



CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Getting to Know Me!

Social Studies/Self-Identity/Skill Level 1: *Draws a self-portrait*

Group Size Suggestions: Individual, Pairs, Small Groups, Whole Group

Materials: Drawing/writing or painting utensils, various paper choices (construction, copy paper, finger-painting paper, etc.), mirror (large enough for an individual child to be able to see his/her face)

Details:

- Around 28-months, it is typical for children to create a self-portrait that includes a few simple lines and/or shapes. As children age, it is typical for them to add more details to their portrait and to refine their simple lines and shapes.
- Invite children to use the mirror to study their face. What shapes do they see? What details do they see?
- To create excitement and ‘newness’ to this activity, join the children and create your own self-portrait. By observing you, the children may realize they can add eyes, ears, hair and a mouth to their portraits!
- Encourage the children to use what they learned from their mirrored observations in order to create a self-portrait (using whichever art materials they prefer).
- It is important to note that there is no ‘right or wrong’ when it comes to the children’s self-portraits. This activity serves several purposes:
 - 1. The self-portrait activity falls within our Social Studies/Self-Identity Domain, which we do in order to increase self-esteem and confidence in our young learners.
 - 2. It is important to enable children to believe they can draw (and that they enjoy the act of drawing!
 - 3. Drawing is a great way to develop fine-motor skills (which can lead to strong emergent writing skills!).
- Last, but not least, ask the children to tell you about their artwork/self-portrait. Adults tend to guess what they see in a child’s drawing, but you will learn so much more when you ask the child to tell you about their work.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Living Things

Science & Technology/Life Science/Skill Level 1: *Identifies at least one living thing*

Group Size Suggestions: Individual, Pairs, Small Groups

Materials: None needed (see the following details for additional information)

Details:

- Understanding the natural world helps children develop scientific thinking skills, which is why taking a nature walk with the children is an excellent way to provide you a chance to determine how comfortable they are with their knowledge of living and non-living things.
- Whether you utilize the outdoor play area, or you host a brief nature walk of the surrounding area, take a bag or container of some sort (to collect the treasures you and the children find along the way).
- Invite the children to take a nature walk and collect treasures. Encourage the children to find some items that are living (such as, leaves, flowers, grass, and, even though this distinction is not important at this point of a child's development, accept items that were 'once-living' as well such as, bark, twigs, pinecones, etc.) and items that are non-living (rocks or soil).
- As the children collect treasures, ask them to identify which category the item belongs to (i.e. is this a living thing or a non-living thing?).
- When you return to the classroom, invite the children to sort the living and non-living things on a workspace (possibly within your science/nature center) and add labels to the workspace to designate which side shows living things and which side shows non-living things.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Follow My Lead

Language & Communication Development/Listening & Understanding/Skill Level 1: *Responds to one-step requests*

Group Size Suggestions: Pairs or Small Groups

Materials: None needed

Details:

- Following instructions is a part of everyday life. Following directions or instructions (i.e. responding to or following one-step requests) requires children to attend to detail in spoken language, to sequence the information in the appropriate steps and to seek clarification if they have trouble remembering or recalling the information.
- In order to enable children to practice and improve upon this skill, invite them to join you in a small group (which will enable you to observe and take note of the children's responses).
- Rather than "Simon says", change it up based on the interests of the children with whom you are working (i.e. Spiderman says, Cinderella says, The Snowman says, etc.).
- Only give directions the children can understand. Start simple: "Jump!" "Turn around." "Blink your eyes." And so on.
- Once the children show they can follow one-step directives, start to make them a little harder with two items of information (like, "Jump two times" or "Turn around three times").
- As you begin, you may want to share the directive and then show them what you want them to do. For example, tell them "Jump" and then jump. This is especially helpful as you increase the complexity or directives.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Rolling with Words

Phonological Awareness & Phonics/Segmenting/Skill Level 1: *Identifies separate words within a sentence*

Group Size Suggestions: Small or Large Groups

Materials: Outdoor Play Ball (playground ball)

Details:

- Practice segmenting sentences with this active activity! You will need a small amount of floor-space and a playground ball.
- Say a simple phrase and then ask the children to repeat the phrase. Roll the ball back and forth for each word. For example, "She runs". Roll the ball to one child and say, "She". Then, ask that child to roll the ball to another child as you recite the second word in the sentence "runs".
- Another way to practice sentence segmenting is to say a two-word sentence such as, "He eats" and as say them, bounce the ball one time for each word.
- Pass the ball to each child in the circle so everyone can have a chance to practice counting the number of words in sentences (stick with two- or three-word sentences that have short, easy to understand words).

