



This guide walks you through presenting ***Building Relationships: Fostering Connections***. These are suggestions, so please use the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (16)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activities:
 - » *Relationship-building Behaviors*
 - » *Building Relationships*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or similar large paper and markers for writing participant ideas.
- Pre-write flip chart discussion questions for **both** large group discussions:
 - » Children's learning improves when...
 - » Children are more likely to take risks when...
 - » Children's engagement in classroom activities increases when...
 - » Children talk and share more when...
 - » Barriers to building relationships...
 - » Ways to work on getting personal needs met...

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The purpose of this presentation is to provide participants with information about the importance of building relationships with children, what children learn when we take time to form relationships with them, and ways to help sustain lasting connections with children.
- This is one in a series of in-service suites on *Building Relationships*.
- Participants are encouraged to view this presentation and think about how it pertains to the children in their classrooms.
- Learning activities offer participants opportunities to create plans for how to think about their children as individuals and consider the steps they will take to create lasting and meaningful connections with the children in their classrooms.



EMPHASIZE *

Building relationships with children is the first step to creating an engaging learning environment.

SLIDE 1: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS: FOSTERING CONNECTIONS

Introductions:

- Begin the training by giving participants background information on yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.

Use an icebreaker that emphasizes relationships with children:

- Have participants share the last conversation they had with a child.
- In a small group, ask participants to share an experience where they knew that they made a connection with a child.



SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Introduce NCQTL.

Review NCQTL framework for effective practice:

- The House structure supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.

Building Relationships: Fostering Connections fits into the foundation of the House. When young children interact in planned and positive experiences with their teachers, those interactions play a crucial role in helping them to engage with, think about, and communicate in their learning environment.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To define what it means to create meaningful connections with children.
- To identify why building positive relationships with children is important.
- To highlight effective ways to cultivate connections with children.

SLIDE 3: LEARNING OBJECTIVES

We have three objectives for this presentation:

- First, we will define what it means to create meaningful connections with children.
- Next, we will identify why building positive relationships with children is important.
- Last, we will highlight effective strategies for starting and sustaining positive relationships with children.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOSTER A CONNECTION WITH A CHILD?



SLIDE 4: WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO FOSTER A CONNECTION WITH A CHILD?

Connecting with a child means watching for something significant that a child is doing, saying, or feeling and then intentionally creating an interaction with that child related to what you see.

EMPHASIZE *

Get to know a child on a *personal level*, and then build on the information you gather to sustain a lasting connection.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS...

- Positive relationships may serve as “buffers” for children.
- Caring and supportive relationships can help children defy the odds.
- Quality relationships have been linked with low levels of aggression in children.

SLIDE 5: WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS...

It has been well documented that a strong teacher-child relationship can lead to many positive outcomes for a child.

- Positive relationships may serve as “buffers” for children.
- Caring and supportive relationships can help children defy the odds.
- Quality relationships have been linked with low levels of aggression in children.

Other positive outcomes include: high levels of social skills, school readiness, more independent behaviors, higher levels of frustration tolerance, validation of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, more positive interactions between peers, higher levels of school engagement, and in some cases a valuable protective factor for children living in poverty.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



NOTE 

References

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- Werner, E. E., & Smith, R. S. (1992). *Overcoming the odds: High risk children from birth to adulthood*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
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BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

"A child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults in care of and in joint activity with that child. In short, somebody has to be crazy about that kid. Somebody has to be there, and to be doing something—not alone but together with the child."
-Urie Bronfenbrenner

SLIDE 6:
BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

This quote emphasizes the importance of relationships in children's development.

"A child needs the enduring, irrational involvement of one or more adults in care of and in joint activity with that child. In short, somebody has to be crazy about that kid. Somebody has to be there, and to be doing something—not alone but together with the child."

— Urie Bronfenbrenner

Positive relationships are critical in children's healthy development. Meaningful relationships develop through a process of exchanges between a child and someone who intentionally loves, cares for, and spends time with the child.

NOTE 

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a co-founder of Head Start and a psychologist who developed the Ecological Systems Theory.

Quote reference:

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). *Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

EMPHASIZE



"Somebody has to be crazy about that kid."



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN?

- Children's learning improves when...
- Children are more likely to take risks when...
- Children's engagement in classroom activities increases when...
- Children talk and share more when...

SLIDE 7: WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN?

Why do children thrive when they have a connection with their teacher?

DISCUSSION

Lead participants in a discussion about why they feel relationships are important. Write these beginning statements on flip chart paper and post each one in a different area of the room, dividing the room into four groups.

- Children's learning improves when...
- Children are more likely to take risks when...
- Children's engagement in classroom activities increases when...
- Children talk and share more when...

