

## Teacher Time: Supporting Initiative and Curiosity in Preschoolers

Gail Joseph: Hi, everyone, and welcome to Teacher Time. I'm Gail Joseph.

Dawn Williams: And I'm Dawn Williams. We are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. We are so excited to have you with us today for the third preschool episode of Teacher Time.

Gail: So exciting. It's already our third one.

Dawn: Already! Also like to call your attention to the Viewer's Guide. You will find it in the resource widget. If you are new to Teacher Time, the Viewer's Guide is for you. You can download the guide and use it throughout our time together for taking notes, reflecting, and planning how you'll use the Teacher Time practices in your own settings. This month's Viewers Guide is full to the brim with reflections, clinical resources, and information.

I think that's all for logistics. Let's get started.

Gail: We are so excited to be focusing this season of Teacher Time on supporting young children's self-regulation and learning, so the behaviors that help us learn. Supporting self-regulation and learning is also referred to as Approaches to Learning – you see that in the blue column – which many of you know is one of the domains of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, which you have a picture of right there on that slide.

Dawn: So far this season, we focused on emotional, behavioral, and cognitive self-regulation skills. Today, we are focusing on the initiative and curiosity sub-domain.

Gail: That's right. We're so excited that you're here with us. We want to dive a little bit deeper into initiative and curiosity, the ELOF goals for preschoolers. You can see we put both of those goals up on that slide. This subdomain has two main goals – that the child demonstrates initiative and independence. Today, we're going to focus on that second goal, which is the child shows interest in and curiosity about the world around them. While we focus on curiosity today, it's important to note that these – the development of both skills are related. When we support the development of curiosity, children often demonstrate more initiative and independence in their play, which is what we have in that first goal. They build on each other. We're going to focus on curiosity but know that you're addressing both with some of the strategies we're going to present today.

Dawn: Let's play a little jeopardy and give you the answer. The answer is, it's as important as intelligence and student achievement; it's as important as persistence in student achievement; it supports better job performance; it leads to better relationships; people with more of it have greater life satisfaction; it helps us live longer; it predicts leadership ability. What do you think the answer is? Put your answer in the Q&A box.

Gail: Pretty great list of things.

Dawn: Right? I'll give it a second and see what pops in there. I think it's some – what is confidence? Initiative, self-care. Curiosity, curiosity, self-regulation, social skills. These are good answers. At-home drumroll. It is curiosity. Folks already got it right in the Q&A. That is right.

Decades of research have demonstrated that curiosity is related to so many positive life outcomes. Isn't it fascinating to see that what we teach in children's early years really impacts life in the long term? You get to be part of building the foundation for the children's lifelong learning and success.

Gail: I love it. Somebody put in the actual official jeopardy, what is curiosity? Love it.

Dawn: Thank you.

Gail: As we're talking about curiosity, we're curious to know – what we've been doing in Teacher Time this season is we've been thinking about ourselves. When we're thinking about skills we want to develop in children, we're thinking about, first, how we develop those skills in ourselves? We are curious about how you keep yourself curious as an adult. How do you keep fueling a passion for lifelong learning? Enter some of your ideas in the Q&A. How do you keep yourself curious? We'll – we're waiting for people to respond. One of my things is I love to read the paper. That keeps every morning – my little morning routine is I can't wait to get a cup of coffee and sit for just a few moments of quiet and read through the headlines, dig deeper. Listen to NPR. We've got things coming in here. Trying new things. Yay, Stacy. A new hobby. Learning new things for the classroom, exploring nature, Kaylie. Reading training updates. Leaving questions, the news, Googling, staying up on current events. Nieces and nephews – oh, I love these things. Reading a lot, asking questions. Great, great answers. Especially when we saw all those great things that are related to curiosity. We want you to keep that curiosity up.

Alright, Dawn.

Dawn: We are so glad to hear about so many ways that you're keeping yourself curious. Great answers there. Curious adults help foster curiosity in children, just like some of you were mentioning in the Q&A. Curiosity is very important for young children. It helps children be more observant and to think about things and try to figure them out. When children explore their curiosity, they expand their vocabulary as they use language to describe what they're thinking, seeing, hearing, or experiencing. It also gives you greater curiosity in early childhood when it's associated with greater kindergarten reading and math academic achievement. Simply being in a state of heightened curiosity makes us more susceptible to learning new knowledge.