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Hand Washing 101

Physical Development/Self Care/Skill Level 2: *Identifies basic processes for self-care*

Group Size Suggestions: Individuals or Pairs

Materials: Sink, soap, paper towels (or dryer, or whatever is accessible by way of your classroom/facility)

Details:

- Invite the children to show off their handwashing skills. As they individually wash their hands, talk with them about the important steps needed in order to remove germs from their hands. Although some states suggest various procedures (for handwashing), the Center for Disease Control recommends the following steps:
 - **Wet** your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
 - **Lather** your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
 - **Scrub** your hands for at least 20 seconds. To illustrate the duration of 20 seconds, suggest humming the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
 - **Rinse** your hands well under clean, running water.
 - **Dry** your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.
- If you have children struggling to remove the 'germs' as they handwash, provide one-on-one guidance (and/or place a chart/poster in your handwashing space so children can easily see the steps they should follow to properly wash their hands).

- In addition, talk with the children about the importance of not touching their face (especially when they haven't washed their hands). Many germs can easily transfer through our mouths, noses, and eyes, and keeping our hands away, in addition to handwashing, are two excellent preventative tools.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Rhyme Time

Phonological Awareness & Phonics/Rhyming/Skill Level 1: *Listens to a variety of rhymes*

Materials: Rhyming picture book (OR, dry erase board and dry erase markers)

Group Size Suggestions: Small Groups or Whole Group

Details:

- Listening to rhymes promotes children's abilities to learn the sounds that make up words. Ask your child about the songs, poems, rhymes or chants we are learning as a class.
- Choose a book, such as "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" and invite the children to join you in a read-aloud.
- As you read, encourage the children to predict what word will come next (in the rhymes). For example, "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a yellow bird looking at me." In this example, children fill in the word, /me/. As the book continues, ask them to talk about how they successfully predict words (and, as needed, help them understand that one of the reasons they can make those predictions is due to the rhyming nature of the story).
- Continually and consistently provide opportunities for children to hear and participate in listening activities (that include rhymes). Nursery rhymes, poems, and songs are great resources.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Color Me Impressed

Language & Communication Development/Vocabulary/Skill Level 1: *Identifies color words*

Materials: Crayons or markers (red, yellow and green) and notecards

Group Size Suggestions: Small Groups

Details:

- Identifying colors is an early vocabulary skill. This activity provides practice for children struggling to correctly name and identify colors.
- Invite the children to find one item in the classroom that is blue (if needed, provide them a time-limit to do so, such as 20 seconds, or a countdown from 10). Once the children return with their item, encourage each child to share the item he found. Challenge the children to use repeat the color of the item, as well as other descriptive words such as, "soft, large, light, heavy".
- Continue the activity as you ask the children to find items that are yellow, green, and orange.

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Food Finders

Physical Development/Nutrition/Skill Level 1: *Identifies a variety of nutritious foods*

Materials: Play food (from the dramatic play center) OR books and magazines that feature food

Group Size Suggestions: Individuals or Pairs

Details:

- Understanding health and nutrition can make a positive impact on a child's development. Ignite teaches children about food that is good to eat every day (such as vegetables, healthy proteins, fruits, water, etc.), and foods that are better to eat every now and then (such as French fries, donuts, potato chips, etc.).
- Invite the child to find a piece of play food (from the classroom dramatic play area) that is healthy (such as fruits, vegetables, chicken or milk). Ask the child to tell you about the food she has found. Does she like the food, has she tried it before, what category does the food belong in (i.e. did she find a healthy food, or did she choose something not-so-healthy)?
- Next, ask your child to find a piece of play food (or pictures in a book, magazine, etc.) that is better to eat every-now-and-then (rather than every day).
- If the child struggles to find healthy and/or non-healthy foods, help her do so (visit the dramatic play center, peruse books and magazines, etc.).

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Around the Room with Words

Language & Communication Development/Receptive Language/Skill Level 2: *Shows understanding of many different words*

Group Size Suggestions: Small or Large Groups

Materials: Index cards and tape or Post-It notes, marker

Details:

- Write the names of objects found around your classroom on the index cards or Post-It notes (i.e. door, blocks, calendar, book, chair, rug, etc.).
- Invite the children to demonstrate their understanding of classroom vocabulary as they identify the words you've written and match them to the appropriate objects.
- Show the children the cards or Post-It notes you've created and explain that they each contain the name of an object/item in your classroom.
- Invite them to look at the words and ask if any are familiar. You might ask them to also identify any letters they recognize and perhaps link them to the sounds they make.
- As you discuss each card and the word that is on it, encourage a child to place that card on the item it represents (i.e. the card with 'door' on it should be taped to the door, etc.).
- Remember, you are not expecting the children to be able to read the words. Rather, you will likely be reading them to the children. However, in using the actual written words instead of photos, you provide the children with the opportunity to make important literacy connections (as listed above). This activity enables you to gauge the children's ability to understand words as they place them on the items they represent.
- As the children maintain interest, continue playing.
- Once all the words are posted around the room, remind children to practice 'reading' them on their own (throughout their daily interactions in your classroom).

