

CORE SKILL: RELATE

Teacher-Child Relationships



What You Need to Know

Responsive, sensitive relationships between teachers and children allow for children to learn and develop across *all* areas of development. When children feel safe and connected, they are able to fully explore and engage in the world around them. They take appropriate risks, try new things, and show increased self-reliance, persistence, compliance, and focus. When teachers anticipate issues and/or calmly address them when they occur, children can quickly re-engage in the classroom. Children use their relationships with teachers as a model when learning to communicate and relate to others. They seek out teachers to help them when they encounter problems or when they need comfort, support, or guidance.

Things to Consider

What it looks like: Ms. Callahan greets children each morning with genuine joy in seeing them. If a child arrives who is sad or angry, Ms. Callahan makes a point of taking the time to acknowledge and accept the child's feelings and help them settle into the classroom. Throughout the day, she uses a calm, warm voice, and, when appropriate based on each child's culture, gives hugs, pats on the back, or a lap to sit on. She also takes time to talk with children about their lives outside of school. Through these practices, children feel secure with Ms. Callahan which improves their interactions *and* helps minimize conflict or tension.

Development of Emotional Connections with Adults

Between 36 and 48 months, children <i>may</i> :	Between 48 and 60 months, children <i>may</i> :
Engage in positive interactions with adults (e.g., demonstrate affection, talk about ideas).	Initiate interactions with adults.
Use adults as a resource to solve problems.	Participate in longer and more reciprocal interactions with adults.
Begin to feel comfortable separating from trusted adults when in familiar settings.	Show enjoyment in interactions with adults.
Engage in pro-social behavior with adults (e.g., saying goodbye).	Separate from trusted adults when in familiar settings.
	Engage in pro-social behavior with adults.
	Seek help from adults when needed.

Setting the Stage

Activities that support the development of a strong teacher-child relationship:

- ◆ Spend one-on-one time with each of your children (at least 5-minutes at a time). Give the child your undivided attention (don't multi-task!) and follow their lead in the activity, conversation or just being with them. Try not to "teach," but rather enjoy unstructured quality time together.
 - Note: It's not necessary for you to leave the classroom, but if possible, plan so that this time can be uninterrupted (e.g., another teacher is present and overseeing the activity occurring during those 5-minute intervals, or the other children are engaged in an alternative activity such as Choice Time).
- ◆ Sit with children during mealtimes so that you can observe their connections to you, offer help and assistance, and engage in social conversations about their interests and ideas.
- ◆ Greet children as they arrive each morning. Individualize morning greetings based on children's social-emotional and language needs, as well as their comfort levels with physical touch and eye-contact.
- ◆ Join in the play during Choice or Outside Time so that you can get to know children and their interests.



OBSERVE	<p>OBSERVE</p> <p>Carefully observe each child and your relationship with them. Does this child come to you for help? Are there certain children who you feel more or less connected with? Are there some children who you tend to expect negative or challenging behaviors from? Or maybe you don't experience tension or conflict, but just indifference?</p>
FOCUS	<p>Help Children See You as a Resource</p> <p>Help children see you as a resource, a helper, and a partner in problem solving.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Show empathy and acceptance of feelings: "I see you are feeling frustrated that the doll won't stay on top of the block." ◆ Offer assistance without forcing your own solution: "I'm happy to help if that's okay. Can we figure out how to make it stay together?" and work through the problem <u>together</u>.
SCAFFOLD I	<p>Promote Child Autonomy (genuine interests in their ideas, interests, and activities)</p> <p>Show genuine interest in children's ideas, interests, and activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Activities they choose: Join in and participate. Follow their lead (without taking over). ◆ Within your planned activities: Offer choices, invite children to share their ideas and be flexible to follow their ideas. <p>Be sure to build in opportunities for children who are non-verbal, less vocal, or just need more time to share. You can use visuals, pauses, talking sticks, alone time, or prompting through yes/no questions.</p>
SCAFFOLD II	<p>Engage in Social Conversations</p> <p>Chat with children about their (and your) interests, ideas, and experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ "I see you have crackers today! Your mom said those are your favorite. I love crackers too!" ◆ "How was your night last night? Anything you want to share?" ◆ "Here are a few pictures from my trip. Do you want to show me which picture looks like something you did or somewhere you went before? ...Oh, you pointed to the beach! Did you have fun when you went to the beach?" ◆ "I hear you are going to the park later. What are you excited about doing? Why?"
KEEP IT GOING	<p>Consider what you learned from observing children as well as their reaction to your Focus and Scaffolds. Find ways to build the activities in the Setting the Stage into your regular routines.</p>