



LET'S TALK: TEACHER-CHILD INTERACTIONS

SUMMARY

CONTENT OVERVIEW:

Dr. Alexandra Figueras-Daniel joined us to talk about the importance of teacher-child interactions and how those interactions with children impact their growth and development. The ways in which teachers interact and engage with children is part of the foundation of the House Framework. Children enrolled in early childhood learning environments need frequent, meaningful interactions with engaged adults and opportunities to support their learning. And quality teacher-child interactions are essential for children's social and academic development and learning. We explored what is meant by "quality interactions" and how to ensure each day is full of meaningful, high-quality interactions with young children. Within relationships, the interactions that happen each moment contribute to the growth of developing brains. That means that when you are holding a baby and feeding him, gently talking about that yummy bottle, you are actually helping to build his brain!

Key Points:

- All children benefit from high-quality instruction and classroom interactions, regardless of language status, race/ethnicity, or special needs
- When teachers develop positive relationships with children and are sensitive to children's needs, this fosters children's social development.
- Emotional support – teachers help children develop warm, supportive relationships; experience enjoyment and excitement about learning; and feel comfortable in their learning environment.
- Our interactions with children communicate to them that they are valued members of the community. By listening and responding, we communicate that children's thoughts and ideas and feelings are important, their ideas are valued, their feelings are validated and their home language is acknowledged and communicated.
- Our interactions also support children's learning and development. We model new vocabulary, we scaffold thinking, we encourage creative and critical thinking, and we support receptive and expressive vocabulary.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY WITH LINDA ESPINOSA

Dr. Linda Espinosa joined us to help us to think about ways to intentionally engage with individual children to support continued growth and development in this area. She gave tips to ensure that children's knowledge and skills are developed through high-quality interactions.

- The content of the interactions, as well as the emotional tone, are the heart and soul of language development for all young children, including children who are dual language learners. Language that is responsive (built on the child's interest) and enriched (extends the child's expressions with more detailed or complex language) supports children in learning new vocabulary, narrative skills, and listening comprehension. These interactions should be frequent and can happen throughout the day during informal individual conversations, small group lessons, or more structured literacy activities.
- The emotional warmth and nurturing quality of the interaction are critical to help children develop close and trusting relationships with the teachers. For children who are dual language learners, a positive emotional climate of the learning setting is important to their ability to acquire a new language.
- Young children who hear a lot of diverse language and are encouraged to use language throughout the day will be better prepared to learn to read.
- In addition to intentionally engaging children in conversations throughout the day, teachers can foster literacy skills by:
 - reinforcing language and vocabulary during center time and dramatic play,
 - singing songs that have rich vocabulary and familiar,
 - playing rhyming games,
 - scheduling small and large group book reading activities that use interactive strategies such as dialogic reading (reading the book in an engaging, conversational way).
- Prior to exposing children who are dual language learners to English books, teachers can have a native speaker of the child's home language read the book in child's home language. If no staff speak the child's home language, it will be important for parents or volunteers to read to the child and have conversations that include important topics, themes and vocabulary.

TRY IT OUT!

During the episode we shared examples of teachers who are intentional about the way they engage with young children. In order to develop meaningful relationships and support growth and development, it is important to:

1. Understand the different types of interactions and how they support children's growth and development, and
2. Take time to reflect on what your interactions communicate to your children and how your interactions support emotional and cognitive growth

Your "homework" is to think about the area or areas you identified in the chat as your strength and the type of interaction(s) you'd like to improve on. Take some time to plan to intentionally engage with children in your program in one or more of those ways, and if possible, ask another staff person to support you by observing and then helping you to reflect on what went well and where you can continue to improve.

