Training Module*

Comparing and Contrasting

PURPOSE

To explore the meaning and importance of comparing and contrasting as it relates to young children ages two to five.

DEFINITION

Before we begin, let's take a minute to define what is meant by comparing and contrasting. These terms can be defined as "the ability to define the likenesses and differences between objects, people, or situations." Every day young children compare and contrast. Let's take a look at a few specific examples to help you better understand how these skills are used by young children..

EXAMPLES

Christy and Deanna, both three years old, are playing together in the block area. Christy has just completed a structure. She turns to Deanna and states, "Deanna! Look what I built! It's a house." Deanna looks at Christy's "house" and says, "I built a house, too. Mine is bigger than yours." Christy looks at Deanna's house and responds, "Well, my house has more doors. See, it has three. Yours only has one." Christy and Deanna continue this discussion for several minutes.

In the above example, Christy and Deanna demonstrated the skill of comparing and contrasting. Christy and Deanna were comparing and contrasting their structures. First, they compared – they both built houses. Then they contrasted the houses, one was bigger than the other and the other had more doors. This is a solid example of how children use comparing and contrasting.

IMPORTANCE OF COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

Children begin to compare and contrast at a very early age. How many times have you heard, "She has more juice than I do!" or "His cookie is bigger than mine!" As children are comparing and contrasting things in their world, they are thinking. Cognitively, they are figuring out how things are the same and how they are different.

The ability to compare and contrast is important for a number of reasons. First, it develops problem-solving skills. Again, as children are comparing and contrasting, they are processing information. Second, comparing and contrasting is a very important prerequisite for color, shape, number, and letter recognition. In order to name colors, shapes, numbers, or letters, children must be able to discriminate between them. For example, to an adult the letters b, d, and p all look different. But, to a child, they often look very much the same. Discussing these likenesses and differences can make the letters easier to discriminate. And finally, comparing and contrasting are skills that children will use throughout their lives. As adults we are always comparing how things are alike and how they are different. For instance, comparing two shirts in the department store or maybe two cuts of meat at the grocery store. Every day we are comparing and contrasting things and situations.

Now that you have a better understanding of comparing and contrasting, let's take some time for you to try what you've learned!

^{*} ATTENTION TEXAS CUSTOMERS: This training module is considered self-instructional material.

TRY WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED!

Provide the children in your class with two teddy bears. Make sure that the bears are somewhat alike but also noticeably different. As the children touch, feel, and hold the two bears, ask the following questions:

What is the same about the two bears? What is different about the two bears? Which bear do you like best and why?

As the children answer these questions, record their responses in a notebook. Later review the responses to see which likenesses and differences the children noticed first.

ACTIVITIES WHICH PROMOTE COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

There are many different activities you can plan that promote comparing and contrasting. The following are just a few.

Simple Experiments

Simple experiments are a great way to promote comparing and contrasting. For instance, purchase two small potted plants. Place both plants in a sunny window. Water one of the plants as needed. Do not water the other plant at all. After a few days, encourage the children to describe how the plants are alike and how they are different.

Pretty Pictures

Choose two scenes from a magazine or travel brochure. Talk with the children about how the scenes are alike and how they are different.

Color Collages

Provide the children with collage materials of a single color (e.g., blue). Have each child make a collage using the blue materials. When the children finish, talk with them about how the collages are alike and how they are different. This is a great activity for helping the children notice subtle differences. Because all of the collages will be blue, the children will have to focus on the different types of collage materials chosen for each.

Multicultural Activities

Try to incorporate a wide range of multicultural activities into your classroom on a regular basis. They are a great tool for exposing children to different cultures. These activities are also a great way to make children aware of not only how cultures are different but also how they are the same. Cooking, music, arts and crafts, and dramatic play are all good ways you can bring multiculturalism into your classroom.

Each of the activities/materials mentioned can help your children become skilled at comparing and contrasting. Take some time to use one or more of these activities with your children. Keep in mind as you do so that very young children (two year olds) may not totally understand these activities while older children may find them quite interesting and surprise you with their answers!

SUMMARY

Young children begin to compare and contrast at a very early age. It is important to keep in mind that young children of the same chronological age are often on many different developmental levels. As the teacher you will need to observe each child carefully to see how you can adapt the activity to meet his/her individual needs. In addition, be sure to ask questions frequently that encourage the children to compare and contrast.

ATTENTION CDA TRAINERS: Have each CDA candidate complete this Follow-up Evaluation individually after your group presentation. Evaluate his/her performance and then discuss the results together. This evaluation does not need to be reviewed by HighReach Learning.

Follow-up Evaluation

Comparing and Contrasting

Name	HRL Customer Number
Address	Phone
School Name	Phone
School Address	
Who is responsible for payment? ☐ Self ☐ Other	
I. Define comparing and contrasting.	
2. Describe how children compare and contrast on a daily bas	is.
3. What activities do you currently use with your children whi	ch are designed to encourage comparing and contrasting?
4. Choose one of the activities listed on page 2 and explain ho	ow it could be used to promote comparing and contrasting.

5. Explain why comparing and contrasting is important to young children.
6. Look at the curriculum you use in your classroom and identify two activities the children completed during this month which promoted comparing and contrasting. If you cannot find two, design two yourself.
7. Observe your children as you complete one of the activities listed on page 2. Record your observations below. Be sure to ask plenty of questions as you complete the activity.

This Training Module is designed to be used in conjunction with the curriculum you are currently using in the classroom. Prior to completing the module, explore your curriculum plans and think about how the topic of the module fits into those plans. Throughout the coming months, consider ways in which you can apply the training topic to a variety of classroom activities. As with children, practicing new skills on a daily basis makes a big difference.

In order to receive credit:

- 1. Read the Training Module and complete the Follow-up Evaluation.
- 2. Enclose check or money order in the amount of \$18.00 (payable to HighReach Training Program) and your completed Follow-up Evaluation.
- 3. Mail to:

HighReach Learning Attn: Training Department 5275 Parkway Plaza Blvd, Suite 100 Charlotte, NC 28217

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