



# chapter 1

## *Building a Caring Community*

This chapter will explore the role and influence of the teacher in creating high-quality interactions and fostering positive relationships with children. The essential framework for learning begins when a child feels valued and respected within meaningful and caring relationships. Whether you work with infants and toddlers or teach children in a preschool or early elementary school setting, your first priority is to help guide them toward a healthy understanding of themselves and to instill confidence in their ability to make positive connections with others.

The strategies in this chapter will help you create a caring community that encourages the gifts and strengths of every child and promotes a sense of belonging and purpose. You will be able to instill in your classroom a fresh spirit of celebration and enjoyment. This responsive classroom climate will influence children's excitement for learning and will enhance their ability to relate well with others. As you create this caring community, you will have a lasting positive influence in the lives of children and their families, both now and in the future.

### Chapter Principles

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|-------------------------------|---|
| 1: Connect Before You Correct | 7: Establish Routines and Traditions        |
| 2: Time In                    | 8: Talk About Children Positively to Others |
| 3: Belonging and Significance | 9: Put It in Writing                        |
| 4: Love                       | 10: Kiss Your Brain                         |
| 5: Class Meeting              | 11: Positive Closure                        |
| 6: Make a Sacrifice           |   |

### Chapter Objectives

- As you explore the text and activities in this chapter, you will be able to:
- Implement effective strategies to build a positive classroom climate
- Foster sensitivity and responsiveness to individual, cultural, and language needs

- Establish traditions that encourage belonging, purpose, and responsibility
- Enhance self-esteem and increase emotional competence
- Boost learning and engagement through affirming words, actions, and activities
- Use positive relationships and supportive interactions to create a caring community with young children and families

## Creating a Caring Community

The most important influence in the classroom is *you!* Your words and actions, tone, engagement, and modeling establish the quality and nature of the emotional, physical, and social environment of your classroom. Your relationships with children are your strongest asset. How you respond to them will help them decide if they will connect to school as a place of success and belonging, or if they will disconnect because of challenges and difficulties. Your examples of kindness, respect, caring, and consistency set the tone for them.

Interactions with adults have the power to change the way a child feels about himself and others, and to affect the way he interprets experiences. *The way you respond to a child can influence the way the child in turn responds to you.* This concept is foundational to the philosophy and approach of the 101 principles. Your interactions and emotional response affect how a child reacts to you and has a significant role in the way he relates to his peers. What you say and do influences every aspect of children's emotional, social, ethical, and intellectual development!

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

If you needed to tell someone something that had embarrassed you, or to ask for help with a situation that meant a lot to you, who would you choose? What qualities would that person possess?

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Most people describe this person as loving, trustworthy, non-judgmental, kind, or understanding. These also are the traits that children need to see in adults. They need to know that we love and support them as they are and that they can never lose our love and respect, no matter what they do.

In the classroom, a teacher must guide and support individual children, as well as respond to children within group and peer interactions. In which of these contexts do you find it most difficult to respond with the traits you have listed above? Why do you think this can be a challenge?

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By considering the ways adults influence outcomes, you can gain powerful insight into your role as a teacher.

Participating in a caring community is foundational to a child's sense of self. At school and at home, children need to feel they belong and are loved. Our responsiveness can ensure satisfying relationships between children as they learn and play together. It is our privilege to show compassion and empathy toward the children in our care. It is our responsibility to demonstrate loving behavior and to teach children to have compassionate regard for themselves and others. Our interactions can transform the classroom into a positive, happy place where children like to come and parents want to contribute.

## The Power of Connection

All of us need to be connected to others. Being connected to other people keeps us healthy. Think how we feel when we are disconnected from someone we care about. When we have had a misunderstanding, it weighs on us all day. It consumes our energy as we consider how we can resolve the conflict—whether we can make peace, let it go, or need to address it. We want to feel the relief that comes from reconnecting and to know that everything is going to be OK.

If we don't have close relationships, we become isolated. Being in relationships with others helps us see other points of view and take on other perspectives. As adults, we have control over the people with whom we choose to be connected; it is a conscious choice. Children, however, are totally dependent on adults for these connections. Young children, even infants, will go to great lengths to reestablish a bond when they feel disconnected. We are the lifeline for children who need a safe connection. They depend on us with complete trust to guide and care for them.

Children are born wired to seek this emotional and physical connection. When a baby smiles and coos and his parent responds, the child learns that he matters! When an adult stays present in the child's world—watching, responding, laughing, listening, sharing, and respecting—the child will learn to watch, respond, laugh, listen, share, and be respectful in turn.

Children's early experiences determine their perceptions about themselves and the world. Our sensitive and consistent care protects them from stress and helps them make sense of their new feelings and experiences. When an adult is empathetic and comforting, children will in turn show empathy toward others and learn to nurture



**THINK ABOUT IT!**

Where (or with whom) did you feel you really “belonged” as a child?”

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Think about how you feel when you “belong” today. What are some of the words that describe how you feel when you belong?

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their own needs in healthy ways. We will be more effective at guiding behavior when we first have a strong foundation of meaningful relationships in the context of a caring community.

## Forming a Sense of Community in the Classroom

To form a sense of community, we want to engage children in positive experiences that support their security and well-being. Whether we work with infants, toddlers, or with children in preschool, kindergarten, or the early elementary years, creating a sense of belonging and safety is a priority. Consider the qualities of a caring teacher and observe the emotional climate of a classroom. As we view these important interactions through the eyes of children, we can better understand what they need from us.

Ms. Garcia’s kindergarten class has been studying insects. Earlier, they visited the butterfly garden outside their school and drew pictures in their science journals of their observations. Now the children are pressed together looking at picture books and it’s time for a break. Their teacher whispers, “If you can hear me, touch your nose. If you can hear me, touch your ear.” The children look up right away. “It’s time to put away your notebooks.” The children carefully return their folders into the science box. Nate collects the pencils, while Jared puts away the magnifying glasses.

Ms. Garcia sings, “If you’re ready to go outside, clap your hands,” to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” The children know that this is their cue to line up, so they move right over to the door. Two girls hug each other and smile, while two others go over to the closet to get the bag of balls for the playground. Without needing to give further direction, the children are ready to go out the door with their teacher.

The groundwork prepared by a teacher makes it possible to create smooth transitions in the classroom. Mrs. Garcia has been practicing routines throughout the year with her class. She is pleased to see the children sharing and helping each other. They have been taking increasing responsibility for themselves and the classroom.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

What does this teacher do to make this classroom community work so effectively?

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What are some indications that show the children are engaged in caring about their classroom and each other?

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What responsibilities that are part of this classroom routine give the children a sense of significance and belonging?

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What qualities described in the scenario above would help a child feel connected to the teacher and to the other children?

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## Building Meaningful Connections

There are six principles that will help you focus on creating positive connections with children. These strategies will influence children to engage with you and with each other. These principles will pay off in helping you gain children's confidence and trust.

### ***Principle 1: Connect Before You Correct***

Find multiple ways to connect with a child. Get to know him and show him that you care about him before you begin to try to adapt his behavior. Help him to discover his strengths, his uniqueness, and his special gifts by calling attention to them.

There are simple ways to connect that will make children identify with you and feel close to you. The following skills will boost your connection power quickly, and cooperation will be a natural outcome. Building a caring, empathetic relationship will invite a child to respond positively to your guidance. There are many opportunities to do this.

Get to know each child better by talking and showing personal interest. Pay attention to his temperament, needs, and strengths. Make daily authentic connections.



### Birth to Age 3

- Spend individual time sharing private conversation with each child. The heart of connecting is helping each child feel special and connected to you.
- Give a hug, a gentle pat on the arm, or a special message such as “I love you” in sign language.
- Share special songs or a preferred book that you read each day. Spend time doing activities the child enjoys, such as playing a puzzle or game. Stay in his world as you watch and listen.
- Peek-a-Boo, Pat-a-Cake, and other finger plays and rhymes are gentle ways to connect. Sing favorite songs and poems.
- Peek into a mirror and exclaim over the special face you see!
- Toddlers love to be helpers. Find projects you can do together, such as sort doll clothes, stack books, roll yarn, or wash dishes. Children will feel connected when they know they are helping you.

### Ages 3 to 8

- Ask a child questions about himself and really listen. Children often share more when their hands are busy painting, creating, or helping.
- Have special activities waiting for children in a bag, basket, or envelope that contains materials relating to their unique gifts or interests. A child who loves art can be given paper with various textures and colors to create a collage. Let the child know that you have created this activity just for him.
- Ask a child for advice in solving a problem.
- Invite one child to help another child with a task and connect them through comfortable conversation.
- Sit by a child at lunch and give him your focus as you ask questions.

#### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are three ways you can connect meaningfully with children in your classroom?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think these specific connections will make a difference in the way children will respond to you later?

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- Identify each child's interests, and guide him to books and activities that are meaningful. Use each connection to turn him on to learning and engagement in school.
- Remember that the more you connect, the less you will have to correct.

Investing “time in” is the first step in building a positive relationship with children. *Time in* is when we meet a child's need for undivided attention as we respond to his questions, conversation, and activities. What he wants most is time with us. Our first priority is to make ongoing deposits into his “transaction account.” The investment we make increases his sense of value and worth to us. We “make a deposit” that grows when we give him our empathy, mental focus, emotional presence, and physical proximity. Each time we make a personal relational connection with him, he senses how important he is to us. The following principles can be used together to build up and strengthen our relationships with children and build a positive climate in the classroom.

### **Principle 2: Time In**

When you are near a child, give him a gentle touch, a thumbs-up, or a high-five. Think about it. Words don't always convey the message you want to give someone. However, touching is different. Children are less likely to seriously misbehave when they sense a love and respect on the part of an adult who matters to them. What you do is as important as what you say. We need to seize every opportunity to be intentional in showing our personal interest and making sure each child has received individual time and focus from us.

#### **Birth to Age 3**

- There are many caring ways to say, “You are special! I am glad you are here!”
- Receive infants and toddlers with focused attention and verbal affirmation for their arrival and through the day as you pick them up or help them.
- When holding, picking up, or transferring responsibility of a young child from one adult to another, pay attention to the child's verbal and physical cues as you talk with him.
- Talk *to* rather than *about* the child.
- Be sure to give every parent a positive welcome. Connect by giving explicit compliments about his or her relationship with the child. “I love the way Jacquie laughs just like you! I can see how much you enjoy each other.”
- Provide warm interaction to pre-verbal children by the child compliments. “I love your sweet smile. I've been waiting for you!” The child will feel and respond to your genuine interest.
- Comment about an object the child has with him. “Is Teddy Bear coming to school with you?” Both the child and parent will experience your presence and focus.
- Be sure to reconnect through special one-on-one time-in moments throughout the day.

#### **Ages 3 to 8**

- Start each day standing by the door. Come in early to finish paper work and planning. Give all of your attention to children when they first arrive.

- Focus on each parent and child during drop off and pick up. Interact with eye contact, a smile, and welcoming words.
- Greet each child by name; smile and tell him you are glad he came. Help each child feel special to you. “It makes me glad to have you in my classroom.” “Your smile makes the day happy for me.” “I am so glad you are here.” “I missed you yesterday.” (These greetings have an exponential impact on children who need extra encouragement or with whom you have been struggling.)
- Give preschool and elementary children a choice of a hug, a high-five, or a handshake. Post pictures of each option (a hug, high-five, or handshake) so that children can point to the one they want when they arrive at the door.
- Spend “time in” with children in appropriate ways, being sure to honor what is culturally appropriate and accepted in your school. You will want to be cautious and make sure you respect children’s boundaries. Not all children want to be touched. Often a touch on the shoulder is non-threatening and doesn’t feel intrusive to the child. Make sure you are sensitive and honor what the child needs.
- Give a genuine compliment: “Hi Tanisha! How did things go with your brother? He is lucky to have you to read to him [or paint with him].” Help each child feel special and welcomed. “Good morning, Dariah. I’ve been waiting for you to come. Don’t you have a big smile today!” We want family members who come to school to see that we are happy for their child to come and join our day.
- Be sure to provide “time in” throughout the day. Whisper a cheer, touch their shoulder, and let them know you are noticing their effort and contributions.

Imagine how this investment of time will make a difference when children respond to you later in the day. Investing in a positive start to every day and making positive interactions is a priority that will help children feel comfortable and secure. Your energy given to time in will quickly help them feel accepted and safe.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Describe two specific ways you will build a stronger relationship with a child in your class who needs more positive support. What specific activities or “time in” plans can you make to make this happen?

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### *Principle 3: Belonging and Significance*

Remember that everyone needs to feel that he belongs and is significant. Help each child to feel important by giving him important jobs to do and reminding him that if he doesn’t do them, they don’t get done! Help him feel important by being responsible.

When children are productive and are engaged in meaningful tasks, they are less likely to engage in mischief. They need to do something constructive with their energy and focus. Let a child check off others who complete the art or writing projects. In a toddler classroom, a wandering child can pass out cups and set the table. Assign a child of any age to be a greeter at the door in the morning or when guests arrive. Create important responsibilities, such as “feelings helper.” The feelings helper takes the tissue box to a child who is crying or sad. Help each child feel important by being responsible, and you will quickly see irresponsible behavior turn around.

### **Birth to Age 3**

- When interacting with infants, use descriptive language to explain what you are doing. For example, “Doesn’t that feel better? Ooh, this ointment feels cold. Here is your dry diaper.” By using enhanced language interaction, you are highlighting the sequence of their experiences through intimate communication.
- Use children’s natural inclination to help and imitate. As soon as children are able to carry their plate or put away their belongings, make responsibility fun and support their contributions. Young toddlers can “help” sweep the floor or wash the table (with water), carry their plate, or pass out needed items. Invite them to help you sort crayons, carry toys, water plants, or feed the fish.
- As soon as children can do for themselves, support their growing independence. Give assistance only until they can accomplish a job alone. Pair children to help one another in order to build confidence and teamwork.
- Help children be responsible for their own belongings, and ask them to take responsibility for specific jobs in the classroom.

Here are some creative ways to give older children belonging and significance:

### **Ages 3 to 8**

- The Time Keeper is responsible for starting and stopping the timers throughout the day.
- The Book Helper helps the teacher pass out books and helps hold the big books.
- The Door Holder is always second in line.
- The Disk Jockey is responsible for the music in the room.
- The Germ Buster is responsible for squirting soap or hand sanitizer (or passing out towels) before lunch or when needed.
- The Class Cleaner can wipe tables, wash mirrors or walls, and sweep the floor.
- The Guest Greeter gets up to meet guests at the door. This person asks guests their names and introduces them to the teacher and class. (Have a procedure for greeting guests when they come in.)

Think outside the box! There are many creative ways to name jobs. Make sure that every child has a special job to do each day.

● **THINK ABOUT IT!**

What are some jobs you can give to a specific child that will help him invest meaningfully in your room?

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What other jobs can you name that will help children feel they can make a significant contribution?

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 **Principle 4: Love**

Every child needs an adult who cares and wants to spend time with him. Make an effort to show him how special he is to you.

Consider it an honor when children come to you. Realize that they choose you because they feel that you have something they need. When you really listen and stay emotionally present, they trust that you will be responsive and that you will care. When you make the effort to see life through their eyes, it will pay off in the way they respond to you and to each other.

Take every opportunity to connect with children. With an older child, sit quietly to talk and spend time together. With an infant or toddler, rock or sway together and tell what you love and enjoy about him. With an older child, take a walk together. Let him come with you to deliver a message to another teacher or to the office.

Learning to stay sensitive and aware of children's activities, attention span, emotional experiences, and challenges is part of creating a caring environment. When you see that a child is upset, invite him to step aside with you, gently touch his back or shoulder, and ask him if there is anything you can do to help. Really listen, and reassure him that you are glad he is there. Help him get involved in positive interactions with others or in another activity after you have focused on your time together.

For those who speak another language at home or are just learning English at school, interacting through picture books, games, and activities is especially important. Let two children be "buddies" to double their connection and assist each other. Teach signs or cues that children can use when they need something, so that each child can communicate what is needed. Your sensitivity and support will let them know they can be comfortable coming to you for help.

Here are some ways we can show children of *all ages* that you care:

- Be fully present. Be conscious in your focus.
- Give your full attention. Give eye contact.

- Sit on the floor with young children and really concentrate on their world.
- Listen intently without interrupting.
- Wait patiently. Let children finish their thoughts.
- Resist the urge to change the subject.
- Follow and see where the child will lead in conversation.
- Sometimes not saying anything at all is good.
- Be still in silence. You'll be amazed at the wisdom a child can share.
- Have a secret sign or private word of endearment.
- Tell the child often how much he means to you.
- Protect and nurture your connection every day.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

When are children hardest for you to love? (Do you feel it is when they are disobedient, angry or upset, whiny, or disrespectful?) What do you think children need from you at these times?

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### *Principle 5: Class Meeting*

Take time to gather children together any time you sense the need to connect or address a particular issue. Starting the day off with a meeting is a good way to show that you care. Give them an opportunity to reflect, listen, empathize, and problem-solve. Focus on two-way communication. Listen more than you talk. Teachers and children will learn from each other.

Children do not always arrive at school ready to learn. They may be tired, stressed, or in need of a gentle transition into their “classroom family” through a focused sharing activity. Children may never see each another outside of school, so a class meeting gives them an opportunity to develop understanding and connection to each other. When many cultures are present, this focused time builds respect and empathy for each child’s unique experiences.

The purpose of a class meeting is to connect and work together as a group. It may be a scheduled time or an impromptu meeting after lunch or recess. It might be better to have a smaller meeting if several children want or need to talk privately. Sit together on the floor or arrange chairs in a circle to create a feeling of unity, respect, and equality. The purpose is to connect and open communication. Children learn to listen and appreciate other perspectives. This guided time allows them to express their feelings and bond around common understandings, decisions, or compromises.

You can help children share their joys and concerns. They may be happy or excited—or need to talk about what is worrying or bothering them. It helps to keep a “Feelings Jar,” where children can place their worries or joys on a slip of paper in a “safe” place. These may be shared at the next meeting. Expressing excitement and sharing frustrations help children lift their burdens, connect to others, and feel more positive about what lies ahead.

### Birth to Age 3

- Class meetings are a perfect way to start the day for infants and toddlers. They will sense the consistent comfort and familiar routine.
- Sing a daily greeting song to welcome everyone. Sing or chant a name song that focuses attention on each child. “G is for Georgia, she’s sitting next to me . . .”
- Highlight a new sign. Teach young children sign language for frequent needs, such as *drink, eat, potty, please, milk, more, and enough*. There are many wonderful books, videos, and websites dedicated to early sign language for infants, toddlers, and school-age children.
- Talk about feelings (emotional experiences). Use puppets or stories to highlight feeling words such as *sad, happy, or upset*. “It’s sad to leave mommy. Wave bye bye! It’s happy to see our friends. Wave hello!”
- Sing feelings songs that name and describe emotion words. You can make songs to easy tunes. Add verses to “If You’re Happy and You Know It.” You can vary the speed and pitch of the song as well as the actions to focus on children’s feelings and experiences.
- Ask transition questions: “Tell what you had for breakfast. What is one thing you did at home this morning? Who helped you get ready for school?” “What did you do to help someone?” If you are with infants or pre-verbal children, ask questions and “talk through” the routines. They will benefit from your descriptions. You can include what you learned when children were dropped off, or recreate what you know they did: “Who helped you put your socks and shoes on?” (Describe activities in detail!)
- Adapt “open up” questions from the list below to the needs of younger children.

Here are some effective ways to encourage children to “open up” and talk!

### Ages 3 to 8

- Ask them to finish feeling sentences: “I like it when; I don’t like it when; I was sad when; I was angry when; I don’t think it is fair that; I wish that I didn’t have to; I am afraid when . . .” “Tell if you are mad, sad, or glad, and give one reason.”
- Ask “What would you do if?” questions: “What would you do if you were the king/queen of the world? What would you say if you could talk to the president?”

What you would invent if you could solve a problem? Where you travel if you could take a hot air balloon ride and see the sights from the sky? What character would you be if you could jump into a book for a day?"

- Ask “what is/was” questions: “What is the good news and bad news of the day? What is something you are thinking about today? What was something special that happened to you today? What was the best thing you learned in school yesterday?”
- Ask “far fetched” questions: “What would you do if it snowed 10 feet and you needed to get out of your house? What would you do if you had to make pancakes for everyone in school? What would you do first every day if you were the (janitor, fireman, doctor, librarian, etc.)?”
- Ask “you” questions: “What jobs do you do at home? What is something you are proud of? What do you want to be when you grow up? What surprised you today? What is something that happened to you since yesterday? What is something helpful you did this morning for someone else?”
- Ask them to finish “when I am” statements: “When I’m a teacher I will; when I’m a teacher, I will not; when I’m a mom/dad, I will; when I’m a mom/dad, I will not . . .”

When you create authentic conversation and connections, children will listen and will be ready to move forward in the day with positive feelings about themselves and for each other.

### **Principle 6: Make a Sacrifice**

Make sure you have taken care of your personal business before school begins so you can give full attention to the children. Plan to arrive a few minutes earlier to school so that when children need your attention, you aren’t entering grades, checking e-mail, taking the lunch count, or texting. During the children’s rest or quiet time, settle the children and remain available rather than hurrying off to the computer. Giving extra time to children when they come in and throughout the day is an important way to help children feel they are loved.

Make a commitment to spend more time with children who need extra attention, to create special moments, and to focus on them. You will quickly see the trust blossom and experience a change in the way they will open up to you. Children who feel unconditional love and trust will respond by returning this trust to you.

An important part of creating a learning community is to have adults join in activities. Assistants or volunteers should sit with the children during learning times, showing their own enthusiasm for a story, rubbing the back of a child who needs soothing, and staying “present” in the children’s world. Be sure materials are set out ahead of time, and use learning, dancing, singing, and eating times to focus on the children.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

Can you think of a specific child you know who needs extra support, love, and encouragement? What activity could you plan to do with this child? What does this child need to hear from you? How can you connect with him in a special way?

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What changes could be made to prepare materials or activities ahead of time so that more focus is put on supporting children's positive learning experiences?

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## Creating a Unique Identity for Your Classroom

The following principle will help you build a strong foundation for identity and caring and will transform the way you see your role in the classroom. Establishing unique routines and traditions for your classroom will boost your influence and engage children in meaningful cooperation. As you build positive relationship connections, you will find many productive ways to link academic training with character and social-emotional support.



### **Principle 7: Establish Routines and Traditions**

Children behave better when they know what they can count on. Establish traditions that they can anticipate and that provide them with fond memories and feelings of belonging and security.

Use every opportunity to create experiences that build a sense of common identity. Create special classroom customs. These can be simple celebrations done each day, such as having children give compliments to a child next to them in a circle, or keeping a compliment box. When we establish routines and traditions, children take pride in belonging to the

classroom community. These special events and activities help children grow and learn as they feel safe within a nurturing environment.

## Creating Unique Traditions in the Classroom

Creating happy expectations for children when they first enter the classroom will set the tone for positive memories. Activities that are age appropriate for younger children may continue to be used to enhance communication in preschool and elementary years. Be creative in application to the children and parents you work with. Here are some examples.

### Birth to Age 3

- Take photos of babies and pre-verbal children when they are happy and write a note describing the moment to the parents or caregiver.
- Record babies laughing (or toddlers singing) and e-mail the file to the parents or caregiver.
- Prepare calming activities, such as chants, poems, songs, or finger plays to welcome and assist children through transitions.
- Set out baskets of materials, activities, or toys ahead of time to make the room inviting.
- Celebrate milestones such as crawling, walking, new words, new skills, and acts of caring. Create a special routine, like adding a flower to a wreath or a chain to a paper chain. Celebrations of kindness and achievement can be as elaborate and as creative as you and your students can create and enjoy together.

### Ages 3 to 8

- Use a digital camera daily. Take candid photos of the children when they are working, giving reports, or engaged in academic projects. Post them in the hall to show parents and others what they are doing. This is important for infants and toddlers too.
- Keep a class yearbook to record special events and remember highlights. At the end of the year, give each child a copy. Let them sign each other's books with compliments.
- Establish meaningful "rites of passage." Children may spend a night at school, place flowers on local memorials, participate in a local volunteer service event, or stage an indoor holiday parade.
- At the end of each day, read a chapter from a book as a way to model a love of reading and to entice children to look forward to the next day of being together.
- Ask children to set their own positive goals and check on daily progress: "Did you eat your vegetables and fruits, give a compliment, or exercise today?"
- Snack time should be used for conversation and social interactions. However, when children finish, let them transition into a meaningful activity. They can lead motions and singing together ("YMCA," the color song, etc.) This keeps everyone active and involved.

- Let children bring in flashlights (or you may provide them) for a “reading day.” Be creative! There are many possible variations on this theme.
- Have children write a letter to themselves saying what they hope to learn that year or what they want to be like in the future. At the end of the year (or when the child graduates from your school or moves), send the letter home with the child to keep. Younger children can dictate their letter to the teacher.

## Creating Traditions That Connect School to the Home

### All Ages

- Send books to read at home with an activity for children to do with parents, such as a related song, drawing, puzzle, or craft.
- Send a class “mascot” (such as a stuffed teddy bear) with a backpack, clothing, and writing journal with a child each weekend. The child can (with the help of his parent, if needed) write about what the bear did while he was visiting and have it read to the class on Monday morning.

### Ages 3 to 8

- Create special ways to participate in community service activities as a class to help children develop caring and empathy for others. Children can participate in a food drive or collect stuffed animals for a local charity or organization. Helping children and families reach out to others in need will create lasting memories for everyone.

## Creating Traditions That Connect Home to the School

### Birth to Age 3

- Bring in photos of families and keep them on a bulletin board low enough for the children to look at and talk about.
- Allow young children to keep a laminated family picture in their “cubbie.” If they are sad, they may get the photo to hold for comfort. A teacher can point to and name each family member.
- Encourage children to hold a family photo while they are going to sleep at naptime.
- Ask children to bring a familiar comfort item that is soothing to them, such as a blanket or stuffed animal from home. Holding a favorite toy that is comforting and familiar can help ease transitions to naptime or comfort a child who is missing his family.

### Ages 3 to 8

- Assemble a class quilt, allowing each child to create a square (paint, collage, or drawing) about themselves and their family.

- Have children write notes complimenting other students. Younger children may draw a picture and dictate the message to the teacher. Let the children bring these notes or drawings home so that family members can see how much the children bring pleasure and are good friends to others at school.
- Have children write and illustrate a book about their family. Younger children may dictate words.
- Create a timeline of each child's life, telling what events were important and illustrating with photographs or drawings. These can be displayed in the room or hall.

When children identify with the purposes and traditions of the classroom, they want to come to school, because they feel needed and know they have a purpose. They don't want to miss the experiences that are awaiting them each day. They become eager learners because you have created a caring community.

#### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Review and reflect on your schedule and activities to be sure each child is supported in success and is given a sense of importance to the goals of the classroom. What two changes could you make to make sure every child is included in activities and traditions that will encourage his sense of belonging in your classroom community?

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## Creating Traditions That Value and Honor Diversity

Helping children accept and honor differences can create good memories and support multicultural understanding. We can never know exactly what someone else is feeling—because “I am not you!” But we can continually support the growth of empathy by creating a culture of kindness.

In early childhood it is important for us to make a point to discuss diversity and feature the heritage of students in our classroom. Invite family members to share customs and traditions. Share values that support understanding. A teacher from a Native American background taught a unit on customs from her culture and had the children make dream catchers. She explained the ways her background taught her to honor nature, the spirit of her Native American culture, and the wisdom and stories of her elders. The class read books that illustrated the struggles of Native American children learning to live within two cultural settings in a changing world.

In response, the children interviewed their own grandparents to ask about memories of stories passed on from generation to generation. They learned about courage and determination, and reflected on valuable lessons about tolerance, integrity, and generosity. Similar units and projects can coincide with Grandparents' Day or national holidays honoring American heroes. These traditions help children to appreciate and value differences in cultures.

Adapting teaching and activities to connect with English language learners and their families will make a big difference to children in the early childhood years. Building cultural bridges opens the academic gate for children to literacy and social success. Provide pictures and objects that demonstrate and illustrate new vocabulary. Make many connections to children's experiences. Be sensitive to how children feel when they are immersed in a new language or cultural environment.

Rather than ignore the issue, talk openly with children in your classroom about cultural, racial, and language differences. Often, in attempts to not draw attention to differences, we ignore many opportunities where we can help children show support and give empathy to one another. Supporting friendship and respect for differences will help children feel they belong and can be successful.

Be sure to provide bilingual translation for materials and have an interpreter present at parent meetings, if necessary. When you send home materials and books, suggest activities that children can do with older siblings who may have a stronger grasp of English. Identify support systems in your local public school district and community that can provide professional development and support for you and your students.

Here are some projects that can be adapted to the ages of the children in your classroom that will help them take on other perspectives:

- At the beginning of the year, ask parents what traditions they would like to have honored while their child is at school or that they would like to come and share with other children. This sharing of culture can become a source of pride to families and a wonderful learning opportunity for the children in your classroom. This communication also serves to connect you in positive ways to families.
- For very young children, including infants and toddlers, have parents contribute songs and lullabies in home languages and play these at nap or rest time. Invite parents to read stories in other languages and tell what they mean in English.
- Let children share songs and traditions from home, or have parents or caregivers come to sing and share songs in a native language.
- Make sure that "heroes" who visit your classroom (people from the community and parents who come to share their career, talent, or hobby) represent many cultures and backgrounds.
- Invite someone with a special ability (exceptionality/disability) to come and share with your class about his or her experiences. Let children ask questions.
- Don't forget that regions of the country differ considerably, so while you study social studies and geography, let children share their experiences. Families frequently move, so you already have experts in your midst.

- Be sure to have a globe or map of the world, and let children stick a “flag” where they, their parents, or grandparents are from. You and they will be amazed by the diversity represented in your classroom.
- Link to a classroom in another location via Internet or visual teleconference and share a lesson or story. Let children reflect afterwards about the differences and similarities they observed.
- Let children in your classroom who speak other languages at home participate in writing activities in their own language and have them translate for the class. This exposure will ignite an early passion for languages and later cross-cultural study.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

How do children feel when they leave home and come into a new group setting for the first time?

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If you were the child, what would you want someone to do to help make you feel comfortable and to help you adjust? (Doesn't it make sense to involve them in meaningful activities?)

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## Using the Power of Positive Affirmation

Words have influence! It matters what words we use because words have the power to change the way a child thinks and feels about himself. Words that may not seem important to a parent or teacher may be the defining moment of a child's life. Here are four ways to communicate your positive regard that make a big difference in the way children feel about themselves and their peers—and you.



### *Principle 8: Talk About Children Positively to Others*

Let children overhear you speaking positively about them—bragging about their good qualities, efforts, and actions—to others.

We want children to know how proud we are of the skills they are learning. The more we say good things, the more children want to do them. Refrain from talking about what a child did wrong; instead, use positive words to tell others what he did that made you proud.

Using positive approaches will increase the quality of your connection to children and parents. Here are some examples that will help you use positive interactions to support caring connections.

- When parents bring children to school, say at least one positive thing about each child as he or she comes and goes. This is as important for parents of infants and toddlers as it is for parents of children in older settings. Soon children will be doing more of the creative, helpful behaviors that are supported.
- When visitors come into the classroom, say, “I want you to meet my wonderful children. I am so proud of them!” When parents come by, say, “Let me tell you something fantastic Josiah did today.”
- When you are in a circle, have each child give a compliment to the child next to him.
- Keep a compliment jar so that children can write compliments about each other (or ask a teacher to do so). These can be read at the end of the day or sent home.

### **Principle 9: Put It in Writing**

Start a tradition of sending good thoughts in writing. Leave “I care about you” notes in surprising places.

Writing and receiving messages help children learn a spirit of gratitude and affirmation. If the child can read, write a note of thanks or encouragement. When planning a special classroom event, ask the children to write an RSVP. When children are too young to read, send notes home and have parents read them. Leave notes on desks or in cubbies of children who show generous actions to their friends. Encourage children to leave thank you notes for each other.

Start a “Heroes” bulletin board and make sure you find ways to highlight every child for acts of kindness and courage. It takes a conscious effort to create a culture of kindness and counteract the negative attitudes they may see modeled. A spirit of gratefulness can be talked about often and encouraged.

Write notes home to the parents, letting them know how much you appreciate their love for their child, investment into his development, or support of the classroom; or you may thank them for a specific contribution they have made. Let parents know how much you enjoy having their child with you during the day.

### **Principle 10: Kiss Your Brain**

When a child is exhibiting behavior that makes you proud or is making great choices, be sure to praise, thank, and draw attention to his great contributions. Tell him to “kiss your brain!” (Children love this!) They will respond by kissing their hand or finger and patting their head. You can model this action, as well.

Our role as teachers is not to provide empty praise, but to counteract messages that a child may have heard that have discouraged his motivation. Our praise can uplift his perceptions. One child was encouraged to “Kiss your good math brain” when she figured out an alternative solution. Later, she told her teacher it felt good to be good at math. We want to celebrate effort and successes, especially in the early childhood years when children are learning new skills every day.

Positive verbal support encourages children to try as they work toward a goal. Everyone appreciates a “silent round of applause,” a “silent cheer,” or an outright genuine cheer for a job well done. Make your classroom a place where children are encouraged to be proud of themselves and each other.

### **Principle 11: Positive Closure**

At the end of the day, remind children that they are special and loved. Help them look for something good, both about the day that is finished and the one that lies ahead.

Infants and toddlers can hear a special “good bye and see you tomorrow” song that is familiar and soothing. Younger children can dictate something special that happened each day. Older children can keep a journal of a treasured memory of each day. Make sure the children know you are looking forward to tomorrow, when you can be with them again. For younger children, this is comforting, and for older children, this can be their lifeline.

#### ● **THINK ABOUT IT!**

Can you remember negative words someone said about you as a child? What were they? How have those words affected you since then?

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Can you remember positive words someone said about you as a child? What were they? How have those words affected you since then?

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Think of a child whose behavior you find annoying. What are some positive statements you can tell others about this child?

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## **Summary**

Every investment we make into connecting to children and families will yield a positive benefit to children’s daily experiences in the classroom. We will create the kind of caring community where children feel safe and enjoy the company of adults and other children. In this safe, responsive community, children will form their first impressions about themselves as confident learners. The early meaningful experiences with us will build a strong foundation for their future social, emotional, cognitive, and physical

development. The quality teacher–child interactions and positive experiences with peers will set a lasting foundation for mutually rewarding relationships and for effective positive guidance of children.

## Using the Principles in Your Classroom

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### **Love: *Practice smiling in the mirror.***

One of the most effective ways to show our care and invite children to share our space, time, and energy is to smile! Children look for happy faces. Unless you practice looking at yourself in the mirror, you might think you are smiling when you aren't. If you had a problem with your bank account and needed a teller to help you, which one would you choose when you walk into the bank? Wouldn't you choose the one who looked most genuinely pleasant? Children gravitate to those who feel and look trustworthy. A way to get started connecting is to practice smiling in the mirror.

### **Connect Before You Correct: *Take time to see the world through a child's eyes.***

Sit on the floor and children will gravitate to you. Have no agenda—the child knows right away that you have joined his world. Be ready to look and listen. Are you on the child's eye level? Are you looking at him directly? What is the child's mood? How is his tone of voice and rate of speed? Responsive, reciprocal listening is a way of “staying with” the child's pace, pitch, and speed. Let him guide you in the conversation. “Stay with” his or her thoughts. Repeat back what he is saying. Communicating with a child is like walking up steps. You want to extend your hand and help him come to you one step at a time.

Teachers can build consistent opportunities to build on what children are saying to add to their vocabulary. Expand on a child's words and phrases by repeating what is said back to him, and add additional thoughts or descriptions. For example, if a toddler says, “Truck!” you might respond, “Yes, that's a red truck. Where do you think the truck is going?” or “What do you think the truck is carrying?” For older children, these verbal extensions play an important role that creates a positive context for learning. Talking about emotions and experiences can support higher level concepts and processes and build meaningful exchanges between teachers and children.

### **Establish Routines and Traditions: *Me Bags are a wonderful way to share.***

A Me Bag is a wonderful tradition to create connections and greater understanding. Place favorite objects that represent special people and experiences into a favorite tote bag to share that shows others what you are all about. Teachers can share a Me Bag

with parents or with the children in their classroom. Have one or two children bring in a Me Bag each week, or one a day. You can let the children bring in a Me Bag every few months, with different objects each time. Children love to talk about themselves, and sharing their Me Bag is a way to help them to connect to each other.

## Teacher Tips

The following are comments from teachers who have been trained to use the 101 principles in their childcare settings and classrooms.

If you create a loving, safe environment where you give children confidence, they will perform for you because they feel safe with you. When someone believes in you, it gives you license to have confidence. It's amazing what that power will do in a human life. How can you communicate to your students, "I believe in you"?

I believe with all my heart and soul that this is the only plan that is in the best interest of the children. The children in my class had a year full of learning and are now capable of solving their own problems. Best of all, I did not have to spend my day solving disputes. My principal has received letters, calls, and visits from parents who can't stop raving about class meetings and positive principles. The principles are the tools I needed to make my classroom a happy, productive place where children feel safe, cherished, and excited to learn.

The principles have been the most effective tools in working with my students. I gave a copy of them to my each of my parents. I feel so lucky that I have them now and can incorporate them into my teaching style while I'm still learning to tune it, versus getting them after I've been teaching for 20 years!

I have worked with children for many years, but have found my behavior toward them and

how I interact with them changing. I am now more aware of my words and actions and try to consider how the children will interpret them.

I use the principles every day. Working as a tutor in an early childhood center for children at risk gives me opportunities to observe the power of a positive attitude toward students, compliments, smiles, and bringing the best out in others on a daily basis.

I have always made every effort at the beginning of each year to connect with my new students in meaningful ways. After sharing my own Me Bag, I allowed one child each morning to share his or her bag. I teach in a multicultural community where more than half of my students are English language learners. The pictures and items they brought to share created a bridge between their common interests and similarities. This was the first time I have used Me Bags, and I feel I saved weeks of time in helping my children create meaningful relationships. The parents loved helping the children put together the bags, so it was an extra bonus for them to know we cared about the children and their families.

More than any other element of the classroom, the quality of relationship I have with my students creates a defining foundation for everything else. Having high expectations and

*(continued)*

following through to give children the very best in instruction and responsive care matters. But the most important influence is when a child senses my honest investment into his success. He knows I always want the very best for him,

and that I am going to stick with him to help him be successful. He knows I believe in him and that I genuinely care and am invested in him. When this relationship is present, it changes everything for the child.

## Research on the Run

### *Teachers Have a Powerful Influence*

Positive teacher–child interactions and positive emotional climate are a critical part of quality programs that increase academic and social outcomes (Early, Maxwell, Burchinal, Alva, Bender, Bryant, et al., 2007; Fuller, Gasko, & Anguiano, 2010). Children with risk factors depend on the responsiveness of the teacher to connect to their needs and support their success. When teachers are warm and emotionally responsive, these children can achieve in school without as many behavior adjustments. However, if a teacher is controlling and demanding or uses coercive discipline methods, this has a distinct negative impact on these children. At-risk children rely on positive, responsive support in order to gain the skills and strategies they need for school and social success (Connell & Prinz, 2002; Murray, Waas, & Murray, 2008).

Positive relationships encourage children’s feelings of worth and foster their sense of belonging in the community (NAEYC, 2008). “The close attachments children develop with their teachers/caregivers, the expectations and beliefs that adults have about young children’s capacities, and the warmth and responsiveness of adult–child interactions are powerful influences on positive developmental and educational outcomes” (NAEYC, 2010, p. 34).

### *Positive Relationships Matter*

The research shows that positive, responsive social and emotional support compensates for skills children may not get outside of school. When they receive high-quality responsive care in school, this support predicts (both directly and indirectly) how well they will do in school later on, and affects their ongoing adjustment in school and in life (Schultz, 2008; Shonkoff & Philips, 2001).

A positive, responsive teacher–child relationship

- **Increases positive behavior.** Positive discipline and sensitive, responsive teaching strategies directly positively affect children’s behavior (Bennett, Elliott, & Peters, 2005; Rimm-Kaufman, 2002; Snyder, Cramer, A Frank, & Peterson, 2005).
- **Decreases negative behavior.** When teachers model and teach emotional understanding, it decreases behavior problems (Ackerman & Youngstrom, 2001; Raikes & Thompson, 2006).
- **Helps children like school.** Having positive relationships with teachers helps children see school as a safe place where they can be successful—and where they want to be (Baker, 2006).
- **Overcomes risk factors.** Responsive, emotionally sensitive care can make up for the impact of stress, lack of maternal attachment, and other

risk factors a child experiences. Stress factors are mediated through positive climate, responsive relationships with teachers, and a consistent environment with low stress (Burchinal, Campbell, Bryant, Wasik, & Ramey, 1997; O'Connor & McCartney, 2006). These experiences make a difference academically and socially for children with risk factors (Fuller et al., 2010).

- **Strengthens healthy choices.** The ability to connect meaningfully with teachers when they are young will make a positive difference when children face the social pressures and challenges of the upcoming middle school years (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Kersey & Masterson, 2011).
- **Enhances empathy.** When adults respond empathetically to a child's distress, a child will be more empathetic to us and to others (Davidov & Grusec, 2006; Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989).
- **Fosters emotional competence.** Positive interactions with teachers increase cooperation, empathy, and compliance (Blair, Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004; Denham, Renwick, & Holt, 1991; Denham, Zinssler, & Bailey, 2011).
- **Increases self-regulation.** Positive relationships increase social skills and emotional regulation, whereas negative interactions result in higher levels of disruptive behavior and aggression (Denham, 2005).
- **Influences future relationships.** Children's relationships with their caregivers make an emotional pattern or blueprint that lasts for their lifetime. If they feel significant and important, they will bring this belief into their future relationships. If their early experiences are negative, this also creates a lasting pattern (Spencer, Jordan, & Sazama, 2004).
- **Fosters respect.** Creating a sense of community in schools is critical so that every child feels cared for, respected, and valued. Taking time to know

children and help them know one another is important (Norris, 2009).

- **Supports positive peer relationships.** When caregivers are emotionally available, sensitive, and responsive to children's needs, words, and actions, these "back and forth" (reciprocal) caring interactions have a strong positive impact on children's development, education, and on how well children get along in social interactions with peers and others (Ahnert, Piquart, & Lamb, 2006).
- **Creates positive role modeling.** Children's responses are strongly influenced by the way a teacher guides behavior (Herrera & Dunn, 1997; Lepper, 1981; Macoby, 1992; Snyder et al., 2005).
- **Provides life relationship skills.** Social skills gained early in school and early quality experiences with teachers affect future relationship success with peers and teachers, as well as better school outcomes (Denham, 2005; Hamre & Pianta, 2006).

### *The Impact of Responsive Teaching on Academic Outcomes*

Responsive teachers give sensitive attention to individual needs, stay aware of changes in children's learning and emotional patterns, and work to meet their needs in consistent ways. The influence of this commitment to supporting children's development has lasting impact on important learning dispositions. Responsive teaching has lasting results.

- **Fortifies school readiness and health.** Social-emotional well-being is a critical determinant of school readiness and is related to both educational and health outcomes (Briggs-Gowan & Carter, 2008).
- **Enhances self-regulated learning.** When children can control their emotions and have self-regulation, they are more ready for school and do better in academics from the beginning (Raver, 2002).

- **Enhances learning skills.** Children with better social skills are better learners, and they get along better with friends and other adults in school (Denham, Blair, DeMulder, Levitas, Sawyer, Auerbach-Major, et al., 2003; Miles & Stipek, 2006; NICHD-ECCRN, 2005).
- **Enhances overall development.** The quality of early interaction experiences has a significant impact on developmental, cognitive, social–emotional, and language outcomes for children, with particular efficacy to children at risk (Ochshorn, 2011; U.S. Department of Education, 2009).
- **Enriches brain development.** The way adults relate and respond to young children directly affects the formation of neural pathways (Cozolino, 2006; Perry, 2001; 2005).
- **Increases school engagement.** When children have a warm, caring relationship with adults, they are more self-controlled and develop more advanced cognitive and social skills, which allows for more focused time learning and is linked to later positive outcomes in life (Barnett, 2008; Downer & Pianta, 2006; Downer, Rimm-Kaufman, & Pianta, 2007).
- **Supports high-quality learning.** High-quality learning depends on consistency in teacher–child interactions and warm, emotionally responsive relationships (Connell & Prinz, 2002; Haynes, 2009; Pianta & Hadden, 2008).
- **Promotes language development.** Children come to school with differences in the level of enriched language experiences; children from poverty tend to experience fewer words of encouragement at home. Teachers who use meaningful conversations and positive interactions can meet this need. Language thrives in the context of safe, responsive relationships and emotionally warm interactions, which nurtures positive feelings about learning in the brain (Hart & Risley, 1995; Hernandez, 2011; Landry, 2005).
- **Increases achievement.** Warm, sensitive responses help children achieve more and become more successful in school (Berry & O’Connor, 2009; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003).
- **Mediates risk.** At-risk children with low socioeconomic or minority status who receive strong instructional and emotional support from teachers achieve academic outcomes equal to students with no risk factors (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).
- **Lowers referral to special education and future remediation.** Prevention of social and academic difficulties is more effective than remediation (Gallagher & Lambert, 2006; Office of Head Start, 2012).
- **Creates a more positive future for children.** The quality of strong, caring relationships between teachers and young children affects future social and educational outcomes (Bennett, Elliott, & Peters, 2005; Stipek, 2006).