ELOF MINUTE WITH PETER PIZZOLONGO

- The Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five (ELOF) is 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 outlines and describes the skills, behaviors, and concepts that Early Head Start and Head Start programs must foster in all children—including children who are dual language learners and children with disabilities.
 - 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.
 - Today's topic: Let's Talk About It: Teacher-Child Interactions—ELOF segment focus is on the domain Social and Emotional Development.
 - Subdomain Relationships with Adults: two goals.
 - 1st goal: Child engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with adults. The developmental progression includes:
 - Preschoolers typically demonstrate affection during their interactions with family members, teachers, and other trusted adults.
 - They are able to separate from familiar adults with minimal distress—when in a familiar setting.
 - As they have more experiences interacting with adults—can participate in longer and more reciprocal interactions with both trusted and new adults.
 - The second goal: "Child engages in prosocial and cooperative behavior with adults. Developmental progression includes:
 - Often, this begins for a child by greeting you as he enters your classroom or family child care home—and later saying goodbye.
 - Preschool children typically respond to teachers' and parents' requests, which might include assistance or prompting—and progress to responding without assistance or prompting.
 - We've all experienced—preschoolers at times demonstrating uncooperative behavior—saying No!—but these are usually resolved with support from adults—and in most children progress to being cooperative with a few reminders, at times—such as 'use your quiet voice' and "walk, please."
 - We know that all children benefit from high-quality teaching and classroom interactions, regardless of language status, race/ethnicity, or special needs—which is true for all domains, and especially for social and emotional development.
 - Children's social and emotional development is fostered when teachers develop positive relationships with them and are sensitive to children's needs.
 - And teachers certainly have an important role in helping children develop warm, supportive relationships, experience enjoyment and excitement about learning, and feel comfortable in their learning environment.
- 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>

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT MINUTE

Dr. Neal Horen described why teacher-child interactions are important for social-emotional growth and development.

First, he described how teacher-child interactions support children's growth and development:

- Fostering connections enhances children's abilities to connect with peers.
- Helping children learn coping skills allows them to build up their problem solving skills.

Then he provided strategies for supporting a positive learning environment:

- Providing quiet moments of encouragement.
- Engaging in simple interactions like the greeting in the morning
- Having specific individualized cues
- Incorporating social skills lessons into everyday practice to enhance children's prosocial skills

RESILIENCY AND WELLNESS

Neal Horen described why it is important for adults to practice mindfulness while they work with young children and what it means for adults to develop positive relationships with children.

Neal highlighted strategies for developing and supporting a positive climate and meaningful relationships with children:

- Adults set clear and reasonable expectations and provide consistent responsive structure
- Children can express and regulate emotions with the adult
- Teachers take a moment each day to do deep breathing or mindful breathing
- Self-care: Drink water, get sleep, exercise, ask trusted colleagues for support

When children present behaviors that are challenging to the teacher:

- Look past the behavior and identify the purpose of the behavior
- Identify strengths of the child and concrete strategies to address the behavior
- Identify the skills the child needs to work on

RESOURCES:

15 -minute In-service Suites: Fostering Connections <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/fostering-connections.html>

15-minute In-service Suites: Being Aware of Children's Needs – <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/childrens-needs.html>

15-minute In-service Suites: Engaging Children in Conversations – <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/practice/engage/iss/engage.html>

The Importance of Home Language Series: Language at Home and in the Community-For Teachers – <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/home-language.html>

Teacher Time 3/1/2014 – Teachers' Choice! Digging into Challenging Behavior: Part 1 – <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/development/teacher-time-archive.html>

Teacher Time 4/25/14 – Teachers' Choice! Digging into Challenging Behavior: Part 2 – <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/development/teacher-time-archive.html>

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

All programs must provide high-quality early education and child development services, including for children with disabilities, that promote children's cognitive, social, and emotional growth for later success in school. A center-based or family child care program must embed responsive and effective teacher-child interactions.

§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

§1302.91 Staff qualifications and competency requirements

A program must ensure center-based teachers, assistant teachers, and family child care providers demonstrate competency to provide effective and nurturing teacher-child interactions, plan and implement learning experiences that ensure effective curriculum implementation and use of assessment and promote children's progress across the standards described in the *Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five* and applicable state early learning and development standards, including for children with disabilities and dual language learners, as appropriate.

§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.



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