

What Does Active Supervision Look Like?

To understand what active supervision might look like in your program, consider the following example. As you read the vignette, identify the specific strategies used in the bolded text.

Maria and Yasmin have taken their class of 3-year-olds out to the playground for outdoor playtime. The 15-foot square playground has a plastic climber, a water/sand table, and a swing set. Maria and Yasmin stand at opposite corners of the playground to be able to move quickly to a child who might need assistance. The children scatter through the playground to various areas. Some prefer the climber, while others like the swings. Many of the children play with the sand table because it is new. Maria and Yasmin have agreed on a supervision plan for the children they will observe and are always counting the children in the areas closest to them, occasionally raising their fingers to show each other how many children are close to them.

This helps them keep track of where the children are, and to make sure no one is missing. If one child moves to a different area of the playground, they signal each other so that they are both aware of the child's change in location.

Maria has noticed that Felicity loves to play in the sand table. She hears children scolding each other and notices that Felicity throws the toys without looking. As Maria sees Felicity and Ahmed playing at the sand table, Maria stands behind Felicity and suggests she put the toy back in the basket when she is done with it. By remaining close, she is also able to redirect Ahmed who has never seen a sand table before and throws sand at his classmates. Kellan has been experimenting with some of the climbing equipment and is trying to jump off the third step onto the ground. While he is able to do this, some of the other children whose motor skills are not as advanced also try to do this. To help them build these skills, Yasmin stands close to the steps on the climbing structure. She offers a hand or suggests a lower step to those who are not developmentally ready.

Maria and Yasmin signal to each other 5 minutes before playtime is over, then tell the children they have 5 minutes left to play. When the children have 1 minute left, Maria begins to hand out colors that match color squares they have painted on the ground. She asks Beto, a child who has trouble coming inside from play time, to help her. When the children are handed a colored circle, they move to stand on the colored spot on the playground. As the children move to the line, Maria guides them to the right spot. When all the children are in line, both Maria and Yasmin count them again. They scan the playground to make sure everyone is in place, then move the children back into the classroom. They also listen to be sure that they do not hear any of the children still on the playground. Yasmin heads the line and Maria takes the back end, holding Beto's hand. When they return to the classroom, there are spots on the floor with the same colors that were on the playground. The children move to stand on their matching color in the classroom.¹⁶ Maria and Yasmin take a final count, then collect the circles, and begin the next activity.¹⁷

Both Yasmin and Maria are actively engaged with the children and each other, supporting the children's learning and growth while ensuring their safety. They use systems and strategies to make sure they know where the children are at all times, and to support children in developmentally appropriate risk-taking and learning.