### *The Impact of Responsive Relationships on Physiological Development*

Within the context of a warm, responsive relationship with a caring teacher, children gain important developmental anchors:

- **A secure relationship bond.** A secure attachment with caregivers is an important protective factor in resilience regardless of a child’s risk factors (Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Sroufe, 1995). The elements of a warm, caring relationship allow a child to internalize self-control and increase cognitive development (Kestenbaum et al., 1989). Emotional attachments between children and caregivers create social–emotional patterns that inform future relationships (Ahnert et al., 2006; Ainsworth, 1982; Bowlby, 1988). Children who experience secure attachment relationships with their caregivers have more positive

relationships and show higher prosocial skills with their peers, and these effects last over time (Howes & Hamilton, 1992).

- **Healthy relationship interdependence.** The relational–cultural theory explains the influence of significant relationships with adults to create emotional patterns for self-appraisal and to form a lasting blueprint for future relationships (Spencer et al., 2004). Positive, sensitive interactions provide a secure base for children’s healthy psychological growth and frame the formation of relational competence. This undergirding foundation includes mutual respect based on equality, children’s fundamental need for secure relational connections with others, the establishment of trust and cooperation rather than use of coercion or punishment, and the need for relational skills as essential life competencies (Adler & Stein, 2005). The child’s need for belonging and significance within a trusting relationship is a core foundation of the 101 principles and this approach to responsive practice.
- **Psychological and physical health.** Multidisciplinary research and advances in biological and neurological science shed light on the need for positive, responsive relationships to support optimal brain development, physiological regulation, and psychological health (Cozolino, 2006). Children’s early experiences have lasting implications for their health, well-being, and social adjustment. The role of teachers in providing mediatory and protective factors for children is essential.

### *Understanding Early Education Contexts*

Children may spend more time under the guidance and nurturance of non-parental caregivers than in the care of parents. The following statistics illustrate the importance of quality relationships between young children and the adults who care for them.

- The U.S. Department of Education indicates that two-thirds of all 3- to 5-year-olds in the United States attend childcare or preschool 40 hours a week or more (NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005).
- In settings with high concentrations of military service personnel, children may spend 60 or more hours a week in childcare (Lucas, 2001).
- National reports show that 72% of working mothers have children under the age of 5 in the care of someone besides a parent. Of these childcare service arrangements, 48% are placed with relatives, 31% at profit or non-profit childcare centers, and 21% with other providers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2007).
- Other figures show that up to 60% of 4-year-olds are already in some type of care (Magnuson & Waldfogel, 2004).
- Of the 11 million 3-year-olds, five million will spend at least 25 hours a week in the care of someone other than a parent (Ehrle, Adams, & Tout, 2001).
- Nationally, nearly 1.3 million children attend state-funded preschools, more than one million at age 4 alone (Barnett, Hustedt, Friedman, Boyd, & Ainsworth, 2010).

## Getting Positive Results Using the Principles in Action

What happened or led up to the interaction?

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Which principle did you use?

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How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?)

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What did you learn?

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What happened or led up to the interaction?

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Which principle did you use?

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How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?)

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What did you learn?

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## Guide to the Principles

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1. **Connect Before You Correct:** Find multiple ways to connect with a child. Get to know him and show that you care about him before you begin to try to adapt his behavior. Help him discover his strengths, his uniqueness, and his special gifts by calling attention to them.
2. **Time In:** When you are near a child, give him a gentle touch, a thumbs-up, or a high-five. Think about it. Words don't always convey the message you want to give someone. However, touching is different. Children are less likely to seriously misbehave when they sense a love and respect on the part of an adult who matters to them. What you do is as important as what you say. We need to seize every opportunity to be intentional in showing our personal interest and making sure each child has received individual time and focus from us.
3. **Belonging and Significance:** Remember that everyone needs to feel that he belongs and is significant. Help each child feel important by giving him important jobs to do and reminding him that if he doesn't do them, they don't get done! Help him feel important by being responsible.
4. **Love:** Every child needs an adult who cares and wants to spend time with him. Make an effort to show him how special he is to you.
5. **Class Meeting:** Gather children together any time you sense the need to connect or address a particular issue. Starting the day off with a meeting is a good way to show that you care. Give them an opportunity to reflect, listen, empathize, and problem-solve. Focus on two-way communication. Listen more than you talk. Teachers and children will learn from each other.
6. **Make a Sacrifice:** Make sure you have taken care of your personal business (checking your social networking site, e-mail, texting, or grading papers) before school begins so you can give full attention to the children.
7. **Establish Routines and Traditions:** Children behave better when they know what they can count on. Establish traditions they can anticipate and that provide them with fond memories and feelings of belonging and security.
8. **Talk About Children Positively to Others:** Let children overhear you speaking positively about them—bragging about their good qualities, efforts, and actions to others.
9. **Put It in Writing:** Start a tradition of sending good thoughts in writing. Leave “I care about you” notes in surprising places.
10. **Kiss Your Brain:** When the child is exhibiting behavior that makes you proud and is making great choices, be sure to praise, thank, and draw attention to his great contributions. Tell him to “kiss your brain!” (Children love this!) They will respond by kissing their hand or finger and patting their head. You can model this action as well.
11. **Positive Closure:** At the end of the day, remind your children that they are special and loved. Help them look for something good, both about the day that is finished and the one that lies ahead.

## Study Guide

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- a. **Goal Setting:** What are the characteristics of a caring teacher? If you needed to tell someone something embarrassing or ask for help with a situation that meant a lot to you, who would you choose? What qualities would that person possess?
- b. **Questioning and Reflection:** What are some ways you can connect meaningfully with children in your classroom? How do you think these specific connections will make a difference in the way children will respond to you later?

What principles in this chapter would make a difference in the quality of your connection with them?

- c. Case Study:** Mrs. Jones' kindergarten class has been “wound up” and distracted for the last month since the holidays. After trying everything, she decides to use Principle 5, Class Meeting. Which strategies presented would be most appropriate to ensure a relational connection with the group and to provide an opportunity for calming and reassurance?
- d. Personal Examples/Group Brainstorming:** When are children hardest for you to love? Do you feel it is when they are disobedient, angry, upset, whiny, or disrespectful? How do you feel at these moments? Can you give an example? What do you think children need from you at these times?
- e. Learners as Experts:** In the “Creating a Unique Identity for Your Classroom” “Creating Traditions That Connect School to the Home,” “Creating Traditions That Connect Home to the School,” and “Creating Traditions That Value and Honor Diversity” sections of this chapter,

what strategies are most appealing to you? Explain two strategies you want to use (or have implemented) from the reading, and what you feel the impact on your children or families will be (or has been).

- f. Principles in Action:** Using the “Getting Positive Results Using the Principles in Action” sheet, share one principle you have already implemented from this chapter. What happened or led up to the interaction? Which principle did you use? How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?) What did you learn?
- g. Research on the Run:** In this section, identify the top three priorities that you want to target in your students. What impact of responsive teacher–child relationships and interactions are most important to you?
- h. Looking Ahead:** Set the purpose for upcoming study by introducing chapter objectives. Thank you for sharing your personal insight about responsive, positive guidance and for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of children.

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## chapter 2

# *Guiding Behavior*

This chapter will introduce opportunities to create healthy outcomes for children by using positive, relational guidance. As you interact with the text and activities, you will gain insight and self-awareness about the ways that a teacher's words, actions, and responses can influence the behavior of children. You will discover how much your contribution influences the outcome of interactions and affects children's understanding and cooperation. By guiding behaviors effectively in the first place, you will be able to avoid many common behavior challenges.

The strategies presented will help you develop new ways of seeing and thinking about children. They will assist you in becoming more sensitive and responsive to children's needs. You will be able to redirect behavior with strategies that work to support children's developing social and emotional competence. The principles are intended to help teachers become more effective, however children will learn the strategies as they see you model them. They will influence the way that children treat each other. The 101 principles provide a way to communicate with others that will enhance the quality of interactions for both adults and children.

### Chapter Principles

- |                                |                                |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 12: Modeling                   | 17: Follow-Through/Consistency |
| 13: Make a Big Deal            | 18: Validation                 |
| 14: Incompatible Alternative   | 19: Extinction                 |
| 15: Choice                     | 20: Take Time to Teach         |
| 16: When-Then/Abuse It-Lose It | 21: Punt the Plan              |

### Chapter Objectives

As you explore the text and activities in this chapter, you will be able to:

- Activate the powerful influence of adult responsiveness on children's behavior
- Recognize the difference between discipline and punishment
- Understand the unintended consequences of punitive practices
- Avoid power struggles and ultimatums as you shift to positive guidance

- Gain effective strategies to promote cooperation and engagement
- Learn essential strategies to boost social skills

## Children Learn by Watching and Listening to Us

Children come into the world vulnerable and dependent. They form their sense of self by the way adults respond to and about them, as well as to others. When adults are kind, children feel they are worthy of kindness. As a result, they will treat others with kindness—as well as be kind in the way they treat themselves.

It is our responsibility to be sensitive to children's unique traits and temperaments. We want to match our response to a child's needs and stay aware of how much each one trusts and depends on us to help him be successful. Children who naturally laugh and have outgoing personalities are most likely to engage adults in conversation and find it easier to get their needs met. Children who are active may need adults to be patient and provide outlets for their energy. We may need to reach out to a quiet or sensitive child to include him and draw him into active conversation. We want to assist him by creating opportunities to interact successfully with other children. For a child who is impulsive, we want to respond in gentle ways, guiding with patience as we support skills that help him create positive outcomes. With our guidance, children can get what they need in healthy ways.

What children do is modeled on what we do—and what they say is based on what we say. Unless we reflect on our actions and work to make our responses conscious, most of us will do to children what was done to us when we were their age. Our responses will come from what we experienced. An adult may have a degree in child development, but when a 2-year-old throws food in her face, the emotions she feels can be influenced by the way someone once responded to her. If we were raised in a strict environment, we may react to that loss of control by becoming permissive. Those who have children of their own know that adults often become like the parent(s) who raised them. We might be surprised to hear the words we say sound like the ones that our parents said to us.

Most of us are committed to creating positive experiences for children. However, we know that when adults are frustrated, they may resort to comments such as, “Stop it!” “Don’t!” “You’re just asking for trouble.” “What’s wrong with you?” “It serves you right!”

How many times do we hear these statements coming out of the mouths of frustrated parents and teachers? How many times do we say them ourselves? Often children themselves are present when adults comment on behavior frustrations. “He’s a handful!” “You should see what she did now!” “What’s gotten into him?” “My children are all wild today. There must have been a full moon!”

Without realizing it, we tend to focus on what children are doing *wrong* instead of focusing on what they are doing *right!* It makes sense to be drawn to disruptive, self-defeating, unproductive behaviors, because those are the ones that embarrass and distract us. Our words show our frustration. However, are we putting our energy where it will pay off?



The truth is that what we focus on will grow! Like a weed that is fed and watered, the behavior that gets our attention will thrive. The impact of frustrating experiences can be long lasting. Children take their cues about themselves from our responses, so we need to think carefully before we speak. Remember that words have the power to influence children's perceptions about themselves and others.

