

5 ways to extend on children's interests

In element 1.1.2 we are asked to put children's interests at the centre of the program. This should be done in a way that supports children to see this happening.



Reflect on your understanding of 'interests'

Often when we think about interests we think about items like trucks or dolls, or topics like space or dinosaurs. When interests can also be the way children use their environment or resources like stacking, jumping, climbing, posting, or scrunching. The more definitions for interest the more planning opportunities.



Make sure you have understood the interest

To really understand the interest you have to pay close attention to what the children are doing and how they are doing it. Just because children are holding a resource or are in an area of the environment does not mean that is the interest, they could be representing their ideas or discussing something else.



Provide multiple ways to explore the interest

Once you have identified the interest planning one specific extension does not allow for the children to have agency over the extension and sometimes this leads to a lack of engagement. Placing the interests in different experiences allows for more successful engagement with extensions.



Connect children to the extended experiences

Deliberately explaining to the children what is on offer in the room and how it is based on their interests can help with engagement. For younger children this could be achieved through placing new resources with the existing ones the child was interested in, or by modelling how resources support their interests.



Make it a meaningful extension for the child

Developmentally young children struggle with conceptual, representational ideas that are not based on tangible, visible links. As adults we might be able to see that collaging a truck is related to an interest in trucks, yet for the child that is art, and their interest is touching and moving trucks around.