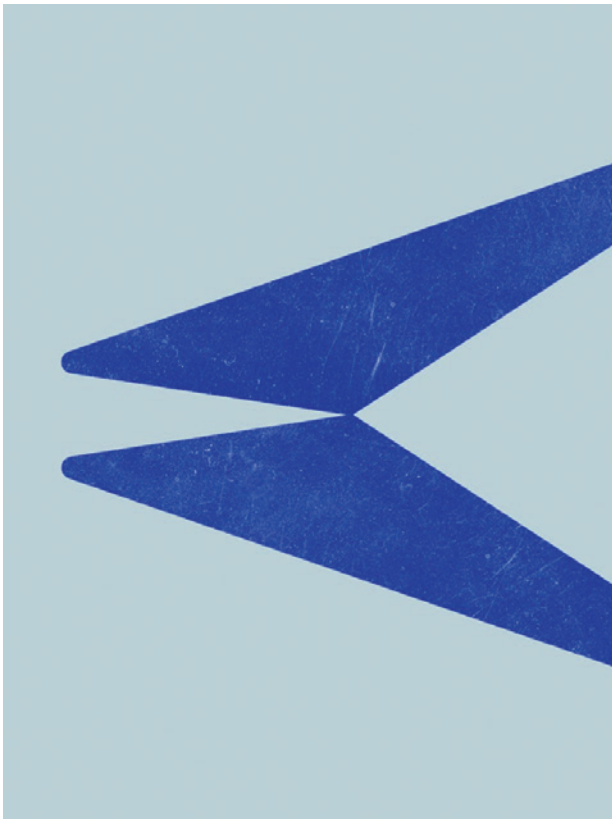
Early childhood learning cannot be promoted through instruction and conveying knowledge according to a plan made by adults. Young children want to actively explore and try things out. What they also need is the right measure of guidance and answers to their questions. Here, the boys' mother is giving them an opportunity for learning by experience by letting them participate actively in baking the cake. Zalán is allowed to push the button on the scale, add sugar by the spoonful and mix the batter. And it is not always easy. Sugar should not be spilled, and holding on to the mixer is difficult. These are challenges to master that make learning interesting. A learning situation is a situation that challenges children but does not overwhelm them.

Achieving the common goal requires a lot of communication and coordination among the participants. The cake batter gradually comes together as the boys ask questions, follow instructions and add their own comments. Kristóf is a part of things, too, even though he is too little to help. But he is highly interested as he observes the goings-on, and he is already learning as he listens to their conversation and sees how his mother and brothers use different kitchen tools. He is enjoying sharing the feeling of doing something together. Being involved by being so close to the activity is valuable for his social-emotional development.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).



## CLOTHES PEGS

Eyes wide open for little things, again and again! Children explore their world with all of their senses. When adults make this possible for them, they enrich their children's knowledge of the world.

### MELINA / 9 months

Melina is curious and heads straight for the clothes peg basket. / Almost everything is new, when you are new in this world. And everything has to be explored. / Whether it's a button or a clothes peg, everything is interesting. Even if it is not all safe. / Her mother is there. This gives Melina a feeling of security and sets her free to explore everything around her. / Melina looks at her mother. She speaks to her. Melina's mother understands her child and answers her. / What does a clothes peg taste like? / What does it feel like in one of your hands? And in the other hand? / Just a little dialogue in the laundry room.

#### Holistic learning

Melina discovers the basket full of clothespins and crawls to it purposefully and full of curiosity. Lots of things are new to Melina, and every little thing has to be explored intensively. Young children are born with the drive to learn. Motivated by their thirst for knowledge and their curiosity, they put a lot of effort into discovering the world around them. Melina examines the clothespins with all of her senses. With her hands, she grasps the string to which some clothespins are attached, and throws it to the floor. She reaches into the basket, takes clothespins in her hands and then drops them. She listens to the sounds that the clothespins make when they fall on the floor or into the basket or when she rummages in the basket. She watches her mother take a handful of clothespins. She feels the black clothespin in one hand and then in the other. By putting the clothespin in her mouth, she can feel it with her lips and taste it with her tongue. By biting on it, she tests the strength of the material. Through all of this exploration, Melina gains more and more knowledge about the things around her. Moments like this, when children explore (investigate, examine) things undisturbed and guided by their own interests, are very important for their development and learning. Melina's mother allows Melina to engage freely in her exploration activity. She is attentive and nearby—maintaining eye contact with Melina and responding to her signals—but she does not interrupt. She only steps in when Melina finds a small button that could be dangerous; she removes the button immediately. After that, Melina is allowed to continue with her activity.

→ 1

#### Children express themselves in many ways

Young children express their needs, feelings and thoughts in a variety of ways. Melina uses her voice to express her feelings. Her mother hears her sounds and answers her with similar sounds and with eye contact. This tells Melina, "Yes, I am here, and I hear you."

It is clear that Melina enjoys her investigation of the clothespins. She is excited and pedals her legs,

makes big eyes and makes sounds that she repeats again and again. She also smiles a little smile.

→ 2

#### Physical and emotional well-being

Young children can be curious and active when they feel well both physically and emotionally. The familiar, reliable presence of her mother gives Melina a sense of security in the surroundings of the laundry room. This feeling of security is reinforced by the exchange of eye contact and sounds between the little girl and her mother. In this protected setting, Melina can freely and calmly go about exploring the clothespins.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.); Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).



## COOKIES

Children need a stimulating learning environment that allows them to follow their interests and develop and realize their own ideas.

PAOLO / 4 years, 1 month  
NEVIN / 4 years, 4 months

Thick icing, colourful chocolate decorations, sweet coloured sugars and chocolate pictures! The teachers have provided the children with everything they need to decorate the cookies. / Nevin and Paolo and two other children at the table decorate the cookies skilfully and just as they like. There is no pattern that they have to follow. Fortunately! So they can experiment! And in this way, they can experience how they themselves and the other children have creative ideas. / They talk about what they're doing and what they need. They are practising getting along with each other on a shared project. In addition, their fingers can feel the stickiness of the sugar icing on the brush and how hard the sweet icing becomes as it dries. That's material science. / Nevin, Paolo and the two girls carefully place the decorated cookies on the tray provided. No two cookies are the same! And they are all lovely!

### Holistic learning

From day one, children try to grasp connections in the world around them. To do so they use all of their energy and all of their senses. That is exactly what Meret, Anna, Paolo and Nevin are doing here. They are touching, smelling, and looking at the different materials for decorating biscuits and experimenting with how they go together. They are learning a lot about the properties of the materials, such as that sugar icing sticks to the brush and hardens over time. They also observe how the individual materials result in many small masterpieces in the end. When the children see the finished biscuits the next time, they will be able to imagine how they were made. To be able to understand these connections, young children must have experienced them themselves. In addition to exploring the materials and learning the steps, the children are also practicing social interaction and expanding their language skills as they talk among themselves. There is so much going on here all at once. The children's goal is colorful, decorated biscuits, but the journey itself is enriching and as much fun as the result.

→ 1

### Stimulating learning environment

The childminders have provided various ingredients for decorating the biscuits that they baked together. The children find plenty of things that inspire their creativity and make it fun to join in. The materials give children the opportunity to gain new experience. Meret, Anna, Paolo and Nevin make use of the opportunity and become absorbed in the task. No one tells them what the biscuits have to look like when decorated. The children are allowed to give free rein to their imagination and experiment with the materials as they wish. Not having to follow specific instructions, the children are free to develop ideas and try out new things.

The materials and the way that they have been provided are developmentally appropriate: a small table at which the children sit comfortably; utensils that the children can use safely by themselves without constant adult supervision; a manageably sized group in which joint activity and exchange among the children are possible. Here the childminders have created a learning situation that gives the children inspiration for an activity and an opportunity to follow their own initiative.

→ 2

### Learning together

All four children decorate biscuits on their own and for themselves. But the activity also demands a lot of teamwork on their part. To gain access to desired ingredients and to realize their ideas the children have to negotiate among themselves, confer and help each other. Anna hands Meret more biscuits and passes her the bowl of icing. Paolo tells Meret that she can ask him if she needs more decorations. In this way he offers her his help indirectly. Paolo is happy to pass over the bowl of chocolate sprinkles. He does not need any more sprinkles, but Nevin stills needs some. A little conflict has arisen, but Paolo resolves it immediately by showing Nevin an alternative: "Come on. We can use Smarties." This is how children practice their social skills.

→ 3

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ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).





IREM / 2 years 10 months

It doesn't always have to be children's toys. Every-day objects also provide wonderful learning opportunities. Irem has discovered the magnets on the refrigerator. What are those strange things? Sometime they stick, and sometimes they don't. Throwing them is no good at all. So how do they work then? / Irem is thrilled. It works! It sticks! Being thrilled and excited is what leads to perseverance. Irem is tireless. Perhaps from here to there? Or maybe from here to there? Her mother supports her in her explorations and discoveries. This takes patience. And also the ability to lift her up and hold her. / Here we can see the power of attraction. In a dual sense. The attraction of the magnets. And the attraction of exploration. A physics lesson at the refrigerator in the kitchen. / A chair for Irem could give her mother some relief and strengthen Irem's independence. / It doesn't work at all with the spoon. And when the magnets are removed from the pieces of paper, the papers fall to the floor. And when the magnets stick to the faces in the photos, Papa and Ilke disappear. That's just too bad. All of this has to be talked about. / Irem's mother is willing to take part in the different experiments. She has time. Shared curiosity doubles the pleasure.

## MAGNETS

Physics experiments at the refrigerator. Young children want to be great explorers. For this, they need adults who take the time to find answers to their questions with them.

### Research and discovery

Young children are explorers and discoverers, and Irem is no exception. She has discovered the magnets on the refrigerator and wants to experiment with them. She has so many questions: where do the magnets work and where not? Do both sides of the magnet stick or just the black side? Will a spoon remain stuck to the refrigerator, too? What happens when you take away a magnet holding papers? Do the magnets also stick when you throw them at the refrigerator from below? What happens when you let the magnets fall? Do they break? How can you distribute the many magnets on the different pieces of paper? Irem seeks answers to all of her questions, and the best way for her to find them is if she tries things out herself. Through her many little experiments, Irem learns some things about the attractive force of magnets and its practical uses.

Irem's mother sees that this is a learning opportunity for her daughter and supports her in her learning. She responds to Irem's interest and joins her in her voyage of discovery. She is patient and gives Irem ample time to explore the things that she is curious about with persistence. She offers little suggestions as to where and how the magnets remain stuck, without lecturing Irem or supplying Irem with ready-made answers to her questions. Children learn best through their own explorations and manipulations and their own experiences. Irem's mother also holds Irem up so that she can reach the magnets that she wants. Irem could reach the magnets by herself if her mother gave her a chair next time or if she placed the magnets lower down. Today it appears important

to Irem to make her discoveries while on her mother's arm.

→ 1

#### Learning together

Irem is discovering the magnets on the refrigerator with her mother's support. Experimenting together and mutual exchange are important for Irem's learning processes. Children can only form a multidimensional and holistic view of the world around them in social interaction. Together with her mother, Irem 'co-constructs' her knowledge about magnets. The two of them seek answers to Irem's questions together. If Irem had to scout out the answers all by herself, her search would probably soon come to a dead end. With her mother's help, however, Irem not only finds answers but comes up with new questions. In this way she is encouraged by her mother to try out new things, follow up on her curiosity and interests, show persistence and exchange experiences. Even though her mother probably knows the answers to most of Irem's questions, she resists the natural urge to answer and engages in the experimenting with openness and interest.

→ 2.

#### Emotions in the learning process

Handling the magnets is obviously a lot of fun for Irem: she laughs and is full of energy. This enthusiasm is very important: if their explorations bring pleasure or success, children retain their learning and want to learn more. Irem is driven by her natural curiosity and is being given the opportunity to follow her interest. This is the best starting point for gaining, using and expanding knowledge about these interesting things. Children's natural desire to learn is the engine that drives their own learning biographies. When children achieve something, experience success and find answers, they gain a high level of satisfaction and see themselves as active and effective.

→ 3

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ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 ff.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).



## PUDDLE

In rain, wind or sunshine, in spring, summer, autumn or winter: With the right clothing, children can have enriching experiences outdoors at all times.

ANNA / 4 years

There's no such thing as bad weather; there is only the wrong clothing. That's what nature lovers say, and it's especially true for children. It's pouring. It's the weather for puddles and it's cold. No problem! Anna is having fun with her puddle and the mud. / This miserable weather is giving Anna the opportunity to learn things about water. How can you put puddle water into the pail with a shovel? How can you transport the water in the pail safely to another place? And how can you get a hold of the thin handle of the pail when you are wearing such thick and bulky gloves? / Anna sticks with it. And succeeds. It was worth getting her clothes dirty for this!

### Holistic learning

Young children learn holistically. That means, for one, that they use all of their senses to learn and, for another, that they also benefit in a variety of ways from one and the same activity. Anna actually wants to play with some water from the puddle, so she scoops some into her bucket so that she can carry it. But at the same time she is learning a variety of different things. She is acquiring a lot of scientific facts about water, for instance: she sees how the rain water is mixing with earth and becoming grayish-brown, dirty water. She feels the ground getting wet under her feet and notices that different types of ground take up the water differently: the meadow is absorbing the water fully like a sponge, but the stony ground covered with leaves becomes slippery. She sees raindrops creating bubbles in the puddle. She discovers how water can be transported. She sees that precipitation can sometimes be rain and sometimes snow. And she sees how snow becomes water.

In addition to these scientific experiences, this situation also stimulates learning in other developmental domains. It is difficult to grasp the handle of her bucket with her gloves. Anna does not allow this to discourage her and does not give up. She shows persistence, patience and motor skills.

→ 1

### Stimulating learning environment

Children need a stimulating learning environment. This can be a puddle in the pouring rain, if children are wearing the right clothes. Anna is well dressed for the outdoors with her thick jacket, rain pants, rubber boots, gloves and cap. The cold and wet weather does not appear to bother her. She scoops water from the puddle into her bucket as if it is the obvious thing to do, with great concentration. The rain here is not an uncomfortable weather phenomenon. For Anna it is just the opposite: the rain is giving her lots of interesting opportunities to experience different things. Rain is an invitation for all kinds of play, experimentation and observation. As Anna includes water in her play, she becomes more familiar with the element quite incidentally. Each season and all

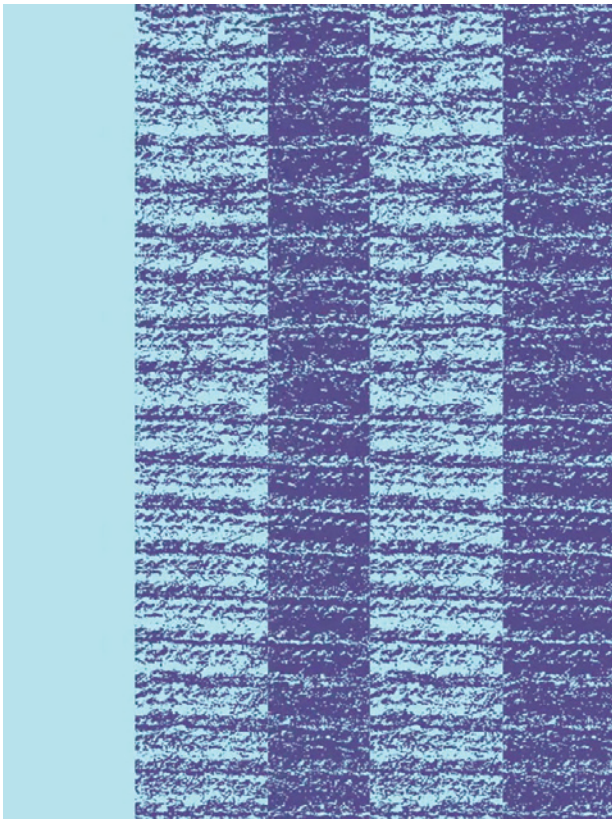
types of weather offer a wealth of valuable learning opportunities.

Anna has definite thoughts about what she wants to do and pursues her ideas tirelessly. Young children can engage in an activity with commitment, persistence, concentration and will power, if they have the opportunity to follow their interests without interference.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit:  
Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.); Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).



## SOCKS

Room, time and opportunity.  
That's what children need to be able  
to manage tasks on their own.

MARA / 3 years 2 months

There is a lot going on at the day care centre. But Mara is focused on her task. How can she get the sock to go over her heel? / Pull it, tug it, twist it around. A second attempt. / That looks better. At least her toes are almost in the right place. The day care teacher is very close by. She could help Mara, of course. But she allows Mara to discover the pitfalls of socks on her own. In this way, Mara learns that she can put on her socks by herself. Even if she doesn't succeed on her very first try. / Now she has to get the top of the sock in the right place, below her knee. Mara is very precise about this. / Putting her second sock on is already easier. While she is doing so, Mara can even chat a bit with the others about who was in the woods. And she can take a look around at what else is going on. / She quickly gets her toes and heel into the sock correctly and, finally, pulls the sock up to her knee. Done! And all by herself!

### Experiential learning in the child's everyday life

Mara has just had her after-lunch nap and wants to put her socks back on. This is a daily task that she has done many times with more and less help. Even though it takes her longer than it takes an adult, Mara has had a lot of practice and no longer needs any assistance. Despite all the busy activity around her, she devotes herself to her task with concentration and care. She has a precise notion of how her sock should sit on her foot and knows how to achieve it. She pays attention to every detail, such as making sure that the top of the sock lays flat under her knee. This takes her some time, but her teacher sits patiently in front of her and gives her as much time as she needs. She knows that each time Mara puts on her socks she will be surer and do it better. Today she already displays progress as she puts on the second sock, for she no longer needs to devote her entire attention to the task. As she pulls up the sock, she can also talk with the others about who was in the wood. Young children learn by doing and experiencing. Mara learns to put on her socks by doing it independently and by being given the opportunity to try it herself whenever possible. Through repeated tries, she can strengthen her skills and develop them further.

→ 1

### Doing tasks on their own

Putting on socks has to be learned. Mara is being given the opportunity to perform this demanding skill independently. Her teacher is nearby. She could help Mara if Mara needed her to. But Mara manages very well all by herself. Ordinary but also challenging daily tasks are important learning opportunities for young children. When they master the tasks on their own, they have a feeling of self-efficacy and accomplishment. This is of central importance for the gradual development of a positive and also

realistic self-concept, which enables children to approach new tasks with confidence and self-assurance.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).





## SOUP LADLE

Without activity there is no learning. Children learn through their bodies, senses and emotions all at the same time.

### MELINA / 9 months

Melina's mother has given Melina a basket containing interesting objects. Melina goes for a soup ladle. The cuddly toy can wait. / It's funny how the soup ladle rocks to and fro on the floor! / What's like to have this in your mouth? This end? And the other end? / All of this is interesting to Melina. And the other child with the ladle in the mirror. Nine-month-old Melina does not yet recognize herself. But she is fascinated by the movements that she sees, and she coos with pleasure. / Melina can hear that someone is nearby. This gives her the courage to continue playing. What does the soup ladle taste like? / And what will happen if it falls to the floor? She can pick it up all by herself! Let's see what other interesting things are in that basket.

#### Learning with all their senses

Melina's mother has put a basket containing interesting objects on the floor for her. Curious, Melina crawls to the basket and takes out one object after another, including a soup ladle. With rapt attention Melina watches how the ladle rocks to and fro on the floor and listens to the sounds it makes as it rattles. This has caught her interest. She picks up the ladle and draws it to her mouth. She feels and tastes first one side and then the other. She probably smells the metal, too. Then she swings the ladle up and down with her arm, scratches her head with it and then puts it in her mouth again. She explores the ladle extensively with her mouth. Melina listens when the ladle drops to the floor and makes clattering noises again. She looks at the ladle once more, puts it in her mouth a last time and then turns her attention back to the basket of objects. Melina uses all of her senses to examine the ladle and learns about its shape and properties. As she engages with the ladle she makes sounds and expresses her enthusiasm.

