

# BankingTime: Getting Started



## What is Banking Time?

**Banking Time** is a set of techniques designed to be used during regularly scheduled one-on-one time to ensure positive, sensitive, and supportive interactions between a teacher and child. Some children and teachers naturally connect, and sometimes more purposeful strategies are needed to foster connection and break a cycle of negative interactions, especially in cases where relationships are characterized by conflict or when a child does not seek you out when they need help. *Banking Time* supports you to make intentional efforts to engage positively with children who are not as strongly connected to you on a regular basis in order to help them see and use you as a resource, engage in learning activities, and navigate daily demands.

## Why it matters:

**Positive relationships** with adults are critical resources for children. These relationships can protect children from the impact of stress and other negative experiences by helping them to feel safe, accepted, cared for, and heard. *Banking Time* helps you invest in this relationship capital (i.e., you and the child are “banking” positive relationship time). When problems or conflicts arise, your prior sensitive and responsive interactions with the child will allow the child to draw upon the capital that you have invested in each other, to help solve them. Children who display challenging behaviors are frequently reprimanded by adults. *Banking Time* helps to balance out these more negative interactions with interactions where the child is in control and can see the adult as accepting and supportive.

## What it looks like:

- ◆ Regularly scheduled 10-15 minute, 1:1 teacher-child play sessions, 3 times a week
- ◆ In a quiet location, free from distractions
- ◆ Child-led (i.e., not the time to “teach,” ask questions, or give commands)
- ◆ **Not** contingent on the child’s behavior (not a reward or punishment)

## Choosing an activity:

- ◆ Activities should be open-ended and child-led, not relying heavily on the child’s skill or teacher direction.
- ◆ Make room for the child to bring their world into sessions, whether this means sharing something from home or from their family’s culture.

### Appropriate Activities and Materials

- Art materials
- Clay or playdough
- Imaginative play
- Loose parts
- Blocks and building materials
- Dolls, figurines, or small animals

### Less Effective Activities and Materials

- Reading
- Puzzles
- Computer games
- Games with specific directions
- Games designed for solitary play
- Activities that require help from adults

Banking Time was created by Dr. Robert Pianta, Dr. Bridget Hamre, and Dr. Amanda Williford at the University of Virginia. For more information on using Banking Time, contact [STREAMin3@virginia.edu](mailto:STREAMin3@virginia.edu).



Your role during *Banking Time* sessions is to convey interest, sensitivity, and understanding to foster a positive connection with the child. Rather than leading or “teaching,” you will follow the child’s lead and Observe, Narrate, Label, and Build Relational Themes.

**Observation:** Carefully watch and take note of the child’s actions, words, and feelings while being aware of your own thoughts and feelings



- ◆ Spend a few moments watching the child before joining in the activity
- ◆ Pause and observe several times during your time together
- ◆ Notice the child, their preferences, how they engage with you, and how they seem to be feeling

**Narration:** Describe what the child is doing aloud with an interested tone of voice. Try to avoid teaching, questioning or commanding.

#### Technique:

- ◆ **Reflect:** repeat the child’s words back, sometimes with extra details
- ◆ **Imitate:** follow the child’s lead by doing the same thing as them
- ◆ **Sportscast:** carefully describe the child’s actions

#### Example:

- ◆ If the child says, “Look I made a happy face,” **you could say**, “Yes you made a big smiling face.”
- ◆ If the child begins to roll playdough into a ball, **you could follow along**, taking a piece of playdough and rolling it into a ball too.
- ◆ If the child begins building with blocks, **you could say**, “I see that you are putting the blocks one on top of the other to build.”

**Labeling:** Communicate your perception of the child’s emotional state.



- ◆ Pay attention to the child’s verbal **and** nonverbal communication
- ◆ Ask about a character’s feelings during pretend play
- ◆ Reflect the child’s feelings back to them. For example, if a child is struggling to complete a task you could say, “You look frustrated.”
- ◆ Pay attention to the child’s response to determine if your label was accurate

**Developing Relational Themes:** Identify and communicate a message to the child about the importance of your relationship with them.



- ◆ Choose a theme that is relevant to your relationship
- ◆ Communicate the theme verbally and non-verbally. For example, help a child fix a broken toy and say, “I’m here to help when you need me.”
- ◆ Potential themes: ***You are safe with me, I care about you, I am interested in you, I accept you, adults can be helpers, I am consistent, you do things well, I will be here when things get tough, I understand the signals you send me.***