

## Key Takeaways

Here are some tips that were shared in this episode for educators to get more comfortable following the child's lead:

- Watch and observe, listen to their conversations, see what comes up naturally, and notice what questions they are asking, what are they drawing when they color, what do they get excited about? What are they interested in?
- Be flexible. Throw away your preconceived idea of what your curriculum should be and look at things through their eyes. Follow their lead.
- The only limit is your imagination, seek out inspiration by connecting with other educators, look on Pinterest and Instagram for fun ideas and tweak them to suit your children's needs
- Throw out your checklist/preconceived curriculum - "the children will seek out what they need" and you can address all areas of learning under a theme the children provide and it's ok to have more than one "theme" going at a time.

## Episode Notes

In [this week's episode](#), we speak with Devynn Thomas, an owner of an in-home play-based childcare center for children ages 2-4. She started her career in early childhood 10 years ago in center-based child care, but during the pandemic when she needed to stay home with her own children, she took the leap to open her own business. Devynn is passionate about the connection between play and learning, as well as how literacy, science, and math can be explored through play. Be sure to [listen along](#) as we explore making the most of interactions during play and following the child's lead in planning the curriculum. Then, come back here to discuss with other CLC members!

### An example of following their lead

Devynn shared an example of how an interest in blocks and building evolved into more when 2 new homes were being built across the street. Soon enough, the children were asking all about construction and what type of tools they were using to build the houses as they watched the homes being built. Devynn provided books about construction as well as different homes, even for animals, or in other cultures, to bring these learnings full circle. When the homes were completed, the children then built a birdhouse for the new neighbors to welcome them to the neighborhood. **This example covers many different concepts** such as math and science, concepts in the natural world, fine motor exercises, and even social and emotional learning, all based on their interests. The children were so excited to play an active role in their own learning and provided many opportunities for meaningful interactions. They were invested and engaged in their learning.

### The children will seek out what they need

One tip Devynn shared was to be Flexible. Devynn explains how she calls her program playschool. She uses a very gentle Pre-K curriculum, but it is play-based and it is child-led. Through this work, Devynn has found that straying away from the curriculum and letting learning occur more naturally can make learning more meaningful. Of course, having learning goals and standards is still important, but managing the experience to meet the learning goals while still focusing on their interests is important.

Learn more about learning through play and child-led activities on our blog, and these other good reads [What Does Regard for Student Perspectives Look Like in a Teacher-Directed Activity?](#)  
[How to Increase Children's Autonomy in the Classroom](#)  
[Playful learning: Where a rich curriculum meets a playful pedagogy.](#)