Babies and toddlers: Amazing learners

This resource has been developed by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority in collaboration with Anne Stonehouse AM and Early Childhood Australia. The videos were filmed at Gowrie Victoria, Docklands.

The three videos in this resource highlight and showcase selected examples of significant learning in the birth-to-three-years period. The aim is to make visible babies’ and toddlers’ learning and, by doing so, to expand awareness and appreciation of it. As a result, professionals will look more closely, reflect on what babies’ and toddlers’ behaviour means, adopt an image of babies and toddlers as capable and competent learners, and enact this image in their work.

The videos include examples of learning that may amaze and impress viewers, but most of the learning shown is ‘everyday learning’ that occurs frequently and in a variety of settings. The focus of the videos is on children’s learning rather than on practices that support that learning.

The intended audience for this resource is the broad range of early childhood professionals working in the early years. The videos could also be used with families who have children aged under three years.

The videos and an information booklet, which includes key messages, are available on the VCAA website at: [www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx](http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Pages/earlyyears/index.aspx)

A DVD can be ordered by contacting the VCAA Early Years Unit at: [veyldf@edumail.vic.gov.au](mailto:veyldf@edumail.vic.gov.au)
Key messages in the videos

Children are active learners from birth – agents, active constructors of, and contributors to, their learning and experience, and that of others.

Babies and toddlers are motivated from within to learn. They seem to have ‘a built-in drive to learn from everything around them’.1

Secure trusting relationships are a crucial foundation for all categories of learning. When very young children feel safe and are confident that their needs will be met, these relationships free them to take advantage of opportunities around them.

Children learn largely through relationships and interactions with important others and through active engagement with their world.

Learning occurs all the time – in everyday experiences.

‘Children learn at different rates, in different ways and at different times. Their development is not always easy or straightforward.’ 2

Babies and toddlers are great communicators, even before they are able to use language fluently. They communicate through facial expressions, gestures such as pointing, crying, babbling, using single words, stringing sounds together with the occasional understandable word and constructing simple sentences. Their communication requires close attention in order to understand them.

Play and exploration are important vehicles for learning about self, others and the world.

The more adults appreciate babies’ and toddlers’ learning, the more effectively they can support it.

1 Early Childhood Australia NQS Professional Learning Program 2013, ‘Babies’ and toddlers’ belonging, being and becoming’, Thinking about Practice Series, Early Childhood Australia, Canberra, p. 3.

2 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) 2009, Belonging, being and becoming – the Early Years Framework for Australia, Australian Government, Canberra, p. 17.

Anne Stonehouse AM is a consultant and writer about early childhood education. She has published many books, articles and other resources. Anne has been, and is currently engaged in, a number of projects related to the national and Victorian frameworks and the National Quality Standard. She writes regularly for Early Childhood Australia and other organisations about quality in early childhood settings.