

## Physical Development: Exploring Concepts of “Over” and “Under”

### Physical Development

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#### Moving Over, Under and Through!

Using boxes and blocks, children explore positional relationships and develop physical skills.

When children move *in*, *on*, *over*, *under*, *around*, and *through* various apparatus, they learn about where their bodies are in relationship to objects (in the tunnel, on the balance beam, and so on). Young children also learn about positional relationships when we invite them to place objects in relationship to one another (*put the square blocks on the shelf under the rectangle blocks*) and when we describe the positions of their bodies or the objects. The more we use words in conjunction with experiences to describe the positional relationships, the more quickly children will understand the concepts. For example, while children are under the table, we want them to hear the word *under* to describe where they are in relationship to the table.

#### Investigating Infants

Infants can begin exploring the concepts of *in*, *on*, and *under* in very simple ways. Put a variety of small items (such as blocks, metal and wooden spoons, plastic lids, crumpled balls of aluminum foil, and plush toys) in a plastic bowl or container. Use items that are large enough to handle but not small enough to swallow or choke on. Items made of different materials and colors add interest and variety to the activity. Infants will delight in taking the objects out of the bowl or container and in putting them back in. Comment as children engage in the various actions: “Look! You took the spoon *out* of the bowl.” “Good for you – you put the ball *into* the bowl.” Turn the bowl upside down and place an object under it. Ask, “Where is the ball? Look! It’s *under* the bowl.” The key is to let infants explore the physical relationships and for you to verbally label them.

#### Traveling Toddlers

Toddlers are great at getting into small spaces, and they enjoy the privacy those spaces offer. This is wonderful, because you can create so many opportunities for children to get *on*, *in*, and *under* things and to go *over*, *around*, and *through* them. In addition, since toddlers are natural born “carriers,” you can encourage children to carry things *in* and *on* other things, as well as *under*, *over*, and *through*. Purses, pails, buckets, and boxes with handles are great for putting things in. From a collection of items, invite children to select objects that you name and put each item into their containers. (“Jaime, a block! Krystin, a comb!”) Then ask children to help count the items in their containers. Lead a parade

around the room with children holding their containers: go *around* the tables, go *under* the desk, go *through* the door. As you go past each location, invite children to take an object out of their containers and place it *on* or *under* the table, desk, or chair. Again, the more often you use words to describe the positions, the quicker children learn.

### **Parading Preschoolers**

Preschoolers enjoy vigorous activity, and you can put this to good use when teaching positional relationships. Remove the chairs from a table in your room. Have children pick an object from the block or dramatic-play area and line up the items leading to the table, leaving two to three feet between each item. (You may have to form curved lines rather than straight lines if your classroom is small.) Then ask children to line up and follow your directions to get to the table—a child can go *over* the block, *around* the spoon, and *under* the table. You can add a *through* direction by using a cardboard box with the ends cut out (you'll have to tape it to a chair so it will stand up) or by getting a cheap trash can and cutting the bottom out of it to form a plastic tunnel.

### **“Can Do!” Kindergartners**

Kindergartners will love the challenge of crawling through a tunnel and walking “on a narrow bridge” suspended “over a river.” Using the trash can tunnel idea from above, place a balance beam through the tunnel so children can crawl through it. Then lay a 2' x 4' pine board on the floor at the end of the tunnel. Place a “river” cut out of craft paper under the board. Children can walk the board to go *over* the river. Later, invite children to carry a block or spoon *on* a tray or *in* a container as they move through the tunnel and “*over* the river.” As a further challenge, children can carry a ball or plastic egg on a tray while going *over* the river. Children who fall off are “all wet” and the objects are lost in the river.