



## In-Class Activity



# Strategies for Building Relationships with Children, Families, and Colleagues

A series of higher education activities based on the CSEFEL Preschool Modules. These activities are designed to be embedded in coursework and include ideas for in-class activities and assignments.

## Rationale

The relationships we build with children, families, and colleagues are at the foundation of everything we do with children. We know about the importance of relationships in terms of children's development and success in school. It is important to build these relationships with all children as a context for supporting their social emotional development and preventing challenging behavior. It will be easier to address challenging behavior if we already have a relationship with the child.

## Objective

1. Students will become more aware of how important it is to build positive relationships with colleagues, families, and the children in their classrooms.
2. Students will share ideas regarding how they can build relationships with children, families, and colleagues.
3. Students will gain an understanding of how the relationships they have with children, families, and colleagues facilitate children's social and emotional development and prevent challenging behavior.

## Type of Activity

Small group then large group discussion so make sure there is adequate space to work in small groups.

## Time Allotment

Minimum of 10 minutes but more time may be needed to allow for sharing and discussion.

## Materials Needed

1. Flip chart paper
2. Markers

## Introduction to Topic and Transition to In-Class Activity

1. Discuss how the development of positive relationships with colleagues, families, and the children in their classrooms supports children's social and emotional development and prevents challenging behaviors.
2. Discuss how children learn and develop in the context of relationships that are responsive, consistent, and nurturing.

3. Stress the idea that children with the most challenging behaviors need positive relationships, and yet their behaviors often prevent them from developing sustained, positive relationships.
4. Discuss the importance of building relationships with families and colleagues (e.g., as a role model for children, to set the stage for future collaboration, etc.)
5. Transition to the in-class activity with a statement such as, "To help you become familiar with a range of strategies that teachers can use in building relationships with children, parents, and colleagues, let's brainstorm some ideas."

## Sequence for In-Class Activity

1. Ask students to divide into small groups. Divide the small groups into focused topics of: (1) children, (2) families, and (3) colleagues. Each group will brainstorm a list of things they can do to build relationships with children, families, or other colleagues (Depending on the topic assigned to their group). Have groups write their lists on flip chart paper.
2. Allow students about 10 minutes to complete this task. Teams should report back to the large group by sharing their ideas. Other students should be encouraged to add to the lists.
3. After groups have reported back, ask them to take 5 minutes in their small group to answer the following question:  
What specific strategies might you use to build a relationship with that one child, family, or colleague who is most challenging to you or who most pushes your buttons? (Some responses may include: conversation starters, asking open ended question (i.e., "wh" questions), wait silently for responses, asking questions about topics that children are interested in, using background information about the family to begin conversations).
4. Have teams report back on strategies they discussed.
5. Highlight the importance of play as a context for building relationships with children. Explain that play gives the adult an opportunity to follow the child's lead, comment on what the child is doing, and build on positive interactions.

(continued)



6. Discuss how having a positive relationship supports children in their social and emotional development and helps to prevent challenging behavior.
7. Discuss some benefits of having positive relationships with families and colleagues

### Closing

It is important to build positive relationships with children as well as families and colleagues. These positive relationships provide children with a sense of security and comfort. Positive relationships also help create a positive learning environment thereby supporting children's social emotional development and preventing challenging behaviors.

## Adaptations & Considerations



### Potential issues and concerns for the instructor to consider

- During class, some students might feel that it is hard to develop relationships with families and colleagues due to the constraints of their workload and schedule. Ask the group to brainstorm ways to address this issue.

### Adaptations

- Some students may not directly work with children but rather work with families or other professionals (e.g., administrators, social workers, technical assistance provider, etc.). In this situation, ask them to reflect on how they build relationships with staff and family members and how these relationships impact their work.
- Ask students who serve as administrators to make a plan for how they would use this activity with their staff to assist them in building relationships with children, families and colleagues.

### Online Class Considerations

- Ask students to post online their ideas for ways to build relationship with children, families, and colleagues.
- Ask students to share ideas and experiences with peers in a discussion board.
- In a discussion forum, chat with students about how the relationships they have with children, families, and colleagues impact their work.

### Practicum Seminar Considerations

- Ask students to reflect back to their initial days in their practicum placement. How did they begin building relationships with the children? other adults in the classroom? other staff in the program? families?
- Ask students to share strategies that have worked and strategies that have not been very successful.
- Have students share how these relationships with children, families, and colleagues. impact their placement.

## Resources and Readings

1. Building positive relationships with young children by Joseph, G. E., & Strain, P. S. <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/handout5.pdf>
2. What Works Briefs #12: Building Positive Teacher-Child Relationships by Ostrosky, M.M. & Jung, E.Y. <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/handout12.pdf>
3. CLAS Collection #2: Building Healthy Relationships with Families by Corso, R. M., Fowler, S. A., & Santos, R. M. (Editors) [http://store.cambiumlearning.com/cs/Satellite?c=CLG\\_Product\\_C&childpage-name=Store%2FStore\\_Layout&cid=1277940958046&pagename=Store\\_Wrapper&rendermode=previewnoin-site](http://store.cambiumlearning.com/cs/Satellite?c=CLG_Product_C&childpage-name=Store%2FStore_Layout&cid=1277940958046&pagename=Store_Wrapper&rendermode=previewnoin-site)