Gail: I love it. Now we want to take a closer look, just briefly, at how developmental scientists regard curiosity. Curiosity is often talked about as state curiosity and trait curiosity. Then we can further divide these. State curiosity is this spontaneous and short-term curiosity. It's curiosity that's often triggered by something outside of us. For example, something – we see a headline, and we're curious to read more about it. We want to explore – we see something in the environment, we want to explore it a little bit more. We can think about that state curiosity as exploratory curiosity, and that's in the moment. I overhear something, or maybe I see a headline in a magazine at the supermarket, and I just can't wait. I am burning with curiosity to find out what is going on with so and so and so and so. That's exploratory state curiosity. Then there's also this specific or informational curiosity where I want – I want to learn everything about something. Maybe you've seen a new documentary, and you want to know even more about that subject matter. Or maybe you want to master the complex knowledge behind something that you've just become fascinated with. It's very goal oriented, specific, “I really

want to know more about this.” These things are, again, triggered by something outside – that’s that state curiosity.

Then there’s trait curiosity. Trait curiosity is about being a curious person. It’s about having what we might call a hungry mind, where you’re always excited to learn more about things. Trait curiosity includes several different categories, if you will. As you’re listening to these, think about for yourself if you fall into these categories. Based on the answers so far, I think a lot of people joining us today have some of this trait curiosity. But I’d also be thinking about how you might foster this for young children. There’s intellectual curiosity, which is a joyous exploration where challenging situations are an opportunity to grow and learn. Where you’re actively seeking out situations where you have to think deeply about something. Where you want to learn more about subjects that are unfamiliar to you, and you find it fascinating to learn new information. There’s social curiosity, which is seeking to understand others. We do this overtly or covertly. Overtly is when I meet someone new, I want to ask them a lot of questions. I really want to know them. Covertly, it might be that I overhear a conversation. I’m curious to learn more about what’s happening in that conversation. There’s also problem solving, and problem solving is where you can stay awake at night just thinking about a problem that you want to solve. Or you spend hours on a single problem, because you can’t rest until you know the answer to it. Where you’re spending so much time working through to get to arrive at an answer – that problem-solving type. Any of you crossword people out there like me, or the Wordles – that’s this problem-solving curiosity. We can’t get away from it until we can solve it. Sudoku, those kinds of things. Then there’s this tolerance for ambiguity as a trait. And this is that – I think about this one a lot. This is about handling the stress that comes from entering uncertain situations, that – that curious people have this tolerance for this. They’re OK to try new things and explore new places, even if they lack confidence in their abilities to speak the language or understand the protocol. They’re always willing to seek out new experiences, even if there’s a little bit of doubt about the confidence in being able to do it. Think about how we keep that alive for young children, that tolerance for ambiguity, that it’s OK to explore things even if you’re not quite sure of the skills you need for it.

The last one is thrill-seeking, which is being open to novel and thrilling experiences. A lot of people probably joining us today that might be thrill seekers. Even though when we hear “trait,” – we think about “trait” often as a personality trait, as something that you’re born with or without, researchers think that only about 20% of trait curiosity might come from our DNA or our genes or by nature. The rest of it – which is a whole lot more, 80% of it – comes from whether it’s fostered or squashed by the environment we grow up in. That means that early childhood educators and providers have a lot to do to support and foster this trait curiosity, to develop hungry minds. Today, we’re going to talk about some of the strategies to support young children’s curiosity and teacher moves that can help. We’re going to also look at some curiosity in action.

Dawn?

Dawn: Yes. To see some of that in action, let’s watch this video. Note what the children are doing, think about how they demonstrate their curiosity. While that’s happening, I want you to enter your thoughts into the Q&A.

Gail: Sometimes there's a little lag before that video starts playing, if you're curious about that.

[Video begins]

Teacher: ...What he's saying? Could you ask him if there's anything he wants me to know about the caterpillar?

Child 1: [Speaking Spanish] What do you see?

Teacher: You could have done that too, Andre. Told him in Spanish for me. No.

Child 2: [Speaking Spanish] They walk.

Child: He said that he sees him walking.

Teacher: You see him walking. Brandon saw them walking, too. I like the way it moves when it walks. Did you notice it kind of moves like this? Like it kind of pulls the back of its body forward. Look how it's kind of searching out with its head.

Child 1: Sometimes the –

Child 3: There are moving.

Teacher: Uh-huh.

Child 2: [Speaking Spanish] Looks like he wants to open the door.

Teacher: Yeah, so we would walk like this.

Child 1: That one wants to get out.

Teacher: Do you guys think he's trying to work his way out?

Child 1: Yes.

Teacher: Let me show everybody.

[Video ends]

Dawn: I already see some comments coming up. Someone said, "You notice that the teacher allows students to help one another with their language and communication." Great observation. I'm going to give you all some time to put these things in the Q&A here. I know it takes some time to process.

