Problem Solving in the Early Years

Infant

I can…

Begin to explore cause & effect

Interact with my world through observation and imitation

Explore the world through my senses

Toddler

I can…

Experiment with objects to learn about them

Work things out through repetition

Use my memory of previous interactions to help me solve problems

Preschool

I can…

Think of solutions to the problems I experience

Begin working cooperatively with others to solve problems

Start to reflect on my use of problem-solving strategies

Kindergarten

I can…

Persist longer through the frustration of a problem

Begin to think about problems I haven't directly experienced (abstract thinking).

Reflect more critically on others' problems, even if they're not my own.

Nurturing Problem Solving in Young Children

Infant

- Delight in my discoveries! Everything is new to me!

- Show me how to play with different objects

- Offer me new things to explore; place them within my reach

- Let me explore using all my senses

- Narrate my actions

- Spend time in serve and return interactions that encourage imitation

Toddler

- Offer materials with moving parts

- Show me how, then let me try

- Let me try to figure out how to do things before offering help.

- Allow me the opportunity to use repetition to figure things out.

- Show me how to communicate when I have a problem. (e.g.?)

- Ask me open ended questions; wait for my response.

- Support peer interactions by staying close; help me to share and take turns

Preschool/ Kindergarten

- Use visuals to help me remember how to problem solve and find solutions

- Create intentional opportunities to practice problem solving with peers (e.g. collaborative materials)

- Encourage me to think of solutions before offering suggestions

- Notice my problem-solving with positive descriptive feedback

- Help me reflect on my use of problem-solving

- Model and narrate your own use of problem-solving