

# BUILDING ON EVERY CHILD'S ABILITIES



We all have things that we're good at and things that challenge us. Too often, the strengths and abilities of newcomer children are overlooked because of (or are overshadowed by) their settlement and language needs. By focusing on the strengths that newcomer children bring to your program you can encourage the development of healthy self-esteem that will be the foundation for their successful transition to life in Canada.

The following steps will help you to identify and work with children's interests, abilities and strengths.

## **STEP 1: OBSERVE CHILDREN TO DISCOVER THEIR UNIQUE STRENGTHS, ABILITIES AND INTERESTS.**

When there's no shared language you can't count on conversations to help you understand a child's strengths, abilities and interests. For this reason, observation is key to working with newcomer children. When children first start coming to your program, spend some time interacting with them and observing them with an open and accepting attitude.

Get to know the child and their family. What is the child good at? What do they enjoy? Talk with the family and find out what the child likes to do at home.

## **STEP 2: IDENTIFY DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS FOR THE CHILD.**

What is the child working on? What developmental goals have you set for the child? Is there anything the child is struggling with? Has the family indicated a specific concern?

# BUILDING ON EVERY CHILD'S ABILITIES

CARE FOR  
NEWCOMER  
CHILDREN  
RESOURCE  
SERIES

## STEP 3: USE THE CHILD'S AREAS OF INTEREST/STRENGTH TO WORK ON DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS.

Here's an example: You have discovered (through observation) that four-year-old Mohamud really seems to enjoy building with blocks and is quite good at it. After speaking to his parents, you also realize that he mixes up his numbers and colours in both his home language and in English. You can use Mohamud's ability and interest in block play to help him develop his skills in these other areas. You can join him in his block play to demonstrate and talk about numbers, colours, sizes and shapes. Slowly, when Mohamud feels confident and ready, you can help him to include another child in the block play and encourage some simple turn taking.

## STEP 4: PLAN YOUR PROGRAM AROUND THE CHILDREN'S STRENGTHS AND INTERESTS TO SET THE STAGE FOR SUCCESS!

Be creative with your program planning but remember to plan developmentally- appropriate activities and use materials that reflect the children's interest and skill levels. Have realistic expectations and set achievable goals. Try not to compare children. Expand and facilitate the children's learning experiences whenever possible, and don't forget to join in their play!

Keep an open mind and allow yourself to get excited about even the smallest accomplishments as you encourage the child to try the next step.

Finally, create a comfortable environment for all the children in your care by incorporating culturally-appropriate materials. Encourage parents to bring in objects or toys that are of interest to the children.

## REMEMBER THAT A POSITIVE APPROACH OFTEN HAS THE MOST LASTING EFFECT.

By taking the time to discover and develop children's strengths, you can help the child and their family to develop self-confidence as they settle into a new culture and a new way of life. This positive approach and supportive role will often be remembered and appreciated long after the child and family have left your program.

Visit [cmascanada.ca](http://cmascanada.ca) for more resources to support your work with newcomer families



SUPPORTING THE SETTLEMENT OF YOUNG IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE CHILDREN / SOUTENIR L'ÉTABLISSEMENT DES JEUNES ENFANTS IMMIGRANTS ET RÉFUGIÉS  
Funded by: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada / Financé par : Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada