



WHAT IS IT?

This strategy is a set of relationship-building techniques used to improve the quality of interactions between teachers and children. They range from greeting each child as they arrive to spending special play time with each child.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- ◆ During meals, teachers sit, talk, and eat with the children. They talk about what they did over the weekend, upcoming events, and anything else the children want to discuss.
- ◆ Each day at Center Time, the teacher spends 10 minutes playing with a different child. The child decides how they will play with the materials, and the teacher follows along.
- ◆ A child is upset and feeling frustrated. They seek out the teacher for help. The teacher kneels down to the child's level and speaks in a soothing voice. Together, they find a solution to help the child feel better.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Warm and sensitive relationships help children feel secure and supported as they learn. Responsive relationships help children learn how to communicate, overcome challenges, and participate in the classroom community. When teachers consistently show interest, understanding, and support, children feel more confident to explore the world around them.

Ways to Intentionally Build Relationships

Learn about each child's preferences, interests, background, and culture.

Start conversations with children and their families about their ideas, desires, experiences, and traditions. These conversations should happen both at the start of the year and in your day-to-day interactions. Seek to recognize and welcome children's unique linguistic, racial/ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. For example, learn how to greet children in their home languages, or learn key words that may comfort them in their home language.

Aim for at least 5 positives for every 1 correction.

Sometimes children hear many more corrections than positive comments. Provide positive attention and feedback as often as possible. This is especially important for children that may often hear more corrective feedback or redirection.

Provide individually and culturally responsive support for children's emotional experiences.

Emotional expression varies across children. Some children may need more scaffolding as they develop self-regulation skills and learn to appropriately identify and express emotions. Children may also be expected to navigate emotions in different ways at home. Reflect on how your own feelings, backgrounds, and biases may influence your expectations about students' experiences. Seek to learn about and honor how each child and family talks about and works through emotions.



TIPS FOR BUILDING & MAINTAINING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

- 1. Greet each child at the door every morning using their preferred greeting**
 - Let them to choose from a hug, high five, wave, etc. (see this [Greeting Board resource!](#)).
- 2. Provide warm, positive, responsive interactions**
 - When addressing children, use their names and bend or kneel down to their face level.
 - Use a calm and supportive tone of voice, especially when children are experiencing difficulties.
 - When appropriate, give hugs, words of praise, a pat on the back, or a hand to hold.
- 3. Show interest in what children are doing**
 - Carefully observe and comment on what children are doing. For example, “You’re building a tall tower with the blocks.”
 - Ask children if you can join in on their play.
 - Follow the child’s lead and interest during their play.
- 4. Engage in meaningful conversations with children and their families**
 - Encourage children and families to talk about their ideas, interests, experiences, and cultures.
 - Respond to children’s comments by asking questions and expanding on what they say.
 - Share your own interests and find connections with children.
 - Connect with families to learn from them how to best support their child.
- 5. Spend one-on-one time with children.**
 - Set aside a few minutes to play with a specific child (e.g., beginning of Center Time, meals, on the playground).
 - Rotate and track so that each child gets a turn being the focus of your positive attention.
- 6. Show empathy, acceptance, and support for children’s feelings.**
 - When a child experiences a strong emotion, calmly label it (e.g., “You look sad and disappointed.”), acknowledge the situation (e.g., “You wanted a turn on the bikes, and we ran out of time. It’s hard when things don’t go our way.”), and offer your support (e.g., “I am here to help when things are hard. I wonder what would help you to feel better?”).
- 7. If you think a child would benefit from more targeted relationship-building, consider using Banking Time. See the LOOK Banking Time strategy sheet for further information.**

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Building Positive Relationships

[Available as PDF](#)

NCPMI©

Building Strong Relationships

[ECE Resource Hub](#)

CASTL©

Banking Time

[ECE Resource Hub](#)

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