

standing of language, and the full range of experiences at home and in the community to make new connections and understand. Children come to preschool as experts about many things—among them, their families, their home language(s), and their belongings. When learning builds on what children know and allows them to expand their skills playfully, they are happy to participate in any learning experience or activity, to recite any rhyme, and to count any set. That is why offering children experiences that are personally meaningful and connected is so important. In addition, since children learn using all of their sensory modalities in an integrated way, it is essential to strengthen the modalities with which individual children need special help and build upon their areas of strength. Integrated learning is further described in the section titled Curriculum Planning.

Intentional teaching enhances children's learning experiences

Effective curriculum planning occurs when teachers are mindful of children's learning and are intentional or purposeful in their efforts to support it. In the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) publication titled *The Intentional Teacher*, Ann Epstein offers the following description:²⁰

... the intentional teacher ... acts with knowledge and purpose to ensure that young children acquire the knowledge and skills (content) they need to succeed in school and in life. Intentional teachers use their knowledge, judgment, and expertise to organize learning experiences for children; when an unexpected situation arises ... they can recognize a teaching opportunity and are able to take advantage of it, too.

With an understanding of early learning and development, the teacher works to help young children reach the learn-

ing destinations identified by California's preschool learning foundations. The intentional teacher is flexible in order to accommodate differences in children's learning strengths and needs. Intentional teaching strategies span from planning learning environments, experiences, and routines to spontaneous responses suggested by the moment-to-moment focus of the children.

Family and community partnerships create meaningful connections

Strong connections with families grow from respecting and valuing diverse views, expectations, goals, and understandings families have for their children. Programs demonstrate respect for families by partnering with them to exchange information about their children's learning and development and to share ideas about how to support learning at home and at school. Partnerships with families extend to the community where the families live, come together, and support one another. Building connections to the surrounding community allows a program to become known and make use of community resources. Getting to know the community also gives teachers insights into the learning experiences and competencies that children bring to the preschool setting and informs efforts to make preschool meaningful and connected for children.

Individualization of learning includes all children

Each child is unique. Preschool teachers use their understanding of each child's blend of **temperament**, family and cultural experiences, language experiences, personal strengths, interests, abilities, and dispositions to support the child's learning and development.