



Viewers Guide | Episode 4

CAN WE BE FRIENDS? PEER INTERACTIONS AND YOUR CURRICULUM

SUMMARY

CONTENT OVERVIEW:

Peer relationships are so important in the life of the young children in your program and you can help to support those budding friendships throughout the day in many ways. Your curriculum allows multiple opportunities through small and large group activities that can help children to understand empathy, relationships, and friendships.

LITERACY SEGMENT

You can support young relationship builders by providing books and listening opportunities in your program. Here are some of the books highlighted in today's segment:

- Gossie and Gertie by Olivier Dunrea
- How Do Dinosaurs Play with their Friends? by Jane Yolen & Mark Teague
- Bear's New Friend by Karma Wilson & Jane Chapman
- The Best Friends Book by Todd Parr

Remember when you read these books to children, point out the relationships between the characters, talk about what the characters do that make them good friends. Here are some more ways to support friendship through language and games:

- Provide opportunities for older infant to see and interact with other babies and young children.
- Acknowledge pro-social behavior (e.g., "Thank you for bringing me Tracie's hat.").
- Be ready to intervene and assist an older infant who has conflicts; verbalize the conflict and resolution (e.g., "See Amy crying. She is sad because you took her toy. Let's give it back and find you another.").
- Provide opportunities to play with other children in a variety of settings.
- Have duplicates of favorite toys and toys that it takes two to play with.
- Model and provide the words to help toddlers learn to share materials with each other.
- Provide space for toddlers to manipulate materials within the same area.
- Help each toddler learn some words in his peers' home language

GUEST EXPERT DONNA WITTMER

Young children begin to develop relationships much younger than many people realize. Six-month-olds prefer to look at photos of infants their age and by the time they are eight months old, children have been known to look concerned and comfort other infants in distress. Friendships develop by 1 year of age and by the time a child is 12-18 months old, many types of interactions begin to occur in addition to just parallel play. You may begin to see:

- Affection
- Kinesthetic conversations
- Run and chase games
- Peek-a-boo
- Object exchange
- Imitation—a form of communication

As a teacher, you should understand how important adults are for modeling, being affectionate and responsive to the needs of young children, and teaching interaction attitudes and skills. To help this process, be sure to:

- Notice and acknowledge prosocial behavior—helping, comforting, giving, defending and,
- Create a prosocial environment—model prosocial interactions, provide an interesting environment; create cozy areas for two, provide opportunities for children to cooperate and help others, and create small groups for stories and meals.

You'll also want to document social and prosocial interactions for children, teachers, families, and the community.

Even with plenty of adult support, we know that conflicts and biting often occur in this age. Here are some things you can do to help children learn how to manage these conflicts and emotions:

- Focus on the important relationships that the children have—are they affirming and affectionate?
- Look at the many reasons for biting and observe when and with whom they are occurring:
 - Learning language and negotiation skills
 - Exuberance
 - Frustration—I want it now!
 - Stress—look at interactions and environmentBecause they have teeth!
- Intervene immediately with aggressive behavior, however use conflicts as teaching moments.
- Use relationship-restoration, perspective taking, and skill-building strategies.
- Communicate with families often and dialogue about policies and strategies for hurtful behaviors.

ELOF MINUTE WITH PETER PIZZOLONGO

Today's ELOF segment focuses 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.

As teachers of young children, you make decisions about the experiences you provide for them, and how you will interact with each child, based on appropriate expectations of what children should know and do at various stages of their development—information you can access through the ELOF and your program's curriculum. You use that information to plan the experiences you set up, the teaching practices you use—acknowledging, encouraging, giving specific feedback, asking questions, and giving information to help the children in your care build good relationships with each other. For more information, refer to the ELOF [here](#).

Domain: Social and Emotional Development; Subdomain: Relationships with Other Children.