Children internalize the labels they hear, and they remember the experiences that make them feel either inept or competent. When a child is successful in negotiating a new situation, he will feel confident about handling the challenge the next time. When he is not successful, he may continue to respond in ways that are frustrating to himself and others.

We need to think carefully about how we respond to children—and then choose to speak and act purposefully. It is easier to say, "That child needs to change his behavior," than to admit that the behavior that needs to change is our own. It's important to put the camera on ourselves to see how our own actions and words influence the child's reactions. Rather than rely on interactions that don't help, we can use productive strategies that will create cooperation instead of resistance. The following principles work to change our own behaviors—as well as our children's responses—so that we can help them learn the skills they need to be successful in school and life. What children learn from watching us will determine how they will respond to others in the future.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Describe the child who, when present, makes the day go better for everyone. Next, describe the child who, when not present, makes the day seem easier. What skills does the first child have that the second one does not?

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What do you think can be done to model, practice, and create a positive experience and outcome for the child who needs to learn the skills you have listed?

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## The Goal of Discipline

Discipline refers to teaching and training. The goal of discipline is self-discipline. We want children to learn the skills they need to navigate through life on their own. The sooner they have skills for getting along with others, the better. Children are capable of developing those skills early.

In order to help children make good decisions and take responsibility for their own lives, we need to shift our focus to ways we can teach and train them effectively. First, instead of putting the primary focus on what children are doing wrong, we want to concentrate on what children are doing right. Next, we need to consider what we ourselves do or say that contributes to the behaviors we do *not* want to see. Children need

a safe environment where they can feel confident to take risks and learn from their mistakes. We want to focus on teaching children healthy ways to get along and solve challenges with results that are satisfying and successful.

Many people confuse the word *discipline* with the word *punishment*, and even use the words synonymously. We often hear, “What this child most needs is a little discipline,” when what is meant is, “This child needs a little punishment.” Many of us think of punishment as a penalty for misbehavior. In contrast, positive relational discipline teaches children to become self-disciplined without needing to rely on punishment or coercion. This is a shift away from “stopping misbehavior.” Instead, we put all of our effort and energy into ensuring that children have the strategies they need to be successful in relational and learning interactions. They will need our support to learn effective skills, language, and strategies for self-regulation and emotional regulation. These are the building blocks of healthy social interactions and success in school.

Positive relational discipline uses empowering interaction practices that assures respect for every child, models healthy relationship patterns, and fosters social and emotional competence. Through meaningful relationships, children gain a deeper understanding of respect, empathy, and care for themselves and others.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Punishment refers to inflicting pain on purpose. There are many ways that we purposely or unintentionally inflict pain on others. There are many other ways that do not include physical punishment that can hurt others. Can you think of some examples?

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Can you think of some ways that others hurt us, maybe without even realizing it?

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Many of us were raised to feel that children will be more likely to change their behavior if they feel remorseful about what they did. So without realizing that there are more effective ways to motivate change, we may inadvertently resort to punitive habits without understanding that this approach works against the outcome we really want. Besides physically hitting, other ways that can leave a lasting impact include yelling, insulting, name-calling, being sarcastic, or embarrassing or shaming others. If someone embarrassed us by calling attention to what we were wearing, or made us feel silly, what might we feel like doing? We might feel like leaving, retaliating, or embarrassing that person back. Some of us might turn our anger inward and cry. It is important to consider that children feel this way, as well.

Whenever someone humiliates us, talks down to us, or embarrasses us, it sets up a negative reaction. We probably want to withdraw or retaliate in some way. The connection we had is broken and it will take time and energy to repair it. The more often the connection is broken, the weaker it becomes. We need to learn and use strategies that are positive—that keep us connected to children, so that they will want to come to us whenever they need help or guidance and know that we will always be trustworthy, authentic, supportive, and helpful.

## Guiding Behavior in Positive Ways

Teachers need the ability to guide behavior in positive ways. As Chapter 1 suggests, the most important goal for teachers is to develop an authentic relationship with children based on respect and caring. The resulting connection formed is critical for children who may spend between 40 and 60 hours a week in childcare, before and after school care, or in a classroom.

Even a caring teacher may respond punitively if she lacks effective strategies to redirect and guide children in positive ways. A teacher's beliefs and prior experiences may influence her response to misbehavior. She may think that losing a desired privilege will help a child learn a lesson. She may be frustrated with her own inability to respond effectively and frustrated with a child who has difficulty following directions. Yet research consistently shows that punitive approaches create more problems than they solve.

The skills for positive redirection and social-emotional competence given in this chapter are critical for children. The strategies are also important for teachers, who research tells us most often leave the profession because they do not have the skills they

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Can you think of some reasons why punishment might be unfair?

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What kinds of feelings may arise when children do not respond to what you ask or need?

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In what way might your upbringing or beliefs about discipline affect the way you feel about or respond to children?

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need to deal with discipline issues. Punitive practices not only break the relational connection with children, but sap teachers of needed energy and enthusiasm for teaching.

## Considering the Unintended Complications of Punitive Responses

We need to consider the importance of teaching skills instead of punishing, or we run the risk of complicating the issue and creating long-term problems for the child. We need to understand the issues, even if we ourselves are committed to positive approaches, so that we can speak knowledgeably about the challenges and become strong advocates for positive practices.

What are some reasons why teachers punish?

- Teachers are more likely to respond negatively to children when they are stressed, frustrated, or under a deadline.
- Teachers may not see everything that happens and punish a child without realizing what preceded the incident.
- When several children are involved in misbehavior, often only one is singled out by the teacher.
- If a teacher feels a child is “out to get her” or “did it on purpose,” she is more likely to punish him.
- If a teacher has frequent conflict with a child, the child will be punished more often.
- Children with academic challenges often get in trouble.
- Children who are active get punished more often.
- Children from low income, minority, ethnic, or culturally different backgrounds are more likely to be punished.
- Teachers may be inconsistent in their responses and respond punitively one day, but not another—for the same behavior.
- Teachers may use punishment without realizing the deeper life lessons that are modeled, such as “might makes right” and “it’s OK to make other people feel badly if they do something you don’t like.”

What unintended consequences result from punishment?

- The child feels embarrassed and may withdraw emotionally to protect his self-esteem.
- The positive connection between the child and teacher is weakened.
- The punitive response decreases the child’s motivation.
- Resulting resentment blocks the child’s ability to learn.
- The frustration over being singled out may cause a child to retaliate.
- A child’s lack of success may cause him to disengage from school.
- Punishment doesn’t teach the child needed skills to be successful next time.
- Over time, a child responds with anger and feels school is not a place for him.

- A child loses motivation, effort, interest, and enthusiasm for learning.
- Other children are influenced by the teacher's negative response to a child and form lasting perceptions about him.

## Discipline and Punishment: What's the Difference?

It is important to distinguish between the terms *discipline* and *punishment* and to clarify the benefits of positive responsive interactions for all children.

Discipline	Punishment
Discipline means to teach and train.	Punishment means to inflict purposeful pain.
Discipline focuses on what we <i>do</i> want children to do.	Punishment focuses on what we <i>don't</i> want children to do.
Discipline teaches children that responsibility comes from self.	Punishment makes a child dependent on external control.
Discipline increases long-term positive behaviors.	Punishment decreases motivation and effort.
Discipline teaches permanent skills.	Punishment only stops behaviors temporarily.
Discipline strengthens the bond between adult and child.	Punishment breaks the connection and causes a child to retreat or pull away from an adult emotionally.
Discipline teaches emotional competence and self-regulation.	Punishment that embarrasses the child will make him turn his anger outward by acting out.
Discipline gives children skills to be successful in school.	Punishment makes a child feel school is not a pleasant place for him to be.
Discipline shows children that they can be successful.	Punishment makes children feel like a failure.
Discipline makes children resilient, empathetic, and caring toward others. The child turns these feelings outward.	Punishment causes self-doubt, shame, and embarrassment. The child turns these feelings inward.
Discipline creates responsibility and significance that turns into cooperation.	Punishment causes retaliation and anger that turns into uncooperative behavior.
Discipline inspires a child to <i>be</i> like you.	Punishment inspires a child to <i>act</i> like you.

## Positive Principles for Guiding Behavior and Relationships

The benefits of positive redirection and responsive support are lasting. Children need to learn how to be cooperative, pay attention, follow directions, get help, enter a group, understand the emotions of others, and respond in appropriate ways to various social interactions. These *prosocial skills* are socially responsible behaviors that include emotional regulation, empathy, cooperation, and compliance. They form the foundation of self-control and help a child problem-solve and get along well with others. These are essential skills for academic success and for healthy social relationships.

We want to focus all of our energy to help children become independent, motivated, and responsible human beings. When we replace punitive practices with positive connections, children will respond in new ways, and the benefits will be experienced each day in the classroom—and long into the future. Using the 101 positive redirection skills will increase your confidence as a teacher, and will create positive outcomes for all of your children in their interactions with you and with their peers.

The following principles work to change our own behavior—as well as children’s responses—to elicit cooperation and motivation.



### *Principle 12: Modeling*

Model the behavior you want. Show the child, by example, how to behave. Children are watching us all the time, and they will grow up to be like us—whether we want them to or not.

- If you want children to develop character traits that you value, then you need to demonstrate those traits in your daily interactions. If you want children to be gentle, kind, patient, self-controlled, faithful, honest, generous, persistent, hard working, and caring, you must live those traits yourself!
- If you want children to be polite, then you can say, “please,” “thank you,” and “excuse me” in a pleasant voice when you ask for something or take something from a child.
- If you want children to be neat, it is important to show pride by keeping the classroom neat and clean.
- If you want children to be quiet in the hall, be sure you and other teachers refrain from conversation as well.
- If you want children to show a sense of humor and genuine pleasure interacting with their peers, you must demonstrate this same spirit.

#### ● **THINK ABOUT IT!**

What are two things you do because your own parent modeled that behavior?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What are two ways you have seen children imitate you?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

What are some of the qualities you want children to have when they leave you? How will you model those each day?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- If you want children to be kind, be respectful about children’s space and belongings. For example, before you help a child with his zipper or food wrapper, ask if he can do it himself or if he would like help. Showing children how to be thoughtful is much more powerful than telling them.

### **Principle 13: Make a Big Deal**

Make a big deal over responsible, considerate, appropriate behavior—with eye contact, thanks, praise, thumbs-up, recognition, hugs, special privileges, or incentives (not food). Children want and need our attention. We need to train ourselves to watch when children are behaving in productive ways (for themselves and others) and give our attention to those behaviors.

Stay “tuned in” and aware, so that when children negotiate good decisions and solutions, you can support these positive contributions. When we call attention to their successes, we influence their perceptions about their ability to make positive contributions to others and to make good decisions for themselves. Next time the child encounters a similar challenge he will know that you noticed and responded and will be more likely to remember the successful experience.

#### **Birth to Age 3**

- Focus on reciprocal interactions with smiles, nods, and personal conversation.
- Help children feel secure through predictable routines.
- Respond with positive comments about new milestones and discoveries.
- Be mindful to respond to behaviors you want children to repeat. For example, if an adult laughs as an infant dribbles food out of her mouth, she may repeat the behavior to gain a similar reaction. She learns that she can make things happen!
- When a child shows empathy toward another child, be sure to support his developing emotional competence. “That was kind for you to help Sondra.”

