



# Making the Most of Classroom Interactions

## Session One: Emotional Support

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# Effective Interactions Foster Children's Development

# Knowledge of Effective Interactions Affects Child Development

- Knowledge of Effective Interactions =
- Skill in Identifying Effective Interactions =
- Teaching Practices =
- Children Development

# Preschool Experiences Matter

- Children who attend preschool start kindergarten more academically and socially prepared

# The Quality of Preschool Varies

- On average, most children benefit from preschool, but some children fail to make significant gains in preschool.
- Many preschool children are not consistently exposed to effective instruction

# Teacher-Child Interactions are Key

- Interactions are the moment-to-moment exchanges that teachers have with children.
- Teacher-child interactions are the classroom experiences that matter most to children's social and academic development.

# The Average Preschooler Has Few Daily Interactions with Teachers

- 1% = Routines
- 8% = Elaborate
- 18% = Minimal
- 73% = None



# Intentional Interactions Matter

- An intentional interaction has a goal
- Intentional teaching interactions are opportunities for learning
- Teachers who are intentional create and make the most of interactions with children.



# What Does This Mean for You?

- ALL teachers, new and experienced, need to observe and evaluate their teaching in order to make the most of their interactions with children
- Intentional and effective interactions help children learn and develop.



# Elements of Classrooms Influence Learning

- **STRUCTURE: Who? What? Where?**
  - Curriculum, Standards, Material, Training
- **PROCESS: How?**
  - Implementation, Relationships, Academic & Social Interactions
- **CHILDREN'S ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**



# Three Domains Influencing Children's Academic and Social Development

- Emotional Support
- Classroom Organization
- Instructional Support



# Emotional Support

Positive Climate

Negative Climate

Teacher Sensitivity

Regard for Student Perspectives



# Emotional Support Domain

- How teachers help children develop
  - An enjoyment of and excitement about learning
  - Feelings of comfort in the classroom
  - Appropriate levels of autonomy



# Why is Emotional Support Important?

- Children who are more connected to teachers and peers learn more
- Children who have a predictable, safe, and supportive environment become more self-reliant and comfortable taking the risks needed to learn new skills
- Children who feel competent and connected and who have opportunities to be independent are more motivated

# Emotional Support Domain

- How teachers help children develop
  - Warm, supportive relationships
  - Enjoyment of and excitement about learning
  - Feelings of comfort in the classroom
  - Appropriate levels of autonomy



# Emotional Support:

Positive Climate



# Positive Climate Dimension

- Positive Climate reflects the emotional connection, respect, and enjoyment demonstrated between teachers and children and among other children

# Why is Positive Climate Important?

- When children feel happy, relaxed, and connected to others they
  - Are motivated to learn
  - Are excited to participate
  - Get more out of lessons



# Positive Climate Indicators

- Relationships
- Positive Affect
- Positive Communication
- Respect



# What Do Relationships Look Like in the Classroom?


- Teachers and children are in close physical proximity
- Teachers and children share activities
- Peers assist one another when problems arise
- Teachers and children have a matched affect
- Teachers and children engage in social conversation

# Example of Relationships

Once children have arrived, the teacher joins them for breakfast. Children pass food around the table and talk excitedly with the teacher about what their mothers do while they're at school. The teacher tells them that her mother teaches at school too. When one child shares that her mother is sick, the teacher's face mirrors the child's concern

# Example of Relationships

Once children have arrived, the teacher joins them for breakfast. Children pass food around the table and talk excitedly with the teacher about what their mothers do while they're at school. The teacher tells them that her mother teaches at school too. When one child shares that her mother is sick, the teacher's face mirrors the child's concern



# What Does Positive Affect Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers and children smile and laugh
- Teachers and children are enthusiastic about being in the classroom

# Example of Positive Affect

The teacher and the children gather on the sofa to talk excitedly about their trip to the apple orchard. One child says she picked 11 apples, and the other children smile as they begin calling out how many apples they picked. The teacher laughs along with the children as they talk about their field trip and what to do with all of the apples.



# Example of Positive Affect

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# What Does Positive Communication Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers and children show verbal affection
- Teachers and children share physical affection
- Teachers communicate positive expectations.

# Example of Positive Communications

“We are going to have so much fun today!” says a teacher at center time. “We’re going to make play dough!”

A child responds: “I make play dough with my nana.”

The teacher holds up his hand. “High-five,” he says. “You can be my helper!”

The child high-fives the teacher.

# Example of Positive Communications

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The child high-fives the teacher.

# What Does Respect Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers and children make comfortable eye contact and listen to one another
- Teachers talk in a warm, calm voice
- Teachers and children use respectful language, such as “please” and “thank you.”
- Children cooperate and/or share with one another

# Example of Respect

The teacher is helping children create self-portraits with paint, yarn, and other materials. She turns to the boy sitting next to her and says, “Charlie, when you’re done with those scissors, may I please have a turn?” When Charlie finishes using the scissors, he passes them to her. The teacher responds, “Thank you!” I need these to cut the yarn to make hair.

# Example of Respect

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# Emotional Support

Negative Climate



# Negative Climate Dimension

- Negative Climate is not about the absence of Positive Climate, but it is about the presence of specific behaviors, such as teasing or anger, that expresses negativity in the classroom.

# Why is Negative Climate Important to Address?

- Children learn better and develop positive social-emotional skills in classrooms free from aggression and threats to their physical and emotional safety
- Negative Climate affects all children in the classroom adversely, not just those directly involved in behaviors and interactions that express Negative Climate

# Negative Climate Indicators and Behavior Markers

- Negative Affect
  - Irritability, anger, harsh voice, peer aggression, disconnected or escalating negativity
- Punitive Control
  - Yelling, threats, physical control, harsh punishment
- Sarcasm/Disrespect
  - Sarcastic voice/statement, teasing, humiliation
- Severe Negativity
  - Victimization, bullying, physical punishment

# What Does Negative Climate Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers or children appear irritated or angry
- Teachers use punitive measures such as threats or yelling to control children
- Teachers or children are sarcastic or disrespectful
- Teachers or children engage in severely negative behaviors such as hitting or fighting

# Example of Negative Climate

As the teacher and children gather on the rug to read, Connor and Micah continue their argument, shoving each other for the best spot. The teacher raises her voice, “That’s it! I’m so tired of this silliness. Stop right now or you’ll both have to stay inside for recess.” She turns toward the other children and says, “Maybe the rest of you can show Connor and Micah how big kids behave.”

# Example of Negative Climate

As the teacher and children gather on the rug to read, Connor and Micah continue their argument, shoving each other for the best spot. The teacher raises her voice, “That’s it! I’m so tired of this silliness. Stop right now or you’ll both have to stay inside for recess.” She turns toward the other children and says, “Maybe the rest of you can show Connor and Micah how big kids behave.”



# Emotional Support:

Teacher Sensitivity

# Teacher Sensitivity Dimension

- Teacher Sensitivity describes the teacher's moment-to-moment awareness of and responsiveness to children's academic and emotional needs



# Why Is Teacher Sensitivity Important?

- High levels of sensitivity increase children's active exploration and learning because the teacher consistently provides comfort, reassurance, and encouragement.

# Teacher Sensitivity Indicators

- Awareness
- Responsiveness
- Addresses Problems
- Student Comfort

# What Does Awareness Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers anticipate problems and plan appropriately
- Teachers notice lack of understand and /or difficulties

# Example of Awareness

- It's Roberto's birthday and his mother arrives with cupcakes and ice cream for a surprise classroom celebration. The teacher sees that Michelle, who has diabetes and is not allowed to eat either of these foods, looks like she's about to cry. Fortunately, the teacher keeps sugar-free candy and other safe snacks in her cupboard, she quickly slips Michelle a few treats so that she can join the fun.

# Example of Awareness

- It's Roberto's birthday and his mother arrives with cupcakes and ice cream for a surprise classroom celebration. The teacher sees that Michelle, who has diabetes and is not allowed to eat either of these foods, looks like she's about to cry. Fortunately, the teacher keeps sugar-free candy and other safe snacks in her cupboard, she quickly slips Michelle a few treats so that she can join the fun.

# What Does Responsiveness Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers acknowledge children's emotions
- Teachers provide comfort and assistance
- Teachers provide individualized support

# Example of Responsiveness

- As the teacher reads a picture book during circle time, a child calls out, “ I can’t see!” and folds her arms across her chest. The teacher says, “You look and sound pretty frustrated that you can’t see. Let’s figure out a way for you to see this book.” The child nods and says, “Will is in the way.” The teacher replies, “What if you ask Will to move back a little?” When the child does not respond, the teacher says, “You can say, “Will, would you move back a little, please?”

# Example of Responsiveness

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# What Does Addresses Problems Look Like in the Classroom

- Teachers help in an effective and timely manner
- Teachers help resolve problems

# Example of Addresses Problems

- Ryan is struggling to write his name. Mr. Tony sits next to him and shows Ryan his name card so that Ryan can copy the letters. Ryan carefully copies down the letters and says, “I wrote my name!”

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# What Does Student Comfort Look Like in the Classroom?