CLASSROOM CONNECTION: Alphabet Hunt

Phonological Awareness & Phonics/Alphabet Knowledge/Skill Level 1: *Recognizes 10 upper case letters*

Group Size Suggestions: Large Group or Small Group

Materials: Magnetic letters or letter cards

Details:

- Before playing this game with the children, hide the letters or letter cards throughout the classroom.
- Gather the children and tell them they are going to go on an alphabet hunt around the room. Encourage them to gather as many letters as they can find before you call them back together.
- Once they have had ample time to look around and find letters, reassemble the group. Ask each child to hold up each letter s/he has found and to share the letter name while doing so.
- If you find this is an easy task for the children, you can easily add onto the game by challenging the children to say the letter sound along with its name. They might even try naming something that begins with that sound/letter.



Family Connection: Routinely Routine

Skill: *Identifies daily routine activities*

- A child's understanding of their daily routine activities contributes to a sense of safety and independence. Helping children establish and maintain daily routine activities provides them with consistency which is a key ingredient to happy and helpful learning!
- Explain to your child that when they are at home, they have certain routines. You can say something such as, *"When we are at home, we will do similar activities everyday just like you do at school! What are some things you do at school?"* Or, *"All of those things help you learn and grow. You do so many things throughout the day at school. We are going to do many things at home that will help you learn and grow, too!"*
- Support your child in identifying daily routines (at home) by creating a visual schedule. In order to create a visual schedule, use a wipe-on/off board or paper and make a two-column grid.
- One side of the grid will include pictures that illustrate different daily routines (which you can find by way of magazines, catalogs, grocery flyers, and other paper advertisers). For example, bars of soap (for handwashing), toothpaste/toothbrush (for brushing teeth), fruits, vegetables, and other nutrient food choices (yogurts, wheat bread, etc.), and so on.
- The other side of the grid will be left blank so that your child can add a small sticker (or a checkmark) next to each daily routine as it's completed.
- As you and your child work together to find images for the visual schedule, talk with her about the importance of each daily routine. For example, *"Yes. Washing our hands is very important because it helps to prevent the spread of germs and can remove germs from our hands. Did you know we should scrub soap on the front and back of our hands, between our fingers, AND our fingernails!? When I am washing my hands, I hum the 'Happy Birthday Song' two times because it helps me remember to scrub all the important parts of my hands, and it makes the time go quickly!"*
- If you choose to use paper for the visual schedule (rather than a wipe-on/off board), you can use the schedule multiple days by placing a new and blank piece of paper atop the completed daily tasks.

Family Connection: Segmenting Savvy

Skill: *Identifies separate words within a sentence*

- Identifying separate words in a sentence requires a skill called sentence segmenting. Sentence segmenting is the first step toward learning how to identify smaller sounds (such as syllables and letters within words), all of which are strong indicators towards success with reading.
- Following is an experience that enables you to practice sentence segmenting with your child in a fun, yet easy and effective manner!
- Start by telling your child that you need their help counting the number of words in sentences, and then model how the activity will work by saying a simple, two-word sentence such as, “I run.” As you speak, hold up one finger for each word (i.e. one finger for the word /I/, and a second finger for the word /run/).
- After you demonstrate, ask the child to listen to another sentence and to count the words as you did.
- If your child struggles to count each word in a sentence, shorten the sentence to one word (“Yeah!” “Yes!” “Yikes!”). OR, stick with two-word sentences, but after you say and count the sentence, ask your child to repeat the sentence and count the words as he says them. Lastly, rather than asking your child to ‘count’ each word (with his fingers), you can invite your child to clap his hands as he hears each word.
- If your child is interested, continue playing, and as he shows comfortability with the two-word sentences, increase them to three (or four-words) each!

