

A to Z's of Early Childhood

3R'S OF EARLY LEARNING: RELATIONSHIPS, REPETITION, ROUTINES

3R's of Early Learning: Relationships, Repetition, Routines

Many people consider early reading, writing, and arithmetic skills (the traditional 3 R's) to be the foundation for early learning because they are skills children need to be successful in school and beyond. Though these skills are important, research shows there are three important processes that shape children's brain development and early learning. We refer to these processes as the new 3R's of Early Learning: Relationships, Repetition, Routines. The new 3R's of early learning are important because they focus on how children learn rather than what they learn.

RELATIONSHIPS

Nurturing and responsive relationships are the foundation for building brain development and for early learning. From the time they are born, children have thousands of interactions each day with their caregivers, other family members, and other adults in their lives such as practitioners in early education and care programs. Toddlers and preschoolers also have many interactions with other children. When children have consistent and positive interactions with others, they are experiencing relationships that support their brain development and their learning.

REPETITION

Children benefit from repeated opportunities to learn. For example, hearing a caregiver use a word repeatedly or having many opportunities to crawl toward a favorite toy or person helps children learn new skills or master ones they have learned. Some children might need more repetition or practice than others. For all children, repeated learning opportunities within everyday routines help build connections in the brain that advance development and learning.

ROUTINES

Relationships and repetitions should occur in the context of everyday routines and activities. Routines are predictable and often have several steps (e.g., changing a diaper). Activities can occur within a routine (e.g., playing a game of peek-a-boo during a diaper change) or they can stand alone (e.g., painting at an easel with a friend). Everyday routines and activities provide opportunities for children to practice skills or learn new skills when and where they are meaningful and useful. Some routines and activities happen at home, while others happen in the community or in early education and care programs. Many happen in more than one place, so children have repeated opportunities to engage in nurturing and responsive relationships. This also means they have repeated opportunities to practice skills in different places and with different people or with different toys or materials.

RELATIONSHIPS

Serve-and-return interactions

REPETITION

Making neural connections by embedding learning in everyday activities and routines

ROUTINES

Predictable activities in everyday routines that engage and motivate

Remember, **the 3R's of Early Learning: Relationships, Repetition, Routines** are the foundation for supporting brain development and early learning.