Teacher Time

Viewers Guide | Episode 4
CAN WE BE FRIENDS? PEER INTERACTIONS AND YOUR CURRICULUM

SUMMARY

CONTENT OVERVIEW:

Dr. Alexandra Figueras-Daniel joined us to talk about the importance of peer relationships and how children's interactions with each other support their growth and development. She shared strategies for using routines and curriculum, including small and large groups, to help children with relationships, understanding empathy and friendships.

Key Points:

- Children are born seeking relationships. They are naturally attracted to other children and seek out ways to engage.
- Three- and four-year olds are beginning to understand that people have thoughts and feelings separate from their own – this is when they begin to understand ideas of sharing (understand – not do), working together to create or build something, play games that require turn-taking, take turns in conversations, show empathy when another child is hurt, etc.
- Routines – such as meals, transitions, greeting/departure – teachers model positive language and behaviors – asking children about their lives, interests, problems, etc. Encourage children to talk with each other, provide ideas for solving problems, take time to greet and say goodbye, etc. Clean up, meal times offer opportunities for children to work together in pairs or small groups to accomplish tasks.
- Small and large group times can be used to encourage children to get to know each other, share tasks, learn from each other, and solve problems. During choice time, teachers can support children in entering into play situations, working together to solve problems, negotiating the use of materials, communicating needs and wants, and engaging in back and forth conversations.
- Outdoor play offers opportunities for children to engage in gross motor and physical play, but opportunities should be offered for children to engage in quiet or imaginative play or working together in small groups to care for a garden, play at a sand/water table, or play games for just a few children, such as hopscotch, jump rope, or bean bag toss.
- Teachers provide wide variety of opportunities for children to engage with each other and develop positive relationships, they model conversational language, and they provide supports for solving social problems.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY WITH LINDA ESPINOSA

Dr. Linda Espinosa joined us to help us understand the importance of language skills for developing friendships. She also explained how to use language and literacy experiences to support children's relationships She gave tips to support children in developing relationships and communicating with each other in positive ways.

- For all children, the ability to talk with peers and form friendships are primary motivators for attending to and learning language. For children to participate in play with peers, they will need to learn basic language skills. Through many forms of play, but particularly dramatic play interactions, children will hear, learn and use new vocabulary and common expressions.
- Observing children during peer interactions, during choice time, on the playground, during small group time, etc., will give teachers insights on their language skills, and how they approach learning new words.
- Starting with large group and throughout all daily activities, teachers can foster a spirit of cooperation and friendship. From the songs we sing to the types of materials we put out, teachers can promote children working and talking to each other with respect and interest. Classrooms can set up friendship trees with examples of how classmates have helped each other with tasks or problems.
- The most prominent part of the day for shared peer interactions and shared tasks is choice time. This is the time of the day when children can choose a specific activity and will most often result in cooperative activity. Children typically build structures together, create dramatic play scenarios, design imaginative fantasies, or figure out science problems together.
- Teachers can intentionally pair children who are Dual Language Learners with children who speak English, to work on puzzles, play literacy or math games, or even cooperate on computer games. During these times, teachers will hear children naturally respond to and extend each other's language and sometimes even help with new vocabulary.

TRY IT OUT!

During the episode we shared examples of how teachers use routines and curriculum to support the development of peer relationships. In order to support children in developing relationships, it is important to:

1. Understand where children are in terms of their strengths and challenges around engaging with peers
2. Remember routines and curriculum can be used to support development of these relationships and build community in your learning environment

Your "homework" is to take time this week to specifically observe and document children's skills in this area. And then think about and plan to use your routines and curriculum to support their growth in this area. Where can you add opportunities for children to work together? How can you support them in social problem solving? Maybe even think ahead to next year – what can you put into place early on that will help children develop really meaningful and positive relationships as they move through the year. Let us know on MyPeers!

ELOF MINUTE WITH PETER PIZZOLONGO

Peter Pizzolongo provided information about the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, the ELOF: A framework that represents the continuum of learning for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers: what children should know and be able to do during their formative years—from birth through age five.