Gail: Definitely seeing children that were curious about what was going on.

Dawn: Right. Let's see, people also say that the – "The teacher allowed the children to observe and describe in their own language." One other person said I – "I recognize intellectual curiosity." "The children want to know more about the caterpillars, was a great move to ask them what they noticed." "The great open-ended question to spark their curiosity." The noticing is just great, right?

Gail: Yes.

Dawn: Let's see. "There was time to give in to the children to make their observations." "The teacher allows the students to come up with their own hypothesis about what they're seeing."

All of those open-ended questions help prompt, encourage, and they – it's a meaningful way to encourage participation and curiosity.

Gail: Absolutely.

Dawn: [Inaudible] the questions.

Gail: We're going to watch another video of some curiosity in action. Get ready to observe and note what you see.

[Video begins]

Teacher: We're just going to look at it for a while. And we're going to think about, "Gosh, what do I want to know about this hermit crab?" You know what this is? It looks like cheese, doesn't it? But that kind you sprinkle on your pizza. This is sand. He's crawling around in sand. And let's see, he has a shell. He lives in a shell. If we are really, really still, he might come out and crawl around. Let's look at him. What do you want to know about this hermit crab? What do you – what would you like to know?

Child 1: I want to see him.

Teacher: I want to see him. That's a statement. Can you think of a question that you have about this crab?

Child 1: Why don't it want to come out?

Teacher: That's a lovely question. I'm going to write that down. You said, why doesn't he come out? Are you wondering that, Johan? I'm wondering that, too. I'm looking at him thinking, I really want to see this crab. Why won't he come out? He won't come out – why?

Child 2: He's sleeping.

Teacher: He's sleeping. Is there anything else you can think of?

Child 1: No, 'cause I know.

Teacher: Tell me.

Child #1: Cause when – when we talk loud, he won't come out.

Teacher: Oh, I understand what she's saying. If we talk loud, it may scare him. So he's staying in that shell. Right? That – now those are good two – those are two good – oh, oh, don't say anything. Don't say anything – shh, shh, shh! Don't move. Don't move. Don't talk. Don't move. Don't say anything. Let's just watch. Shh. Shh, shh, shh, shh, shh. I think he's looking around. Do you see his eyes? Wow. He's walking around. He must not be afraid anymore. Shh, don't, shh. He's not afraid anymore. He came out of his shell. He's not sleeping either. Oh, man. Is he going to climb out of the cookie pan?

[Video ends]

Gail: I love that teacher. We're getting so many comments. And yes, if you're entering comments in the Q&A, you're entering them in the right spot. Our Q&A support will be sending out – I know sometimes you're not sure, because you can't see it, but we'll send some of these out to you, so you can see what other teachers are saying, other participants are saying. But

there's so many great ways that this teacher is supporting curiosity. She restates the question so students feel reinforced. Recognizing curiosity, modeling, "What do I want to know?" Modeling being curious. Somebody noted that she had been observing too. It's true, I was – I've seen it 100 times, and I always lean in, just the way that she's using her voice. So many ways. She also brought something novel and fun into the classroom. She brought in this hermit crab into the classroom, which set up children to be curious about it. Such a great – lots of great things going on in that video.

Dawn: There really is. I absolutely love that moment when she leans in and gets quiet.

Gail: We all do that same thing. It's such a good move.

Dawn: Now, let's get back to the basics. We do this in each webinar. The BASICS are a collection of strategies that could be used in any setting interacting with preschool-age children. The BASICS are teaching practices you can apply no matter what content you are focusing on. Math, literacy, social-emotional skills – it's always important to remember the basics. The Teacher Time BASICS are: "B" is behavioral expectations in advance; "A" is attend to and encourage appropriate behavior; "S" is scaffold with cues and prompts; "I" is to increase engagement; "C" is create or add challenge; and "S" is the specific feedback. Today, we are going to provide examples of how to apply the Teacher Time BASICS in ways that will foster and support young children's curiosity.

So, behavioral expectations in advance. Here are some examples of providing behavioral expectations that will support children's learning. When we support young children's curiosity, we think open-ended and unstructured learning activities, like some of those questions we've been seeing in the videos we just saw. But this doesn't mean that we completely lose control over the classroom, because that can quickly become chaotic and shut down some children's learning. We want to foster independence, initiative, and curiosity, but not chaos. It is still important to provide some behavioral guidance. One critical strategy for this is providing behavioral expectations in advance. Here's some examples: you could, "Before you raise your hand, I want you to think about what questions you have about blank, what the topic is." "Before I read this book, let's put on our thinking caps, because I want to know what you are thinking about when you hear this story." And – or, "Before I bring the mystery bag around for you to feel, show me five. Eyes on the action, ears listening, quiet mouth, hands, and feet. Feet to yourself."

