

Building Relationships

Young children flourish when surrounded by warm and caring relationships. Building strong relationships with children and their families is essential to success in early childhood learning environments (National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning, 2013; Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014).

How to build strong relationships with families?

When families, teachers, and schools work together, children are better able to learn and succeed in school (Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014). Including families in the child's school life fosters the child's identity by bringing the home culture into the classroom.

Celebrate family strengths:

- Support families as children's lifelong teachers.
- Encourage families to speak their home language with their child.
- Learn about the cultures of the families.
- Ask families to help in selecting materials and activities for class that reflect those cultures.

Communicate often and in ways that are best for families:

- Find out how families want to communicate—in person, phone calls, email, or a website.
- Take the time to engage in informal chats and longer conversations.
- Find ways to communicate with all families.
- Use interpreters, learn words in the home languages, and translate written material.
- Set up a system to exchange information with families about their child, including daily successes and learning progress.

Support families in ways that they will want to participate:

- Provide opportunities for parents to engage and help, either at school or at home.

Create a friendly environment:

- Seek out families' ideas about what would feel welcoming to them.
- Provide adult-sized furniture, share meals, and create opportunities for school visits.

(EI 18.1 Self Control; 19.1 Cares for Possessions; 20.1 Cooperative Play; 21.2 Guidance & Support)

Ways to build positive relationships with children include:



Encouraging communication

- Listen
- Get on the floor
- Play together
- Share personal stories
- Ask questions

Being emotionally available

- Greet warmly
- Be affectionate
- Share laughter
- Share meals

Encouraging development

- Give warm greetings
- Encourage their efforts
- Provide support
- Validate feelings
- Encourage friendships

References:

Hemmeter, M., Fox, L., & Snyder, P. (2014). *Teaching pyramid observation tool for preschool classrooms manual, research edition*. Baltimore, Maryland: Brookes Publishing Co.

National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning. (2013). Retrieved from Activities with families: Fostering connections: NCQTL@UW.EDU

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