Social Foundations
Persistence: Persisting with Tasks

What: Persisting refers to the ability to continue something, in spite of challenges. It also refers to the determination and desire to have an impact on the world.

Why: Persistence helps children carry out activities they are motivated to explore, while also learning more about and accomplishing goals.

How:
1. Praise and Reward
   - Verbally reinforce children by commenting on specific behaviors they use to persist through a task. For example, *I see you really concentrating on rotating the pieces to figure out how they fit in the puzzle; it looks like that piece fits!* Offering specific reinforcement by describing concrete, positive behaviors encourages children to continue to persist through challenging tasks.
   - Create a persistence sheet for each child's portfolio. Write down anecdotal (or informal) notes about the persistent actions you see children using, and include the date you observe these actions. Share this with families as you describe children's persistence behaviors.

2. Learn from Disappointments
   - Children can learn a lot when things don't go as anticipated or intended. Rather than joining the children's disappointment or jumping to their rescue, engage them in a discussion about what to try next. Encourage their persistence.
   - Make note of times when children experience disappointment and how they deal with it. How quickly do they persist or give up? Notice the complexity of the strategies they try.

3. Scaffold It
   - Look for natural opportunities to up the ante. Build on what children are doing, and nudge them to try new things or add more challenge to what they are already doing. For example, beyond stacking the 10 blocks and finding joy in knocking them over, try for 12 blocks. Look for scaffolding opportunities throughout the day. Likewise, if a task seems overwhelming or too difficult, adapt the task to make it less challenging.
   - Watch and make note of how children respond to scaffolding. How does it influence their persistence? Do children continue with the added bit or return to a more familiar comfort zone? Do they continue to interact with you or withdraw from interaction? Track children's responses over time.

4. Notice Distractions
   - Distractions can disrupt children's concentration and persistence. And when distractions happen, make note of how children respond. Do children easily return to their prior activities? Do they need support to re-engage?
   - Create a chart for children to monitor their own persistence. Place a picture of a distracting sound in the first column and a picture of the sound it makes in the second column. Next, ask children to describe how they worked through the sound in the third column. Vary chart entries with pictures and words children are familiar with, and encourage them to check in when they need help.

5. Just Play

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Create safe opportunities for children to engage in unstructured free play. Hang back and actively observe what children do, making note of any signs of persistence and the sophistication of their play. Notice, too, what happens when they try something that does not work right away. What do they do? What support do they need?

Create several activities that include a three-step sequence. Include activities in various centers and encourage children to try them. For example, the writing area sequence might involve making a book in these three steps: 1) Choose a piece of paper, 2) Fold the paper in half, and 3) Write/draw pictures inside of the fold. Be sure to include a model for children to follow.

Model the activity for children, and then challenge them to complete it on their own, using the three-step sequence as a guide and reminder of what comes next. Record your observations and review them later with these questions in mind: Did children complete all of the steps? Did they complete steps independently or with the help of a peer? If they did not complete the steps, did they leave the task because of a distraction or frustration? Did the activity sustain their interest?

6. Family Chat

Ask families to share examples of their child sticking with a task. Does this happen when the child is playing a particular game, when an award is involved, or all of the time? Ask families to describe the child’s mood and emotions during play. Encourage families to help children persist by guiding them toward next steps or offering some form of support.