Data at a Glance

What Is Data?

Data is information that we collect to answer questions or solve problems. For example, when setting the table, we find out how many plates and cups are needed. We can organize data into a list or graph to help us interpret it and draw conclusions.

Why Is Learning About Data Important?

Data helps people understand the world around them and make decisions. We gather information to answer questions such as:

- "Are there enough cookies for everyone?" Count how many people and cookies there are.

- "Should I wear a jacket today?" Check the weather forecast and then decide.

- "What type of ice cream should we get for a party?" Survey people's favorite flavors to find out.

What Do Children Need to Know About Data?

Children can learn how to:

- **Collect data:** Count how many people are in line to use the slide and the swings to see which one has a shorter wait.

- **Sort or organize objects by different features:** Arrange classroom books by the first letter in the title so that favorite books are easier to find.

- **Ask questions that can be answered by collecting information:** For example, "Do we have enough forks and spoons for everyone eating lunch at this table?"

- **Organize and represent information:** Use tally marks or simple bar graphs to show what colors of cars children see.

How Can We Help Children Learn Data?

Talk About Data Throughout the Day

- Talk about how things around the classroom can be sorted.

- Ask what the sorted objects have in common.

- Make tally charts or bar graphs to organize and compare information, such as what book the class wants to read.

Ideas for Exploring Data During:

Centers/Small Groups
Heavier or Lighter?: Have students use a balance to weigh objects against a base object and construct a chart showing which items are heavier or lighter.

Guided Small Groups
During science activities, children can represent which objects sank and which floated.

Math Moments
Compare shapes to Find Your Group: When putting children into groups, give each child a card with a shape, object, number, or color on it and have them get into groups based on their card.

How Can We Support Learning About Data at Home?

Encourage families to:

- **Ask children to sort objects** (for example, blocks, laundry, kitchen items) by color, size, or type.

- **Ask children if their friends or family members like something**, such as a certain food, park, or TV character. Then organize the answers with simple tallies on paper. Talk about what the data means: "How many people said yes?" "Which park do most friends want to go to?"