But she is not only taken by the ladle. Her attention has also been captured by the small child sitting facing her. She has not yet realized that the child in the mirror is no one but herself. For now, she watches the movements and facial expressions of the child in the mirror with fascination. Young children learn by doing and by observing.

→ 1

#### Stimulating learning environment

Melina is sitting on the floor in her room. This familiar room is set up so that Melina can explore her surroundings in safety. Her mother is nearby, within sight and hearing distance. She could come immediately if Melina needed help. This makes it possible for Melina to go on a voyage of discovery. To this purpose, her mother has provided a number of things that are stimulating for Melina and give her a variety of learning opportunities. There is the basket filled with a few toys and a soup ladle. Melina can access these materials as she wishes. She can

crawl to the basket by herself and take out an object of her own choosing. A household object, the soup ladle, has caught her particular interest. Children do not always need ready-made toys; everyday objects, too, invite them to explore and experiment. There is also a large mirror in the room. In the mirror Melina can watch what she herself is doing. Later on, she will look in the mirror to find out what she looks like and how she appears to others. Mirrors also promote identity formation in children. In this way, children expand their ability to perceive themselves and others.

Melina's room is designed to provide stimulation but also allow rest and recovery. The room is not too sparsely furnished but is also not overcrowded with things. It invites play and exploration but does not overwhelm the child with stimuli.

For children to be able to get to know the world around them and also themselves, they need secure relationships with attachment figures. The opportunity to engage actively with interesting things and become deeply absorbed is important for children's development and learning.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).



## UPSIDE-DOWN BOSU BALL

Children can learn a number of things at the same time. Especially when play requires several senses and when they can choose the task themselves.

ZALÁN / 3 years, 10 months  
KRISTÓF / 7 months

Three people, one room, lots of learning opportunities and lots of fun! For little Kristóf with his red car. And for Zalán on the tippy ball, a toy from his home country, Hungary. / The ball tips this way and that. They sing a Hungarian song. And each tip this way and that way is an occasion for comment. / Itsy—bitsy ..... Zalán knows the song, too. That connects them. And his little brother Kristóf probably knows it well, too. / There is a lot going on here in play: Coordination and balance, sense of rhythm, and social closeness.

### Holistic learning

Children's learning is not fragmented but holistic. This means that children use all their senses when learning. Zalán hears the song that his mother sings and sings along with her. Under his feet he feels the upside-down bosu ball he is standing in wobble and uses his sense of balance intensively. Using his whole body, he tries to keep his balance. In his hands he feels the ball, its form and material. His eyes follow the ball's flight. His eyes coordinate with his arms and hands, which catch the ball and throw it up again. Even little Kristóf, who is lying nearby on the floor, is using his senses to explore. The focus of his attention is a small car. Kristóf feels the material with his hands and mouth, and his eyes watch with interest as the car rolls back and forth. Young children do not learn with their intellect alone but also with their body, their emotions and their senses—children learn with 'head, heart and hand'. All are important for a child's learning processes. But holistic learning also means that children can profit in several ways from one and the same activity. In this situation Zalán and also Kristóf are learning in many different domains: coordination and reaction ability, sense of balance, body tension, feel for music and rhythm, language and social skills. This means that with young children, individual developmental domains cannot be trained in isolation. Children develop their skills in the different developmental domains in everyday and play situations.

→ 1

### Play is learning, and learning is play

Playing, singing, laughing and learning—it all comes together. Here it is apparent that learning is associated with pleasure. Zalán throws and catches the ball, stands on the wobbling bosu ball, and balances on one leg, while singing at the same time—it is no easy task to manage all of that at once. But Zalán associates this challenge of his own choosing with enjoyment and not with exertion. His mother knows that play is important for children. She takes ample time to play and sing with her sons, which she obviously also enjoys. Conditions are especially favorable for young children to learn when it is important to them and when they can be en-

thusiastic about and interested in the activities and topics.

→ 2

### Challenges

For a situation to be a learning situation, it must challenge the child—that is, it must be slightly difficult for them. Children themselves often choose challenges that are appropriate for them, just as Zalán is doing here. Standing on the bosu ball without losing his balance is not very easy but it is not enough of a challenge for Zalán, apparently. It is more of a challenge for him to stand on one leg while playing catch with his mother and singing at the same time. Zalán explores how far he can go, what he can do successfully and what not. It always has to be slightly more difficult. Just difficult enough that he can manage the task successfully. His mother allows him to try out his ideas, and she does not push him to set even more challenging goals. This makes the situation neither boring nor frustrating for Zalán—the best condition for learning.

There is a moment when it is too much: Zalán catches the ball but loses his balance. But it is not so bad. He laughs as he gets up and tries again. He works tirelessly at this challenge of his own choosing, supported by his mother's patience and loving smile.

→ 3

### Appropriate support

Kristóf is relaxed as he explores the little red car while his mother and brother are playing catch. In close physical proximity to his mother and with his brother nearby he has a feeling of well-being. With her light touches, his mother signals her presence. She frequently looks at Kristóf in the face to make sure that he is alright. She helps him when the little car rolls too far away and places it where he can reach it. She also pushes the car away so that Kristóf can watch it move again. When Zalán's ball goes off target, she holds her hands protectively over Kristóf's little head. These small gestures at the right moment give Kristóf the feeling of security that he needs to be able to pursue his desire for exploration. When he no longer feels good, perhaps because he is tired, and starts to cry, his mother understands his signals and responds immediately by picking him up.

In this situation the boys' mother succeeds in giving both sons her attention. As she plays and sings with Zalán, she watches out for Kristóf with a great deal of care.

→ 4

### Songs and rhymes

Zalán and his mother sing a song together. Singing songs is an effective way to help children learn in many different domains.

Songs have a rhythm and a melody, and the lyrics are often composed in rhymes. This supports language acquisition: the rhythms in songs and verses consolidate a feel for language and support the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary. Singing the

Hungarian song also helps Zalán expand and strengthen his first language, his family's language. This is an important basis that will also help him learn German well and quickly.

Music—whether in songs, with instruments or in singing and dancing—is also a form of communication that even young children greatly enjoy. This mother singing with her children is giving them the opportunity to learn another language and to express and communicate thoughts and feelings.

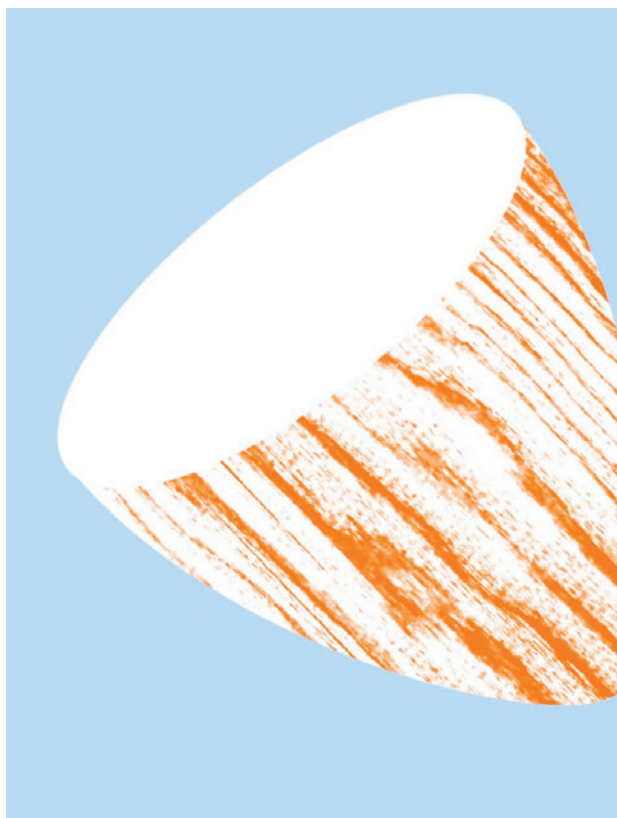
Music also conveys belonging, emotional well-being and love and care. Singing together fosters the emotional attachment between mother and son. It also underlines their enjoyment of playing together.

→ 5

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 4 Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).
- 5 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).



## WOODEN FRUIT

Young children can engage with things in depth if they feel secure and safe, are not hungry or thirsty, are dressed comfortably and have had enough sleep.

### KRISTÓF / 9 months

They can stand. And they can turn over. This is how they taste. And how they feel. Smooth. The bottom is somehow different. There's something rough on the wooden toy fruit. / Kristóf learns all of these things with his hands. With his 10 fingers. And with his mouth. / They can also roll away. Kristóf goes after the toy. Calmly and with total concentration, he explores the wooden toy fruit and gives his curiosity his full attention. His mother is nearby. And his two older brothers are busy doing something else. The voices of the other three convey a feeling of security. / Sometimes on his stomach. Sometimes on his back. There is always something different. / The wooden toy fruit on the smooth wooden floor. The wooden toy fruit on the edge of the carpet and on the soft carpet itself. / How persevering and contented Kristóf is! All with just one toy. For a long time.

#### Learning with all their senses

Using the sense of touch in his hands and mouth, Kristóf feels the smoothness of the wood and the roughness of the Velcro strip. He feels the weight of the wooden toy and notices that it can roll away. He hears the sound that the wooden toy makes when it hits the floor. It sounds different on the parquet flooring than on the carpet. The toy can be held with one hand or both hands. Kristóf can explore it when he is on his stomach or when he is lying on his back. Kristóf also hears his own voice as he makes sounds when investigating the toy. He learns by processing the many different perceptions through all of the senses. He is active physically, emotionally and mentally.

Now and again he glances at his mother and brothers. He also sees the camera. But he is so absorbed in his explorations that neither the happenings around him nor the rolling away of the toy deter him. From birth on, children try with all of their energy and all of their senses to grasp the world around them. Their pleasure and the strength of their motivation is plain to see in Kristóf's happy and concentrating facial expression.

→ 1

#### Physical and emotional well-being

It is fascinating to see Kristóf's persistence and concentration as he examines the wooden toy. He seems well-rested and content. His physical needs have been met: he has had a good sleep, has been fed, is wearing clean diapers and is dressed such that he feels neither too warm nor cold. His practical clothing also gives him enough freedom of movement to turn over and crawl comfortably and without feeling constricted. He obviously feels very comfortable in the familiar surroundings. The voices of his mother and brothers give him the security that he needs to be able to engage deeply in his play. He knows that if he needs her, his mother is there for him. It is this security that makes it possible for

Kristóf to fulfill his need for autonomy and stimulation and to explore the wooden toy extensively.

→ 2

#### Stimulating learning environment

Kristóf is not yet interested in what this red, half-rounded object with its smooth surface represents. And his mother recognizes that the wooden fruit toy is not only appropriate for her older sons to use in role play but also interesting for Kristóf to explore. The toy has no dangerous edges or corners, and it cannot be swallowed. It has lots of interesting characteristics such as curves that allow it to roll, a piece of Velcro that offers a contrast to the smoothness of the wooden surface and a bright red color, which Kristóf also seems to find attractive. The toy lies in his field of vision on the floor, where he can reach it. Also, there is enough space for him to roll over on his back or to crawl after the toy when it rolls away. This is a stimulating and safe learning environment that allows Kristóf to engage in deep exploration and experimentation.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).





## DOLLS

In role play, children process and internalize what they have experienced. This is very valuable.

TIM / 3 years 5 months  
NILS / 3 years 6 months  
ZALÁN / 3 years 10 months

Tim wants to take a walk with Anja. Anja is the doll's name. Actually, all of the dolls at the play group are named Anja. / Tim is taking care of Anja. He doesn't want her to get cold. She needs something warm. The pink knitted jacket is just right. But sleeves and arms are a bit tricky. / Nils comes along. His Anja isn't very well—she's got a stomach bug. That's why his Anja has to stay at home today. / Being ill? Getting dressed, going outdoors? These are things that Nils and Tim know about. With the Anjas, the two boys can act out situations that they have experienced themselves. How attentive and caring the two boys are! They have certainly often experienced being looked after by others.

### Role play

Tim and Nils have been using dolls in their daily play for some time now. Tim is planning a walk with his doll named 'Anja', and with a lot of empathy he is considering how he should dress her so that she does not get cold. Nils' doll is suffering from a stomach bug. These are two issues with which the boys seem to be very familiar. Role play often reveals how children experience everyday life and their current concerns. For instance, Nils himself was quite ill recently with gastroenteritis. He is now processing that experience in his role play. When children are allowed to choose a role, they also learn to empathize with others and change their way of looking at things in their play. Tim and Nils take the part of caring adults and consider things that they are familiar with from their parents and other caregivers: how should I dress the baby so that she does not get cold outdoors? Is the other baby ill, too? They take responsibility for their 'Anjas'. They have to put their thoughts into words and communicate them to others. In role play they learn to express themselves and to listen and understand what others are trying to tell them. But role play reinforces more than their language and social skills; when dressing his doll Tim is also developing his fine motor skills at the same time. Role play provides countless opportunities to learn and practice.

→ 1

### Stimulating learning environment

To take their 'Anjas' for a walk, Tim and Nils also need doll clothes and baby carriages. All of these things and more are supplied in the play area at the play group. The play area is set up to invite and inspire creative and imaginative play. The play group teacher has thought about the children's concerns in daily life and what props they could use to re-enact and revise their experiences. The types of materials supplied should always take the children's current interests into consideration. Nils will soon have a new sibling, and the 'baby' topic is

very much on his mind. Tim, too, enjoys playing with dolls at the moment. Zalán, who is playing in the background in the kitchen area, helps his mother at home with the cooking and can apply his knowledge in his play. Who knows, the children might soon be interested in other topics, such as building sites, police, circus, horses, or Indians. Then it will be time to 'reset the stage' in the role play area by providing new and appropriate materials and props.

To become deeply absorbed in play, however, children need more than the proper materials and an environment that relates to their experiences. They also need ample time and space to pursue their interests and ideas on their own initiative and with concentration. It is mainly in self-chosen (unstructured), free play that children encounter a variety of experiences and learning areas. In free play, children make their own choice of where, with what, and with whom they want to play. The two friends Tim and Nils enjoy playing together and use free play to engage deeply in role play of their own choosing. The play group teacher is nearby. She observes what is happening and can provide help if needed. Her main task is to ensure a healthy balance between stimulation/support of the children's own initiative and between helping /stepping back in her role as educator.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.); Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).



## GAME

From earliest childhood on, children are surrounded by various media. They need adults that know how to use them. In this way, children learn step by step to use media and to recognize their uses and risks.

LIVIA / 2 years 1 month  
MAURO / 4 years 3 months  
LENA / 6 years 8 months

Fun and games on the sofa. And media education as well. But the children don't notice that. / There's a special yellow dot. It can multiply itself. It can magically create other colours. But for that it needs Livia, Mauro and Lena. / The children have to clap. Only in this way do the dots get bigger and bigger, until they almost leap from the page. / And then everything is all yellow again and still and small and round. / From book to tablet. The game continues. A lot is the same; some things are different. Father is nearby. He's with his three children as they try out the new game. And all four of them learn fast and also score points! / Can they already do it themselves? Yes, many fingers make the dots come and go, get bigger and smaller. It was like that in the book, and on the tablet it is the same and also different. / Through play, Livia, Mauro and Lena learn what different media can do and cannot do and how to use them.

### Using media

The new picture book captures the children's and their father's attention. They follow the instructions enthusiastically and race to blow, clap and tap. This is not only fun but also shapes the children's relationship to the book as a medium. They experience that books have an effect on their own minds and on others. Positive memories of 'story time' in the group can also contribute towards children's enjoyment of books in the future and their discovery of the joy of reading and writing.

Even in the first years of life, children come into contact not just with books but also various other media. It is impossible to imagine life today without cell phones, computers and television. To be able to recognize the opportunities and advantages as well as the risks and disadvantages of this, children have to have a chance to explore different media and ways to use them and to discover their great diversity. They need the accompaniment and support of adults for this. Together with their father, the three children investigate not only the picture book but also the new game, all the while practicing using the tablet computer. Livia tests the finger movements required to move things around on the screen. And Mauro learns where he has to press to return to the menu. Lena is older and has more experience in using the tablet. She comments on what she is doing, sharing her ideas with her younger siblings. As a side benefit, Livia is learning to recognize the colors that Lena and Mauro name several times.

Their father accompanies them as they try out the new game. This way he can see how Livia, Mauro and Lena manage it and can answer any questions that come up. He only steps back and leaves them to experiment on their own when he is sure that the three children can play the game without difficulty.

and without being overwhelmed. But he stays nearby and can lend a hand if needed. In this way, the adult makes the children's age-appropriate use of media possible.

→ 1

### Research and discovery

What happens to the colored dots in the picture book when you touch them, blow them away or clap loud? With rapt attention, the children and their father turn the pages and find out what happens next. Suddenly, the dots have multiplied, practically fall out of the pages or become giant-sized. It is a lot of fun to do something yourself and then observe what changes. Children learn from actions and experiences, through trying things out, observing, asking questions and repeating. They also notice that the drawings in a picture book are static, even though it seems as though the dots react to the children's actions when turning the pages at first. This is different with the tablet, where the dots do in fact get larger and finally burst when the children touch them. The children's father supports their learning processes. He acts as a moderator as they make their discoveries, talking with them about what they can do with the book and with the game on the tablet, for instance. But he cannot influence how each child processes and organizes the external stimuli and information. Children actively shape their own learning processes. But they are still dependent on the support and reactions of reliable and considerate adults as attentive counterparts and examples.

→ 2

### Learning together

The atmosphere is relaxed. The children and their father have a feeling of well-being and are enjoying being together. Two-year-old Livia belongs just as much as four-year-old Mauro and six-and-a-half-year-old Lena do. Each of them makes an individual contribution to the shared experience. The older siblings have more experience and allow Livia to go first when touching the dots and turning the pages. She can practice her fine motor skills in this way. Lena and Mauro use language more to comment on their actions and to learn more and more about the game and use of the tablet ("Do you have to press both dots?"; "Where exactly do you have to touch the screen?"). Despite the difference in their ages, each child can profit from the game and learn something new.

But all three siblings already know one thing: to experiment together and try out something new, they have to be considerate of one another. For example, they have to each find a place where everyone can see the picture book and the tablet without blocking one another's view. To understand what the others are saying, they have to take turns speaking and listening. If everyone spoke at once, they would not understand what the others were saying. And for all of them to be able to participate in the game, they have to be close enough to be able to touch the screen. The children know all of this only because

they have experienced it in many situations and have practiced it many times.

It is important for children to be given the opportunity to experience things in stable, constant group compositions with familiar people. Here they can practice basic communication skills in interaction: speak and listen, ask and seek support, help and explain. Together with others, children also learn to take responsibility for their own actions and to see and respect others' way of looking at things. Children develop these fundamental social skills in their earliest years.

→ 3

### FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.); Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 f.); Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).



## HANDS

In the company of their peers, children learn to solve problems together, to see things from the other points of view and to take responsibility. To learn this, they need adults as role models.

LEYNA / 1 year 10 months

LARA / 2 years 11 months

The other children and the teachers can be heard nearby. And so the two friends can dare to have an adventure. / Whoops! For Leyna the uneven ground in the woods is not without its problems. After all, she is not yet two years old. Fortunately, she has Lara. Lara helps her. And how! / Now what? How can Leyna get back on her feet? Lara looks over at the grown-ups. But they are busy with the other children. And so Leyna tries to help herself. / Lara puts down her stick and pot. She needs both hands. Right! That does it! The two little girls manage on their own. What a wonderful feeling!

### Learning together

When Leyna falls down, Lara is right there to help her. Lara seems to know exactly what to do. First, she brushes off Leyna's hands and face with care. Then she helps her friend to get up. She has probably seen adults perform these actions. Things that she has observed and probably experienced herself she now passes on to Leyna, all the while practicing her social skills as well. She shows empathy and takes responsibility for a child who is one year younger than she is.

Children learn a lot from each other. Where there is an age difference, both the younger and older children benefit from each other. Being together with other children offers different opportunities than being together with adults, since adults tend to be more similar to each other in life experience, knowledge and abilities. Children who are familiar with each other and like each other share many successful and unsuccessful interactions and in this way can try out social behavior. Nevertheless, there should always be an accessible adult nearby to keep an eye on the children and make sure that the situation stays manageable for them and does not overwhelm them.