Family Connection: Awesome Athletics

Skill: *Carries out a one-step request (in an unfamiliar situation)*

- Successfully following directions is an important life skill both at school and in the home. Help your child strengthen listening skills and build verbal processing while playing a game and having some fun!
- Invite your child to participate in a variety of athletic endeavors by saying something like, ““I want to see your awesome athletic skills! Awesome athletes must be good listeners. Listen to my instructions and then show me your awesome athletic skills.”
- Provide your child with a one-step request such as “Jump up towards the sky!” “Do two jumping jacks!” “Run around the tree.” “Hop like a bunny.”
- Continue providing directions and escalating the number of steps. Switch up the directives to match your child’s interests, or to better suit your location (i.e. if you are in the car, ask your child to “clap once or slap your knees three times”).
- If this activity is difficult for your child, model the directions for them. Children process visual images much faster than they process verbal directions.
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, add an additional step to the directions. For example, you might challenge:
 - Hop two times on one foot and then hop two times on the other
 - Run to the end of the yard and then walk backwards on your way back
 - Bounce the ball four times and then throw it in the air
 - Run to the tree, do a jumping jack and skip back

Family Connection: Spill the Beans**Skill:** *Uses 1-to-1 correspondence to count sets of 4 or less objects*

- One-to-one correspondence is the understanding that when counting a set of objects, you say one number for each object you count. For example, if a child is counting three toys and says the number name aloud for each toy as it is touched, “One, two, three,” she is demonstrating one-to-one correspondence. It is easiest for children to demonstrate one-to-one correspondence when the objects they are counting are in a line or some other organized arrangement.
- Place four or less small objects (beans, buttons, paper clips, etc.) into a plastic cup. Have your child cover put his/her hand over the top of the cup, give it a good shake, and spill the objects on to a table or the floor. Say something like, “Let’s practice counting! I am going to place objects in this cup. Please cover the cup with your hand and shake the cup and then we’ll pour out the objects and count them!”
- After the objects are released from the cup, help your child arrange them into a straight line, and to then move them into a pile as they count each object. You can say something like, “I want you to count how many objects we have. Let’s put them in a straight line and count! How many are there all together?”
- If this activity is too difficult for your child, support them by moving their finger as they count the objects.
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, have them count the objects in the random arrangement the objects are in when poured out of the cup instead of lining them up or having your child move each object as they count it. You can also add additional objects to the cup.

Family Connection: Word Pairs**Skill:** *Shows understanding of many different words*

- A strong vocabulary supports children’s reading comprehension skills as they must focus on sounding out a word, but not the word’s meaning. You can support your child’s vocabulary development through reading books and talking with your child throughout the day. Understanding the relationship words have because of their meaning will help children when they are using context clues to read new words.
- Explain to your child that you are going to play a word game. Say something like, “*Let’s play a game that makes us think about words. I am going to say a word and I want you think of a word that either means the same thing, a word that means the opposite or a word that goes with it.*”
- Provide your child a word and ask them to think of another word that goes with it. For example, “What word goes with, “FAST”?” (they might say, “quick” or “slow”). “What word goes with “PEANUT BUTTER”?” (they might say, “jelly” or “peanuts”).
- Switch roles every few words so that they are providing you with a word. Make a “mistake” every now and then to see if your child will correct you!
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, provide them with two options to choose from. For example, if you provide them with the word “banana,” ask them if “apple” or “basketball” would go with the “banana.”
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, ask them to provide you with two words that go with word you have provided them.

Family Connection: Counting Cupcakes**Skill:** *When asked to produce a set of objects, counts out 10 or fewer objects.*

- Young children need frequent and repeated opportunities to produce a set of objects that corresponds with a number they have been given. This helps solidify their understanding that the last number counted represents the whole of the group. Young children often think that the object they touched when they said the number five is five. They aren't yet able to conceptualize that all the objects they counted collectively represent five, not just the last object they counted.
- For this activity, find a muffin/cupcake pan and write the numbers 1-10 on a piece of colored tape or a sticky-note and place one number on the bottom of each muffin/cupcake hole. (You may want to cover the remaining two spaces with a piece of paper or tape if the pan is made for a dozen).
- Gather objects that you have a good number of like paperclips, buttons, beans, cotton balls, etc.
- Explain to your child that they are going to fill each muffin/cupcake hole with the number of objects that correspond with the number on the bottom of the hole. Say something like, "We are going to practice our counting skills! What numbers do you see in the bottom of the muffin tin?" Encourage your child to say each number as they point to it. "Fill each muffin tin with the number of objects that represent the number."
- Ask your child to select one number to start with by saying something like, "Which number do you want to start with? 4? Great! Count 4 buttons to put into the number 4 tin."
- Continue until each cup has been counted and filled!
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, focus on the numbers 1-5. Take a piece of paper and write the numbers 1-5 along the bottom then draw a line of dots on top of each number that correspond with the number. Have your child place objects on the dots to help them count out the correct number.
- If your child is ready for a more challenging math experience, change out the numbers in the muffin tin (i.e. rather than 1-10, choose random numbers such as 6, 10, 12, 14, 5, etc.).