Here's an example of the "Show me five." These behavioral expectations in advance can also come as modeling, like the provider raising a quiet hand in the picture on the left, or with visuals such as eyes on the action. Those are some strategies you all have used in the past.

Gail: Absolutely. I was thinking about that teacher with the hermit crab – she had to have had behavioral expectations in advance, because she had about 10 children around that table that all had their hands to themselves. Clearly behavioral expectations in advance.

Now I'm going to talk about "A," which is the attend and encourage appropriate behavior. It turns out this is an extremely important part of fostering young children's curiosity. There was a study that was conducted to understand what teacher behaviors lead to more curious classrooms. What happened is the researchers placed a curiosity cabinet, I put a picture of one

on the slide there. This curiosity cabinet was in the back of a first grade classroom, both classrooms actually, and it even had a sign on it that said it's OK to touch it. Then they observed what children did, but they also observed prior to the curiosity cabinet being put in the classroom, and they noted what kinds of things the teacher had done. What they found is that children – in classrooms where the children opened drawers and explored the curiosity cabinet, they were more curious. In those classrooms, teachers were consistently using more encouraging words. They would say things like, "What an important question." "How would you find the answer?" "When you find out, let me know because I'm curious too." They did a lot of praising the process and not the product, like, "Oh, you're really thinking!" The other thing that's great is they smiled more. Smiling more in classrooms increases children's curiosity. Just think about ways that you might put that in place.

Now we're going to watch a video of a teacher in action, who is supporting children's curiosity and encouragement.

[Video begins]

Teacher: What, would you ask a question – Can you say that question again? Because I didn't hear it, it was a good question. Did you say, "What do you think is going to happen?" Or what did you say?

Child 1: I said, what do you think is going to happen if we put more green inside?

Teacher: If we put more green. Oh, my gosh, what do you think is going to happen if we put more green?

Child 2: Hey, look at, look at, I'm pouring water in it.

Teacher: That's great. You poured it right on the top. What do you think is going to happen if we put more green in the tub?

Child 1: Then if I take it up, what will happen?

Woman: That's transfer.

Teacher: Oh, you lifted it up. So she poured water in the top, and then what happened when she poured water in the top?

Child 1: I got – I picked it up.

Teacher: There you go.

Child 1: I picked it up.

Teacher: You picked it up. But when she poured in the tub, how come it went down? What's making the water go through?

Child 1: This is making it go faster.

Teacher: How does it get down there, though?

Child 2: The holes!

Teacher: The holes – oh, the holes!

[Video ends]

Gail: Go ahead and write into the Q&A things that you might be – things that you saw that teacher doing in the video to attend to and encourage behavior. I noticed a lot of smiling. Let's see what else. I know people are starting to write in. Asking a lot of questions. She wasn't telling them anything was right or wrong, she was just letting them explore. Enthusiasm.

Dawn: Yeah, the enthusiasm.

Gail: Clearly, children were getting the sense that being curious is OK in this classroom. Dawn?

Dawn: Again, the non-verbal way she was communicating was really helpful too.

Onto the "S." A very important part of helping a child learn is providing them with scaffolding. Scaffolding is how we help a child learn by providing them with just the right amount of assistance to help them reach the next level. Scaffolding also promotes independence and initiative, as you are not doing something for the child, but rather helping them to get what they are trying to do. Scaffolding children's curiosity can include the adult modeling, wondering out loud. For example, saying, "I wonder why the leaves on the tree are green?" You can use questions to prompt thinking. You could, for example, not get a correct answer, but share your thinking to encourage children's thinking. For example, "I am so curious about what is happening here, I wonder why these blocks keep falling. What do you think keeps making them fall?" You're trying to provide an opportunity for children to do their own thinking. You can see that scaffolding is for children to think more deeply, not necessarily to arrive at the right answer.

Gail: That is right. Another way we can support curiosity is to increase children's active engagement. That's what the "I" is for in our Teacher Time BASICS. Active engagement is a very important strategy to support curiosity. One strategy that we might use for that is to provide new and diverse experiences, like bringing a hermit crab into a classroom. We could also do things like bring inside materials outside. You can see bringing – you see all those materials that are there that are typically indoor things that now the teacher has brought outdoors, and that might increase some active engagement. We see some colanders, and pots and pans to make some music. A little outdoor music festival, I love it. Moving these materials to a new place in a new setting increases novelty and maybe increases some active exploration and curiosity.