→ 1

### Challenges

The young children are walking together over the uneven ground in the wood, which is a good training ground for motor skills and coordination. But it is no easy task to keep their balance, and Leyna promptly falls down. She does not seem to be able to get back up on her own. It is also not very easy for Lara to help her friend up. This is the next challenge facing the two girls. Then Lara gets the idea to put down her pail and use both hands. This is the only way it works. The two girls have mastered the challenge together—without the active help of an adult. But the children know that if they had needed additional help, a reliable person is nearby. This has given them the confidence to try to manage this on their own.

Children need challenges to seek new solutions, try things out and thus learn new things. It is up to



the adult to provide these opportunities and also to ensure that the children are not overwhelmed.

→ 2

### The hundred languages of childhood

Young children communicate in many ways. They use 'a hundred languages' to express their needs, feelings and thoughts, ideas and plans, questions and answers. In this scene, Leyna and Lara hardly speak a word. And yet they seem to understand each other very well indeed. When Leyna wants to get up, she reaches her hand out to Lara, conveying the message, "Please help me stand up." And when Lara's support does not work at first, she communicates with Lara by appealing to her with a brief look. When the girls have succeeded in getting Leyna back on her feet, they continue on their way hand-in-hand—an unspoken sign of their shared success and their togetherness.

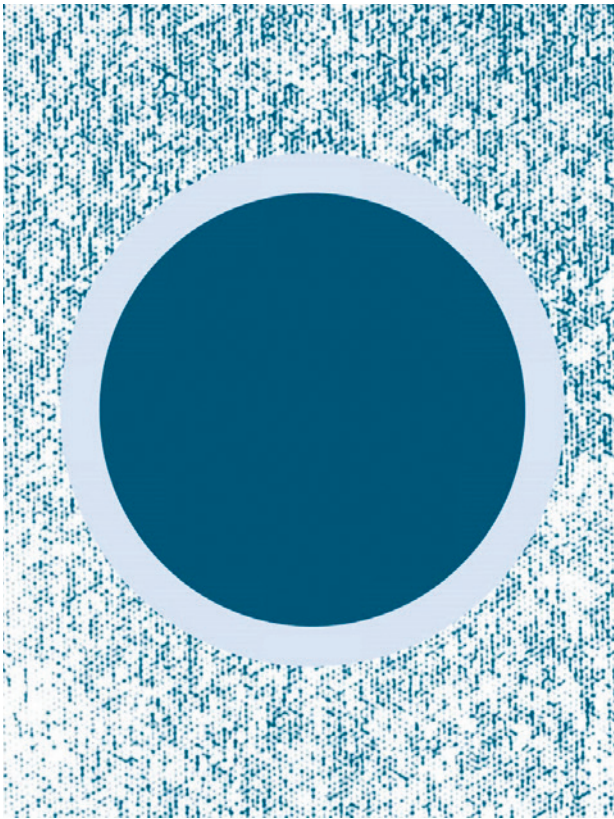
In their regular exchanges with other children, Leyna and Lara learn to distinguish between their own and others' needs, feelings and thoughts. This is an important prerequisite to (further) development of their capacity for empathy, empathetic behavior and consideration for others.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.); Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).





## HOLE

By playing together, children have their first experiences with one another. They notice that together they make progress. They learn to work together, to form their own opinions, and to accept other ways of looking at things.

ANNA / 4 years 1 months  
NEVIN / 4 years 4 months  
MERET / 3 years 7 months

Anna and Nevin are outside in the garden at their day care centre. It's cold, but Anna and Nevin want to stay outside. The teacher is also there. She gives them the necessary feeling of security. This allows them to engage deeply in their task of building a tunnel. / Meret wants to help. The others let her. Will the three children succeed in making a hole through the pile of hard snow? What's the best way to do it? With the stick? Or with the rake? / With both, of course! And with questions and answers! / -It's hard work! Tips and tricks are shared. The three children don't give up. They pursue their common goal with perseverance. / After 15 minutes of concentrated effort, they succeed. They manage to break through the snow. There's a hole now! / All that effort was worth it. And making the effort was fun.

### Learning together

Working together to drill a hole through a pile of snow gives the children many opportunities for learning. It all starts with the idea to poke and prod the snow 'mountain'. And then comes the plan to make a hole right through it. The children try out the best ways to drill a hole using the rake and sticks (Nevin: "We have to push hard like this"), discover the principle of leverage and learn something about the consistency of snow.

But the three children are also gaining experience in social interaction. Meret is a bit younger than the other two and is given specific tips on how she should go about making the hole. All three children are learning to cooperate in joint play and to take different perspectives. Specifically, that also means checking how the mountain and the drilling look on the other side. Through talking to each other they can form their opinions and learn from one another. They expand their knowledge together (co-construction).

To achieve their goal they must communicate. They take turns, give each other tips and say if they do not agree with something. This gives Anna, Nevin and Meret a feeling of belonging as well as their first experiences with democratic cooperation. Working together requires a lot of consultation among the children. When speaking with each other, they are trying out and expanding their language skills.

→ 1

### Stimulating learning environment

Play in the snow-covered garden offers the warmly dressed children in the day care group an interesting and stimulating learning environment. Children with similar interests gather together and engage in activities together. Nevin, Anna and Meret want to drill a hole in a pile of hard snow. They find that the rake and sticks are appropriate tools to translate their goal into action. For a full 15 minutes they devote

concentrated effort to reaching their goal, without interruption.

Children need to be allowed ample time and opportunities to set their own goals and to find their own solutions, so that they can experience self-efficacy and feelings of success. During free play they also need a familiar, reliable and accessible caregiver who gives them the necessary security to be able to engage in an activity with concentration and without interruption.

In this example, the day care group teacher is in sight and in hearing distance; she could provide support at any time if the children asked for help or needed new impetus for their play. Thus, all the necessary conditions are fulfilled to allow Nevin, Anna and Meret to concentrate on their activity with persistence and meet their own goal, learning all the while.

→ 2

### Research and discovery

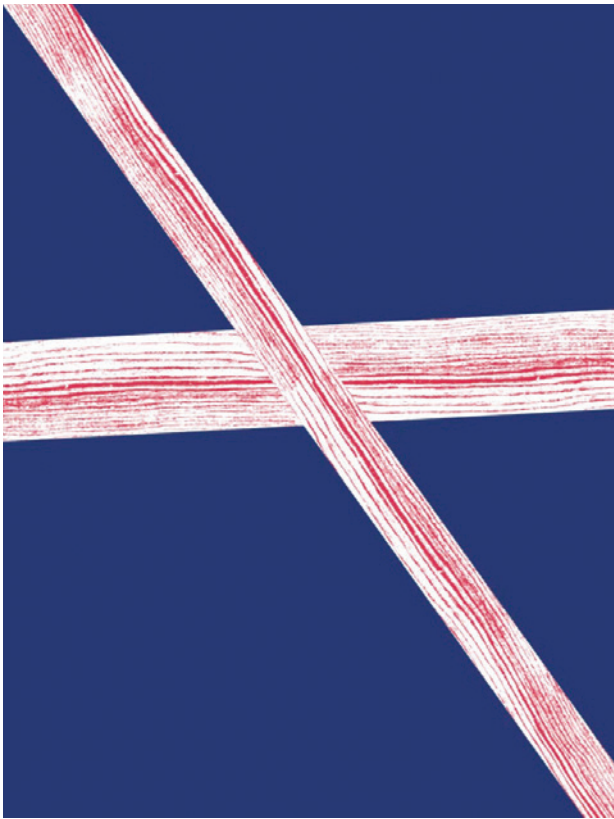
In choosing to drill a hole through the hard pile of snow, Nevin, Anna and Meret have not set themselves an easy task. Children devote considerable effort towards achieving a goal or finding something out. They are strongly motivated by their natural curiosity; they learn by exploring and discovering. They take pleasure in experimenting and developing their own explanations and hypotheses; this is how young children learn best.

By actively engaging in working with the rake and the sticks, Nevin, Anna and Meret experience that they can have an effect the world around them. They work towards accomplishing their goal with persistence, and in the end they are successful. It's a wonderful feeling! Strengthened by this experience, they will make other plans in future and translate them into action with energy and zest.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.); Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 2 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).



## JET

Role play allows children to be somebody else. This opens up many language and social perspectives. And it helps children to understand and share their observations.

RAPHAEL / 3 years 2 months

MARA / 3 years 2 months

When somebody takes a trip, they have a lot to talk about! Raphael apparently already knows about jets and flying. Maybe he often watches planes? / Now he wants to share this with Mara and fly off with her in the woods. / Mara and Raphael and the other children come to the woods every week with their day care group. They spend a whole morning there in all kinds of weather. All kinds of weather—that's also important when flying. / A few long branches are all Mara and Raphael need to build their plane and take their first flight together. / Raphael is the pilot. Mara is the passenger. Each child has their own role. Raphael is responsible for the flight.

### Learning together

Learning processes in early childhood take place in dialogue with others. In their social interactions, children construct a multilayered and holistic view of the world. In their joint role play, Mara and Raphael are learning a lot, both from each other and together. Raphael already knows something about airplanes and flying. He knows, for instance, that some airplanes are called jets, that the person who sits up front steers the plane, and that passengers must fasten their seat belts. In playing Raphael applies his knowledge, establishes it more firmly and passes it on to Mara as he instructs her. Together they also discover that branches can be used in different ways, such as to build airplanes.

As they play together, the children practice their roles among themselves. Raphael expresses his idea of building a jet—he is the 'storyteller' who determines what happens most of the time. He also plays the part of pilot—a leading role—whereas Mara prefers to sit in the back. At the same time, Raphael's questions show clearly that he is also interested in Mara's ideas. Again and again he includes her in the play. Raphael also shows that he can take another's perspective and be responsive in another situation. Whereas it is important to Raphael to find the right name for the jet, Mara wants to take off now. Raphael responds to her wish, and off they go. Expressing your own wishes and needs and respecting the wishes and needs of others are important components of social competency. They can only be practiced and acquired in social interactions. Raphael brings his knowledge into their play, but he also cooperates with Mara. He also practices taking responsibility for others: as a pilot he must make sure that his passengers are wearing their seat belts, so that they stay safe when flying. In role play children strengthen and expand many social skills.

→ 1

### Role play

Raphael already knows a lot about airplanes and flying. As the day care center is located near an airport, he has probably seen a lot of planes. He may

have been on an airplane himself and would now like to re-enact and share the experience with Mara. In role play, children process and internalize things that they have experienced, seen and heard in their daily life. They develop an understanding of the world of adults. They act out procedures and processes and discover logical connections.

In play, children can take on roles that they mostly cannot (yet) have in real life: lion, Indian, princess, mother and father, doctor and patient ... anything is possible. Raphael is a pilot today, and Mara is a passenger. By taking different roles, children take on different ways of looking at things. This is training in taking other perspectives. We need this skill to be able to empathize with others and put ourselves in the position of others.

By pretending to be someone else, children can explore who they are and who they would like to be. What are the qualities and tasks of a pilot? Can Raphael imagine being a real pilot himself one day? In this way, Raphael develops and strengthens his own identity.

In their joint play, Mara and Raphael also use meta-communication—that is, they come to an agreement about what they will play. First they have to establish that they want to build an airplane, what kind of airplane it will be, and what it will be called. When the airplane is finished, they decide who is going to sit where. They always tell each other what is happening as they go along: “Now we’re flying. Now we have the wheels out. Now we have the wheels in.” Here the two children have precise notions about the sequence of events in flying. The mental processes that are applied in play are important for the development of planning skills. In their conversation Mara and Raphael come to agreements and develop the sequence of events in the story together.

→ 2

### Stimulating learning environment

The wood is a wonderful place for learning. It offers children plentiful opportunities for play and discovery. Precisely because there are no prefabricated toys or materials that are meant to be used in a predetermined way, all the places and things in the wood can be exciting for children. A clearing becomes a racetrack, a group of mushrooms a research laboratory, a pile of branches and twigs a construction site, a large stone a kitchen, a tree trunk an observation tower, a meadow of wildflowers a jewelry workshop, a pair of fallen trees an obstacle course, a canopy of foliage a cozy den and a few sticks on the ground an airplane. Each child has an opportunity to follow his or her own interests and ideas, to be creative and to have a varied range of experiences. Mara and Raphael are using their time in the wood to fly their jet. To do so, they need only themselves, a few sticks, some space and imagination. It is also important for children to know that they have ample time to play and that familiar and trusted persons are close by who give them security. The adults are always available, should the children ask for help. Other than that, they monitor the children and

support them when needed by offering new ideas and impetus.

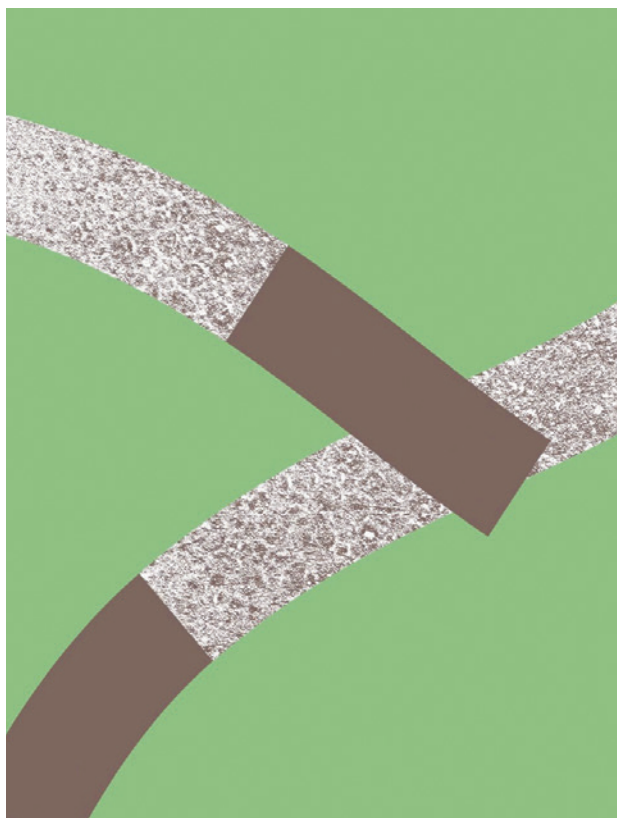
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.); Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).





## ON THE PATH

Even when people have a common interest, they have their own opinions and different feelings. Children learn to respect that if they spend time together regularly.

SELINA / 2 years 10 months

JIL / 4 years 4 months

SIMON / 4 years 5 months

Putting on your boots and rainy weather go together. And rainy weather is also great weather for snails. Snails have been a topic for some time now for Simon, Selina, Jil and their childminder. So, out into the damp outdoors for some fun! / The first one to spot a snail at the edge of the path calls out proudly to the others. Six eyes and six hands see more than two. / How does the little animal move about? Who dares to touch the slimy snail? What does a snail feel like? / Cold? Warm? Damp? Wet? Or sticky even? Not every one wants to touch the brown thing. And they do not have to. The path leads on. And the next opportunity is just around the corner.

### Learning together

Simon, Selina and Jil are an experienced team. They spend a lot of time together with the childminder. Their familiar interaction with one another suggests that they have known each other for some time and that they like each other. And with the presence of their childminder they feel sufficiently secure and supported to respond to one another and try out social behavior. In doing so, they learn a lot about themselves and others. Simon, for instance, does not dare to touch the slug. But he courageously overcomes his fear and is able to find out how a slug feels—namely, slimy. He shares this with Selina and Jil, who would rather not touch the slug. In this way the three children learn to be aware of their different feelings, express them and respect the feelings of others.

Relations between children tend to be more equalized than relations between children and adults. This offers unique challenges and enriching experiences for personal and social development. Simon, Selina and Jil have similar previous knowledge about slugs, and this is the starting point for exchanging newly acquired information about slugs (slugs are slimy). And their discussion on who is brave enough to touch the slug would have been somewhat different with an adult.

Each slug at the edge of the path catches the children's attention, and all three children join in the search for more crawling animals. Whenever they find one, they happily inform the others. This gives them a sense of belonging and allows participation. Belonging and participation are important prerequisites to learning to see things from another's perspective and for developing a sense of responsibility.

→ 1

### Research and discovery

The three children have often noticed that there are no slugs to be seen when the sun is shining but that there are a great many to be found when it is raining. They have also seen different kinds of slugs and snails, including large Roman snails. These crawl-

ing animals have sparked their interest. On each of their walks they learn more about them: Jil notices that Simon has found an especially large snail, and Simon notes that it is slimy. Young children's learning processes are always linked with concrete, everyday situations. They are embedded in everyday experiences and the immediate world around them. The childminder cannot influence the children's inner learning processes directly. Children do not learn because they must but because they are curious and interested. But adults can support and encourage them in this. They can observe children's interests and activities carefully and provide them with a stimulating learning environment to explore independently. The childminder makes it possible for Simon, Selina and Jil to be outdoors in rainy weather, and she gives them ample time to stop along the way and explore their surroundings. This is the only way children can develop an interest—such as these children's interest in snails—and increase their knowledge about it.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.); Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).





## PICTURE BOOKS

Children can learn a lot from each other and transcend language barriers through play.

ZALÁN / 3 years 10 months

YANNIK / 4 years

Zalán and Yannick are in the playgroup book corner. At home Zalán speaks Hungarian. Yannick speaks German at home, and he wants to look at the number book, too. / And now a fun counting game begins. / How many bugs are marching across the leaf? How many peas are there in the pod? How many butterflies are flying out of the book? / Hungarian, German—the two boys understand each other perfectly. They understand each other through words and through laughter. And, of course, their index fingers are also very important aids to communication. The lesson is successful without any adult help at all. / Another book. A book about a witch. / And now Zalán shows what he has just learned from Yannick: “Look at that!”, he says. Phrases like this help their play together in spite of language limitations. Who knows? The two boys could become good friends!

### Experiencing same and different

Zalán and Yannick have different first languages: Yannick speaks German and Zalán Hungarian. But the two boys have many things in common: they are both interested in certain picture books and want to discuss them with someone. This shared curiosity and their mutual interest in one another are the basis for their play together. Yannick and Zalán interact with each other uninhibitedly and with curiosity, looking at the books together despite the language barrier. They look, show, turn pages, laugh, talk. It is more fun doing this together than alone. The boys probably recognize the differences in their backgrounds and this may be just what they find so interesting about each other. This is the way that the children learn about sameness and difference. It helps them to experience themselves as unique but also as part of a larger community at the same time. An important prerequisite for Zalán and Yannick to be able to approach each other in their curious and well-meaning way is an open attitude on the part of adults towards persons who have other backgrounds or speak other languages. When parents, day care teachers and other significant persons in children's lives view the diversity of all people in our society as a resource, as normal and as an opportunity, they model tolerance and send a powerful learning message to their children.

→ 1

### Children express themselves in many ways

Zalán speaks Hungarian at home, Yannick German. In the past few months at day care, Zalán has learned quite a bit of Swiss German but not enough for a detailed conversation with Yannick. Yet there are other forms of communication besides exchanging words. Children use ‘a hundred languages’ to express themselves and communicate. Zalán and Yannick are using some of them here: they approach each other,

touch each other, point to things in the picture book, look at the same things together, laugh, tell each other things and provide commentary through gestures and words. Together, Zalán and Yannik find different ways to communicate their thoughts and feelings and to make themselves understood. They bypass the initial language obstacles and break them down. At the same time, they also expand their language skills. For example, when looking at the picture book with Yannik, Zalán can learn new words in the foreign language and practice some that he already knows. He has learned some numbers in Swiss German, and he counts to demonstrate. He also repeats a phrase that Yannik has used several times—"Look at this!"—and learns another new phrase.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 5: Inklusion und Akzeptanz von Verschiedenheit:  
Jedes Kind braucht einen Platz in der Gesellschaft (S. 44 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von  
sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch  
mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).



## SUITCASES

When children know each other and feel sufficiently secure, they try a lot of things tirelessly: communicating with and understanding one another, getting help and helping one another.