Family Connection: Takeout Takeaway

Skill: Deletes a word from a compound word, without the support of pictures

- Deleting a word from a compound word (e.g. when you take "butter" away from "butterfly" it becomes "fly.") is segmenting skill. Segmenting is the ability to divide sounds we hear into smaller sounds. Learning to segment begins with identifying words in a sentence and then moves to parts of words (such as with compound words).
- Before you get started, think of several food items that happen to be compound words (e.g. strawberry, watermelon, grapefruit, cupcake, peanut, oatmeal, etc.). Invite your child to segment the names of some of your family's favorite foods.
- Explain to your child that you are going to play a game in which they takeaway part of a word by saying something like, "Compound words are words that are made up of two words, and we're going to play a game with compound words that are foods, like the word, CUPCAKE! When you take away the word /cup/ what is left of your CUPCAKE? CAKE! That's right. When you take the word CUP away from CUPCAKE, you have the word CAKE."
- Go through a few more words together, and then challenge your child to try one on his own! For example, "BLUEBERRY. Take the word BLUE away from BLUEBERRY. What is the new word?"
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, use two small objects (buttons, cups, etc.) to represent the two words forming the compounding words. Touch each object as you say each

word in the compound word. Remove one of the objects to help our child takeaway a word from the compound word.

- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, invite him to think of other food items that are compound words, or come up with new categories of words to explore!

Family Connection: Cereal Line-Up

Skill: *Pairs objects using one-to-one correspondence when given sets of up to 10 objects*

- Children first use one-to-one correspondence to count objects as they say one number for each object they count. As children grow in their mathematical thinking, they then use this skill to compare groups of objects to determine which group has more or less. Pairing objects helps them make concrete connections between different sized groups of objects.
- Invite your child to practice counting, pairing, and comparing groups of objects using cereal (or other objects/snacks with different colors).
- Pour about 20 pieces of cereal on the table and have your child sort them into groups by shape, size or color (whichever makes sense for the food item). Ask your child if they can tell which group has the most or least number of pieces (or if they are the same), just by looking at them!
- Encourage your child to check his/her answer, by using one-to-one correspondence counting skills to determine the exact number in each group.
- Continue playing by changing the number in each group.
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, reduce the number of groups to two (and reduce the number of objects to no more than 5).
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, encourage them to leave the pieces in piles (rather than lining them up).

Family Connection: Two Step Tasks

Skill: *Follows two-step, oral directions (that relate to familiar activity or situation)*

- Your child has been working very hard on following directions at school. Not only does the ability to follow directions make your child's time at school and home more productive, it is an important indicator of their language and communication development.
- To continue strengthening your child's listening and understanding skills, provide several different two-step directions throughout the day. For example, "Please take off your shoes and put them in the closet." "Put your toys in the basket and then put the basket on the shelf." "Put your trash in the trash can and your cup in the sink."
- To play a specific game that supports following two-step directions, engage your child in a game of "Simon Says" (i.e. "Simon Says touch your nose and turn around." And so on).
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, use the phrase "First (task), then (task)." Before you send your child off to complete their two tasks, have them repeat the instructions using the "first – then" language and touching a finger for each task they are going to do.
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, you can add a third or even fourth instruction (if your child is ready) or you can time how long it takes to complete the tasks (if he likes that type of motivation).

Family Connection: Nature Walk

Skill: *Identifies at least 3 living things*

- Understanding the natural world helps children develop scientific thinking skills, which is why taking a nature walk with the children is an excellent way to provide you a chance to determine how comfortable they are with their knowledge of living and non-living things.
- Ask your child to join you on a walk and explain that you're going to practice being scientists as you search for living things!"
- As you walk outdoors with your child, encourage your child to identify living things. As she does, pause and study each living thing (for example, "I see a squirrel! I know it is living because it moves and breathes!").
- If possible, make a list of the living things your child observes.
- If this activity is too challenging for your child, identify the living things for your child and encourage him to name one or two things he notices about the living things. Another option is to provide you child a choice between one living thing and one non-living thing.
- If your child is ready for a more challenging activity, support them in thinking through how the living things they have identify grow and change over time.