6.1: The Teacher’s Role - Build and Maintain Positive Relationships with Children

Teachers build meaningful relationships with children during day-to-day interactions with them. Since relationships are central to young children’s learning and development, effective preschool teachers engage in consistent efforts to develop positive and nurturing relationships with each child they serve. Preschool teachers understand the importance of consistency, continuity, and responsiveness in supporting children’s healthy social and emotional development (adapted from California Department of Education and First 5 California 2012, 121). In cases in which children display challenging behaviors, teachers can focus even more directly on cultivating a relationship with the children during less stressful times (when children behave appropriately) and rely on additional support through ongoing mentoring and coaching (e.g., reflective supervision, early childhood mental health consultation) to put in place effective strategies to establish and sustain positive relationships with young children. When teachers engage in positive, nurturing relationships with young children, children feel safe and confident to engage deeply in exploration and learning. For those children who come to the classroom displaying challenging behaviors, nurturing, stable, and positive relationships with teachers often help to provide them with the emotional support needed to develop future positive relationships with teachers and peers (Buyse et al. 2008).[1]

Development is often referred to as a journey, not a race. Children navigate their journey through individual rates of development. Along the journey, there are many milestones and developmental successes to celebrate, but alongside these celebrations there are behavioral considerations that challenge children and their caregivers. Teaching young children is not just about creating an environment and a curriculum, but also providing limits, clear expectations and applying developmentally appropriate strategies to guide young children in navigating their journey. Most importantly, teachers must also demonstrate a sensitivity to a variety of children’s needs, temperaments and learning styles.[2]
References

[1] California Preschool Program Guidelines by the California Department of Education is used with permission (pg. 39-40)

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