TIM / 3 years 5 months

NILS / 3 years 6 months

In the play group. There are lots of things to play with, and Tim, Nils and some other children are here. Tim and Nils like each other. Today they want to go on a trip together. Their suitcases are here. This must go in and that must go in. It's not surprising that Tim's suitcase won't close and that the zip on Nils's suitcase gets stuck. Nils already knows how to ask a friend for help. / Tim helps Nils. And then Nils helps Tim. But there are problems with both suitcases. What could be the cause? / The baby doll takes up too much room! What about putting it in the other suitcase? The two boys try it this way and that. Packing a suitcase takes practice. But it should be possible for the two of them together to manage it. / Before they can go on the trip, play group has a morning get-together. For everybody, also for Tim and Nils. Who knows, maybe it will work out with the suitcases afterwards. The two friends will certainly not give up easily!

### Being familiar with one another

Tim and Nils have known each other since they were just a few months old. They also spend a lot of time together outside the play group. The two friends are a well-functioning team. They exchange information, reach agreements on what they want to play and help each other in difficult situations. Nils and Tim are obviously very familiar with one another and feel very comfortable in each other's company. Under these conditions, it is easy to offer each other help, put forward suggestions and respond to each other's ideas. For instance, Nils does not hesitate to ask Tim for help with closing that difficult zipper on the suitcase. Tim helps Nils as a matter of course and also asks Nils for assistance. But even so, closing the suitcase is not completely successful. Both boys see the problem. Each of them offers suggestions as to what could be removed from the suitcase to make it work.

In the security of a friendship relationship, many social skills can be tried out in a variety of interactions. Things learned can be applied later in other relationships and situations. Children learn to be assertive but also to be considerate of others, to put forward their own interests and to compromise. The play group provides the two boys with a secure environment in which they can be deeply absorbed in their play. They are familiar with the premises, and the play group teacher is nearby. She can help if the children ask or if she notices that the children are overwhelmed. The two friends have everything they need to be able to try out social behavior as much as they like.

→ 1

### Learning together

Their shared goal is clear: Tim and Nils want to go on holiday together. But packing the suitcase is not

without its problems. Together, they now have to find a solution. What can they remove from the suitcase so that it can be closed? The baby has to come out but should not be left behind at home. Is there room for the baby in the other suitcase? By talking this over, the two friends identify the problem and seek possible solutions (co-construction). Each contributes his part and learns a lot while doing so: making and carrying out plans together, putting forward suggestions and considering another person's suggestions, encountering and tackling challenges, setting priorities (here, deciding what should be taken on holiday and what can be left at home)—as well as interrupting an activity and possibly taking it up again later.

→ 2

### Role play

Going on holiday with their families is something that Tim and Nils are familiar with. They have surely watched their parents pack their bags, and have perhaps been allowed to help. What must be taken along, and what can be left at home? This has to be carefully thought over and planned.

In the play group's play area there are suitcases, dolls, clothes and various everyday objects that encourage role play. This gives Tim and Nils the opportunity to act out things that they have already experienced in everyday life. They play the roles of adults and plan the family holiday with the baby. As they consider together what should be packed and what should stay at home, they are practicing thinking ahead and putting their own thoughts and ideas into words. In role play they also learn to put themselves in someone else's shoes and to keep sight of the important things. The next time their families go on holiday, Tim and Nils will certainly be able to imagine what preparations their parents will have to make as well as what they should consider when packing so that the suitcase can be shut but nothing is forgotten.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).





## BABY FOOD

Facial expression, gestures, touching and words are all parts of an important dialogue. Through these, children very early on learn about themselves and about the effect that they have on others.

### KRISTÓF / 7 months

Time to eat! There's carrot mash for Kristóf. Carrots and potatoes. / One spoonful, two spoonfuls, three, four ... With every spoonful there is more than baby food. There is eye contact. And mother's accompanying commentary about Kristóf's facial expressions. And finger games. / Eight spoonfuls, nine spoonfuls, ten, eleven ... Mother and child are a well-coordinated pair. With their own dialogue. A dialogue of sounds and words, and movements of their hands and feet. What a special game of love! Now his little feet are interesting for him. / His mother has noticed that, too. / Fourteen spoonfuls, fifteen spoonfuls, sixteen, seventeen ... That's enough now. Kristóf shows it. And his mother understands it. In this way, Kristóf finds out about himself. And he finds out that he can have an effect on others.

#### Communicating with each other

Exchanges with other people play an important role from birth onwards. Even though Kristóf cannot yet express himself in words, there is a lively exchange between Kristóf and his mother as she feeds him. They make eye contact frequently and smile at each other.

From the beginning, children are equipped with basic abilities to perceive and communicate. They express their feelings and thoughts in 'a hundred languages'. With his facial expressions, his sounds and the movements of his hands and feet, Kristóf gives his mother information about his mood and his needs. At the same time, he uses all of his senses to perceive what his mother is expressing. He listens to her quiet, calm voice, watches her friendly facial expression and feels the finger that he is holding. Based on his mother's reactions to his behavior, he learns whether and how he is being understood. As his mother observes his facial expressions and body language, or looks in the same direction as he does, she learns what interests him or what he wants to express. She responds to this quickly. This is how she notices his interest in his own foot, for instance. She comments on his movements and holds his foot up to him. When he starts to fuss, she knows what this means and lifts him out of the baby seat. This is how Kristóf learns that his signals are perceived and that he can have an effect on others. This is a central experience: from the discovery of their efficacy and from direct physical, sensual and emotional experiences, children develop a multifaceted personal identity in the first years of life.

→ 1

#### Experiential learning in the child's everyday life

Learning processes in early childhood are always connected with concrete and everyday situations in the child's life. Kristóf is not only satisfying his hunger as he eats his baby food. He also experiences many things: he explores the taste and consistency of the mashed potatoes and carrots with his tongue,

listens to the sound and rhythm of the rhyme that his mother recites to him and notices that he can grasp different things, like his mother's hand and his own foot. By putting into words what Kristóf is experiencing or doing, and by adding rhymes and songs to everyday activities, his mother is supporting Kristóf's language learning. In this way, daily meal times not only provide the opportunity to eat but also open up innumerable learning opportunities. Young children do not learn in isolation or outside the context of their actions; learning is always embedded in these contexts. And all of this is based in the child's emotional, security-giving relationship with his mother.

→ 2

#### Physical and emotional well-being

For children to feel good and be active, their emotional needs have to be satisfied as well as their physical needs. Kristóf is well-rested, and his four o'clock feed satisfies his hunger. He is obviously feeling well and in good hands in the presence of his mother. Secure and satiated, he can focus attention on the dialogue with his mother. His two older brothers are playing in the next room, and Kristóf and his mother are enjoying being together. They use mealtime to interact intensively with each other. Moments like these strengthen their relationship and give Kristóf certainty that he has a familiar and reliable attachment figure near him who notices his needs and responds to them with sensitivity. This kind of security is a necessary condition for Kristóf to be able to venture out and explore the area near his mother, where he experiences many interesting things.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.); Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Bildung—Betreuung—Erziehung (S. 22 f.); Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Bildung—Betreuung—Erziehung (S. 22 ff.); Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).





## CONVERSATION

Mutual exploration and discovery is highly valuable. Children need lots of encounters like this. In this way, they learn to express themselves in different ways and, later, to see things through the perspective of others and to have empathy.

ENZO / 1 year  
PIA / 11 months

Pia and Enzo are talking. They're talking with their hands, their eyes and their whole bodies. / Fascinating! They are communicating without using any words. Look at what I've got! Show me, I want that, too! / What have you got in your mouth? Can I see? Give it back to me! Good, then I'll play with my things again. / Pia looks around the room. She can see her familiar carers. They give her the security and peace to explore and discover.

### The hundred languages of childhood

Pia holds out the little wooden ladder towards Enzo, and Enzo takes it. At that, Pia flaps her arms up and down, 'blows raspberries' with her lips, gets louder, sits up straight and reaches her hands towards Enzo. Here the little girl is using many forms of expression to communicate. We do not know what she is thinking, but it seems clear that she is not happy about Enzo taking the ladder. Enzo remains unruffled, however, and does not allow himself to be diverted from his explorations. And the ladder does not appear to be very important to him, for he quickly drops it. Pia has now discovered something new. She finds a pacifier that she would like to investigate more closely. But Enzo is interested in it, too. He immediately takes it from Pia and sticks it in his mouth. Pia will not be dissuaded from satisfying her curiosity, however. She simply takes the pacifier from Enzo's mouth. Once again, Enzo reacts immediately and takes it back, leaving Pia sitting there empty-handed. She retreats, makes sounds, flaps her arms up and down again, turns her attention to the wooden ladder again, looks around her and then crawls away. What has taken place in these few seconds is an intensive conversation between the two young children, even though there is no direct verbal communication. The children tell each other what they are interested in and what they want at the moment and what not by moving their arms and hands, by their facial expressions and sounds, and by gestures, such as taking or defending objects. In this way children use all means at their disposal to express themselves and communicate. The role of the adult is, first, to make these situations possible and, second, to notice, pay attention to, and respond appropriately to these many different forms of communication.

→ 1

### Developing self-awareness through exchanges with others

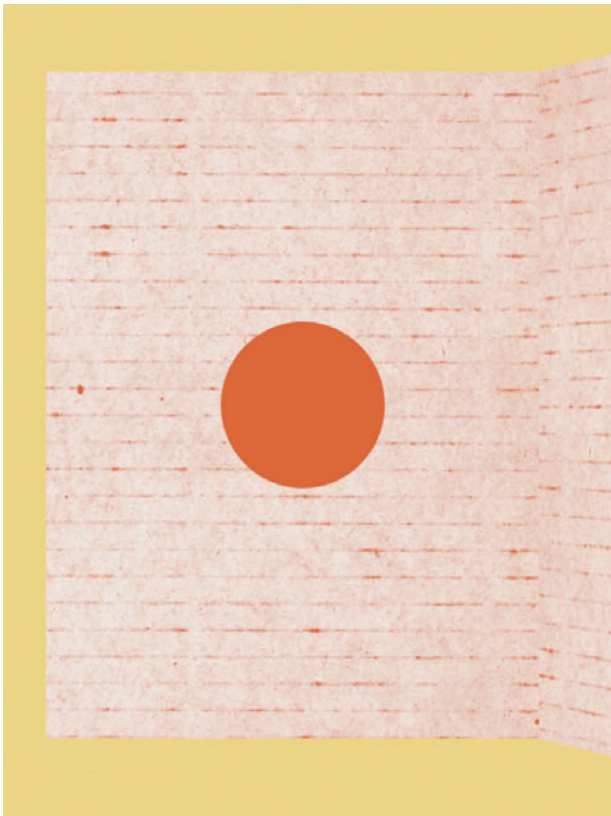
Pia and Enzo clearly show what they want and what they do not want. Pia is upset when Enzo takes the wooden ladder that she is interested in out of her hand. Enzo defends his pacifier. In these encounters, the two children learn step by step to differentiate between themselves and others, empathize with others and, later, to understand them. In these nonver-

bal and, later, verbal exchanges, they acquire self-awareness and gradually an idea of what may be going on in the minds of others. These developmental steps are the basis of a capacity for empathy, empathetic behavior, consideration and the ability to be assertive. Here we also see the first signs of the ability to handle conflict. In the example shown, each child champions his or her own interest (ladder, pacifier), and the other child gives in to them. Lots of these altercations are needed before children become able to defend their own concerns without hurting others and become able to negotiate compromises with one another. They need innumerable everyday experiences to learn these two things: giving in and being assertive. These form the basis of understanding the principle of give and take and, later, of learning to negotiate the 'rules of the game' with one another.

→ 2

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).



## LIBRARY

Starting early is what makes avid readers and bookworms.

IREM / 3 years 3 months

ILKE / 5 years 2 months

Irem is happy that she is at the library today with her mother and her brother. / They are spoilt for choice! Which of the many books is interesting for all of them? This one, or that one. / It's one from the box. A picture book. It's the story of a cat named Mieke Matze. / Page after page, three pairs of eyes focus on Mieke Matze's paws and follow the cat's adventures. It's cosy being close to mother, with the new book and the many adventures. And: There is a lot to discover, to talk about and to name. / Irem sees one thing and Ilke another. This makes the voyage of discovery through the pages of the book fun. Their mother tells the story and verifies the details. She repeats it and moves on. Page after page. The illustrations are put into words. Objects get names. In this way, the children's vocabulary grows. / This makes them want more. More books and even more stories. This facilitates reading and writing later on.

### 'Reading' picture books together

Irem and Ilke visit the library with their mother, where there are lots of books, including children's books in various languages. Irem is allowed to choose a book for them to read together. Reading to children consists of more than reading the written text aloud. Reading to children also means following a story through the text and the illustrations, talking about the story and about what can be seen in the pictures. When Irem, Ilke and their mother read a picture book together, a lively discussion develops in which all three take part. Irem wants to know why the baby carriage rolled down ("What did he do?"). Ilke feels for the baby ("Mama, look...oh...the baby") and shows empathy. The children's mother listens to their comments carefully. She continuously prompts the children to say something about what they see in the book ("What is this?"). She draws their attention to particular details in the sequence of illustrations. The children name the objects and people in the pictures, and their mother repeats the words. By repeating their words, their mother mirrors and confirms the children's answers, which also consolidates and expands the children's personal vocabularies. This way of reading to young children, called dialogic reading, involves children and adults having a conversation about a book; it is a significant way to promote language development in children, especially their vocabularies, age-appropriately. What other aspects of language and cognitive development are promoted by dialogic reading to children? As children follow the story with interest, looking at the text and illustrations page by page, the many words are transformed by the mother's voice into concrete pictures. The mind's eye is watching a film that is in color and rich in detail. In this case, the children are following the adventures of a cat called Mieke Matz. A lively and creative imagination is a valuable enrichment for children's experience and activities.

Learning at school is based largely on the medium of books. Early experiences with books, texts and illustrations are therefore very important for children's learning biographies. From an early age, young children should be given the opportunity to have positive experiences with books so that they will also be interested in books at school and can deal with them competently. Enjoyment of books, stories, illustrations and texts also sparks a desire to learn to read and write. Narrative language is also an important bridge between everyday language and key language skills later on—namely, reading and writing. Language is a key competency for school learning and educational success.

For this reason, reading activities play a central role in early language acquisition. Early experience with books allows young children to develop pleasure in and enthusiasm about language in an age-appropriate way.

→ 1

#### Physical and emotional well-being

Irem and Ilke cuddle up close to their mother as they look at the book that she is reading to them. For good development, children need more than food, sleep, clothes and a home. Children need trusted persons who are perceptive of their needs, respond appropriately and give the children loving attention and time. Developing a strong emotional attachment to one or more attachment figures is central to a child's development. Here, their mother is their 'safe harbor'. Close physical proximity with their mother gives the children care and security. In her arms the children feel secure and protected. Both children are relaxed and can focus all of their attention on the picture book. Children are only open to learning experiences when they feel well physically and emotionally.

→ 2

#### Learning together

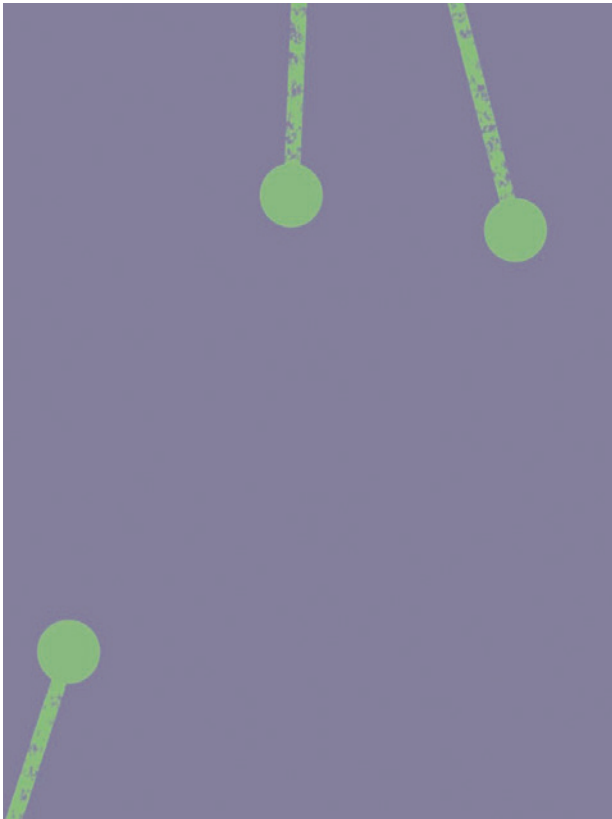
Irem, Ilke and their mother are reading this picture book for the first time. None of them knows more about it than the others; all three are discovering something new. As they read together and discuss the story, a question suddenly comes up: "But whom does the bag belong to?" Ilke and his mother think at first that the bag belongs to the mother in the story. But they are both wrong. Ilke sees their mistake immediately and says clearly: "No. His mother's bag was green." His mother is open to Ilke's correction. She knows that adults can get things wrong sometimes, too. The question of the bag's ownership leads to a joint search through the book. They all have to think about it and recall the story. And together they find the answer.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.); Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und Gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).



## SNAIL

Shared interest is double interest! It stimulates children to become aware of their observations and thoughts and to talk about them. This aids their language development.

SELINA / 2 years 10 months

It's good weather for snails today. That makes today's outing especially interesting. What are these little animals? What do they do if they're afraid? / What happens if you touch them? What does the shell feel like? What does the slimy body feel like? / Selina's childminder is not afraid of touching snails. She skillfully draws Selina's attention to this and that and encourages Selina to touch the snail herself. / What about those feelers? Does the snail like the leaf? This is nature study for beginners. / Selina is fascinated. Perhaps next time she will dare to hold the snail in her hand, too, and experience what it feels like when the snail is slimy and crawls across her hand.

### Language support

There are endless opportunities in daily life to talk with children about all kinds of subjects. A small snail can spark a lot of conversation. In her exchange with Selina, the childminder offers a commentary on the snail's behavior using words that Selina understands and shares her thoughts about it. Here she serves as an example for Selina in terms of speech but also as a role model who gives Selina the courage to touch the snail. When adults put what they perceive, observe and think into words, they not only help children to perceive and recognize things; they but also promote their speech and language development. By asking questions, the childminder stimulates Selina's thinking and encourages her to express herself. Through her body posture and her questions she signals her genuine interest in Selina's opinions. Selina feels valued and respected.

→ 1

### Learning together

Selina has shown interest in snails for some time now and uses every opportunity to take a close look at them. Snails may be nothing unusual to the childminder, but she has the ability to look at the whole situation from Selina's perspective. She knows how fascinated Selina is by snails and that she would like to learn more about them. Being able to empathize with the child's way of looking at things is a key ability that allows adults to pick up on children's current interests and questions, providing optimum support to children as they learn. When the childminder finds a snail with a shell, she uses it as an opportunity to talk with Selina about it. With questions and interesting comments she captures Selina's attention. Their conversation stimulates Selina's curiosity and increases her amazement. It encourages her focus on the snail and to try something out. She turns her attention to the snail again and again, even though there are a lot of other things on the playground that she could explore. And finally, she even dares to touch the snail's shell and finds out what effect this has on the snail.

This shared experience gives them pleasure and

strengthens the relationship between the child-minder and Selina. A relationship based on trust is essential to feel at ease and be able to engage deeply with the task at hand. In addition, children are particularly stimulated to learn new things if they can see interesting things with and in persons that are important to them. Selina sees how her childminder holds the snail very naturally on the palm of her hand, offers it a little leaf and places it gently on the ground. Selina benefits also from these observations. She is quite likely to imitate them at the next opportunity.