Let the four groups brainstorm ways to extend these sentences and have them record their answers under the starter sentence. When finished, have participants share with the large group.

NOTE

Make sure these examples are emphasized during group discussion.

- Children's learning improves when their teacher displays a positive affect, shares activities with them, and makes efforts to connect with their family.
- Children are more likely to take risks when their teacher reinforces effort, shows excitement and enthusiasm, encourages and gives positive praise, and consistently validates feelings.
- Children's engagement increases when their teacher plans activities based on their interests, asks questions about their life outside of class, honors their home language, and provides help with new and challenging tasks.
- Children talk and share more when their teacher listens with eye contact, asks for clarification, asks open-ended questions, and laughs and plays with children.

HANDOUT

Provide participants with *Tips for Teachers: 21 Ways to Foster a Connection with a Child*.





SLIDE 8: WHAT DOES THE PROCESS OF BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS LOOK LIKE?

What do teachers think about when they make plans to build connections?

- They think about giving planned and meaningful encouragement at just the right time. For example: "I'm going to give Amir some encouragement at the writing center."
- They show an appropriate level of interest in a child's life outside of school. For example: "I'm going to ask Max what animals he saw at the zoo yesterday."
- They make plans to learn a child's home language. For example: "Today I'm going to use the new Spanish word I learned with Maria."



Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 43 seconds

SLIDE 9: VIDEO: FOSTERING TEACHER-CHILD CONNECTIONS

Introduce the video.

Inform participants that the video they are about to view shows teachers in action, building relationships with children in a variety of ways during ongoing classroom activities, routines, and transitions. Interviews with teachers, parents, and program directors highlight the benefits of positive teacher-child relationships.

VIDEO 

NOTE 

Group discussion of video will come after the *Relationship-building Behaviors* learning activity. Participants will reflect on the behaviors they saw in the video in their small groups. Consider showing photos on Slide 4 to help participants get started.

HANDOUT 

Distribute and review the *Relationship-building Behaviors* learning activity handout.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING BEHAVIORS

Lead participants through the *Relationship-building Behaviors* learning activity.

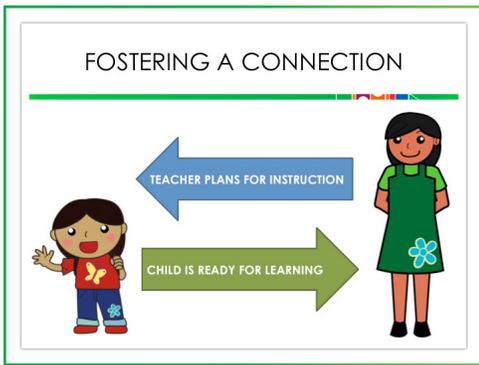
Ask participants to discuss the relationship-building behaviors they saw teachers engaging in during the video. Have them record those behaviors, along with any other essential behaviors they come up with. Participants may work in groups at their tables or individually, based on the needs of the participants.

DISCUSSION

Lead participants in a large group discussion of the essential behaviors they saw the teachers in the video engaging in. Add any others that participants added.

Record the group's examples of essential behaviors on a flip chart. Make sure the following behaviors are included:

- Sharing in play activities with children
- Positive affect
- Children take the lead
- Promoting independence (e.g., classroom job chart for children)
- Spreading out during play time
- Teaching the names of emotions
- Encouragement



EMPHASIZE *

Creating and maintaining meaningful connections with children means engaging in multiple back and forth planned and purposeful interactions.

SLIDE 10: FOSTERING A CONNECTION

NOTE: Animated slide is complex. Thumbnail to the left only shows final image; other images will appear before this one.

This slide shows an example of one back-and-forth interaction between a teacher and a child. When we think about the steps involved in creating and maintaining a positive connection with a child, we know that it's not just a one-time statement of praise, or a warm greeting once in a while, or occasionally showing interest in a child's life outside of school. Creating and maintaining meaningful connections with children means engaging in a **series** of planned and purposeful interactions. These are **back-and-forth** interactions during which the teacher may be continually monitoring him or herself to make sure the child is engaged and receiving something positive out of the interaction.

Here are a few ways that fostering connections support teachers and children in the classroom:

- When a teacher observes a child, it helps the child feel safe and secure.
- When a teacher offers a child encouragement, the child engages in the environment.
- When a teacher plans for instruction, the child is ready for learning.



Length of video: Approximately 21 seconds

SLIDE 11: VIDEO: TEACHERS CONNECTING

If we asked children about how they might feel and what they might think about when their teacher made efforts to connect with them, here are some examples of what we could hear.