- Goal IT-SE 4: Child shows interest in, interacts with, and develops personal relationships with other children.
- Developmental progression leading toward this goal begins with young infants looking attentively at other children, touching their faces; recognizing other familiar children and smiling at them, making sounds directed to them.
- Before most children are 18 months old they are participating in simple back-and-forth interactions with each other, knowing some of their new friends' names.
- As toddlers, children typically seek out other children for social interaction, develop friendships, and engage in more elaborate play with friends.
- By the time children are 3 years old, they are greeting their friends by name and showing preferences for playing with some children more than with others.
- Goal IT-SE 5: Child imitates and engages in play with other children.
- Developmental progression begins with young infants watching attentively what another baby is doing. This progresses to infants making similar sounds as another infant, playing next to other children with similar toys—what we know as parallel play.
- Toddlers join in playing with other children, sometimes even taking turns or doing joint activities with a common goal, such as building block structures, engaging in simple dramatic play scenarios.
- By 36 months, most toddlers can engage in extended play with other children, even simple cooperative play with their peers.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH AMY HUNTER

Infants and toddlers learn a tremendous amount from their peer relationships. Infants do form relationships with each other in group settings and that those relationships can lead to more positive outcomes for children. Emerging social competence in infancy has been linked to later social functioning. And research supports connections between very early peer relations and those that occur later in childhood. Concerns with early peer relationships can also predict later behavior and peer relationship problems, so paying attention to those early peer relationships is critical!

RESILIENCY AND WELLNESS

The resilience tip for today is to connect with your peers for support. Humans are social beings. We need connections with each other. Make an intention to work on establishing positive connections with at least one or more of your colleagues who can support you in doing this important work in caring for infants and toddlers. Meaningful relationships with co-workers and positive reinforcement of others may be just the boost you need to support your work. Finally, co-workers and peers can be a wonderful source of accountability for your own health and wellness goals.

TRY IT OUT!

Watch for important friendships between the children in your classroom. When you see children playing together or even struggling a little bit, try stepping back and observing before you help them. Wait and watch – you might be surprised at how well they handle it!

What happened? Share it with us in the Teacher Time Community on MyPeers! Not a member yet? Join us [here](#).

RESOURCES:

Brain Development – This landing page has many resources about how responsive relationships support brain development. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/brain-dev>

Highlights from the Brain Development landing page:

- Early Essentials: The First Three Years – This webisode explores the rapid growth and development that occurs in the first three years of life. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/program-design/ee-orientation-2.html#link4>
- News You Can Use: Early Experiences Build the Brain – This resource gives research based information and strategies about how early connections are built through responsive relationships. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/cde/brain-dev/nycuearlybraindev.htm>

Relationships as the Foundation of Quality Infant and Toddler Care - Ready to dig a little deeper? Use this series of four online lessons to learn more about supporting early relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families.

- Lesson 1: Relationship-Building Skills
- Lesson 2: Prenatal Development and Relationships
- Lesson 3: Building Relationships with Infants in Out-of-Home Care
- Lesson 4: Using the Five R's to Support Learning with Infants, Toddlers and Families

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/program-design/index.html>

HEAD START PROGRAM PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Information in this episode reflects the following Head Start Program Performance Standards

Information in this episode reflects the following Head Start Program Performance Standards

§1302.31 Teaching and the learning environment

(b) Effective teaching practices

(1) Teaching practices must:

(i) Emphasize nurturing and responsive practices, interactions, and environments...

(ii) Focus on promoting growth in the developmental progressions described in the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework...

(iii) Integrate child assessment data in individual and group planning; and

(iv) Include developmentally appropriate learning experiences in language, literacy, social and emotional development, math, science, social studies, creative arts, and physical development...

(2) For dual language learners, a program must recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths and implement research-based teaching practices that support their development.

(c) Learning environment

(1) For infants and toddlers, promote relational learning and include individualized and small group activities that integrate appropriate daily routines into a flexible schedule of learning experiences

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.



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning