What Are the Important Events in Your Life?

Social Studies Background

Our lives are made up of important events that shape who we are. Some of these events, such as the birth of a brother or sister or a move to a new neighbourhood, may be more important than others because they can help us grow and mature in new ways. For example, the boy and the girl in the image shown above will now have an opportunity to grow and develop as the oldest and second-oldest child in their family. Becoming a sibling to a new baby sister means that these children will take on new roles and responsibilities in the family. Their parents may ask them to help look after the baby in various ways, such as playing with her when dinner preparations are underway. The older children must also adjust to the experience of sharing their parents’ attention with a third child. And they will need to become more independent in looking after some of their own needs because the baby’s needs will be the family’s
primary focus for a while. A life event such as the birth of a new sibling will bring about changes in family routines and resources and will provide opportunities for older children to grow in maturity and independence.

Purpose
In this activity, children will explore the social studies concept of significance as it pertains to important events in a person's life. They will think about how important life events, such as the birth of a new sibling, bring about change, not only for themselves but also for the entire family. They will draw a timeline of their own lives from 0 to 5 years old and they will use words or a combination of words and images to depict important events that have occurred in their lives. For example, they might depict the day they were born, their first step, their first visit to a popular theme park, the first time they played soccer, their first day of kindergarten, and so on.

Materials
- Paper and pencil or crayons for drawing a personal timeline

Develop an Understanding of Important Life Events
1. Display the image above of the family gathered around the baby. Direct children's attention to the details in the image that give them information about what is happening in the image and why this change in the family's life is important. Ask children:
   - **Who do you think the people in this image are?** (a family; a new baby's mother, father, brother, sister, grandfather, and grandmother)
   - **What do you think is happening in this image? What clues support your thinking?** (The grandparents are visiting to meet the new baby. Everybody is looking at the baby or touching the baby and smiling.)
   - **Why might this change be important to the children in the image? What clues support your thinking?** (A new baby means the parents might not have as much time to spend with the boy and girl. Everybody is gathered around the baby and the mother is holding the baby because the baby needs to be taken care of. She is too little to do things by herself.)
   - **Why might this change be important to the parents in the image? The grandparents? What clues support your thinking?** (The parents now have three children to take care of and that means more work. The grandparents might have to help look after the two older kids. The grandparents look like they are happy to be with the family. So they probably won't mind babysitting sometimes.)

2. Ask children, **Do you know what a “life event” means?** If children need prompting, say, **A life event is an important change or occurrence in our lives, for example, the birth of a new baby or a move to a new neighbourhood or school.** Ask children, **What are some important events**
that you can remember in your life? Encourage them to share responses, e.g., the first time they rode a tricycle, the first time they went to the zoo (or museum or other special venue), the arrival of new next-door neighbours, a birthday celebration, a carnival or festival, the arrival of a pet in their household, the first day of kindergarten, and so on.

3. Ask children, **Think about an important event in your life. How do you think that event changed you? How did it change your family?** (When we got our new guinea pig, I had to learn new things about caring for a pet. Everybody in my family had to learn how to take turns looking after the guinea pig. When I learned how to ride my bike with training wheels, I was proud of myself. My family didn’t have to worry so much about my falling and hurting myself.)

4. Ask children to choose one important event in their lives and draw a picture of that event. They may label their picture or write a caption for it.

5. Family members may also draw a picture of an important life event. The pictures may be displayed on the wall or on a bulletin board underneath a small decorative banner that says “Important Events in Our Lives.”

**Make a Timeline of Important Life Events**

1. If possible, show children examples of simple illustrated timelines in books or online. Ask them, **What do you notice about this timeline? What does it tell us?** (It is a straight line going from left to right./It is a straight line going up and down. It shows some important events and when they happened. It has marks or dots, labels, and pictures to show each event.)

2. Ask children to think of five important events that have occurred in their lives from the age of 0 to 5 years—one event for each year. Ask them to draw a timeline to represent these events in the order in which they occurred. For example, they can represent events such as the day they were born, their first haircut, their first visit to the dentist, the age when they first learned the alphabet, and their first day of kindergarten. Children may ask family members to help them organize these life events in sequence along the timeline.

3. Encourage children to add details to their timelines by adding written labels, small symbols or icons, stickers, drawings, or photographs of themselves, if they are available, to illustrate each important life event in their timeline. They may use invented spellings in their labels.

4. Add children’s timelines to the “Important Events in Our Lives” display.