→ 2

### Holistic learning

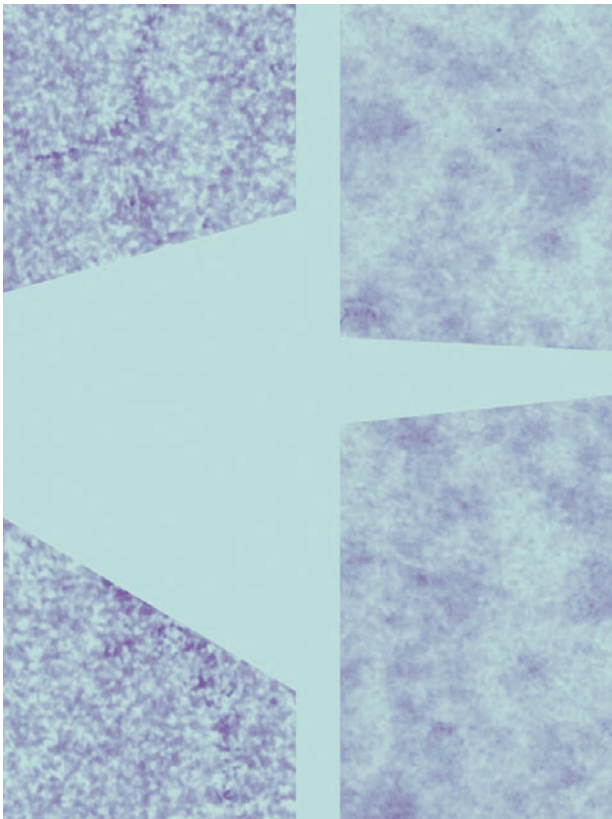
In the first years of life, children do not learn solely through their intellect but with their body, emotions, senses and through interaction with familiar others at the same time. This is founded on attachment relationships and security, based on the experience of care. Early childhood learning means: being active, exploring, asking, observing and communicating. And in each situation children learn a lot of different things. In the short time in which Selina and her childminder turn their attention to the snail together, Selina learns that the snail is still there when it has gone into its shell. And that it comes back out when it feels safe. She also notices that the snail is frightened when she touches it. She experiences the situation with all of her senses. She sees the snail move, wave its tentacles and withdraw into its shell when things get too much. She hears what the childminder says about it. And she feels with her finger what a snail shell feels like. The next time that she sees a snail, she will build on this new knowledge. Perhaps she will even place the snail on the palm of her hand and experience what it feels like to have a snail crawl on her skin.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).





## SONG

Children learn languages easily and well, if adults speak the language to them that they themselves know best.

### ZALÁN / 3 years 10 months

Zalán speaks Hungarian. It is the language that his parents speak. But Zalán can also already speak some Swiss German. / Zalán learnt this goodbye song at the play group. He sings it happily. Again and again. / His mother is interested in this melody from another country. This shows her son that his mother welcomes both languages. She does this in Hungarian. In her mother tongue. This is good for Zalán. In this way he learns his mother's language, the language in which she is fluent. He learns two languages without realising that he is learning. Hungarian at home and Swiss German at the play group. Just like that.

#### Supporting multilingual children

During the first years of his life, Zalán lived in Hungary. He has been living in Switzerland with his parents for some time now. At home he speaks Hungarian, his first language, which he understands without any difficulty and speaks well. But Zalán has recently learned a few words in Swiss German. He learned them at play group. So Zalán now has a family language (Hungarian) and a language of his social surroundings (Swiss German). This clear separation helps him distinguish clearly between the two languages.

Here, Zalán has just come home from play group, and he still has a Swiss German 'goodbye' song in his head. He sings it out cheerfully. His mother asks him in Hungarian where he heard the song. She shows him her interest in the Swiss German song but at the same time speaks in her own language. His mother's interest in the language of his social surroundings is a motivator for Zalán to learn Swiss German. He notices that both languages are important and welcome. His mother knows that growing up bilingually is a great opportunity for her son. Zalán can choose freely which language he wants to speak. To sing the song that he learned at play group he chooses Swiss German. When interacting with his mother and father he speaks Hungarian. By speaking the language that she speaks best, his mother is supporting Zalán's active acquisition of his first language and his basic language development. At home he is learning correct Hungarian pronunciation and grammar. His play group teacher serves as his language model for Swiss German. Correct language acquisition in both first and second language is vital for the development of skills in comprehending and using both spoken and written language: speaking, listening, writing and reading.

→ 1

#### Connecting different worlds

Today, most young children live and learn in several surroundings: at home, in the play group, day care center, childminder's family or other places where children regularly spend time. Zalán attends play

group two mornings a week. Play group is different from home not only because of language. His two environments, home and play group, are very different worlds. By asking about his goodbye song, his mother signals her interest in what goes on at play group. Her basic positive attitude towards the play group helps Zalán to feel comfortable there. He shows this in the cheerful way in which he shares the song that he has learned from Gabriela, his play group teacher, at home. By singing and with his mother's support, he creates a connection between the two worlds.

The song, as a personal experience, is also a good everyday opportunity to promote a young child's language development. When children tell of their experiences, they are practicing their understanding of narrative and their narrative competency. Understanding, structuring and putting whole sequences of events into words in a way that others can understand is a demanding task for children. Here they practice language skills that are important for their later development of reading and writing competency.

→ 2

#### Rituals

"Bye bye, everyone" is the goodbye song that the children sing at the end of morning play group. This ritual helps to structure the morning and serves as an orientation aid. All of the children know that when the song is sung, it will not be long before their mothers and fathers arrive to pick them up and take them back home to the world of the family. Routines and repeated activities like this help children to develop a sense of time. Young children do not naturally think in terms of lessons or timetables. But little rituals like the song help children master the transition between different worlds and parts of the day. They aid children when they enter a group of children or when the play group morning comes to a close, as here. Zalán knows that when he gets home, his lunch will be waiting for him. He is getting better and better at structuring the day. Rituals also provide familiarity and security. All children want to be part of a community. In shared rituals, all children are included and respected, regardless of their background or language. This connects them with each other and strengthens the 'we feeling'.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Pädagogisches Handeln: Übergänge begleiten und gestalten (S. 58 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 5: Inklusion und Akzeptanz von Verschiedenheit: Jedes Kind braucht einen Platz in der Gesellschaft (S. 44 f.).



## ANIMALS

Show me how to do it, and then  
I can try to do it myself.

MIA / 1 year 8 months  
BENJI / 6 years 8 months

Benji and Mia visit a farm with their grandmother. There are two donkeys and a goat at the farm, too. / What do they like to eat? Stones, snow, moss or just grass? / Their grandmother knows all about these things, and she shows her grandchildren the right way to offer food to the animals. After all, the donkeys shouldn't eat the children's fingers, they should only get hold of the food. / The animals seem to like it. And the children do, too. Just in a different way. Tirelessly, they go back and forth between the grass and the animals. / Their grandmother watches them carefully. Yes, she says again and again. Yes. This confirmation gives the children a good feeling. She also sees that Mia already knows how to do it. And Benji too, of course. The two children have learnt several things today. From the animals but especially from their grandmother!

### Appropriate support

Benji und Mia's grandmother takes a walk with them to the farm. They visit the goats there and the donkey, which they would like to feed. This excursion provides an ideal opportunity for the children to experience what animals like to eat and how to find food for them and feed them. To learn this, it is best for Benji and Mia if they try things out themselves and thus acquire their own experience. For children cannot be 'educated' from the outside; they are active shapers of their own learning processes. Children acquire their knowledge of the world around them through observing, imitating, trying things out, asking questions, exchanging information and repeating. But for this they need attentive and reliable adults who monitor and support them in their individual learning. Here, their grandmother answers Benji's questions about what the animals are allowed to eat. But she also lets the two children gather their own experience. On their own they pick grass and offer it to the animals. With little Mia, her grandmother is somewhat cautious at first: she leads her by the hand and goes with her to pick grass. Her behavior serves as a role model for Mia. Now Mia can watch carefully how the grass in her grandmother's hand gets into the animal's mouth. For young children, observing and imitating are important learning strategies. Through repetition, Mia becomes increasingly more confident and independent. With enthusiasm, Mia goes again and again to grassy area and gets new grass for the animals. She watches carefully how the animals eat the grass from her hand. She is expanding her knowledge about donkeys and goats based on this concrete situation. It is important here that Mia's learning experiences are related to her reality—that is, to what she directly experiences in her everyday life and to her concerns.

→ 1

Language support

The grandmother talks with her grandchildren a lot. Even though Mia cannot yet answer with words, her grandmother knows that her granddaughter understands her well. Not only what she says but also how she says it—her tone of voice and her accompanying facial expressions—help Mia understand her. For children it is important that adults talk to them from the very start and that they also express their inner monologues in words. This is the only way children learn not just language but also how to make and implement small and big plans.

Mia only uses a few words herself. But she has already learned other components of language. For example, she knows that the intonation of a statement is different than that intonation of a question. She uses the word “da” (or “here”) in different variations to express herself. She expresses her enthusiasm with a laugh, just as her grandmother does. Using these different forms of expression Mia can communicate with her grandmother and her brother. She expands her language skills through intensive communication with others.

→ 2

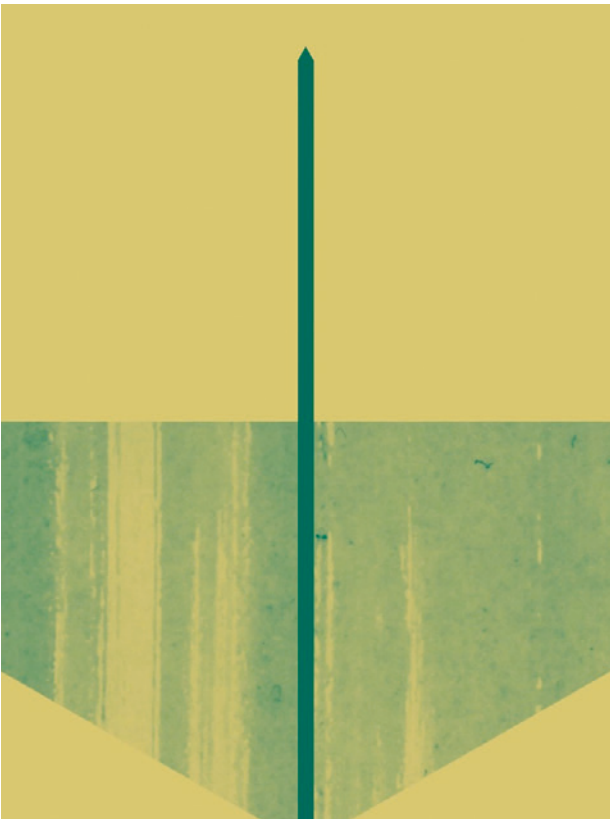
Stimulating learning environment

Children need stimulation. They receive it from adults and other children but also from other living things, from materials and from their surroundings. These surroundings include not only interior spaces but also exterior spaces and the connections between them. Many places in the vicinity of their homes offer children valuable opportunities for learning and discovery. The supermarket, post office, a ride on a bus, the playground, park or wood can be just as interesting as a farm and farm animals. Good places for learning offer diverse things that spark children's curiosity and are challenging but not overwhelming either intellectually or emotionally.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).



## BOW AND ARROW

Genuine interest and the right measure of instruction and incentive from adults make children successful learners.

### MAURO / 3 years 9 months

Father and son have made a bow and arrow together. Mauro wants to know how to shoot the arrow from the bow. Which way is the bow pointing? How do you hold it? Which finger goes where? And how long does the arrow have to be? / Mauro's father knows how to do it. He gives his only just four-year-old son his support. Calmly he explains how the bow works. / Almost! An encouraging word. It makes Mauro want to try again. Again. Handling the arrow correctly is a fine-motor skills challenge. / Mauro did it! Great! He has to do that again. And he wants his mother to see it. / That doesn't matter. If it flew once, it will fly a second, third, and fourth time. All the more so, because Mauro now knows how to do it. His papa showed him how, after all. / And his mother and his sisters see how far Mauro's arrow flew this time.

### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

Mauro's family is spending the day in the wood. Mauro and his father have made a bow and arrow out of branches, and it is time to try it out. Handling a bow and arrow is new to Mauro, so he will have to learn how to use it first. His father helps him by explaining and demonstrating. He gives Mauro ample time and supports Mauro patiently. He thinks about how he can make shooting the arrow easier for Mauro. He shortens the arrow and thinks about the easiest way for Mauro to hold the bow. Mauro's father's behavior and what he says have a decisive effect on the development of Mauro's self-confidence. Mauro feels his father's interest in him and his concerns and senses his father's confidence that Mauro can learn to use the bow and arrow. This encourages him to try out something new. Even though it is difficult at first and the arrow does not quite fly the first few times, his father remains calm and encourages Mauro to keep on trying. When Mauro finally succeeds and the arrow flies through the air, his father shares his happiness: "Yes! That went far!" he says. Mauro also wants to show his mother his success. He is actively seeking his parents' involvement. Adult comments and behavior allow children to experience what they themselves can do and how they come across to others. When he succeeds in shooting the arrow a second time, Mauro immediately looks at his mother. He wants to know if she has seen his success and what her reaction is. His mother is also thrilled and calls out, "That was cool! Great!" Mauro's parents know that it is not easy to shoot an arrow. They both take genuine pleasure in Mauro's accomplishment, showing that they appreciate him. Mauro can better assess his own actions and is reinforced in his feeling that he has made a big step forward. All of this supports Mauro's gradual development of a positive and also realistic self-concept.

→ 1



### Challenges

Making a bow and arrow itself is something that has to be learned; learning how to use it is even more of a tricky task. How must the bow be held? What finger goes where? How far must the bow be drawn so that the arrow flies correctly? When is the right moment to release the arrow? These are real challenges for Mauro. To know and master all of this, Mauro has to try out a lot of things, make several attempts and not allow himself to give up when he fails. His joy is that much greater when he finally succeeds. Mauro sees that the effort was worth it and enabled him to reach a goal. His success gives him a great deal of pleasure, which he shows with a broad smile. The experience of success motivates children to try again. And it helps them to anchor what was learned in their memory.

→ 2

### Holistic learning

Making and using a bow and arrow requires a lot of know-how, patience and skill. With his father's attentive support and guidance, Mauro has an exciting and instructive time in the wood. He tries things out, repeats his efforts and shows persistence. He does not allow failures to deter him. This is precisely the moment when he can count on his father's support. His father gives just the right measure of instruction that Mauro needs to be able to do it by himself. Mauro is highly focused; he listens attentively and observes carefully what and how his father does it. His father allows Mauro to try it himself again and again. Young children are explorers and discoverers. They want to experiment on their own and develop their own hypotheses. This means that children form assumptions about what will happen if you do a certain thing. They test these assumptions by trying things out. They learn by doing and experiencing, through their own activity and through exchange with others. Mauro learns by observing, imitating, trying things out and repetition. In this way, he not only learns how to use the bow and arrow but also practices tolerating frustration and experiences himself as capable.

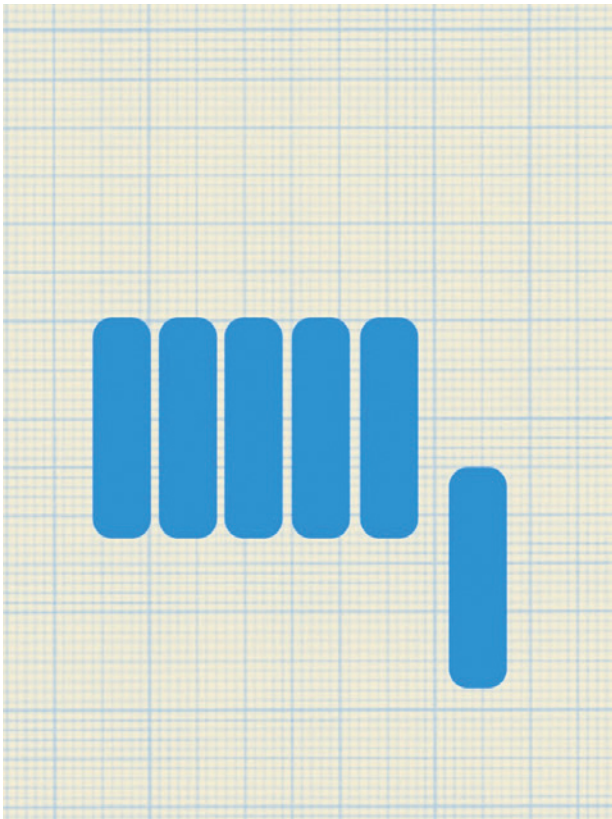
→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).





## CANDIES

Children master challenges when adults talk to them about them and when they reinforce the children in their attempts. Again and again.

ZALÁN / 3 years 10 months  
CSONGOR / 6 years 1 months

The little sweets are a bit of a problem. First of all, because they tempt Zalán to put them directly into his mouth rather than into the container. / And secondly, because they are so small and difficult to deal with. But Zalán's mother encourages him. / And perhaps Csongor, Zalán's older brother, is also a motivation for him. / One after the other, the sweets go into the Donald Duck container. One by one, counted exactly. Zalán shows good finger dexterity.

### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

Zalán has doubts about whether he can get the little pieces of candy into the Donald Duck dispenser: "I want to be able to do that, but I just can't. I have tried many times. It just doesn't work." But his mother encourages him: "Try; maybe you can do it after all! Yeah? If you can't, then Mama will come and help you." Encouraging words like this give children courage to tackle tricky things and to show persistence when the going gets tough. It is not easy for Zalán to resist the temptation of the sweets and he knows that himself: "I can't resist. I am going to eat them anyway." But he stays strong and inserts one sweet after the other into the dispenser, until the package is empty. Now and again his mother asks how it is going. And yes, it seems to be working. Zalán's mother shares his pleasure and says: "It is working! Great!" and "You see, you did that all by yourself!" She had confidence in her son from the start that he could manage this self-chosen task on his own. And if his mother has confidence in him, then Zalán can also trust in his own abilities. And when he and his brother are finished, their mother praises them: "You two did a good job!" Her comments contain several messages: she trusts in Zalán and is confident that he can do many things. Her esteem and encouragement bolster Zalán's confidence that he can master the task and that he can also take on new future challenges self-confidently. In this way Zalán can gradually develop a positive and realistic self-concept.

→ 1

### Holistic learning

Daily life is full of learning opportunities. Even a task like filling the dispenser with the little pieces of candy provides opportunities for learning. Zalán meticulously counts the number of sweets several times. How many has he already put into the dispenser? How many are left? And how many are there in total, actually? Zalán is using this task as a chance to apply his knowledge of numbers and to practice counting. Filling the dispenser with the little pieces demands concentration and manual dexterity; it is an excellent activity for fine-motor skills. Additionally, Zalán is also practicing his language skills as he

communicates with his mother and brother and says the numbers aloud.

Young children need tasks, challenges and play situations that they find interesting. When children play and perform tasks, they learn, apply, strengthen and expand their skills in all developmental domains.

→ 2

#### Finding and trying out new ways to solve problems independently

Zalán is faced with the difficult task of inserting the small pieces of candy into the Donald Duck dispenser. His mother, who is within hearing distance, does not step in and do it for him but gives him ample time to handle the challenge by himself instead. Zalán can only experience self-efficacy and a feeling of success if he does it himself. The task also involves other valuable learning processes for Zalán. At the end, he knows how many little sweets fit into the dispenser and the best way to insert them. And the main thing is that he now knows that he has done the job by himself and can do it again next time. He experiences himself as capable and competent. As an additional benefit, his mother has helped him to adhere to a plan and to delay gratification for a short while.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich (S. 42 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).



# TRAIN

A ride on the train as a voyage of discovery. Being interested in children's interests and ideas. This is how adults support their children's learning.

## MELINA / 10 months

Melina is on the train with her mother. There is so much to see and hear! / Things outside and things inside. Melina is interested in everything: The sounds. The tunnel. The hook. / And especially the hook when it disappears under a scarf. Again and again. Peek-a-boo! Here it is! / Melina can already do a lot with her hands. She can point and grasp things with precision. Melina's mother pays attention to her daughter's signals. This is how she learns what Melina wants, and this is how the two of them invent a game. / An invention in an instant. They invent a game out of nothing. And it's fun.

### Responding to children's interests and ideas

Melina cannot yet express things with words. Nevertheless, it is clear what has sparked her interest. Again and again she directs her gaze to the coat hook on the wall of the train. She also points to the interesting object with her index finger. Her mother watches her carefully, notices her signals and responds to them. She follows Melina's gaze, makes sure verbally that she has understood Melina correctly ("Do you want to see what's up there?") and lifts Melina up. Now Melina can examine the hook up close. She points to it again and again, asking her mother to share her interest and to look at this exciting object, too.