- Children seek support and guidance
- Children freely participate
- Children take risks

# Example of Student Comfort

- The teacher has just finished transcribing Ana's story in the writing center when a boy hurries over from the drama area. He's playing wizard and wonders if the teacher has a wand or know how to make one. The teacher takes a minute to help him think through how to make a wand. Ana, who rarely plays in the drama area, says, "I'll help you!" and goes to the art area to get materials. Then she approaches the drama area and asks the others if she can play there too.

# Example of Student Comfort

- The teacher has just finished transcribing Ana's story in the writing center when a boy hurries over from the drama area. He's playing wizard and wonders if the teacher has a wand or know how to make one. The teacher takes a minute to help him think through how to make a wand. Ana, who rarely plays in the drama area, says, "I'll help you!" and goes to the art area to get materials. Then she approaches the drama area and asks the others if she can play there too.



# Emotional Support

Regard for Student Perspectives



# Regard for Student Perspectives Dimension

- Regard for Student Perspectives describes how teachers interact with children in ways that emphasizes their interests, motivations, and points of view and encourage children's responsibility and independence.



# Why Is Regard for Student Perspectives Important?

- When teachers create a child-centered environment that supports children's independence and expression, children are more motivated to learn.



# Regard for Student Perspectives Indicators

- Flexibility and Student Focus
- Support for Autonomy and Leadership
- Student Expression
- Restriction of Movement



# What Does Flexibility and Student Focus Look Like in the Classroom?

- The teacher shows flexibility
- The teacher incorporates students' ideas
- The teacher follows the students' lead

# Example of Flexibility and Student Focus

- Just before taking attendance, the children ask where the assistant teacher is. The teacher says, “She’s out sick,” and a child replies, “I want to make her a card.” The teacher says, “What a great idea!” She tells the children that they can make get-well cards in the art area as soon as they are done with attendance. She asks the children what they could say in their cards and writes their ideas on the white board for all to see.

# Example of Flexibility and Student Focus

- Just before taking attendance, the children ask where the assistant teacher is. The teacher says, “She’s out sick,” and a child replies, “I want to make her a card.” The teacher says, “What a great idea!” She tells the children that they can make get-well cards in the art area as soon as they are done with attendance. She asks the children what they could say in their cards and writes their ideas on the white board for all to see.



# What Does Support for Autonomy and Leadership Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers allow children to make choices
- Teachers allow students to lead lessons
- Teachers give students responsibility

# Example of Support for Autonomy and Leadership

- The children pass the basket of vegetable around the circle, and Jayda says, “Can we play hot potato?” Ms. Debbie says, “Ok. You tell us how to play,” and Jayda leads the class in a game of hot potato. Afterward, Ms. Debbie says, “Now it’s time to make soup! We’ll need washers, peelers, cutters, and mixers. What job do you want Jayda?” and asks each child how he or she wants to help. The children get to work, each contributing to making the soup.

# Example of Support for Autonomy and Leadership

- The children pass the basket of vegetable around the circle, and Jayda says, “Can we play hot potato?” Ms. Debbie says, “Ok. You tell us how to play,” and Jayda leads the class in a game of hot potato. Afterward, Ms. Debbie says, “Now it’s time to make soup! We’ll need washers, peelers, cutters, and mixers. What job do you want Jayda?” and asks each child how he or she wants to help. The children get to work, each contributing to making the soup.





# What Does Student Expression Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers encourage student talk
- Teachers elicit children's ideas and /or perspectives

# Example of Student Expression

- Ms. Rachel walks over to the block center and asks, “Everette, what are you building?” Everette replies, “An airplane! And it can transform!” Ms. Rachel responds, “Really? Cool! What can it transform into?” Everette says, “A monster!” Ms. Rachel says, “Oh, is it scary to ride on a monster plane?” Everette laughs and says, “No, it’s a nice monster, and he gives fun rides to everyone!”

# Example of Student Expression

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# What Does Appropriate Restriction of Movement Look Like in the Classroom?

- Teachers allow movement
- Teachers are not rigid

# Example of Restriction of Movement

- Before they start their good-morning song about zoo animals waking up, the teacher asks the children to find a safe space to stretch their arms and legs without bumping into anyone else. When the teacher sees that they may need more space than the circle area, she says, “If you need to move into the book area or drama area, that is fine. We’ll all come back to sit in the circle area at the end of the song.

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## Luke 18:15-17

<sup>15</sup> People were also bringing babies to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. <sup>16</sup> But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. <sup>17</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”



## Luke 17:1-2

**17** Jesus said to his disciples: “Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. <sup>2</sup> It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.





# End of Session One: Emotional Support

Session One: Emotional Support

Session Two: Classroom Organization

Session Three: Instructional Support

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