Another great strategy is to follow a child's lead. Following their lead so that when they're exploring new environments more deeply, you can provide that encouragement and support. When children are doing that deep investigation, have a lot of curiosity about something, about trying to create something or make something work – having some ways that children can return to those projects. Sometimes we have – when it's time for clean-up, we make people clean up everything, including something they were working really hard on and wanted to continue doing. I've seen some teachers that create little signs that say, "Under construction," or some project-saving spaces in the classroom where children can move their projects so that they're going to return to it the next day. Again, to foster that deep, deep, deep curiosity and exploration into projects.



Dawn: Another way to increase active engagement is to introduce manageable knowledge gaps. These are sometimes called KWL charts. We ask children what they already know about a topic, and we ask what they want to know or wonder about. This is called manageable knowledge gap, because it directs children and adults to what we don't know but can find out. Realizing what you want to learn is sometimes the motivator to explore further.

Gail: Yes. One go-to place for building curiosity is outside in nature. We're going to watch a video of a teacher who fosters children's curiosity about a beetle.

[Video begins]

Child 1: There, look at Look at!

Teacher: Wow. Right there? Oh, you're digging down to – oh, you're right. They're alive, and they're teeny, teeny. Do you see them? They're so small. You have to – you can barely see it. I wish we had – look at this one. Oh, my gosh, look at this one.

Layla: Look at that one.

Teacher: Oh, it moved. There was one that was so small, it was –

Layla: Look at that one.

Teacher: Oh, my gosh! Layla, what good eyes you have. Oh, Christian, careful because the bugs are very small. We don't want to hurt them. They're living creatures.

Christian: I want to step on it with my shoe.

Oh, no, we're not going to step on them with our shoe, because our friends are watching them. OK, you can look right here. Look right here. Oh, you want this leaf? Oh, look, here's a bug that – look at this bug. Oh, I don't want to touch this one because he has pinchers, but let me see if I can pick him up so you guys can look at him. Look at this one.

Layla: It's a beetle.

Teacher: That is kind of like a – look at that.

[Children screaming]

Teacher: Look at that one, Layla. Look at. Come look. Look at that bug.

[Video ends]

Gail: Love that video. The children are – they're so curious and joyous about what's going on with that beetle. And, of course, I saw that teacher smiling a lot, just like we talked about earlier, and following the child's lead.

I bet we have some comments here. People love it. They love the project. They say it's so great.

Dawn: Yeah, you have to learn. Love how the children are coming running back to see more. She really made them feel curious.

Gail: Absolutely. I'm going to move onto – I'm watching our time here, I'm going to move on – we apologize if you're hearing some echoing, we know that's going on. We're trying to fix it while we're flying this plane here, so hang with us. We are moving onto the “C” in – the letter

“C” in BASICS: we create or add challenge. We can create or add challenge by asking open ended questions. That's one of the things I think has been present in each of the videos we've seen, is a lot of open-ended questions, meaning questions that encourage more than one word to respond to. Think of these higher order questions that challenge children to think more deeply about their observations and experiences. We could ask questions like, “I wonder what would happen if...?” or “Let's find out why...?” “What ways could we do this?” “Why do you think...?” Children can express their curiosities through words, gestures, stories, drawings, climbing, so much more.

Now, we're going to watch a video that shows a teacher asking questions to get children to think, to create challenge. Listen carefully and note some of the questions that you hear this teacher use, and then enter those in the Q&A.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Whoa. What happened?

Child 1: It's all red.

Teacher: All red. But this one's not all blue.

Child 1: Because it's a little bit – You want to try seeing it?

Teacher: That part's a little bit different color? You can try shaking it. Good sharing. But then when you shake it, it's not the same – you've got two different colors in here. [Indistinct conversations] You're making it blue and kind of a yellow-ish color. And that one's all red.

Child 1: When I look at it, it kind of looks like a different color.

Teacher: Oh, good observations. As Zeke's finishing – see what he sees.

Zeke: It's blue now!

Teacher: It's blue. Good shaking. Zeke, what do you see?

Zeke: It's blue.

Teacher: You think it's blue?

[Video ends]

Gail: We've got some people commenting on their questions like, “What happened?” Stating what's going on when the colors are combined or not. “What do you see?” I love – Hannah wrote into us and said that it's important that the open-ended questions have some intention too, that are connected to the learning objectives. I totally agree. Some great open-ended questions there. Dawn?