Melina's mother has succeeded in seeing the world from her daughter's perspective, recognized her interest and given her an opportunity to follow up on her curiosity so that she can expand and deepen her knowledge. These are important prerequisites for giving her daughter optimal support in her development and learning.

→ 1

### Play is learning, and learning is play

Their shared interest develops into a game. Melina does not tire of signaling to her mother that she should hang the scarf on the hook so that she can then pull it away. In this way she learns not only what the material feels like but also how gravity works. The scarf comes down again and again. It is only back up there when her mother has placed it on the hook again. Fascinated, Melina watches how the hook disappears behind the scarf and then reappears. Where is it, when she can no longer see it? Based on many such experiences, Melina will learn that that objects continue to exist even when they cannot be observed. And Melina has certainly experienced the principle of gravity in other contexts, such as when her sippy cup falls down and does not reappear by itself on the table. All of these experiences help Melina to understand the world. Had her mother attempted to explain what gravity is or that objects continue to exist even when they can no longer be seen, Melina would not have understood. Young children learn with their body, senses, emotions and

thinking all at once. They learn by doing and by trial and error. Play is especially valuable in this regard. When at play, children actively engage in the world around them, find out what they can do and what their limitations are and expand their skills. Melina cannot yet hang the scarf on the hook by herself, but she is practicing her fine-motor skills when she pulls the scarf down, and she observes carefully how her mother than places the scarf back on the hook.

→ 2

#### Stimulating learning environment

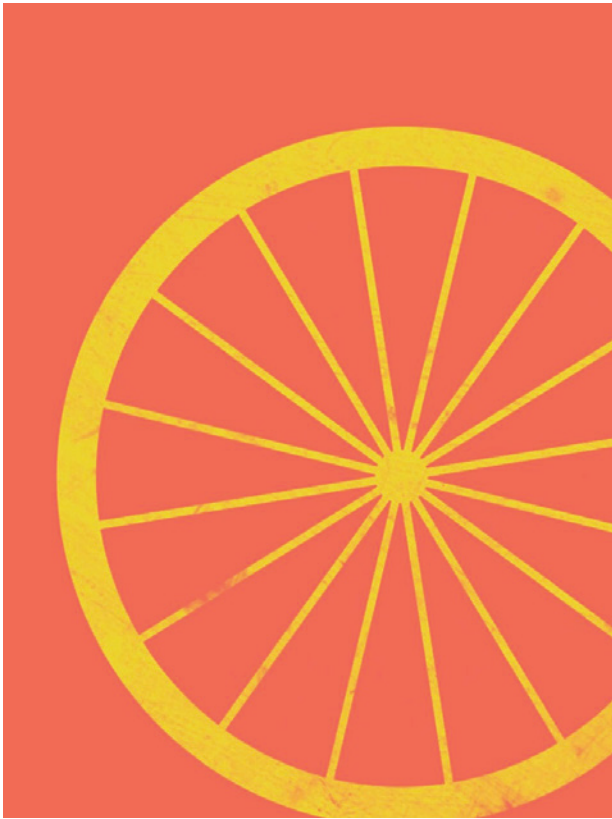
For many adults, taking the train is a tiresome necessity. Not so for Melina. Together with her mother, she follows the passing landscape with rapt attention and is astonished when it gets dark as the train enters a tunnel. There are lots of interesting things inside the train as well: the hook, the voice on the loudspeaker, other people...

Things that may be ordinary for Melina's mother offer her daughter innumerable opportunities to discover and experience new things. Back at home in her familiar environment, Melina will discover similar learning opportunities and build knowledge based on her previous experiences. But at home she will also rest and recover from these exciting experiences. Children need a healthy balance between stimulation and rest and recovery, between too much and too little stimulation.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.); Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 3 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).



## BICYCLE

Conflicts provide excellent opportunities for learning. If adults seek solutions together with the children, they are teaching them many things: how to express themselves and how to listen, how to negotiate before acting, how to find compromises and last but not least, democracy.

MALOU / 3 years 3 months  
ANNINA / 3 years 6 months  
HANNAH / 3 years 4 months  
GROUP / ages 3 years 5 months  
to 4 years 1 month

A lot of children are playing in the garden. And then something happens that often happens: Several children want to play with the same toy. But that's not possible. So now there's a conflict. Annina sits on the bicycle. But that's what Malou wants to do, too. Malou asks the play group teacher for help. / Instead of delivering a fast solution, the teacher offers discussion, concern and participation. The teacher crouches down among the children. She negotiates with Malou and Annina. And Hannah is quietly thinking things over. / This is how even very young children learn what to do when things get difficult: Talk, talk, talk. Until things are okay. Until things work, more or less, for everyone. Until someone comes up with a great idea. And today that someone is Hannah.

### Resolving conflicts together

When people are together there is always a potential for conflict. Opinions, wishes and feelings can diverge, and finding a solution that works for everyone is not always easy. This applies as much to children as adults. Sometimes it is hard to put one's own interests on the back burner and to see things from another's point of view. Empathy, empathetic behavior, consideration and also the ability to be assertive: these are all important skills that have to be discovered and practiced. Here, the conflict over the bicycle is a learning opportunity. Annina and Malou both want to ride the bicycle, but of course only one child can ride at a time. Malou asks the play group teacher to help. The teacher takes the time, together with the children, to seek a solution that works for everyone. By asking targeted questions she leads the discussion: "What do we want to do? Does anybody have an idea?" Her open-ended questions inspire the children to think this over and invite them to seek solutions themselves and express their needs in words.

Step by step the conflict comes closer to a resolution. And not only Malou and Annina are getting practice in democratic cooperation: all of the children in the group, who are following the exchange with great interest, are learning something about seeking and making compromises. In this way the children learn to solve problems more and more effectively, jointly discuss and negotiate, cooperate, express their opinion and look at things from another person's perspective.

→ 1

### Taking children seriously

The play group teacher is conscious of the perils and opportunities inherent in conflict situations. By crouching down to the children's level, she is signal-



ing that she takes Malou's concern seriously. Malou and the other children sense her genuine interest in how they see things, and they feel free to express their thoughts. This is a basic condition for mutual dialogue. By asking questions, the play group teacher makes sure that she has understood the children correctly ("Is that your idea?") and shows them that all contributions are welcome. This makes it possible for the children to express themselves and to contribute to finding a solution. Malou uses words to say what she wants, but Annina shows what she wants more through her actions: she shakes her head and rides the bicycle a short distance. Children all have their own personal style of expressing themselves and in this way all play a part in shaping the interactions and life together in the group.

→ 2

### Learning together

Contacts between children tend to be more equalized than contacts between children and adults. They entail specific challenges and learning opportunities. Children who are familiar with each other and feel sufficiently secure and supported do not tire of practicing social behavior. For quite a long time now, the children in this play group have met two mornings a week. They know each other and can assess each other's reactions. It is essential that there is a trusted and reliable adult nearby who knows the children well and can judge when the children can manage on their own and when they require active help. To resolve the conflict over the bicycle, the children need and seek out the play group teacher's help. She has been watching the events carefully and is on the spot when her assistance is needed. Instead of presenting the children with a ready-made solution, she uses words to guide the children through a discussion. She provides the framework within which the children can search for a solution. This kind of mediating intervention provides guidance and a role model. From examples like this, the children learn more and more to negotiate the rules of the game themselves. Finally, it is Hannah who resolves the situation with a suggestion. It is a suggestion that all of the parties accept and immediately follow.

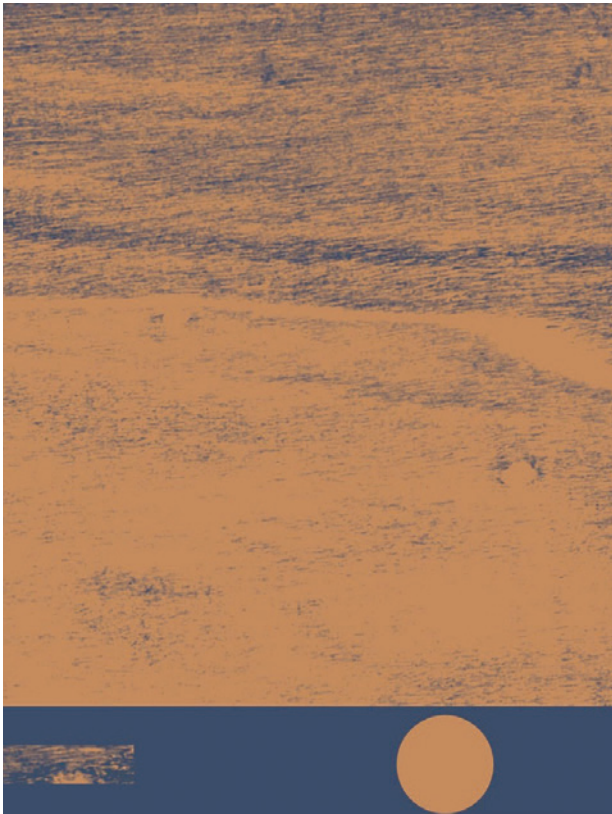
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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.); Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).





## CAR

**We did it ourselves!**  
For a sense of success and achievement, children need opportunities and adults' confidence in them. This makes them strong.

ANGELA / 3 years 6 months  
ARMI / 4 years 2 months

Everyone is here: the childminder, Angela, Armi, and Marona. But something is missing: The toy car has disappeared under the cupboard! Now what? What should they do? / The childminder sees the problem and encourages Angela: Show it to Armi. Armi is bigger. Maybe his arm is long enough to reach the car? / No, that doesn't work. Maybe the triangle stick will do it? / No, that doesn't work, either. The stick is also too short. And the recorder? No, that's no good, either! They need something else! Armi gets the music stick. / It worked! Here's the car! What a great success! Angela tells the childminder the news through the bathroom door. / The childminder praises the two children who fished out the car. Angela is pleased. And Armi is bursting with pride.

### Children finding ways to solve problems by themselves

There's a problem: the toy car has disappeared under the cupboard! The childminder asks Armi if he could retrieve it and asks Angela to show him where it is. In this way she encourages the two children to tackle the challenge on their own and shows confidence in their ability to succeed. Exactly how they achieve their goal is up to Armi and Angela to work out for themselves. They try to get the toy car using different objects, with varying success. The two children work together, and each takes a different role: Armi retrieves the car, and Angela gives him helpful tips.

Children need time and opportunities to find their own ways of doing things. It is important for adults to wait and observe at first, as long as the children do not ask for help or are not overwhelmed by the situation. When children are not presented with ready-made solutions and have to find solutions themselves by trying out different ways to solve problems instead, they have an opportunity to learn from their mistakes and see that they are on the wrong track. They can then gain a feeling of self-efficacy and a sense of success and achievement.

→ 1

### Emotions in the learning process

Armi and Angela take up the challenge of retrieving the toy car with eagerness and delight. Thinking it over and trying out different ways to retrieve the car is a lot of fun. And they are most thrilled when they achieve their goal and retrieve the car. Angela immediately runs to the childminder to tell her of their success; Armi's body language and his comment, "I am so strong!" shows how proud he is of himself. The two children have a sense of accomplishment and success.

Children's learning is accompanied by emotions. Children are enthusiastic learners. Their curiosity is their strongest motivator. They enjoy being allowed to try things out—exploring and questioning and

being interrupted as little as possible. When children then succeed in learning to do something, the experience gives them a feeling of pleasure. This is the best starting point for becoming motivated again and tackling new challenges with self-confidence. However, children do not succeed at everything that they set about to do. They need to persist if they are to succeed in the end. If they experience (repeated) failures, they experience frustration. And if children have negative feelings in a certain situation, like pain or fear, they will tend to avoid similar situations in future and associate them with unpleasant memories.

→ 2

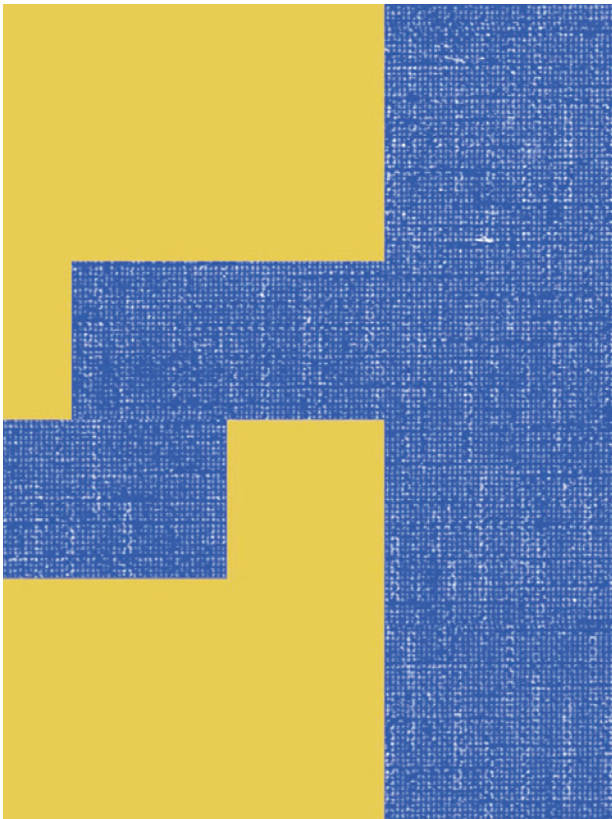
#### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

“Super! Bravo! Bravo, Armi!” praises the childminder. Armi and Angela have managed to retrieve the toy car from under the cupboard. The childminder shares the children’s pleasure and praises them. Her interest and pleasure further strengthens the children’s sense of achievement and self-efficacy—their belief in their own ability to complete tasks and reach goals. This reinforces their experience of having mastered a challenge (almost) by themselves and their sense that they can do so again next time. This experience contributes toward the gradual development of a positive and also realistic self-concept. It strengthens their ability to develop stamina, also known as resilience. Children need resilience so that when they face problems, they can say: “I am capable; I can learn something; I am valuable!”

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).



## CAR TRAILER

Short explanations are often all that is needed to help children to help themselves. Then children have the feeling that they have accomplished something almost all by themselves. This makes them self-assured and confident.

### MALOU / 3 years 2 months

Malou has a problem: How do you hook up the blue trailer to the red car? / Surely the red piece is the solution to the problem. But how does the part go into the hole? Her mother does not go over to her immediately. / Malou tries it another way. But it doesn't hold. / Her mother is still busy talking to someone. Another try. Oh, blow it! Again, it won't hook in. This is tricky. But Malou sticks with it. She doesn't give up that easily. / Now her mother comes over. Just in time. / She helps in three ways: She explains, she stays calm and she encourages her daughter. That's enough. Malou can get on by herself now. / It stays on now. And now the transport can begin! But where can the long shovel go? Does it work better this way or that way? / Malou takes the shovel in her hand and indeed—the problem is solved.

### Appropriate support

Malou needs the trailer to transport the shovel. But she is faced with a problem: it is not easy to attach the trailer to the car. Malou thinks that the red piece is needed to couple the trailer to the car. To make sure, she sticks it in the hole in the car. It fits! Now it's just a case of attaching the trailer. She tries but does not succeed. The trailer will not stay on. She needs her mother's help. But her mother is busy and does not respond straight away. So Malou tries again. She examines the parts very carefully. But once again it does not work. From a distance her mother gives her some tips ("You have to hold it straight first"). When her mother sees that her daughter is not succeeding, she comes over and helps her by giving specific, supportive suggestions. These tips give Malou a mental framework that guides her as she tries to solve the problem. And it works!

Children should be given help and suggestions that are adapted to their current abilities. This enables them to deal with new things, stay motivated, and progress in their development. It encourages them to work out and test their own solutions. If children are given too much help—in relation to what they already can do or want to learn to do—they are not challenged enough and become bored. But if they receive too little support, they are overwhelmed and feel helpless and under pressure. In either case, children cannot learn properly. The appropriate balance between 'helping' and 'letting children do things themselves' will depend on the child's temperament, current level of development and prior experiences.

Malou's mother has a very good sense of what Malou can handle and what not. By guiding her daughter using words, she provides only as much help as Malou needs to be able to attach the trailer to the car by herself. In this way she makes it possible for Malou to experience self-efficacy and enjoy success. Putting the trailer on the car (almost) all by herself gives Malou the courage to tackle the next challenge:

transporting the shovel. The shovel does not want to stay in the trailer. Without any help from her mother, Malou finds another way to successfully transport the shovel.

→ 1

#### Developing a positive self-concept

Social experiences have a considerable impact on the development of self-concept and self-esteem. Rather than taking over the task of attaching the trailer to the car, Malou's mother gives Malou the support she needs to do it by herself. She gives Malou the feeling that she can achieve her goal on her own. Malou experiences herself as a capable and competent person and as a learner. Her experience is: "I can do something; I can learn something; and I am not doing it alone!" This not only shapes how Malou sees herself but also affects her behavior and thus what she experiences in the future and how others will perceive her.

The many messages from their attachment figures convey to children what others believe they can do and what others expect of them. These messages are given through verbal and non-verbal communication (facial expressions, gestures). For example, her mother's behavior shows Malou that her mother believes that she can attach the trailer by herself. This helps Malou to have a positive view of herself (positive self-concept). Respectful messages and encouragement are very important for personality development. Through her words of praise ("Good, super!" "That's it!") Malou's mother shows genuine support and interest in her daughter's success. Sensing her mother's appreciation and respect, Malou experiences herself as capable and competent.

→ 2

#### Linking the new with the familiar

This is not the first time that Malou is using the trailer. She has seen her mother and other children attach the trailer to the car many times. She knows exactly which piece is needed to couple the trailer to the car. But how does it work? With her mother's support, Malou discovers that the trailer will hold only when the red piece is placed at an angle. This new information can be added to her previous knowledge about attaching the trailer to the car.

This example shows how important previous knowledge is for children. An experience is only educational if children can integrate it into their previous knowledge and process it in accordance with their current level of development. So it is important that children are given help that is adapted to their stage of development and what they already know. This is the only way children can have long-lasting learning experiences. The next time that Malou needs the trailer, she will know how to attach it to the car.

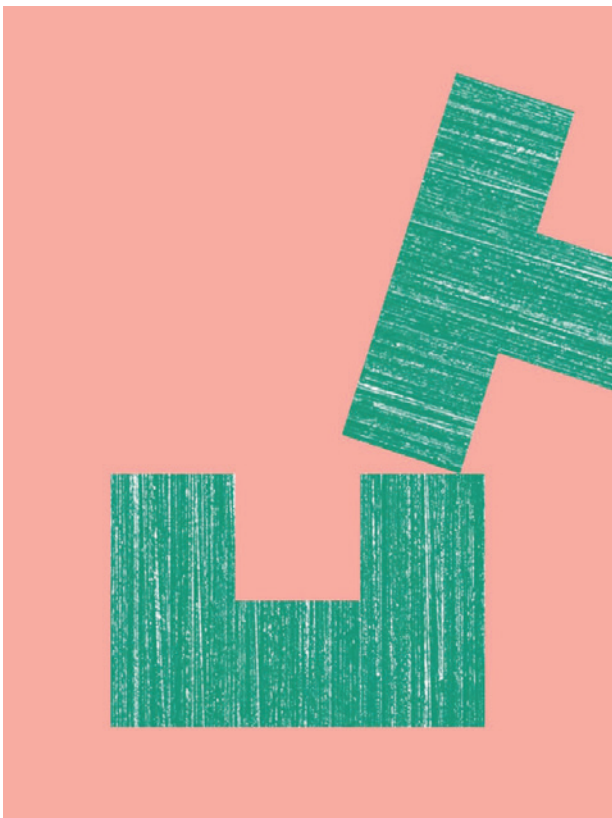
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- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.); Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).





## KETCHUP

Difficulties and obstacles are a part of life and learning. If children are given the time and the opportunity to overcome obstacles themselves, they become confident and self-assured. Success gives them a feeling of pride and gives them strength for the next challenge.

