

Engaging Children of All Ages

After putting Jeremy (8 months) in a backpack and Tamika (19 months) in the high chair, you assemble the other children in the kitchen for a planned cooking activity: making tacos. Yesterday you made recipe cards by using pictures to show the steps involved. Afterwards, you explained the recipe cards to Jorge (2 ½ years) and the preschool chefs.

To be ready for today's activity, you set all of the necessary utensils, equipment, and ingredients on the counter before the first child arrived. The recipe cards are ordered on a clothespin stand. Now you move everything to the table quickly. As the children put on smocks, you tie your apron and give Tamika some small chunks of cheese to nibble.

Keisha (4 ½ years) asked earlier whether she may grate the cheese. Under your careful supervision, she is scraping a large chunk of cheese across the grater, which you placed over waxed paper. You talk about what she is doing, "I see you're using your arm muscles to grate that cheese, Keisha. Is it hard work?"

"Not for me," she replies. "I'm a really strong kid."

"How did you get so strong?" you inquire.

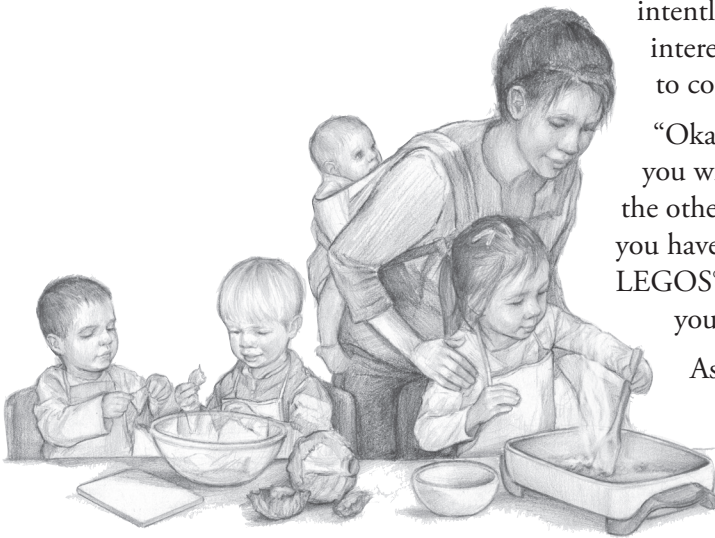
"From playing outside and drinking my milk," she answers. After concentrating intently on grating the cheese for 3 minutes or so, she begins to lose interest. "I'm finished with this stuff," she announces. "I don't want to cook anymore."

"Okay," you say. If you really don't want to make tacos anymore, you will have to do something else while I continue cooking with the others. Do you have a plan?" Keisha shakes her head *no*. "Well, you have some choices. The books and puzzles are out, and so are the LEGOS®. You may play with either of them. You may also write in your journal if you'd like."

As she walks into the living room, Keisha announces over her shoulder that she's going to play with the puzzles.

"We should start browning the hamburger while it's still easy for me to be here with you," you say. "Rosa (4 years), are you ready to put the hamburger meat into the electric frying pan? While Rosa and I brown the meat, Jorge and

Nathan (3 years), you may tear the lettuce into pieces. I'm right here to help if you want me to."



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