

CORE SKILL: RELATE

Teacher-Child Relationship



What You Need to Know

Responsive, sensitive relationships between teachers and children allow 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. Teachers anticipate issues and/or calmly address them when they occur so that 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. For infants and toddlers, **relationships are their primary need**.

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 pleasant, warm voice, and, when appropriate, gives hugs, pats on the back, or a lap to sit on. The teacher also takes time to talk with children about their lives outside of school. Through these practices, children feel secure with Ms. Callahan. This improves their interactions in the classroom *and* helps minimize conflict or tension.

Development of Emotional Connections with Adults

Between 9 and 18 months, children may:	Between 16 and 36 months, children may:
Look to a familiar adult for emotional support or encouragement.	Show emotional connection and attachment with familiar adults.
Become distressed when separated from a familiar adult.	Turn to a familiar adult for comfort or help.
Move or stay close to a familiar adult when a new adult approaches.	Seek assistance from familiar adults in new or challenging situations.
Look to an adult to gauge comfort level or seek assistance in a new situation (e.g., leading by hand to an item they want).	Engage in (and maybe even initiate) positive interactions when meeting new people.

Setting the Stage

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

- ◆ Spend one-on-one time with each of your students (at least 5 minutes at a time). Give the child your undivided attention (don't multi-task!) and follow their lead in activity and conversation. 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 this time can be relatively 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.
- ◆ Join in the play during Choice or Outside Time so that you can get to know students and their interests



Intentional Teaching Practices to Support Teacher-Child Relationships

Monday OBSERVE	OBSERVE Carefully observe each child and your relationship to them. Does this child come to you for help? Are there certain children with whom you feel more or less connected? Are there some students who you tend to expect negative or challenging behaviors from? Or maybe you don't experience tension or conflict, but just indifference.
Tuesday FOCUS	Help Children See You as a Resource Help children see you as a resource, a helper, and a partner in problem-solving. <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>.
Wednesday SCAFFOLD I	Promote Child Autonomy Show genuine interest in children's ideas, interests, and activities. <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 and invite children to share their ideas. Remember to be flexible and follow <i>their</i> lead.
Thursday SCAFFOLD II	Engage in Social Conversations Chat with children about their (and your) interests, ideas, and experiences. <ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ "I see you have crackers today! Your mom said those are your favorite. I love crackers too!"◆ "Which animal is your favorite (<i>looking at animal visual choice board</i>)? I see you pointed to the elephant. I like elephants too!"◆ "Tell me about the trip you took with your family."◆ "My favorite color is green (<i>pointing to green visual</i>). What is your favorite color (<i>offering visuals of colors</i>)?"
Friday KEEP IT GOING	Consider what you learned from observing children on Monday 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.