Moving forward with Acknowledging Individual Children's Accomplishments

Overview

HighScope teachers use encouragement rather than praise. By encouraging children, adults acknowledge children's efforts and accomplishments. The focus is on children's actions and what they are learning, not on whether they have pleased the adult. Encouragement supports children as they challenge themselves, and supports a growth mindset vs. a deficit mindset.

Suggested strategies to encourage individual accomplishments, efforts and ideas:

- Repeat children's ideas
- Comment on what children are doing
- Put children in control of evaluating their own efforts
- Participate in children's play
- Provide opportunities for children to describe their efforts, ideas and products

Goals for moving forward

1. Recognize that encouragement acknowledges a child's ideas and actions and that praise is about the adult's ideas and the adult's expectations.

2. Realize that encouragement pushes children to continue with difficult tasks and allows children to see themselves as capable and competent while praise is about evaluating and judging.

3. Know that offering encouragement builds positive relationships.

4. Understand that by utilizing the strategies of authentic encouragement throughout the day by adults is a classroom where the teachers and children share control.

Implementation plan

1. Explore helpful resources: Carol Dweck video, article from Extension Alliance for Better Childcare, Alfie Kohn 5 reasons to stop saying Good Job

2. As a team, and individually as teachers, choose to gently and playfully remind one another or yourself if you hear or use praise statements like, "Good job" or "I like it when…" for example.

3. Focus on one strategy at a time to practice as a replacement for praise or a praise comment.

4. Develop encouraging responses to questions that children ask like, "Do you like my picture?"

5. Use open-ended questions as a way to respond to children's ideas, comments and products.