VIDEO

NOTE

Consider asking participants to give examples before sharing the examples from the video.





SLIDE 12: MISSING THE MARK

As much as we strive to connect and build relationships with children, there are certain barriers to having those quiet moments to spend with a child that simply come with being a busy preschool teacher.

Even teachers with the best intentions can get derailed by myriad tasks which beg for our attention on a daily basis. The following tasks can impact the relationships that teachers build with children in their classrooms:

- Paper work
- Classroom clean up
- Challenging behaviors
- Burn out
- Lack of support
- Activity preparation

DISCUSSION

Lead participants in a discussion about the barriers to building relationships and the importance of getting their own needs met in order to give time and energy into building relationships with children. Write these beginning statements on flip chart paper to record participant's ideas and comments.

- Barriers to building relationships...
- Ways to work on getting personal needs met...





Length of video: Approximately 23 seconds

SLIDE 13: VIDEO: TEACHERS NOT CONNECTING

If we asked children about how they might feel and what they might think about when their teacher seemed to not want to connect with them, here are some examples of what we could hear.

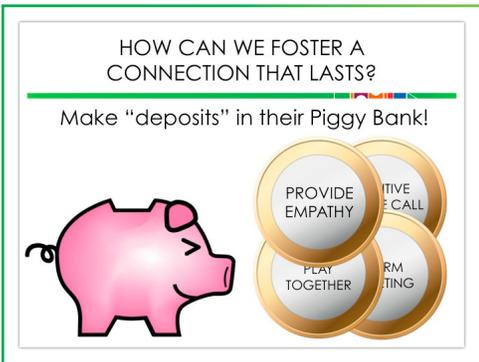
VIDEO 

NOTE 

Consider asking participants to give examples before sharing examples from the video.

HANDOUT 

Distribute and review the *Tips for Teachers: 50 Ways to Encourage a Child*.



SLIDE 14: HOW CAN WE FOSTER A CONNECTION THAT LASTS?

One way to think about how to build relationships with children is by imagining each child coming to school with their own personal "Piggy Bank." A piggy bank that can be filled with "deposits" from a teacher such as a warm greeting, an inviting smile, a listening ear, validation of feelings, and words of encouragement spoken at just the right time. Each of these "deposits" can fill up a child's "bank," and at the same time, work to build a connection and relationship between the teacher and the child.

Our goal as teachers is to make sure that every child has enough deposits, so that if we should have to make a "withdrawal" in the form of a correction or redirection, the child's piggy bank has enough positive deposits to off-set an occasional withdrawal. Keep in mind that some children arrive with "piggy banks" that are already *in the red*. Their little banks are already depleted from receiving too many withdrawals without nearly enough deposits put in. We will address ways to help support these children in the following learning activity.

Make "deposits" in children's "piggy banks" by:

- Providing empathy
- Playing together
- Giving a warm greeting
- Making a positive phone call home





LEARNING ACTIVITY: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Lead participants through the *Building Relationships* learning activity.

Ask participants to work in groups at their tables or individually, based on the needs of the participants.

HANDOUT

Distribute and review the *Building Relationships* learning activity handout.

Introduce the activity.

Think for a moment about a child in your class with whom you find it easy to connect—someone whose piggy bank you've had no trouble keeping full. Think about what makes this relationship go so well and about what you did to create this relationship in the first place. Also, think about what behaviors the child engages in to let you know you have a positive relationship with them.

Now, think about a child in your life that you have found more challenging to connect with. This may be a child who receives more withdrawals than deposits in their piggy bank. Possibly this child has a very different temperament than you have. Possibly your cultural backgrounds are different enough that you find it difficult to know where to begin. Maybe this child engages in some challenging behaviors which make it hard for you to find ways to have positive interactions of any kind throughout the day.

Make a list of steps you will take with this particular child to begin making a positive connection that strengthens your relationship.

DISCUSSION

Encourage participants to share their thoughts and ideas as a large group. Record the group's ideas on a flip chart.

REVIEW



- Positive teacher-child relationships are essential for child learning and school readiness.
- Building relationships is a planned back and forth process.
- Try new and varied ways to cultivate positive teacher-child relationships.

SLIDE 15: REVIEW

In review, we have talked about the importance of creating positive teacher-child relationships. These relationships are the first step in children's classroom learning. We talked about relationships being a series of back-and-forth interactions between a teacher and a child. We want to leave you thinking about easy and creative ways to build relationships with children, especially with children who prove more challenging at first to connect with.

SLIDE 16: CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources on effective teaching practices.



For more information, contact us at: NCQTL@UW.EDU or 877-731-0764
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