#### **Ages 3 to 8**

- Give attention to the children as often as possible when they are doing what you want them to do, and let them know how proud you are of their good choices. Use positive, specific feedback. Tell them what they are doing that you want to see more of!
- Send home “Great Moments” certificates every day highlighting children who are kind helpers, hard workers, and good friends.
- Let children see that making positive contributions and doing the right thing pays off by recognition, privileges, praise, and value in your classroom community.
- Focus on the positive. Take a clipboard with you and give children checks for doing the right thing when walking in the hall.
- Draw a smiley face on the board and let children sign their name underneath for making good choices. (Or let children draw smiley faces of their own!)
- Focus on the behaviors you want to see grow!

Children are motivated by positive relationships. They feel that they matter and are significant. They gain a sense of purpose when they contribute to positive experiences with others. They are excited by new discoveries, curious about their interests, and enjoy the positive sensations they gain through interaction with the environment. Imagine their enthusiasm as they snap a needed puzzle piece into place. During this rapid time of intellectual and emotional growth, children benefit from a teacher's verbal support and positive feedback, especially when they have learned a new skill or worked hard to achieve a goal.

Incentives may be used to “jumpstart” new behaviors and encourage new habits. They should be used to support (in addition to, rather than in place of) the relational and positive strategies of the 101 principles. They should also be used only with a child's full participation and assent under the following circumstances:

- **When skills are achievable.** Make sure the child understands what is expected and that he has the skills to accomplish the skill independently.
- **When the child participates.** The child should participate in defining the goal and choosing the incentive he wants to achieve. For example, an older child may decide to keep track of assignments completed. When he reaches four, he wants extra time to read with a friend.
- **When there is intrinsic value.** Encourage relational incentives, such as earning lunch with the teacher, partnering with a friend on an assignment, or earning the coveted job of washing the whiteboards with a friend. These activities provide healthy social engagement and responsible contributions that benefit everyone.
- **When they are developmentally appropriate.** Use incentives for younger children with care. For example, in Mrs. Hammond's class, a 5-year-old continues to drop his coat on the floor instead of hanging it in his cubby after recess. She is certain that he is able to hang it independently, but keeps forgetting. She laminates several cards with a picture of a coat on a hook. Each time Isaiah hangs his coat successfully, he drops one of the cards into a container. When he earns five cards, he earns the incentives he has worked for: He wants to get the bag of balls from the closet and bring them outside for recess. The cards work as a cue, without Mrs. Hammond needing to speak to him. This incentive was appropriate for Isaiah. (He was thrilled to be the ball boy on Friday!)
- **When the accomplishment is secure.** Children should never lose the incentive (or the step towards the incentive) once it is earned. Each step toward the goal is gained when the child is able to achieve it, until he reaches the agreed-on number. The incentive is based on the number of times that a child has completed a task rather than restricted by a time frame.
- **When they support children's success.** Cooperative incentives can encourage children to work together and inspire team spirit. For example, Mr. Anglan's second graders decide on a dance party once they reach 50 books (together as a group) that they have read at home. He doesn't set a time frame, but lets them gain points until the goal is reached. All children are to be included in the party.

There are many reasons why food should not be given as a reward or incentive, however. We want to encourage children to have a healthy relationship with their bodies. Food is for nourishment. We don't want to contribute to issues such as anorexia, bulimia, body image obsessions, or the use of food to soothe emotions. Later in life, adults may use food as a substitute for love, caring, comfort, or relief. We should eat when we are hungry and stop when we are full. We should make healthy food choices and stay tuned in to our body's needs. Food is associated with the warmth and comfort that we received as infants. Yet while food may seem to work as an incentive, it is not in a child's best interest to use food in this manner, especially in a school or early childhood setting.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are five behaviors you want to emphasize and notice in children?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Name some behaviors in your classroom that you want to stop giving attention to. How can you turn your response around, to be sure that you are focusing your attention on the behaviors you *do* want?

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## Accepting the Challenge to Focus on the Positive

It is very tempting when we see a child engaged in a non-productive activity to scold him, say “no,” or tell him to stop. Our focus on what the child is doing wrong can actually backfire when we give our attention to the very behavior we are hoping to stop. We will be much more successful if we can quickly think of an incompatible alternative and make that behavior seem more appealing to the child. An *incompatible alternative* is an activity that cannot be done at the same time as the undesired behavior, such as walking instead of running, or whispering instead of yelling. Our ultimate hope is to engage him in something that is productive and OK for him to be doing.

It is much more effective for us to focus the child's attention on what we want him to do. We do not even mention the behavior we want to stop. Because we have not given any attention to the previous activity, we do not invite a power struggle. The incompatible alternative replaces the unwanted behavior immediately—without making an issue of it—as it encourages the child to engage in a behavior that is constructive and helpful.



A specific challenge in the early childhood classroom is redirecting behavior within the context of a group setting. The use of the incompatible alternative is very effective for groups of children. Rather than focus on what you do not want children to be doing, simply state what you want them to be doing—and how you want it accomplished.

### **Principle 14: Incompatible Alternative**

Give the child something to do that is incompatible with the inappropriate behavior. Say, “Let’s pretend we are on a secret mission and see if we can walk all the way to the cafeteria without anyone hearing us.” “Help me pick out six markers” (when the child is unfocused or annoying). If a child is bothering you by playing with his shoestrings, instead of mentioning it, simply ask him to help you by sorting the papers or crayons by color.

When we want to stop one behavior, we need to put something else in its place. If we give the child something to do that is incompatible with the inappropriate behavior (that he can’t do at the same time), we will discover how quickly this encourages cooperation. Instead of asking a child to stop running, we can suggest something positive for him to do, such as, “Use your walking feet” or “Come tiptoe beside me.”

When a child is wandering around aimlessly, we can say, “Come read a book with me.” When a child is talking with a friend instead of doing his work, we can say, “Please show me your writing.” The child learns what we want him to be doing, while our positive focus on his help, cooperation, and contribution reinforces our goals for him. We have redirected his attention and not wasted our energy addressing his mistakes. The behavior becomes a non-issue. As we provide purposeful and meaningful ways for the child to be successful, he will learn how to think of good options for himself in the future. Remember that what we focus on will grow, so all of our energy should be spent focusing on productive, healthy outcomes.

#### ● **THINK ABOUT IT!**

List an incompatible alternative for the following behaviors:

1. Running \_\_\_\_\_
2. Talking during silent reading time \_\_\_\_\_
3. Rocking back and forth in a chair \_\_\_\_\_
4. Rattling the paintbrush container \_\_\_\_\_
5. Bothering another child \_\_\_\_\_
6. A most frustrating classroom challenge \_\_\_\_\_

You will find that it requires practice for adults to think of positive alternatives. In the same way, it can be a struggle for children to redirect their own thinking about what *to* do. As they hear you model constructive options, they will become better at generating their own solutions!

 **Principle 15: Choice**

Give the child two choices, both of which are positive and acceptable to you. “Would you rather tiptoe or hop over to the carpet?” “We need to clear off our desks. Do you need one minute or two?” Then set the timer.

The Choice Principle gives the child two incompatible alternatives. The teacher states the desired goal and then gives the child two choices about how it can be accomplished. “We need to hold hands while crossing the walkway. Do you want to hold my left hand or right hand?” “We need to put away the toys. Would you rather help with the puzzles or the blocks?”

Instead of saying, “Stop running,” say, “We need to be quiet in the hall. Would you rather tiptoe or sneak?” This takes the focus off of running, and you have given the child a choice of two positive alternatives. “Would you rather walk on clouds or pillows? Let’s do it together.” Children will quickly make a choice.

“It’s chilly outside. Do you want to wear your coat or your sweater?” If you have offered a specific choice, and the child hesitates, then *you* choose one—while quickly making cheerful conversation about what is going to happen next. It is important to move on. Practicing choices with a teacher gets the child in the habit of looking for positive alternatives when he can’t have what he originally wanted.

It is important to use only two choices, and for both choices to create a positive outcome for the child and be acceptable for you. If the child refuses or decides on a third choice not provided by you, simply say, “You choose, or I’ll choose.”

For example, when you say, “It’s time to clean up. Would you rather do it in one minute or two?” there may be a child who will say, “I want three.” Then, you say, “One minute or two. You choose, or I’ll choose.” The child will want to choose for himself and will make the decision to go with one of the choices you have provided. He wants and needs to have *some* control over his life. If you have to choose, do so quickly and move on to keep the focus on what is interesting and inviting.

Children will feel more in control of what is happening to them and more willing to be cooperative when we support their need to feel competent. When we offer them options, they are likely to cooperate, because they can choose the response that works best for them.

When working with infants and toddlers, the Choice Principle works just as effectively. If a baby is crawling toward another child’s toy, rather than talk about it, quickly provide a physical incompatible alternative (another blanket, baby doll, rattle, etc.) that will distract him. Staying aware and present will allow you to intervene with many incompatible alternatives and choices that can prevent common frustrations for children. In the same way, it is important to redirect a toddler’s attention toward a positive option rather than talk about what we don’t want him to be doing. We can say, “Here is the apple juice. Would you like to drink it from the pink or blue cup?” “It’s time to put your shoes on. Do you want to do it alone or with my help?” “It’s time for a nap. Would you like to snuggle with your teddy bear or your blanket?” Helping children focus on positive choices is a respectful way to reinforce needed routines and instill a sense of cooperation.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

A child is climbing on a chair. What are two alternatives that you could give the child to choose from that would help him do something different?

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Can you think of an example of the Choice Principle? Remember, *both* choices need to be acceptable to you and provide positive outcomes for the child.

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What should you say if the child offers a third possibility or replies, “Neither”? (Don’t forget to repeat the needed goal and your two choices. Then say, “You choose or I’ll choose.”)

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## Understanding Power Struggles

None of us like it when another person orders us around. It usually brings out the worst in us and causes us to disrespect, dislike, or challenge the one who gave the order. Whenever we issue an ultimatum or tell a child what to do, we are setting ourselves up for a power struggle. We have given away our power—and now it rests with the child. It can become like a carefully orchestrated chess game. The next move is his—and he might choose to respond with, “No” or “Make me.” Many small children rebel by saying, “You’re not my momma.” This puts us in the precarious role of either trying to force obedience or backing down.

A teacher once asked, “What would you do if you tell a child to move and he doesn’t?” That is the problem with *telling* a child to do something. What will you do if the child refuses? This is a critical question in behavior guidance with groups of children, because when you interact with a particular child, other children are watching. The lessons learned are not only critical for you and the child, but for all of the other children as well.

Demands such as “Move over here” or “Stop touching the wall” invite the child to test you. Unfortunately, many well-meaning teachers and adults do not understand that using a demand sets up a power struggle with children for whom they are responsible

and then wonder why they do not get cooperation. When we need something to be done, we can either invite children to “come with us” (cooperate) by the way we use our words, or we can make them “push back” by the way we challenge or demand something from them.

In order for us to gain a child’s cooperation, we need to be more respectful when we see that a child needs to change his behavior. Such statements as, “It’s time to line up” or “I need your help,” followed by a choice of how it is done, such as, “You may bring your book with you or leave it in your desk” or “You can collect the papers or the crayons,” encourage cooperation and show the child that you respect his willingness to help by giving him some control over how he accomplishes the goal. (The Incompatible Alternative and Choice Principles give every chance for success. The Demonstrate Respect Principle, described in Chapter 3, will gain respect in return.) We have wisely handed to him a reason to be cooperative instead of the power to become an adversary.

## Avoiding Ultimatums

It is critical to recognize the kinds of communication that adults inadvertently use to set up power struggles. An ultimatum causes children to resist and invites a power struggle. This can take three forms, and it always implies or states a threat.

