



Supporting Development of Sense of Self

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INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the webinar “Supporting Development of Sense of Self.” The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand the individual characteristics and social identities that children use to define themselves and help develop their sense of self.
- ◆ Explore intentional teaching practices to support children’s development of sense of self in any learning format.
- ◆ Reflect on your current practices and plan to use concrete strategies to support children’s development of sense of self.

Activity

- ◆ Watch the webinar.
- ◆ After watching, use the questions below to reflect on how you can support children to develop a positive sense of themselves.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support children’s positive sense of self.

“Who am I? The words may be small, but the question is one of the most significant ones in life.”

Zero to Three

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the webinar? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?



- ◆ The quote on the first page of this guide poses a short but strong question: Who am I? Think about how you would answer that question about yourself. In your description, try to include your individual characteristics (e.g., loyal), social identities (e.g., African American), and your values (e.g., I value integrity).
 - How would you describe yourself to others?
 - How did an important adult in your life help you form your sense of self?
 - How has your sense of self changed over time?



- ◆ Imagine you're a child in a classroom where none of the puppets, pictures on the walls, illustrations in books, or classroom visitors looked like you. On the other hand, imagine if every image you saw in your classroom looked just like you.
 - How would each scenario affect your sense of self and your worldview?
 - Why is it important for children to see themselves represented in your classroom materials and activities? Why is it also important to be diverse in your representation of people?
 - Look through your materials or lesson plans. Think about ways you could increase representation so that children see themselves and others in their classroom.



- ◆ Virtual, hybrid, and physically distant/in-person learning add new barriers to helping children develop their sense of self. Teachers can overcome these barriers by using the three effective practices:
 - Acknowledge and affirm physical attributes, interests, and characteristics
 - Promote autonomy
 - Embrace similarities and differences
 1. Assess each child on your roster and where they are in their development of sense of self. Who may benefit from more support? What trends do you see across your children?
 2. Based on the needs of the children in your classroom and your current learning environment, plan for specific ways to use these practices to help children develop a positive sense of self.
 - How will you modify to support and meet each child where they are? How will you adjust your strategies when or if your school changes its learning format?
 3. Regularly check in on your plan. Assess its impact on children and adjust as needed, using the examples provided on the last page of this guide.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about helping children develop a positive sense of self:

- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Street
- ◆ **Video:** “Change the World”
- ◆ **Link:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9X0II_OI9Y&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=SesameStreet
- ◆ **Description:** An inspirational song to share with children and families. “Empowering children with the idea that they can be anything they want to be.”



- ◆ **Source:** Sesame Street
- ◆ **Video:** “Color of Me Song”
- ◆ **Link:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4sqN2J9_axY&feature=youtu.be&ab_channel=SesameStreet
- ◆ **Description:** An inspirational song to share with children and families. “Whatever color you are, be proud and sing along.”



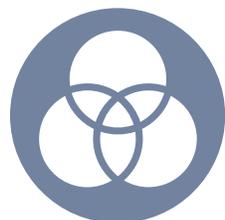
ACKNOWLEDGE AND AFFIRM

- ◆ **Spend quality time with children** - Schedule one-on-one time with children so you can get to know them as individuals. For example, schedule a time with a child to eat a snack and affirm their choices or interests, e.g., “You picked the apple slices for your snack.”
- ◆ **Engage in group activities** - Use songs or games in group settings to help acknowledge and affirm children’s sense of self. Sing songs where children sing something positive about themselves or have them simply share something they are proud of.
- ◆ **Positively and accurately represent children** - Ensure children can see themselves positively and accurately represented in their learning environment through books, images, dolls, and activities.



PROMPT CHILD AUTONOMY

- ◆ **Consider child’s identities, interests, and abilities** - Think about the children in your class as individuals as you choose topics, materials, and activities. Throughout the day you can incorporate these as you imitate their play or provide flexibility in your plan to allow for child autonomy.
- ◆ **Offer choices** - Let children have a say in what happens in the classroom. For example, “Which song would you like to sing today?” or “Where would you like to play?”
- ◆ **Empower children** - Provide opportunities for children to share their ideas to promote equity in social situations. For example, during a book reading where there might be an unfair situation happening, you can empower children by drawing attention to the situation. Then prompt them to talk about how they think things could be fairer or more just.



EMBRACE SIMILIARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

- ◆ **Conversations** - Comment openly about the ways people are alike and different (e.g., people’s skin colors, eye colors, body shapes, hair textures, or physical abilities). For example, “Yes, your hair is straight and blonde. Mine is curly and brown. Our hair is different. We both have hair to our shoulders. What is your favorite way to wear your hair?”
- ◆ **Planned activities** - Intentionally plan books or conversations to point out similarities and differences. You could talk about different words each child has for people in their families, clothing, foods, or places. Or you could share things they like and point out similarities and differences, “Some of us like the hummus while others don’t. We all like different foods, and that is okay!”

CHECK-IN ON YOUR PLAN

- ◆ **Set a reminder!** Build in time bi-weekly to check in on your relationships with each child and consider how you’ve been using these practices. If they aren’t working, consider why and ways to adapt.
- ◆ **Find a buddy!** Sharing goals with a co-worker and checking in with each other can help keep us all on track.
- ◆ **Keep a journal** and make a quick entry when you try out a new practice. Note how the children react.
- ◆ **Record yourself** (live or video) and observe your interactions with children. Take note of how often you use these practices and how children react.