



When teachers focus children on learning goals, children are better able to expand their learning and understanding. Focusing on learning goals involves three main steps:

- **Setting the stage:** Orients children to the purpose of the activity before it begins.
- **Targeted statements to direct children’s learning:** Encourages children to stick with the lesson.
- **Wrapping up the activity:** Helps children understand what they have learned.

WHAT STRATEGIES CAN I USE TO FOCUS CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS?

Below are some suggested strategies and examples of what this looks like in action. There are many other ways to encourage engagement by focusing children on learning goals. Please note that some examples may include more than one strategy.

Begin by **SETTING THE STAGE** for learning by identifying what children should focus on during a lesson.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
<p>During center time, the teacher intends to teach a lesson on the five senses. The teacher says:</p> <p>“This morning we will learn about our five senses. We will learn what they are, and how we use them.”</p>	<p>During center time, the teacher intends to teach a lesson on the five senses. The teacher says:</p> <p>“I am holding an orange. It smells sweet, it feels bumpy on the outside, it looks round, and it tastes yummy. I am using my five senses.”</p> <p>Note: Setting the stage for learning is also NOT talking about what the children will <i>do</i> during the lesson (i.e., the steps of the lesson); instead it is what the children will be <i>learning</i> in the lesson (i.e., why they are doing the steps of the lesson).</p>

Use **TARGETED STATEMENTS** during the lesson to focus children’s attention on the learning goals.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
<p>During a center time lesson on the senses, the following exchange takes place:</p> <p>Child: “I smell strawberries!”</p> <p>Teacher: “Yes, you can smell the strawberries with your nose. We learned that our nose is what we use to smell things, and smell is one of our five senses! What sense are you using when you hold the strawberries?”</p>	<p>During a center time lesson on the senses, the following exchange takes place:</p> <p>Child: “I smell strawberries!”</p> <p>Teacher: “Yes, you can smell the strawberries with your nose.”</p>

WRAP UP the lesson by using summarizing statements to reinforce the learning goals.

What this looks like in action:	What it is not:
<p>At the end of a center time lesson on the senses, the teacher says:</p> <p>“During our center time, we learned about the five senses: we see with our eyes, we touch with our skin, we hear with our ears, we taste with our mouth, and we smell with our nose. We learned that our senses tell us information about the things around us.”</p>	<p>At the end of a center time lesson on the senses, the teacher says:</p> <p>“Good job learning about the senses. It’s time to clean up now.”</p>

NOTE: Please note that the strategies for “What this looks like in action” and “What it is not” are examples specific to those strategies. The behaviors in the nonexamples may be appropriate in other instances depending on children’s learning goals.

WHEN DURING THE DAY SHOULD I FOCUS CHILDREN ON LEARNING GOALS?

Teachers can help children focus on learning goals throughout the day.

During whole and small group time teachers can be sure to talk purposefully about what the children will learn during activities, direct children’s focus to the lesson goals during the activity, and wrap up the lesson by making summary statements about what they learned.

During center time, teachers can help children focus on the learning goals of the center. For example, in the block center, the teacher can set the stage by telling children they can use the blocks to learn about how they can build towers by balancing one block on top of the other. During the center time activity, the teacher can make targeted statements about balance to encourage children to focus on learning, and at the end of the activity, the teacher can summarize what the children learned.