IREM / 2 years 11 months

ILKE / 4 years 10 months

Irem, Ilke and their mother are having lunch. Irem is allowed to help herself to ketchup. / It's fun to watch the red sauce coming out of the hole in the bottle onto the piece of bread. / But now the top has to be put back on. How does that work? / Irem tries and tries. But it's tricky with the eight-sided top and bottle neck. It just won't work! / But Irem doesn't give up. Maybe mother will help, or Ilke, who is older. / Mother encourages her little daughter to try it like this: line up one hole on top of the other! She knows that even a ketchup bottle and its difficult top are an opportunity to learn something. / Don't give up, Irem! Another tip. Now it should work. / She did it! Almost all by herself!

### Challenges

We always encounter little hurdles in everyday life. Here, the cap does not want to go back on to the ketchup bottle. Irem doubts that she can manage it. But her mother encourages her and allows her to solve the problem herself. She sees that this is a learning opportunity for her daughter. It is important for children to deal with this kind of everyday challenge. For Irem, putting the cap back on the bottle requires logical thinking, dexterity and patience. It is no easy task for her, but her mother allows her to take some time to try and offers helpful comments ("Bring the openings on top of each other"). Irem's mother is showing a healthy balance between helping/encouraging her child to give it a try herself, and between stepping in/stepping back. Children learn by doing and experiencing. When Irem manages to put the cap back on herself, she gains a lot more than if her mother had done it for her. It is important that adults caring for young children allow them to make mistakes as a natural part of the learning process and as an opportunity to keep trying and to overcome obstacles.

And now there is a 'click', and the cap is back on the bottle. Irem is visibly proud of her success. Her face beams with pleasure as she passes the ketchup to her brother. The experience of success for Irem was all the greater because she did it almost all by herself and because it was not an easy task. This strengthens her, and when other challenges present themselves in future, she will approach them with more confidence.

→ 1

### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

Irem is not initially confident that she can master the difficult skill of putting the cap back on the ketchup bottle. She expresses her doubts several times: "Mama, I can't do it." Seeking help she looks towards her mother. But instead of stepping in and simply closing the bottle herself, her mother explains how the cap works. Whereas Irem is not sure that she is

able, her mother has every confidence that Irem can solve the problem with a little help. By stepping back and only offering helpful tips, she indicates to Irem that she believes she can do it. Irem feels encouraged and shows persistence. When she manages it at last, her mother shares her pleasure. "Now it worked," she says to her daughter with a loving smile. Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest help children gradually develop a positive and realistic self-concept and are thus important for children's personal development.

→ 2

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ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).





## KEY

When adults place confidence in children's ability to do something, children have the courage to tackle the task with self-assurance.

MALOU / 3 years 2 months  
GROUP ages 3 years 3 months to  
3 years 5 months

Today it's Malou's turn. The play group teacher has given HER the key. SHE is the one who can open the door. The play group teacher knows that Malou can do it. And Malou believes that she can, too. / That's why Malou doesn't welcome any help from the other children today. She wants to do it all by herself. How do you turn the key? Like this, or like that? Or does it have to go further into the keyhole? Malou sticks with it. Fortunately! / How nice that one of the other children recognizes Malou's success. Now all of the children have access to the treasure chest of toys for outdoor play. / What a key experience for Malou!

### Challenges

The play group teacher has given Malou the key to the garden shed. It is really not very easy for her to unlock the door. There is a key chain pendant that makes it hard to turn the key. And the keyhole is so high up that Malou has to stand on tiptoe to reach it. And then there are the other children, who are waiting for the door to finally open so that they can get the toys that they want. But none of this deters Malou from her goal. She does not want any help from the other children. She wants to do this by herself, so she fends off the others. And she knows that she can do it if she tries hard. With persistence and a lot of determination, she succeeds in unlocking the door all by herself. Malou's experience of success strengthens her self-confidence and gives her the assurance that she needs to tackle the next learning opportunities with confidence in herself.

→ 1

### Fostering self-confidence

Today Malou is allowed to unlock the garden shed so that children can access their outdoor toys. The play group teacher has faith in Malou and believes that she can unlock the door. She knows Malou well and can judge what she is able to do. She gives Malou this task because she thinks that Malou can do it all by herself without being overwhelmed. The play group teacher's trust in her contributes to Malou's confidence in her own abilities and her willingness to tackle the challenge with self-confidence.

→ 2

### Learning together

As Malou starts to unlock the door, the other children come running. They wait patiently at first. But Tim and Nils quickly notice that Malou is having trouble with the key, and they offer to help. By being together with others, the children have learned that it is nice to give help to others and that it is just as nice when you receive help from others when things get difficult. But this time Malou does not want to accept Tim and Nils' well-meant offer. She wants to

do this by herself. The children understand her behavior when she fends them off, and they respect her wishes. They wait patiently until the door is finally opened. Tim can well imagine that this task was not very easy. He shares Malou's delight in her success and says, "You did it!" His recognition of her success reinforces Malou's feeling of achievement. That these children show so much social competency and empathy in this situation is the result of them having experienced a great many successful and unsuccessful interactions up to now. Through being together in a group and with the good supervision of their play group teacher, the children have learned to solve problems together, to cooperate and to look at things from another person's perspective.

→ 3

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ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.);  
Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).



## MOUNTAIN

When it comes to helping, there is a magic formula: Help as much as is needed and as little as possible. This makes children independent and courageous.

### MERET / 3 years 7 months

The mountain of snow in the garden at the child care centre is steep and slippery. Meret really wants to climb it. But by herself? No, she can't do it alone. / The teacher assists Meret. By being calm and attentive. She helps Meret with her hand and a knee. That's all the little mountain climber needs. / And: She shows Meret that she's pleased. / "Again!", says Meret. "Again!" That's a sure sign of encouragement!

### Appropriate support

There are three general sources of motivation for children's behavior. The motives that influence children's behavior are: first, the need for security and protection; second, the need for stimulation and challenge; and third, the need for autonomy and independence. The presence of the play group teacher gives Meret security. Meret asks for some additional help by requesting the teacher's hand. Her thirst for action has been stimulated by the fact that, despite the cold and snow, the children have been allowed to romp in the garden of the day care center and climb the piles of snow. Antonia, who comes over and would like to climb the snow mountain as well, is given an alternative option by the teacher: she might want to join the children in the back corner of the yard. The other children also provide inspiration for ideas. For instance, Meret sees some of the children making snow angels, and she wants to try that, too. Meret climbs the hill of snow; she gets some assistance, but she does it in her own strength. Meret is autonomous, acts on her own initiative and according to her own plan. How much security and stimulation each child needs depends on the child's individual level of development, personality, prior experiences at home and outside the home and the specific situation. Finding the right balance to suit the child's level of independence and the support the child needs is crucial. Meret states her goal very clearly: "I want to get up there." But she cannot climb the snow mountain alone. The teacher sees this and responds. For Meret she is a familiar and trusted person, and she is also available at this very moment. The best conditions are in place for Meret to pursue her interest. Children want to try new things, explore and discover the world around them. To do this they need adult support—sometimes more and sometimes less. Meret says exactly what kind of help, and how much, she needs: "Give me your hand!" The teacher gives Meret her hand and also places her leg next to the snow so that Meret's foot will not slip as easily. This is precisely the amount of help that Meret needs to climb the snow mountain and to learn to keep her balance, coordinate her feet and experience success. If the teacher had helped Meret more than that, Meret would not have been able to have these experiences. If she had helped Meret less, Meret might have been overwhelmed. She would not have been able to climb up, and she would have experi-

enced failure. Not too much, not too little—the right balance needs to be found.

→ 1

#### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

A pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled, so the old saying goes. When Meret climbs to the top of the snow pile, her teacher shares her joy. “Super! Bravo!” she says and claps her hands, expressing genuine pleasure in Meret’s success. This appreciative and honest praise conveys to Meret that she has done something great, that she has achieved something! Meret thus receives confirmation from her teacher in addition to her own feeling of accomplishment. This motivates Meret to climb the mountain again. Repeated experiences of success result in children coming to see themselves as capable and competent learners. Meret is gradually gaining an idea of what she knows and what she can do. This self-concept is a significant source of motivation in the long term. It basically determines whether children believe that their chances of mastering a challenge are good and how they approach challenges. Here, the task is to climb up a pile of snow and then get down again. Next time the challenge might be to cut a pattern out of paper, learn a ball game or use a computer game. When Meret knows that she has successfully completed different kinds of tasks, she will welcome new challenges and tackle them with curiosity and confidence. Children’s learning biographies do not begin in school as they learn to read, write and do sums; they begin at birth. The many, small learning steps that children make need to be carefully supported and promoted.

→ 2

#### Research and discovery

Children are explorers. They discover the world around them with curiosity and enthusiasm. Today Meret is practicing climbing mountains. Mastering the obstacle and climbing to its summit is her goal. She tries out ways to get to the top, how it feels to stand up there and the best way to get down again. Observing others or receiving explanations from others can further these learning processes. But the important step is for children to imitate others, to try it themselves. Children can only develop and practice skills through their own activity. Climbing to the top once and down again once—Meret only knows how it is done when she has done it herself. But climbing up once and jumping down again is not enough for Meret; she wants to do it again. Repetition and practice are important, so that children can confirm, correct or expand their newly gained knowledge and convert it into something they perform routinely.

To engage in these individual construction and acquisition processes, children need the right sort of conditions. Meret wants to climb the snow pile several times. She needs the opportunity and ample time. Her teacher makes sure that she has both. She supports Meret patiently, without time pressure.

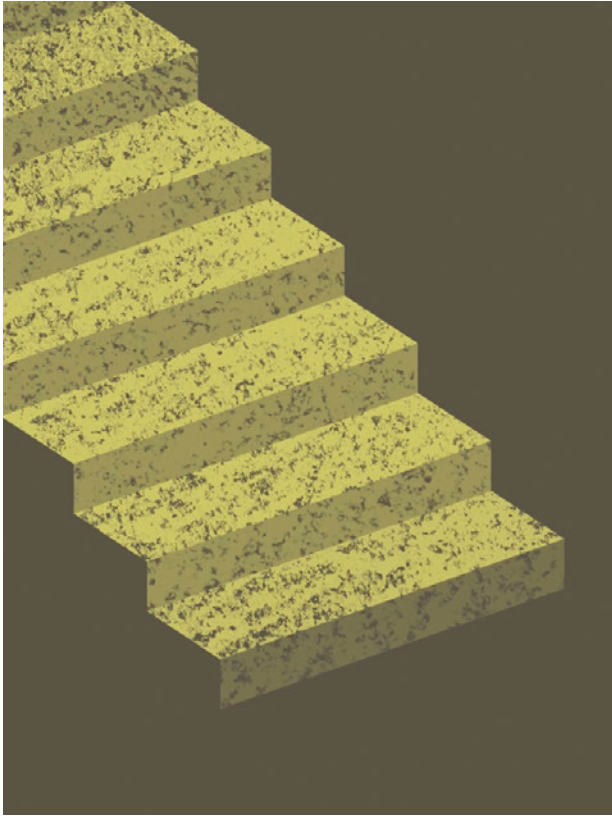
When Antonia comes by and also shows interest in the snow mountain, the teacher offers her an alternative activity. This satisfies both children: Meret can climb without interruption, and Antonia makes snow angels with the other children.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE

ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).



## STAIRS

Children need stable roots AND wings. They need security AND appropriate encouragement and expectations. That way they gradually learn to do a lot by themselves.

ENZO / 1 years 2 months  
PIA / 1 Jahr 1 months

Step by step. In the midst of all the children's voices, Enzo is making his way down the stairs. Having his teacher next to him gives him courage. / Her comment, "Super!" empowers and motivates him. And so he keeps at it. Yes, that's the way. / Step by step. Now that Enzo has nearly reached his goal, his teacher is confident that he can do the rest all by himself. / And she's right. Enzo reaches the bottom of the stairs safely.

### Appropriate support

The day care group wants to go to the movement room, which is located in the basement. To reach it they have to go down a long flight of stairs. Rather than carry Enzo, the teacher allows him to go down the stairs by himself. Enzo skillfully crawls down-stairs on all fours. Turned around to face the steps and going feet first with his head up is the perfect technique for Enzo to master this obstacle. His teacher stays very close to him. She is giving him the freedom to climb down the stairs by himself but she is also always just one step ahead of him, where she can support him if needed. She is giving Enzo both security and autonomy, exactly as appropriate for Enzo and the situation. Climbing down the stairs is a stimulating learning opportunity for Enzo as it is.

Enzo can master the long flight of stairs without having to be afraid. He knows that his trusted teacher is with him and that she will make sure that nothing happens to him.

Enzo completes the last three steps with his teacher somewhat further away from him. His teacher knows Enzo very well and knows what he can already do and what not. But she stays nearby, watches him carefully and is ready at a moment's notice to support him if he needs help.

And so Enzo reaches his goal at last. It has taken longer than if the teacher had simply carried him down the stairs. It took exactly as much time as Enzo needed to perform this task independently. Making it possible for young children to learn and supporting their learning processes adequately often means that we have to 'slow down' our daily routine. Children learn according to their own rhythm. Accompanying and responding to children means taking the time to allow them to develop their own activities, stimuli and ideas. This makes it possible for children to progress in small and big steps and strengthens their increasing independence.

→ 1

### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

What may be a simple staircase for adults is a great challenge for a young child. Enzo crawls down the entire flight of stairs from top to bottom. This demands not only gross motor skills but also a lot



of balance and persistence. But he receives encouragement from his teacher, who says: "Now we've almost made it. Just a little more. Come on." This motivates Enzo to keep going. Saying "Super!" his teacher praises his achievement up to now and spurs him on.

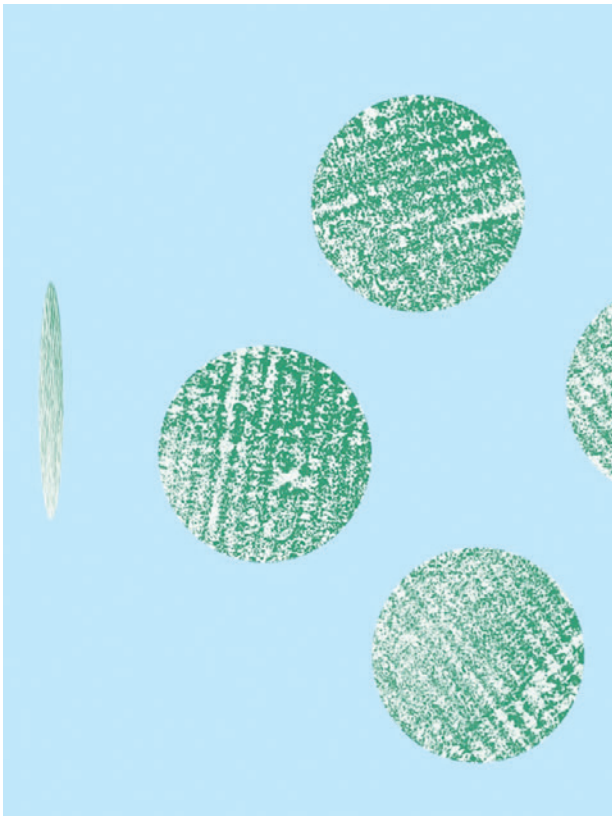
Young children are very strongly guided by what the people who are important to them say and do. This is why his teacher's encouraging words have such a strong effect on Enzo. In this example, it is also clear that Enzo stops again and again and seeks reassurance regarding his actions. Her reaction shows him if he is doing it right and if, after managing each stage, he should continue on. For this reason it is important for adults to respond to children's actions sensitively and immediately—through non-verbal signals (such as an affirming look, holding out a hand, or a smile) and words.

→ 2

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## VEGETABLES

The old saying that “knife, fork, scissors and flames are not for children” is **WRONG**. Even small children can learn together with adults how to handle knives, forks, scissors and flames.

LIVIA / 1 year 6 months  
MAURO / 3 year 9 months

It's just before midday. Lunch needs to be prepared, and the two children want to help. / Each does what he or she can. Their mother knows what her children are capable of, and she gives each child what he or she needs. Mauro already knows how to use a peeler. Livia is just learning how to slice cucumbers. / Their mother guides Livia's hand carefully and in this way shows her how to handle the sharp knife. A little dialogue develops. / “Slice, slice, slice”. The word becomes a spoken verse. / Slice after slice, Livia learns the word as well as how to use the sharp knife. Doing and speaking—a twofold benefit. I am little, but I can do it!

### Challenges

Livia is learning to cut a cucumber and to use a sharp knife in a way that is appropriate for her. Her mother is carefully helping her to cut. Livia is allowed to hold the knife and cucumber herself, but her mother is guiding the knife. In this way, Livia learns close up how cucumbers are cut and what guiding the knife feels like. At the same time, her safety is ensured at every step. Livia is being given a challenging task. Cutting is an activity that she cannot yet execute by herself. But thanks to her mother's supervision, the challenging task is not an overwhelming one. That makes the situation one in which Livia can learn.

It is different for Mauro. He has already had lots of opportunities to acquire experience like this and can use the vegetable peeler by himself. He practices his skills diligently when peeling the carrots, paying close attention to make sure no peel is left on the carrot. At the same time he frequently looks over at his sister with interest.

On the one hand, children need new opportunities to gain experience. This means trusting in their ability to do something. On the other hand, it is the adult's task to give children protection and security. Finding the right middle course requires close and empathetic observation and sometimes also some confidence: what can the child already do? What previous knowledge and experience does the child have? What could the next step be? How would the child react if he or she were overwhelmed or not challenged enough?

→ 1

### Participating and contributing

The children's mother has included them in preparing the noontime meal. She is creating an important learning opportunity for them. The children enjoy being allowed to help, for children naturally want to participate and contribute to the group, in this case the family. They gain the feeling that they are needed, that they can be effective and are important to the family. For their mother, combining household tasks with caring for her children means that things take

longer. But she is fostering her children's independence. In the long term this can lead to partnership-like sharing of the household chores.

→ 2

#### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

Mauro watches how his mother and Livia cut the cucumber for a moment. He is impressed and expresses his admiration: "Livia is doing a really nice job." And her mother's word, "super", tells Livia how well she is doing and that she can continue on. Positive, honest feedback is important for children, especially when it comes from important persons. Children are generally perceptive even of subtleties; they notice what adults pay attention to or ignore, approve or disapprove of. Children orient themselves to adults' comments and in this way adjust their own behavior. This can occur based on verbal comments and on behavior. Mauro and Livia's mother expresses her praise in words, but Livia also gets feedback through her mother's attention and the fact that they carry on with their cutting. Respectful messages, encouragement and sincere interest are very important for a child's personal development. They help children to be pleased with their actions and their discoveries and to dare to try and practice new things.

→ 3

#### Language support

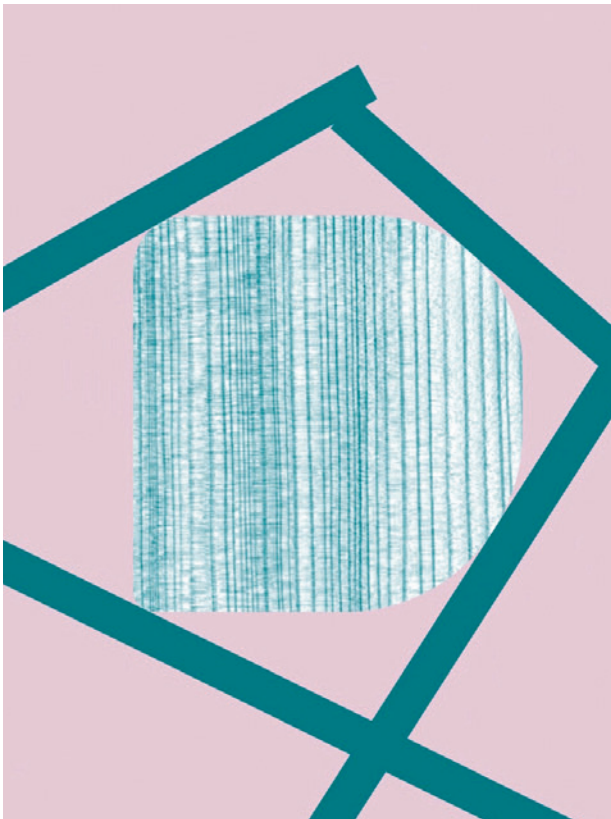
Livia's mother provides a commentary on cutting with Livia in a way that Livia understands. She thus supports Livia's language learning in a developmentally appropriate way. "We have to be careful of our fingers": this is what her mother says to Livia but probably also to herself. It is important for children that adults speak with them and put their thoughts into words. Children learn from their example to focus their attention and to do things step by step. In addition, Livia and her mother take turns repeating the word "cut". With her mother taking up her words and repeating them, Livia receives direct feedback on what she says and experiences what she herself has produced verbally. Their repetition of the word "cut" also accentuates the rhythmic activity of cutting, which is ideally suited to acquiring the skill.