Dawn: Finally, the second “S” in BASICS is to provide specific feedback. This slide shows a few different ways to provide specific feedback while encouraging curiosity. First, be sure to offer wait time, that is, give a child time to respond to your questions or comments. Allow them to respond with words, gestures, or other communication means that is appropriate for the child. Then, give opportunities to get and receive feedback. For example, “What do you think is in the mystery box today?” They might say, “A paint brush.” And you could say, “No, it's not a paint

brush, do you have another guess?" In this example, the provider was specific by saying it wasn't a paint brush, but also didn't give the answer. Instead, they encouraged more curiosity and guessing. And finally, when a child expresses curiosity, before providing what you think, ask them what they think. Let's watch this video about providing specific feedback. Let's give it a second, while that gets pulled up. Anticipation, too.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Marilyn, look, she's got it almost even. Oh, wait a minute, I see the scale is a little off. We got to make sure it's hooked in the edges. Which side is heavier?

Marilyn: This side.

Teacher: Right, how do you know that? Jammi, you guessed this side first. How do you know this side is heavier, Marilyn?

Marilyn: See, this side's like this.

Teacher: Right, because the scale goes down on the heavy side. Excellent, thank you. Thank you. And now this side is heavier. Look at that, we got things blocking it. Yeah, I'm going to get those out from there. Jammi is adding one. Oh, wait, wait, wait, look. Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. It's not as heavy, it's almost even. Do you think we should put one more thing over here? Oh, now it's down too heavy on this side. How are we going to make it the same? Jammi says, "What if I hold it like this? Then they'll be the same." But they're not going to be the same weight, you're just holding it where they go. Let it go and let's see. Oh, check it out. That is so close.

[Video ends]

Dawn: I love all these videos today. In this example, the teacher is providing specific feedback on how to use the scale and encouraging the children to continue with making the scale balance by adding items. The feedback is specific enough to keep the children engaged and motivated, but not so specific that there isn't room to be curious or experiment. So well done.

Gail: I love that. That's the BASICS. You can use the BASICS to support any learning goal. Here, we've talked about the ways that you can use those BASICS to encourage curiosity for the children in your care.

Dawn: Now for our segment Small Change with a Big Impact. Here, we highlight a curriculum modification adaptation that can help a child who needs a little more assistance to fully participate in the learning environment, or group routines and activities. Here we go. We mentioned that one way to increase young children's curiosity is to provide new experiences. Sometimes, children can have a restricted range of interests or actively resist trying new activities, because they're scared or lack the required skills to engage. This might look like a child only doing one thing at a center time over and over and over again, maybe you've seen that before. When you notice this, one modification you can make is to use what they are interested in and embed that into other activities to diversify their experiences. For example, if a child only plays with a train in one way, think about using their interest in trains to find other ways of playing. You could encourage the child to try painting, but instead of using brushes, the child can use the train to drive through the paint and create tracks.

Dawn: When thinking about using the strategies of child preferences, consider a favorite object, like toy, train, or doll. It could be a favorite activity, like a drawing, or a favorite person, like an adult or a peer. Knowing a child and their interests or preferences can help you think about how to use those preferences to encourage expanded learning and experiences for a child.

Here's another example – if a child is not usually interested in puzzles, but you'd like to encourage trying puzzles more and you know the child enjoys looking at pictures of their family members, think about making a puzzle of family members to encourage more participation with puzzles. You can make the puzzle by photocopying pictures and cutting them out so they all – so they all have to be put back together to recreate the image of their family member.

Gail: I love those ideas. Following a child's lead, knowing their interests – one of my go-to strategies.

Dawn: Right?

Gail: Now, we're going to go to our section that we have each episode, Focusing on Equity. In this segment, we lift up the value of equity and consider how we can make our teaching practices more equitable. I want to draw your attention to this interesting finding and sad finding from a study, which is that about 20% of the children in a classroom get asked 80% of the questions. As we've been talking and seeing in almost every one of these videos, asking higher order questions, questions that make you think, those open-ended questions – those are important ways to foster curiosity. Now, let's think, if only 20% of the children – if you have a classroom of 10, that's two of the children – get asked 80% of the questions, or a classroom of 20, four of the children get asked 80% of the questions. Now, we want to think about what might be more equitable with asking these higher order questions, and asking us to be mindful and reflective of who we ask questions to, who we're encouraging to be more curious. We can pay attention to who gets asked questions, who gets asked harder questions, those more open-ended questions and challenging questions. Who receives more feedback? We call that contingent feedback. Somebody – or encouragement for exploring. We also want to ask, who gets smiled at more? Remember, smiling is one of our teaching strategies that can help support encouragement and – and to be curious. Supports encouragement to be curious. We want to ask, who gets smiled at more? Just thinking about those things.

