Strategies for determining children’s interests:

Promote conversations with children by asking open-ended questions, listening to their responses, and continuing the exchanges based on what interests them. Remember to:

- Stay mindful of not interrupting play; give children time before opening a conversation.
- After asking a question, allow enough wait time for children to process and respond.
- Be sure to match the question asked to the child’s developmental level.

Gather data by observing children throughout the day, analyzing work samples, listening to their sharing of special moments at home, with family and out in the community.

Give children opportunities each day to make choices, find connections and be problem solvers.

Create questions for each area of the room that will encourage children to share their feelings, ideas and thoughts. “What was your favorite part of the story? Why?” “Tell me about...” “Why do you think this happened?” Hang up signs in each learning center listing questions to guide adults as they ask questions and engage in meaningful conversations with children.

Other talking points about determining children’s interests:

Bloom’s taxonomy can be used to ask a variety of questions and spark meaningful conversations:

- Remember (identify, name, recall)
- Understand (describe, explain, summarize)
- Apply (explain why, I wonder...)
- Analyze (compare, experiment, contrast)
- Evaluate (express opinion, defend, criticize)
- Create (make, design, construct)

(Big Questions for Young Minds, 2017)

Introducing interesting materials in ways that inspire children’s curiosity and asking meaningful questions will support a growing vocabulary and help children develop higher-level thinking skills.

By listening to children’s responses to different types of questions, teachers can scaffold children’s learning.

Open-ended questions lead children to think about and express their feelings, thoughts and creativity.

By presenting materials in interesting and creative ways, children will be curious to explore and investigate. Materials should include things that children can relate to from their home environment, natural materials, and things that are new to them.

Writing learning goals for centers on lesson plans helps to keep children’s interests in focus while observing and interacting with children.

Resource