

# LEARNING INVITATIONS FOUND AROUND THE HOUSE

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This is a guide for very simple, and inexpensive “learning invitations.” Learning invitations are materials that are displayed in such a way that intrigue children and invoke curiosity.

This document demonstrates that early childhood education is about children gaining a better understanding of the world in which we live. Enclosed are experiences that parents can engage with their children in different ways depending on their age, birth through five. Each one reaches across multiple learning domains and are founded in the idea of “simple fun.”

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. Allow the child to guide the play, how the materials are used (safety consideration), and length of time spent with the materials.
2. Ask open-ended questions i.e., “What do you think will happen if...” or “Why do you think that?”
3. With infants/toddlers, provide the language about what they see, feel, smell, and possibly taste. Use descriptive language.
4. A certain level of stress is a good thing. Allow children to “struggle” to figure things out. When frustration is imminent, ask, “I see you are working hard, do you need help with that?”
5. The MOST IMPORTANT thing you can do, HAVE FUN!

## Invitation Ideas Include:

- Balls and Containers
- Natural Items Found in the House
  - Self-Portrait Creation
- Something Growing in the Kitchen
  - Sensory in the Kitchen
  - Signs of Spring



# SELF PORTRAIT CREATION

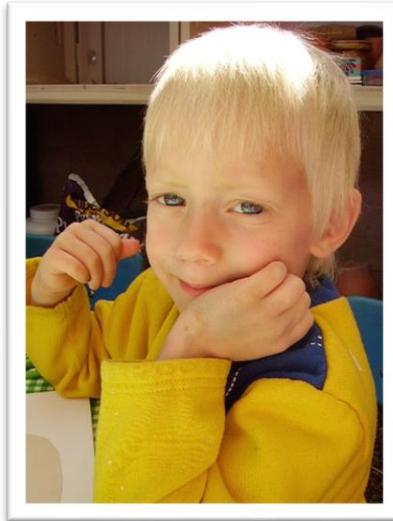
Gather random bits from around the house. Ribbon, string, yarn, buttons, ANYTHING! Using a small mirror have your child consider what they look like. Have them cut, and glue their pieces to create a self portrait with "loose parts."

This invitation is so gratifying to do with children. It is interesting to see what materials a child feels that resembles a part of their body. It offers the opportunity to discuss differences in eye color, skin color, facial structure and more. Analyzing what you look like and then representing it is a great way to build a positive self-image.

## EXTENSION:

Ask your child questions like, Tell me about your work? What pieces are you going to use? Can you tell me why you picked it? What shapes do you see on your face? Who do you think you look like, mom or dad? Why?

Talk about you have mom's eye color or dad's color of hair, or I see you have the same eye color as your brother/sister.



# SOMETHING GROWING IN THE KITCHEN

Place the onions in a clear glass or jar with the root end down. Add just enough water to the bottom of the container to cover the roots at the bottom of the bulbs. Change the water at least every other day. Place the glass in a window that receives plenty of filtered sunlight throughout the day. This is a simple way to teach children how food grows and a great way to talk about where our food comes from.

This is a fascinating phenomenon that happens with root vegetables, when left alone to long they begin to grow! You can do this similar invitation with carrots, potatoes, lettuce and other produce that we consume on a regular basis. This provides children the opportunity to develop an understanding of where food comes from and how, if they choose, to grow their own food.



## EXTENSION:

- Measure plant growth and make a chart to track it.
- Separate that bulbs that are growing inside and plant them in the dirt.
- Investigate what other vegetables grow in this way (garlic, potatoes beets)...
- Allow them to see onions being used during meal prep.
- Investigate the health benefits of eating onions.
- Read a book/article about how to grow onions
- Talk about people who grow our food, farmers!

# SENSORY IN THE KITCHEN

Toddlers love to pull things out of kitchen cabinets! So, instead of it making you crazy, create a learning invitation! Gather: bowls, pots, pans, and various spoons. Allow your child to explore these objects, during their exploration there are TONS that you can talk about. Different sounds that each bowl/spoon combination make, pretend to cook, some of these bowls nest together, how does each object feel, smell, look? This is a great sensory invitation for young children that can be made with items that are already found in the house!

During this exploration there is NOT a learning domain that is NOT being met! Muscle movement including large and small, when bowls, pots, or pans are transported or WHACKED with a spoon. Language is being stimulated by



talking to children and hearing what they say in return. Curiosity is being invoked just by being able to explore these materials and gain understanding of their properties. Finally social emotional is being addressed by simply spending time with your child. Happy Learning!

## EXTENSION

If you are engaging with older children, have them describe the difference in sound. Talk about the material the object was made from, keep a steady beat, or use those materials to make PLAYDOUGH!!! Even have an older child help cook dinner for the family that evening!

# SIGNS OF SPRING



## YOU WILL NEED:

A clipboard (make your own or buy), paper, pencil, sun glasses. IT IS SPRING IN WYOMING! Let's find signs of it. Children identify signs they see of spring. Then have them write down their findings. (No matter what the "writing" looks like). Talk about, what are signs of spring, grass turning green, leaf buds forming, some flowers are sprouting, the sun is warm yet the air is still chilly. Have fun, slow down and walk at a curious child's pace!

This is science at its best! This invitation is a functional way for young children to learn about the changing of the seasons and what that means. Trees that were once bare are bursting with life, the snow-covered ground is turning green and plants are beginning to sprout. These are things that one can observe happening around them and a topic for conversation with young children!

## EXTENSION

Ask questions like, "What are things that happen in the spring? How do you know it is "spring"?" During you walk, take a small trash bag (gloves) and clean up trash you see. Talk about the importance of keeping the earth clean and maybe some jobs in the conservation field. Wash your hands when you get home.