- ELOF is organized in a way that can help teachers and families understand child development and guide the ways in which we help children learn. You can learn more about ELOF by going to the ELOF pages on the ECLKC Website—the Office of Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/elof
- Today's topic: Can We Be Friends? Supporting Early Peer Relationships. The ELOF segment focus is on the domain Social and Emotional Development.
- This domain includes goals for Relationships with Adults, Relationships with Other Children, Emotional Functioning, and infants and toddlers having a Sense of Identity and Belonging.
- Subdomain: Relationships with Other Children.
- This subdomain has 3 goals.
- 1st goal: Child engages in and maintains positive interactions and relationships with other children
- 2nd goal: Child engages in cooperative play with other children
- 3rd goal: Child uses basic problem-solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT MINUTE

Dr. Neal Horen helped us understand why peer relationships are important and gave strategies for supporting their development.

First, he shared strategies for setting up the learning environment to support the development of peer relationships.

- Provide children with many opportunities to work collaboratively
- Observe carefully when children are interacting
- Provide opportunities for learning new social skills

Then, Neal shared strategies for using routines and learning opportunities to support relationships among all children.

- Plan learning opportunities that promote working together, taking turns.
- Routines in general are supportive of relationships, because they offer opportunities for social interactions and collaboration
- Reading stories that foster social emotional development can help children address feelings and emotions and discuss strategies for managing those feelings and emotions in a neutral and supportive setting.

RESILIENCY AND WELLNESS

Neal Horen described why it is important for adults to have positive relationships with colleagues and gave strategies for supporting those adult peer relationships.

Neal described what adult peer relationships look like in the workplace.

- Staff are supportive of one another, both personally and professionally
- Staff engage in using reflective practice, taking time to think critically about their practice and supporting each other in finding strengths and addressing challenges.

Neal shared some common barriers to developing positive relationships in the workplace.

- Gossiping between staff can lead to mistrust, and a lack of trust prevents staff from being able to reflect or provide personal and professional supports to others
- Trust issues can be detrimental to morale and prevent staff from working collaboratively toward the best outcomes for children.

Neal provided strategies for supporting development of peer relationships among adults.

- Provide opportunities to connect on non-work related issues (e.g., hobbies, exercise)
- Make efforts to foster communication
- View work relationships as more like a family
- Foster the same skills in one another that they are fostering in children

RESOURCES:

The Importance of Peer Interaction and Social Pretend Play – 2/25/13 (Front Porch Series) – https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/fp/fpArchive2015.html

Facilitating Children's Friendships: The Adult's Role in Supporting Peer Relationships – 9/23/13 (Front Porch Series) – https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/fp/fpArchive2015.html

Creating a Caring Community (15-minute In-service Suites) – https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/caring-community.html

Facilitating Friendships with Children on the Autism Spectrum in Inclusive Preschool Classrooms – https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/Disabilities/Services%20to%20Children%20with%20Disabilities/Individualization/FacilitatingFrie.htm

Supporting Dual Language Learners with Classroom Schedules and Transitions - https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/planned-language-approach/docs/dll-ts-classroom-schedules-transitions.pdf

HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Information in this episode reflect the following Head Start Program Performance Standards Subpart C—Education and Child Development Program Services
§1302.30 Purpose
   A program must deliver developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, mathematics, social and emotional functioning, approaches to learning, science, physical skills, and creative arts.

§1302.31 Teaching and the learning environment
   (b)(1)(i)-(iv) Effective teaching practices – nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments …; promote growth in ELOF developmental progressions; integrate child assessment data in individual/group planning; include developmentally appropriate learning experiences…
   (b)(2) For dual language learners, a program must recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths and implement research-based teaching practices that support their development.

§1302.32 Curricula
   (1) Center-based and family child care programs must implement developmentally appropriate research-based early childhood curricula…
   §1302.33 Child screenings and assessment
   (b)(1)-(2) assessment for individualization – conduct standardized and structured assessments (observation-based or direct) … that result in usable information/conducted with sufficient frequency to allow for individualization; regularly use assessment information with informal teacher observations and additional information from family and staff … to inform and adjust strategies to better support individualized learning …

HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Subpart F—Additional Services for Children with Disabilities
§1302.60 Full participation in program services and activities
A program must ensure enrolled children with disabilities…receive all applicable program services…and that they fully participate in all program activities.

Subpart I – Human Resources Management
1302.93 Staff health and wellness
(b) A program must make mental health and wellness information available to staff regarding health issues that may affect their job performance, and must provide regularly scheduled opportunities to learn about mental health, wellness, and health education.

Early Childhood
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