

COACH'S CORNER

Coach's Corner is a DIEEC blog dedicated to providing fresh ideas for all early childhood education professionals.



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Using Photos in Early Childhood Education

Building Belonging: Integrating Photos of Children and Families into Your Program

In early childhood education, one of the most important things we can do in our programs and spaces is to create a sense of belonging. One of the simplest ways to promote this is to have photos of the children in their space. When children see their own photos, it reinforces the idea that they are a member of this community and they belong. In addition, seeing photos of the other children helps them to recognize and get to know their peers.



iStock Credit: Zarina Lukash

Using Photos in the Early Childhood Environment

- **Identify personal space-** One of the easiest ways to incorporate child photos is using them to designate each child's space for their belongings. Educators can pair the child's photo with their name to designate their cubby or bin for their belongings.
- **Labeling centers/interest areas-** Add photos of children playing in the various centers or interest areas in your space.
- **Photo books-** Create albums that the children can look through during the day. Add photos throughout the year of different events and activities. Children will love looking back at all the fun things they have done!

- **Family photos**- Encourage families to bring in photos of important people in their child's life. It can help make the transition from home a little easier. Educators can add these photos near the child's cubby or designate a special space for family photos.
- **Emotion display**- Create a class emotion poster or display. Take photos of children "demonstrating" different emotions, perhaps during an activity like Charades. Display the photos in your space and add the words for each emotion. This is a fun twist to a typical emotion poster!

Quick Tip: Placement of photos- Keep in mind that eye level for children is different than for adults. We want to design our early childhood spaces to be accommodating to young children. Photos should ideally be displayed at the children's eye level. For infants, consider adding photos close to the floor on walls or shelves so they can see them while crawling or during tummy time.

In addition to displaying photos throughout the early care and education space, here are some other ways to use photos in your program.

- Photos are a great tool for **documenting child observations**. It can be difficult to find time to write down lots of observations throughout the day. Taking a photo can be helpful in the moment, and then you can go back and make notes later that day.
- In the same way that photos help the children feel like they are a part of their early childhood community, photos can **help families feel connected to their children** while they are in your care. If you are taking photos for observation purposes, consider sending some to the families.
- Educators can **choose a schedule for sending photos**, such as daily or weekly. Some programs utilize communication apps or private social media groups/pages to share photos with families, but educators can also send them via a simple text or email!

Ideas from Delaware's Early Childhood Educators

Kena Trader, family child care educator, uses the children's photos to show how many children are playing in each center/interest area. She has a designated spot for children to put their photo when they begin playing in a specific center. If the kitchen area has space for 3 children, a child can see how many children are currently playing there by looking at the pictures. Kena also has space for children to go if they would like to play alone.

Susan Temple, family child care educator, creates a matching game using the children's photos. She prints two photos of each child and they need to find the matches. Susan calls this game, "Find My Friends"!

The beginning of the school year is a great time to start taking photos. By the end of the school year the children can look back and see how much they have learned and grown. We would love to hear how educators are using photos in their programs. Feel free to send ideas via email or our social media channels.

Please remember to obtain permission from each child's family to use their photos for any reason. Educators should also be intentional about updating their photo displays regularly to include children who are currently in their care.

Resources

- [Photographs: Meaningful Uses in Early Education and Care- Penn State Extension Better Kid Care](#)