I want to give you an example of how you might reflect on that. Let's say that you're leading a circle time. Here we have teacher Jamie, who is leading a circle time. You see Jamie is at the front there. And then we have – so we have, yep, teacher Jamie who is right up there at the front. Then we have the children who are sitting around the circle, and their coach just did an observation for them. What they noticed is that, while Jamie was leading circle, they just made a mark. If it was – if Jamie asked a child an open-ended question, then the coach would just put a zero or an O for open-ended question next to that child's name. If Jamie asked that child a close-ended question, they'd put a C. If the – if Jamie responded to the child, that's what I was talking about earlier, contingent responding, so the child said something and then Jamie said, "Oh, you're right," Or "Good idea," or something like that, then they would put an R for response. If Jamie provided encouragement to the child, it would put a plus, and if Jamie redirected the child's behavior, they would put an X. The coach just watched Jamie and put this – these types of marks around. Seeing that, I think if I was Jamie, I'd look at that and think,

“Huh, why – who did I give more redirection to? Who did I ask more open-ended questions from?” I might notice things like, “Wow, Hattie gets a lot of attention. Lulu gets a lot of attention. Dakota gets a lot of attention, but most of it's redirection.” Because we want to focus on equity, we want to think about who is getting asked what kinds of questions. The next thing that the coach can do that you could – or you could ask somebody to reflect on up here, to reflect on your practice, is that then they put that data on a chart like this. We know something more about the children in Jamie's class – we know their race, we know their gender. We know their – if they're a dual language learner. We know if they have an IEP, so they're a child with a disability. You can see the codes for that there. Sam, W is white, and B is boy. Lulu is white girl. Gabby is Hispanic girl. Dual language learner. You can see all along those codes. Then when you look at that data, you might start asking some more questions. You might be curious about this data. If you're Jamie, you might be thinking about, “Wow, maybe I'm only asking these higher order, open-ended questions of just a few children. And what are the background of those children? Well, it looks like I'm pretty much only asking these open-ended questions to girls, mostly the white girls in my class. Who am I giving more response to? Who am I encouraging more? Who doesn't receive any encouragement during my circle time? Who gets mostly their behavior redirected?” Here, we can be curious about our own teaching, and specifically curious about our equitable teaching practices. I'm sure if Jamie saw this data, that he might be curious about, what can I do? Because I want to be equitable, I want to make sure all children get encouraged. I want to make sure children are getting asked higher order questions and getting responses to their initiations. Maybe a coach or a peer could help you think of some strategies. I think about the good old Popsicle stick strategy, writing different children's names on Popsicle sticks, then circling that around before I ask a question and drawing out a Popsicle stick. It's a little bit more random. I can maybe try and correct or interrupt my implicit biases that might be at play here about why I'm only asking certain children certain questions, but there could be some other strategies, too.

Dawn: Thank you for that, Gail. I think it's helpful, next, to take a moment now in your Viewer's Guide to reflect on your observations from this activity. Think about what you might do to ensure you're calling on children equitably and encouraging children's curiosity. Think about who you engage with the most and least and challenge yourself about biases you may hold toward a child or groups of children. If you're comfortable, take a moment to share your ideas in the Q&A, and we'll try to push those ideas out for all to see. But taking that time to reflect and engage in that activity is the next great step you can take. Give it a moment to see if anything pops in the Q&A, or if you've done some of this before, what were some of the lessons you learned?

Gail: I like that it's a simple way to collect some data. Oh, Alicia has a great ...

Dawn: Yeah, I see this comment. “You can get your co-worker to video you, so you can go over later together.” It's another great thing that a coach could assist you with, too. And it's enlightening, right? Sometimes when you see it objectively or from another perspective, it helps you dig into what might be going on and bring something that's implicit to light.

Gail: That's right. Being curious about our teaching and thinking specifically about the ways in which we are being equitable.

I'm going to go quickly, because we are – we packed so much in today, Dawn, it's incredible.

Dawn: We did.