Repetition itself is a central learning strategy for young children. The word "cut" becomes anchored in Livia's memory and also becomes connected with the activity of cutting.

→ 4

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- 3 Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 4 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).



## FILE

**‘Do it yourself’ in togetherness!**  
In this way, children feel that they are taken seriously, and the relationship is strengthened.

### LIVIA / 1 year 7 months

In the workshop at the workbench. Livia and her father have work to do. Side by side. / Livia tries out the big file. How does it file the new wood of the wooden sword? And how does it work on the wood of the workbench? / Each is doing his and her own work, but they are together in conversation. With their eyes. And with words. / “Fallen down” are two words that are currently occupying Livia. Her father listens, tries to understand, and takes Livia seriously. And then it happens. / Livia’s father encourages his little daughter to pick up the file herself. After all, he has given her a good step stool, and he knows his daughter. / She does it all by herself! And she does it under the eyes of her caring father. This makes her strong.

#### Strengthening the relationship

This is not the first time that Livia has been allowed to join her father in the workshop. They have done a lot of things together in the past and are clearly very comfortable with one another. They may be engaged in different tasks, but they each show interest in what the other is doing. If Livia does not understand something that her father says, she asks. She wants to know exactly what her father is saying. On his part, her father expresses admiration of Livia’s success with filing: “Yes, super. Have you done that much!” This gives Livia confirmation that she can accomplish things and have an effect on the world around her. This recognition of achievement encourages the child; it not only strengthens the relationship but also is important for the child’s personal development.

Livia is standing on a step stool. She does not want to fall off. She expresses this to her father. Even though Livia cannot yet speak in sentences, he understands what she wants to say, and he acknowledges and affirms it (“You must be careful”). Livia feels her father’s genuine interest in her thoughts and feelings. It is fun to stand on the step stool, but it is also an adventure for the little girl at the same time. Several times she seeks and receives her father’s affirmation that she should not fall down. Shared experiences like these strengthen the relationship between children and their attachment figures. For children need adults that are familiar to them, take time for them and can be relied upon.

→ 1

#### Language support

Father and daughter are both deeply engaged in their tasks. And yet there is constant exchange between them, with looks, words and gestures. Livia can speak some words and uses this newly acquired ability to have an exchange with her father. By responding to Livia’s comments and also putting his own thoughts into words (“Will we make another one? No, we don’t have to”). He supports Livia in language acquisition. The willingness to speak and

to listen to others is a central prerequisite for successful communication. Livia is not only concerned with the content of 'fall down'; she is also enjoying the words themselves. She listens to the sound of them, notices how they feel on her tongue and repeats them several times.

→ 2

### Fostering self-confidence

The workshop has a lot to offer both father and daughter. Livia's father can pursue his hobby and his daughter is proud to be allowed to be with him. Her father includes her by allowing her to be with him and to join in. Livia is allowed to play a part, can experiment on her own and communicate. What a lot of different learning opportunities!

This is not a special workbench for children where Livia is allowed to work with a toy file made of plastic or wood. No, she is allowed to work at the big workbench with a real file. Almost like her father. Her father has even given her a step stool so that she can file away from a comfortable height. Livia has been with her father in the workshop many times and has had practice working with different tools. To learn how to use potentially dangerous tools, children need the supervision of an adult who ensures the child's safety and can provide help when needed. This is the only way the child can learn to assess dangers and to use a tool properly. Livia's father knows her well and trusts in her ability to use the file. This encourages Livia and reinforces her confidence in her own abilities. And when the file falls to the floor, both her father and Livia know that she can manage to retrieve it all on her own. Doing it herself not only gives Livia a feeling of competency but also provides her with diverse learning opportunities: carefully climbing down the step stool trains her gross motor skills, for instance. This is a tricky task for Livia that she accomplishes with self-confidence. Everyday challenges like this foster a child's learning and provide a sense of achievement.

→ 3

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ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 22 f.); Leitprinzip 1: Physisches und psychisches Wohlbefinden: Ein Kind, das sich wohl fühlt, kann neugierig und aktiv sein (S. 35 ff.); Leitprinzip 4: Stärkung und Ermächtigung: Die Reaktionen, die ein Kind auf seine Person und auf sein Verhalten erfährt, beeinflussen sein Bild von sich selbst (S. 42 ff.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 3 Das Fundament: Lernen und Entwicklung (S. 26 ff.); Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).



## LAUNDRY

Being a part of things and helping is everything. Children need attachment figures who include them in everyday life and who are role models.

LIVIA / 1 year 6 months  
MAURO / 3 years 9 months

There isn't much room, and there's a lot to do. It's good that Livia and Mauro have got a small laundry rack. This way they can help their mother. / Livia's brother is older and he is already better at this, of course. And of course sometimes things go wrong. But Livia already knows how to give the laundry a shake. Her mother only had to show her once. / Back and forth with underwear, facecloths, T-shirts, boxer shorts, and pillowcases. And back and forth with words and sentences. And it is clear that little Livia is a part of things. But she doesn't want to let go of the soft green facecloth. / Mauro, too, is engrossed in the task. / "Mine!" is a powerful word. Mauro is proud of himself, and his mother's praise makes him happy.

### Participating and contributing

Today is laundry day. Livia, Mauro and their mother are doing this household task together. The children enjoy participating. Thanks to the small laundry rack, they can take an active part. Although Livia is not very experienced at hanging up washing, her brother and her mother very naturally include her. Both of them help the little girl by showing, giving tips and being patient, so that she can make her own contribution to the joint activity. Mauro helps industriously and conscientiously. The children are a help to their mother, but through helping they also gain a sense of making a contribution to the whole family. It is important for children to give of themselves in the family group and to know that this is desired and welcome. For this they need adults who see and appreciate the value of their contributions. Her mother says thank you to Livia for each piece of laundry that Livia hands her. She is communicating to her daughter that she appreciates her help. Doing things together, like hanging the washing, strengthens the relationship between family members.

→ 1

### Respectful messages, encouragement and taking interest

Mauro is proud of the work that he has done. But he would also like to have recognition from his mother and asks, "Mommy, will you look at how mine looks?" In their perceptions and assessments children are strongly oriented by the facial expressions and behavior of adults who are important to them. From his mother's feedback, Mauro learns what effect he can have and how others react to him. His mother's opinion is important for him to be able to assess his performance himself.

"You did a super job hanging those," his mother answers. This response communicates her appreciation of her son and expresses her deep interest in the things he does. This helps Mauro gradually develop a positive and also realistic self-concept.

→ 2



Language support

Livia, Mauro and their mother engage in conversation as they work together hanging up the washing. Communication with others is very important for young children. Through non-verbal (eye contact, gestures, facial expressions), pre-verbal (sounds) and verbal (words) exchange with others, children acquire a multifaceted picture of themselves and their world. For this reason, it is important for adults to speak to children from the very start and to verbalize their actions. Everyday activities, such as hanging the washing, are wonderful opportunities for communicating. In dialogue with the children, their mother fosters their language development. Livia constantly practices expressing herself in words and sounds. Her mother responds to her utterances, thus showing her daughter that she values her attempts to speak and understands what she is trying to say. This encourages and reinforces Livia in her efforts to acquire language.

→ 3

Learning together

"Livia, look, you have to do it this way," says Mauro, and he shows Livia how to hang the clothes on the rack. He takes particular care in order to be a good example to Livia. He also takes an instructive role and points out in a loud voice that Livia has let freshly washed clothes fall on the floor.

Livia's mother also shows her a trick to hanging the clothes: you shake them out first. Livia is happy to know this and immediately tries it out. Or Livia could hand things to her mother to hang. Livia takes up on this idea right away as well and hands her mother one piece of laundry after the other.

Livia benefits a lot from being together with her mother and brother. She has two role models from whom she can learn. And Mauro exercises his role as big brother self-confidently. By helping Livia and giving her tips, he himself learns to sort and pass along his knowledge and to take responsibility for his younger sister.

→ 4

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- 3 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).
- 4 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).





## MORNING SNACK

Laying the table as a ritual and as a learning opportunity: everyone pitches in, everyone has a task to perform. When children are allowed to contribute to everyday life, they have a sense of belonging and learn to take responsibility.

GROUP / ages 3 years 3 months to 3 years 10 months

It's time to lay the table in the play group. They are going to have a feast together. But first, many hands are needed to get the table ready for the morning snack. / Where do the things belong? And: Who is joining us today? These are all things that have to be discussed. / Of course, sometimes something goes wrong. That's a part of learning. / Stacks of glasses, a plate of grapes, slices of bread, a jug of water. Getting everything ready is fun in itself. / This is not the first time for these children. Laying the table is one of the rituals at the play group.

### Participating and contributing

It is time for morning snack at play group, and the table has to be made ready. One child after the other comes to help. While the play group teacher empties the dishwasher, the children carry the dishes and foods from the kitchen to the table. Each child takes on a task, and the teacher lets them do quite a lot. By being allowed to help, the children benefit in many different ways. By doing something for the good of the group they learn to take responsibility and to work as a team. They feel part of a group. By taking part and knowing what needs to be done—as the others do—each child has a sense of belonging. The feelings of belonging and familiarity help children to be comfortable with others.

Just how proud the children are of their work can be seen in Hannah's question, when she asks who did such a nice job of setting the table. Everyone has contributed to the great success.

→ 1

### Experiential learning in the child's everyday life

This is not the first time that the children have set the table. Setting the table is one of the regular activities at play group. All the children know what goes on the table and where. The children feel capable of executing this. Regularly recurring activities like this one help children to find orientation and gain an overview of events.

When they set the table, it is alright if a glass falls to the floor; the glassware is sturdy and not easily broken. Mistakes and mishaps are a part of learning. With every opportunity to perform everyday tasks by themselves, children gain increasing independence. It is important here that adults caring for young children maintain the attitude that mistakes are a part of the learning process. Mistakes should be seen as an opportunity to improve.

The children do not consider it enough to simply put the things on the table. They consider where each item belongs and who will be at the table for morning snack. This is a good opportunity to practice thinking, planning and execution.

Learning processes in young children are always connected with concrete, everyday situations. Explanations alone do not teach children how to handle

glassware carefully, how to set a table so that everyone has a place setting and how to work as a team. They learn on the basis of concrete everyday experience.

→ 2

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ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
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- 1 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Grundverständnis frühkindlicher Bildung (S. 24 f.).



## SHOPPING CART

No one is too little to help. Children want to contribute to the group and to feel that they are valuable.

MARONA / 3 years 10 months  
DINA / 1 year 6 months

For many adults, shopping with small children is a real challenge. There are so many tempting things and so many impressions all at once! Dina, Marona, the childminder and the bear meet this challenge. Firstly, this is not the first time that they have gone to the supermarket together. Secondly, Dina and Marona are allowed to help. And thirdly, they all have time. / The childminder accompanies every action with a simple statement. In this way, the children are always involved. / Marona is already big enough to put the long loaf of bread on the conveyor belt at the till. The childminder does not rush her. In this way, she helps the children to experience themselves as important and capable of helping. / Marona is rather little to manage the big basket and the long walk to the basket return point. But she succeeds. All by herself, without the childminder. The childminder just has to pick up some dropped coins from the floor.

### Participating and contributing

From birth, children are a part of a community and build personal relationships. Children want to participate, play a part and feel that they belong. But this also has to be welcomed and made possible by adults, which is the case for Marona and Dina. This is not the first time that they have gone grocery shopping with their childminder. Here they are given the opportunity to help energetically. Especially Marona, who is a bit older and bigger than Dina, is allowed and able to push the shopping cart, put things on the conveyor belt and put the basket away. These are all opportunities that the childminder gives Marona. She asks questions ("Marona, would you like to push the cart?"), so that Marona can decide herself whether she wants to take up on the suggestion or not. By helping, Marona is a support to her childminder and also experiences her own active participation and feels that she is capable of making a valuable contribution. This strengthens her self-confidence and her feeling of belonging. At the same time, the children also learn a lot about how to go shopping, and they develop increasing independence.

→ 1

### Challenges

Marona is allowed to return the cart with the shopping basket. This is not an easy task, as it turns out. Marona already knows that the shopping basket can be detached from the cart in this store. She pulls hard but the basket simply won't lift off. Seeking help, she looks towards her childminder, but she is busy paying at the register. So Marona has to solve this problem herself. She tries again. And because she does not give up, she manages to get the basket off the cart. Now she can do what she set out to do and bring the basket back to where it belongs. Trying things out, developing solution strategies, and showing persistence even when things get difficult are

central elements of learning processes in children. When a situation challenges children without overwhelming them, it can become a learning situation.

→ 2

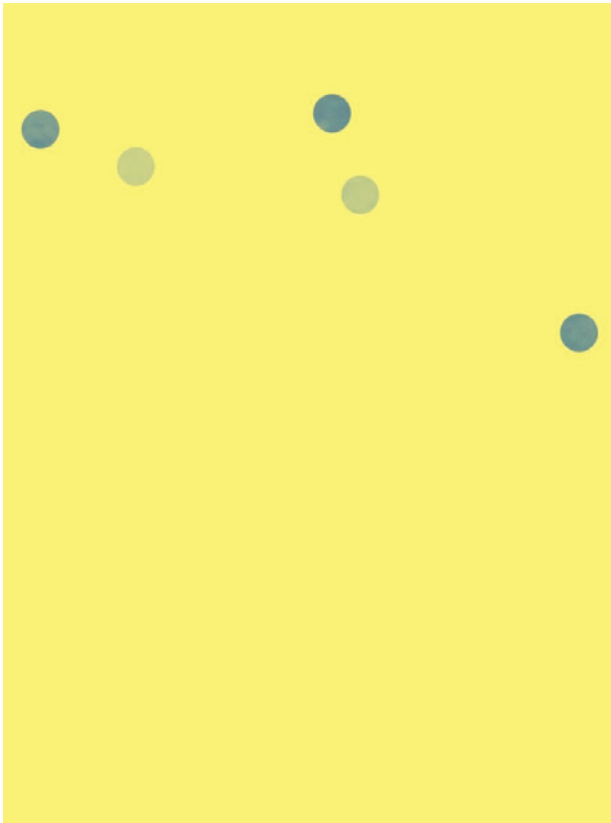
#### Language support

Dina is too young to converse with her childminder verbally, and Marona speaks another language at home. Swiss German is very new for her. Still, the childminder speaks with both girls while shopping, even though they cannot answer her using words. She knows that children understand a language before they can speak it themselves. She asks questions ("Do you want to get up on there, too?"), draws the children's attention to things ("Look, here they are"), praises them ("That's right. Bravo!") and puts their own thoughts into words ("They have the chives down below"). She uses short and simple sentences that both girls can understand. This continuous dialogue with the children is important; following the childminder's example, the children learn to focus their attention, to do one thing and then the next, to plan, and to understand and organize their own feelings and ideas. The childminder becomes a model. She not only sets an example but also supports the girls in learning the German language and building their vocabularies.

→ 3

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRAHMEN für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 2 Leitprinzip 6: Ganzheitlichkeit und Angemessenheit: Kleine Kinder lernen mit allen Sinnen, geleitet von ihren Interessen und bisherigen Erfahrungen (S. 46 f.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 2: Kommunikation: Ein vielfältiges Bild von sich und der Welt erwerben Kinder durch den Austausch mit anderen (S. 37 ff.).



## STEPS

Togetherness and closeness give children a good feeling. Even if not everybody can do everything yet. After all, you can learn a lot from others.

GROUP / ages 1 year 8 months to 4 years 4 months

Five children and their teacher explore different ways of moving forward. Step by step. / Anna is the youngest. The teacher takes her by the hand, helping her to keep up with the other children. Everybody likes holding the teacher's hand. If Anna is allowed to hold the teacher's hand, then the older children are, too. / Little mice can move forward, too. Anna watches very carefully and then she can do it all by herself. / And on they go. Verse by verse, and step by step.

### Belonging

All children want to feel welcome and included wherever they are. Anna is by far the youngest child in this group. But she is a part of the small community, and the teacher and the other children naturally include her in their game about different ways of moving. Anna needs some help so that she can participate. But when she is holding the teacher's hand or at her teacher's side or is dancing with Paolo, an older boy, it all goes quite easily. The other children are allowed to hold the teacher's hand, too. And any child who does not get the teacher's hand simply takes the hand of another child. They are all familiar with each other and have done a lot of things together. They are not afraid of physical contact. This movement game strengthens the group: for one, the children are all allowed to contribute their own ideas; they take turns deciding what kind of steps they will use and sing about. For another, the children experience that everyone in the little group is doing something together and having fun. The shared experience and the respect for each child help them feel good in the group.

→ 1

### Learning together

The children in this small group are not all the same age. But they can all benefit from one another: the younger children learn different ways of moving by watching the older children and imitating them, and the older children learn how they can help the younger ones. Paolo is happy to take little Anna's hands in his and to dance around the room with her. Together with others, children learn to take responsibility for their own actions and for others. They acquire not only knowledge about new things and events but also important social skills. Here they contribute their ideas for ways that the children can move next. Not all of their ideas can be used: for example, two different suggestions for hopping are put forward. To continue enjoying the game even if it is not your own idea is not so easy. Through this experience, the children learn to cooperate in the group, see things from another's perspective, express their ideas and put others' ideas into practice. In the group the children practice being team players and stepping back.

→ 2



### Participating and contributing

Participation—taking part, joining in, contributing—starts with little things. The teacher asks the children what kind of steps they could do next in their movement game. She addresses each child, and each child may offer a suggestion. The children have a lot of suggestions right away, as they know this game well and the options available. They offer their ideas with words (“hopping steps”) or by demonstrating (running to show ‘running steps’). Thus, all of the children can communicate their ideas in their own individual way and are heard by the teacher. The teacher takes their suggestions seriously. This time, the children are the experts who show the teacher how to do things. This strengthens their self-confidence. Belonging and participation also open up a variety of learning opportunities. They are the foundation of democratic cooperation.

→ 3

### Stimulating learning environment

It is up to adults to create a stimulating learning environment in which children can have new experiences, both together with other children and adults and with things. Here, the teacher has initiated a game that involves group singing and movement. This gives the children an opportunity for a variety of experiences with movement and music, on their own and as a group. The teacher succeeds at finding a good balance between inspiring the children and encouraging the children's own self-initiative. She chose to bring the children into the movement room. She is recognizing their need to move and also providing a new experience, in which she takes up the children's ideas and gives them plenty of scope for creativity.

→ 4

FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE  
ORIENTIERUNGSRahmen für frühkindliche Bildung,  
Betreuung und Erziehung in der Schweiz:

- 1 Leitprinzip 5: Inklusion und Akzeptanz von Verschiedenheit: Jedes Kind braucht einen Platz in der Gesellschaft (S. 44 f.).
- 2 Das Fundament: Beziehungen und gemeinschaftliches Lernen (S. 28 ff.).
- 3 Leitprinzip 3: Zugehörigkeit und Partizipation: Jedes Kind möchte sich willkommen fühlen und sich ab Geburt beteiligen (S. 40 f.).
- 4 Pädagogisches Handeln: Bildungsprozesse anregen und Lernumgebungen gestalten (S. 52 ff.).

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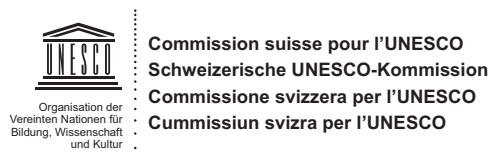


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