Start Smart Move and Play Developmental Activities – Session 5

Station #1 – Fine Motor Skill: Stacking Blocks

Items Needed: Colored Wooden Block Set

Targeted Skills: Stacking blocks is useful in developing intentional grasp and release skills as well as visual and spatial perception.

Developmental Activities: Using the colored wooden block set, have the parent demonstrate various designs and patterns for the children to emulate. Start with easy patterns and progressively increase the difficulty. You may only get through a couple of the samples in the allotted time. Be patient with the children and continually encourage them. Start by using the following patterns:

1. Child’s Desire – give the children a few minutes to play with the blocks and create their own designs.
2. 4 Block Train – this will consist of 3 cubes in a row and then stack a block on top of either of the outside blocks.
3. 3 Block Bridge – this will consist of two cubes with a slight space between them and then balance a cube on top of them.
4. 4 Block Wall – this pattern consists of placing two cubes side by side, then stacking a cube on top of each of the blocks.
5. 4 Block Tower – this pattern consists of stacking four cubes on top of each other, trying to create a vertical tower.
6. 6 Block Stair Steps
   a. Step 1: Place 3 cubes in a row, side by side
   b. Step 2: Place 1 cube on top of the middle cube; place 1 cube on top of the far-right cube
   c. Step 3: Place 1 cube on top of the far-right cube (so it is now three cubes high)
   d. End result should look like stair steps
7. 6 Block Pyramid
   a. Step 1: Place 3 cubes in a row, side by side
   b. Step 2: Place 1 cube on top of the row you just created, halfway between the middle cube and the left cube
   c. Step 3: Place 1 cube on top of the bottom row, halfway between the middle cube and the right cube
   d. Step 4: Place 1 cube on top of the 2nd row, halfway between the two cubes
   e. End result should look like a pyramid
8. Match Parent – have the parent create a design of their own and the children will attempt to replicate it.
Targeted Skills: Stacking and sorting rings of different shapes and colors helps children develop finger strength with various grasps as well as color and shape recognition.

Developmental Activities: Using the shape and color sorter, have the children imitate various designs and patterns as demonstrated by the parent. Start with easy patterns and progressively increase the difficult. You may only get through a couple of the samples in the allotted time. Be patient with the children and continually encourage them. Examples of patterns that you can choose include the following:

Important Note: To improve development, encourage the child to use both the right and left hand so motor skills are developed in both hands/all fingers.

1. By Color – place all the rings of the same color on a peg; the order of the shapes doesn’t matter.
2. By Shape – place all the rings of the same shape on a peg; the order of the colors doesn’t matter.
3. On Command – Have the parent say out loud what piece the child should pick up and place on a peg; for example, “Blue Star” or “Red Heart”.
4. Have the children place the rings on the pegs in the same order; for example, Star, Triangle, Circle, Square, Heart. All 5 pegs should have the shapes stacked in the same order.

Station #3 – Gross Motor Skill: Balance and Walk on a Balance Beam
Equipment Needed: Balance Beam or Tape, Pom Poms

Targeted Skills: Balance is the ability to maintain a controlled body position during task performance, whether it is sitting at a table, walking the balance beam or stepping up onto a curb. To function effectively across environments and tasks, we need the ability to maintain controlled positions during both static (still) and dynamic (moving) activities.

Static balance is the ability to hold a stationary position with control (e.g. “Freeze” or “statue” games). Dynamic balance is the ability to remain balanced while engaged in movement (e.g. running or bike riding).
Developmental Activities (General Balance): Encourage the children to stand on their tip toes and on one foot to improve their balance. Incorporate objects and various challenges to increase the difficulty.

1. Tip Toes – have the children stand on their tip toes using both feet.
2. One Foot – have the children stand on one foot, then have them alternate which foot they stand on.
3. Walk on Tip Toes – have the children try to walk on their tip toes.
4. Step Over Objects – place objects of various sizes (books, balls, towels, etc.) on the ground and have the children walk and step over (without touching) the objects.
5. Unstable Surface – use oversized foam blocks OR place pillows, bean bags or blankets/towels on the ground for the children to walk on. Unstable surfaces make the trunk work hard to maintain an upright position. Make sure that items are placed on a non-slippery surface (carpet, grass) so the participants don’t slip and fall.
6. Eyes Closed – have the children try to perform some (or all) of these activities with their eyes closed.

Developmental Activities (Using Balance Beam): Using a balance beam or taped lines on the floor, have the children practice walking on the beam (or in a straight line) without taking a step off the beam/line.

1. Walk – simply have the children walk across the balance beam or a designated line.
2. Heel to Toe – have the children walk the balance beam by placing the heel of one foot against the toe of the other foot, slowly progressing down the balance beam.
3. Walk and Pick-Up – use the pom poms and have the children walk across the balance beam and then pick up colored pom poms placed to the side of the balance beam and hold on to them until they reach the end. Feel free to incorporate the usage of larger objects that would require the children to use two hands to pick it up.
4. One Foot – have the children practice standing on one foot while on the balance beam.
5. Backwards – if the children are able, have them try to walk backwards across the balance beam. Encourage the children to use their toes to “feel” the beam as they walk by “scraping” the side of the beam with their foot and then place it on the beam behind them.

Station #4 – Gross Motor Skill: Running/Agility and Jumping
Items Needed: Towel, Balloons, Balls, Marker Cones (all optional)

Targeted Skills: Jumping requires bilateral coordination, or the ability to use both sides of your body in a coordinated way. Jumping will also improve body awareness, which is the ability to know where your body is in space, without necessarily using vision.

Running helps to strengthen the core of the body. A strong core improves posture, strengthens limbs, and helps make everyday activities easier. And even though the children probably won’t feel it, running engages their midsection, strengthening those all-important muscles.
Developmental Activities (Jumping): Children will jump in place, off the bottom step of a set of stairs and/or over various objects. Make sure the children squat down and throw their arms up when jumping.

1. In Place – start by having the children jump and try to land back in the same position. Have the parent hold a balloon or ball over the child’s head for them to try to touch or knock out of their hand.
2. Off a Step – use a stairwell, curb or small step stool and have the children practice jumping off the step to the ground.
3. Over Objects – use a towel (or a similar object) and lay it out on the ground, rolled up. The children will jump over the towel without touching it. As the children become successful, unroll the towel to make the distance the children must jump greater.

Developmental Activities (Running/Agility): Have the children perform the various running and agility exercises.

1. Straight Ahead – have the children run straight ahead to a designated line or marker on the ground.
2. Change Directions – have the children run and then change directions when the instructor calls. Children this age might not know “right” and “left” so place objects or colored markers on the ground. As the child runs, the instructor will say “Red” and the child change directions and run to the red marker or the instructor will say “Shoe” and the child will run to the shoe.
3. Obstacles – create a small obstacle course for the children to run around using the marker cones. The instructor may have to initially treat this as a “follow the leader” exercise (with the parents being the leaders) until the children can run the pattern (figure 8 for example) that you have set up.
4. Backwards – have the children run to a certain line or marker, stop, and then run (or walk) backwards to the starting point.
5. Run Then Jump – place a small object on the ground (ball, towel, hat, etc.) and have the children run and then jump over the object.