

Teachers can build children's brains.



As a childcare provider or teacher, you have a special role in children's lives. You have the honor of spending most of the day with your young students, watching them learn and grow. Understanding the importance of a child's development and how you can help them meet milestones—the things children are expected to do at certain ages—can help each child thrive!

The CDC's *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* campaign offers information and tools for teachers to support child development in their classrooms. This includes professional development with CDC'S FREE CEU training, available at www.cdc.gov/ActEarly.

Earlier is better.

Did you know that about 85% of a child's brain develops before they turn six? The more we support brain architecture in the first five years, the stronger children's brain connections will be. See our Resources link on our website for free tips, downloads and tools for easy ways to build young children's brains.

Mark children's milestones.

Watching how each child in your classroom grows and begins to reach milestones can help you identify any concerns about their development. You can use milestone checklists to share information with families or encourage them to download the free Milestone Tracker app from the CDC at www.cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker.

Some childcare centers use regular developmental screenings, or structured sets of questions, to mark students' milestones with their families. Please check our Resources link on our website for more information about screenings, including free training.

Talk with families.

- Share milestone checklists with parents early and often throughout the year, beginning when families enroll.
- Talk with parents in a supportive, non-judgmental way. Remind them how much you care about their child and want him or her to succeed.
- Emphasize that having a developmental delay doesn't necessarily mean something is "wrong" with their child.
- Focus on their child's many strengths.
- Encourage parents to watch how their child plays with other children.
- Share your ideas for supporting their child in the classroom.
- Encourage parents to share any concerns with the child's doctor, and follow up with the family in a few weeks.
- Share and model brain-building activities with families.

Support and include all students.

Having a delay can be frustrating for young children, which, in some cases, can lead to challenging behaviors. Providing extra support and adjusting activities in your classroom to include children with different abilities can help all children feel accepted, successful, and safe. Setting up your classroom to include students with all needs and abilities can be a great chance to talk with young children about differences and disabilities. If you are concerned about how you can support a child with a delay in your classroom, you can ask your director, local health department, or the Mississippi Early Childhood Inclusion Center about training programs on development, milestones, delays, and screenings for childcare providers in your area. Links to helpful contacts are included in the Resources link on our Teacher page.