Gail: This is our segment called the BookCASE. We love the BookCASE. The BookCASE is where we highlight books, and we are highlighting a lot of books by diverse authors, which we love, and they're also related to the episode's theme. With the featured books, we make a case for them, so the BookCASE is not only where we put our books, it also stands for the things we think about the books. We think about – the "C" is for, how can we connect the book to some learning to extend the ELOF goals we're focused on? "A" is for the advanced vocabulary we might find in the books. "S" stands for the way that we might support engagement, active engagement with the book, as we're reading with young children. And "E" stands for extending the learning beyond the book. What might we do to keep the learning and the connection to the goals going beyond the book? We have a few different books that I'm going to highlight quickly, you can read more about them in the Viewer's Guide. The first one is "Many Shapes of Clay: A Story of Healing." I absolutely love this book. We might even bring this one back in the next one, where we can make the case for it. But what I love about it is that there's clay that they're working with in the book, the two characters are working within the book. There's some information about – about healing, about grieving. But the connection to the curiosity is around the clay that's in the book and just being curious about what shape that clay might take, what shape somebody might make of the clay. Another one that is totally joyful is called "Are You Eating Candy Without Me?" I love this book. This one – the great connection here is that it's kind of fun, because it's about the child gets curious about, what does my parent do all day long when I'm at school? Are they – are they shopping? Are they working? Are they watching television? And are they eating candy without me? It's a whole book about it. It's a whole book about being curious about what your caretaker might be doing during the day, and you could imagine all kinds of fun that could happen with that.

Another one that we have on our list is "Be a Maker." I love this one by Katey Howes. It's all about what – getting up in the morning and being curious about what you might make today. You might make a mess, you might make a friend, you might make a building. Then the one that we want to make the case about is called "After the Fall," by Dan Santat, and it's called "How Humpty Got Back Up Again." Of course, if you're going to do "After the Fall," you would first want to read the original Humpty Dumpty nursery rhyme to children so that they had some context. But what happens to Humpty in this is that after the fall, he gets put back together again, but then he gets kind of scared about heights – you could talk with children about being scared of heights – but then he sees a bird flying up, and he gets curious about birds flying and how the birds might actually be a way that he can get back up to the top again. He tries all kinds of ways to build a bird that then he can fly back up. He gets – there's a lot about curiosity in this book, so it's definitely connects to our topic of curiosity. There's great advanced vocabulary in here, I love words like healed, bandages, heights, terrified. Not a great thing to feel, but it's certainly a great word for young children to learn. You can support – you can support active engagement by story reading by asking open-ended questions, encouraging children to make predictions about what will happen next. I love extending the learning by thinking for children about how they might build an apparatus that could protect an egg from falling off a table or off of a wall. You can see there, some examples on this slide of different contraptions that –

that children might make if you're asking them to come up with a way to protect an egg. Then, of course, they can maybe do a little experiment there, could be a bag of bubble wrap, or some kind of parachute, or some kind of Hoberman sphere-type of apparatus. There you have it, our books on the bookshelf to support curiosity.

Dawn: Endless amounts of curiosity that can come from that book.

Now let's turn to one of my favorite parts, the It's All About You segment. You know we do our best caregiving and teaching when we feel well ourselves. Engaging in self-care practices can help educators build greater social-emotional capacity to deal with difficult times. Here is one quick strategy that you can use to get back into that calm space. Continuing with our theme of curiosity, we are going to talk about a strategy where being curious can help you adjust negative and unhelpful thinking. Curiosity can be preventative medicine for your mental health. It helps us find the joy of discovery and helps us question our own negative feelings and cognitive distortions. Having an openness to experience, engaging in personal growth, and responding to life's unexpected twists and turns with grace and humor can make even painful experiences more bearable. When we are able to say to ourselves, "OK, so that happened. What should I learn from that?" Or "What might I be telling myself that's not only untrue, but also contributing to my unhappiness?" "Is this belief true?" Or "What is the evidence for this belief?" Or "Does this belief help me feel the way you want?" Or "Is there another belief for this event?" Questions like that can help you get some ideas to self-reflect about whether or not things are true and take that curiosity to provide yourself with some moments to be able to turn some negative emotions around into something that can help you move forward.

We have covered a lot of material today, and we want to end with some inspiring words from the astronaut Mae Jemison. Here we go. "Don't let anyone rob you of your imagination, your creativity, or your curiosity. It's your place in the world; it's your life. Go on and do all you can with it and make it the life you want to live." I love that.

Gail: I love it, too. Oh, my gosh.

Now before we jump off today, any questions that we didn't answer or get to – we had so much activity in the Q&A – we're going to make sure that those get over to MyPeers. Check us out over there. Also, if you want to rewatch today, or if you want to spread this word or catch some of the older episodes, you can find this on Push Play DTL On Demand, where you can watch our recently aired episodes. And you can join us for our next episode of Teacher Time, April 7, will be Initiative and Curiosity for Infants and Toddlers. Then Dawn and I will be back May 5 to talk about creativity for preschoolers, that will be tons of fun. And then finally, June 2 will be creativity for infants and toddlers. We did it.

Dawn: We did it. Thank you all for joining us today.

Gail: Thank you all for joining us. It was so fun to engage with you in the Q&A. We'll see you next time. Take care.