1. A demand: “Come here right now.” (Do this because I said so.)
2. A demand with a threat of something the child does *not* want: “If you keep talking, you will eat lunch alone.” “If you don’t do what I say, I am going to call your mother.” “If you don’t come now, I am leaving you.”
3. A demand with a threat to remove something the child *does* want: “Either stay on your mat by yourself, or you will not go to recess.”

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What is one ultimatum you have given or that you have heard someone else give?

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What does the child learn when he is given an ultimatum?

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How does an ultimatum place the adult in a precarious role?

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An ultimatum brings out the worst in children. Because they become fearful of not getting or of losing something they want, they will naturally feel resistant. Even if they do comply, they do not do so willingly, and their resentment can lead to further trouble down the road. They will not develop the respect, empathy, and cooperation they need for close relationships and a desire to make good choices in the future. When we become aware of the ways that we set up power struggles, we can replace them with new skills that will build cooperation.



### ***Principle 16: When–Then/Abuse It–Lose It***

*“When you put your books on the shelf, then you may put on your coat.”*

*“When you finish putting the play-dough away, then you may choose a partner for the game.”*

The When–Then Principle links a specific expectation to a positive outcome. It is important to use “when” rather than “if.” The word “if” may cause the child to respond, “Suppose I don’t?” Then a power struggle has begun. However, the word “when” communicates your belief that the child will follow through.

The When–Then Principle uses a logical contingency and communicates our expectations. “When you clean up, then we can have lunch.” “When you come, then we’ll choose a book to read together.” “When your table is clear, then you may go to the library.” Children handle transitions more easily when they understand our expectations. Using “when” invites cooperation.

Until the child completes the first responsibility, he loses out on the promised privilege. “When you put your markers away, then you may go to the sand table.” If he doesn’t put the markers away, he can’t go on to the next center. We want to say and communicate to children what we would want to hear ourselves—respectful, positive words about what needs to be done.

“If you don’t clean up, you aren’t going to have lunch.” “If you don’t come now, you don’t get a book in the car!” “If you don’t put your markers away, you aren’t going to the library.” This is not the When–Then Principle, but an ultimatum, and results in a power struggle, which the child usually wins. He may become resentful and find a way to retaliate if he feels forced to comply. He may decide he would rather not get the book or go to the library than complete the task. But the child needs his lunch, should be encouraged to read a book in the car, and will benefit from a visit to the library. Instead of issuing ultimatums, we need to always consider, “What is in the best interest of the child?”

It is important to focus on the positive side of the principle (when–then) instead of the negative implication. Children need to understand that behavior choices bring about reliable results that are linked to their actions. They need to see that we are paying attention and setting expectations and limits that are in their own best interest.

Children learn by our consistency in using both parts of the When–Then/Abuse It–Lose It Principle that they must follow through on the clean up before they may move to another activity. They realize that in order to read a book, they cannot throw it or tear it. They learn to handle materials with respect knowing someone else will be using them, too. They know that to play with their friends, they need to be gentle and careful, and that

these guidelines are in place to help them be productive and happy. If we are consistent in insisting on the positive behavior, then removal of an object (a book that continues to be thrown, for example) will be infrequent. “I am sorry. I need to make sure you know how to read the book carefully. Why don’t you choose another one and show me that you can use it gently.” When we do need to step in, it should be with kindness, support, and matter-of-fact follow-through so that children understand it is necessary to ensure their safety, the safety of others, and respect for the classroom environment.

The When–Then Principle helps children feel respected and gives them a consistent opportunity to be successful. It presents a logical connection between responsibility and success before misbehavior occurs. It allows for a child to self-correct the next time, because he was responsible for the choice he made. Children want to choose—and want to feel proud of their success. In doing so, they develop self-regulation and self-discipline. This approach gives them ownership of their own decisions and motivation to be responsible for themselves and their own behavior.

We can “practice” the When–Then Principle by talking and “thinking out loud” to babies and toddlers about what we are doing: “When we finish our nap, then we will sing songs (play, etc.)” We can explain our own “When–Then” sequences to pre-verbal children. “When I have finished putting away my book, then I will come and color with you.” Over time, children will see and hear the important follow-through that connects self-regulated behavior and responsibility to the pay off of positive experiences.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are two If–Thens that can be changed into When–Thens?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Principle 17: Follow-Through/Consistency**

Don’t let the child manipulate you out of using your better judgment. Be firm (but kind)! Trust your intuition. If it doesn’t feel right, don’t let the child do it. Come up with choices and alternatives that can help your child to focus on more appropriate behavior and positive learning experiences.

“We’ve tried *everything*,” sigh some teachers. That may be the problem. When we are inconsistent in our responses—sometimes scolding or punishing and sometimes ignoring—we can be sure that the child’s behavior will continue and probably increase. When we constantly change the way we respond to misbehavior, the child keeps trying, not knowing which response he might receive. The child knows that he may get to do it anyway, because the adult may look the other way. He knows that he may even get laughed at for doing it—which pays off in gaining more attention. Even though he may be stopped, the risk is worth it to him. By being inconsistent, the teacher is creating more problems than she is solving.

Teachers who are consistent and responsive have a great advantage. Their children demonstrate greater compliance and show fewer behavior challenges. They seem to expend less energy, yet gain reliable results. Here are some important ways to be consistent.

- Keep consistent expectations. Don't fault one child for something you let another child get by with. For example, telling one child to sit up straight during circle time, and then allowing another to lie down is certainly inconsistent.
- Ask yourself if what you are requiring is realistic. Can you follow through with the request you have made? For example, you may tell children that they cannot turn upside down on the monkey bars, and then go ahead and let them after you see all the children are doing it. Some teachers tell children to line up and then get distracted talking to another teacher. They have taught their children to wait until she sounds like "she really means it," since they realize that she often does not follow through.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What type of behavior is most likely to cause teachers to be inconsistent? What do children learn as a result?

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Describe one scenario where an adult you observed asked a child to do something, but then did not follow through. What could the adult have done differently to create a more positive outcome?

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Describe one scenario where an adult you observed followed through effectively with a child. What happened as a result? What did the child learn?

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### **Principle 18: Validation**

Acknowledge (validate) the child's wants and feelings. "I know you feel frustrated with your friend and want to keep both books to yourself. I don't blame you. I would feel the same way. However, she needs to have one. Do you want to choose which one, or shall I?"

When you validate a child's feelings, you align yourself with the child. Then you can go on to deal with the underlying issues. "I understand you feel frustrated, Michael. I would be upset too, if someone took my puzzle. Thank you for telling me and for

using your words.” “I know you don’t want to stop playing your game. I don’t blame you. I would feel the same way. However, when the bell rings, you need to line up with the other children.”

Children are less likely to act out when they can use their words. We can help by giving them words to describe how they feel, and validate their experience.

When a child is upset, you can say:

*“Thank you for telling me.”*

*“I am sorry that happened.”*

*“I am sorry you feel sad. I would never do that to you.”*

For young children, we often say, “I am sorry your eyes had to see that.” Or “I am sorry your ears had to hear that.” In this way, we validate their experience without reinforcing what they just saw or heard. When we model using specific emotional language, children learn how to use their words, instead of acting out their feelings.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are some emotion words that children can learn to describe their feelings in addition to feeling “mad”?

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You will be able to use these words when you validate children’s experiences. You will be teaching them multiple ways to express themselves in healthy ways when they feel frustrated.

### **Principle 19: Extinction**

Ignore minor misbehavior that is not dangerous, destructive, embarrassing, or an impediment to learning. (Pretend that you didn’t hear, move away, or focus on something else.) Remember, children want our attention. Children repeat the behaviors that work and eliminate the ones that don’t work. Teachers often don’t realize how much attention they give to behaviors they would prefer to eliminate! Our natural instinct is to be drawn to disruptive, self-defeating, unproductive behaviors, because those are the ones that distract us. Unfortunately, by giving the behavior our attention, we inadvertently reinforce it!

When teachers stop teaching and focus on these minor behaviors, teaching time is lost. We need to train ourselves to catch children doing the right thing, and as often as possible look away from the negative behavior so that it does not get reinforced and escalate.

Examples of behaviors that are not dangerous, destructive, embarrassing, or an impediment to learning include:

- Wiggling
- Waving arms in your face (young children)
- Pencil tapping
- Playing with a shoelace
- Facial expressions that communicate an “attitude,” such as eye-rolling

You will learn how to address behaviors that are dangerous, destructive, embarrassing, and an impediment to learning in Chapters 8 and 9.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

Can you think of more examples of annoying behaviors that you can ignore?

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## Transforming Teaching Times

We want children to love learning by making our lesson times captivating and interesting. We can do this by noticing and giving attention to positive behaviors and contributions. Here are some constructive approaches to guiding behavior while you are teaching.



### *Principle 20: Take Time to Teach*

Often we expect children to read our minds and know how to do things they have never been taught. Although our expectations may be clear to us, our children may not have a clue.

- Be specific! Don't wait until things are going wrong. Start out by teaching what you expect. If you find things still aren't working, instead of focusing on what not to do, review—teach what you want children to be doing.
- Be proactive! Think ahead about how you will engage children in learning. Talk about what you will do next and let children ask questions about what they will be doing.



- Be creative! Use many resources (puppets, props, drama, songs, movement, textural materials, etc.) to involve children through “hands-on” multisensory interaction.
- Be flexible! Vary your teaching. Start whispering. Sing or stand. Stay responsive to children’s needs. If one or two children are distracted, vary your plan to engage and involve all of the children.
- Be organized! Prepare materials ahead of time and have them within easy reach. Good organization can head off many behavior issues for children because it reduces frustration. Classroom organization is an important component of a quality classroom.
- Be active! Add movement, activity, and motions to learning, and give children time to stretch and be physically involved with songs and actions that match concepts and lesson plans. Planned physical exercise routines (jumping, skipping, hopping, etc.) that involve motor control, following directions, and adjusting actions to improve performance can increase self-regulation, memory, and planning. These abilities are essential to learning.
- Be individual! Pay individualized attention to children. Move around the room often and spend time with children, supporting their understanding and encouraging their involvement in active learning.
- Be patient! Prepare and practice. It takes regular repetition and rehearsal to make a skill a habit. Practice one skill a day to keep children “on board” with your plans.
- Be purposeful! Teach a new daily skill to build confidence. Encourage children to:
  - Say, “Can I help you?” to at least one person every day.
  - Give someone else a genuine compliment every day.
  - Practice balance: Stand on one leg for one minute every day.
  - Stand up straight. (Pretend like there is an orange between your shoulder blades and squeeze for one minute a day.)
  - Say one thing out loud that you are thankful for every day.

When teachers combine positive guidance with meaningful learning opportunities, children become engaged. We want to help children connect to learning by developing their interests and abilities. They need daily opportunities to explore, create, and discover. Step in frequently to facilitate social–emotional skills by talking often about how to solve problems. Remember to ask questions that link what children are learning to their real-life experiences, and help them develop understanding about concepts in their world. Meet regularly with a trusted colleague to find ways to use the principles in this chapter—and apply them to the needs of your school in ways that are creative and caring.

**THINK ABOUT IT!**

When you meet with colleagues to talk about teaching and discipline approaches, what are three changes you would like to make?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What steps do you need to take to make these positive changes permanent?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Strengthening Transitions

There are many incompatible alternatives to prevent boring or extended transitions. Use a variety of educational, creative, and fun ways to use the time. Plan to read a story or sing a song while children are putting on their coats or hum a tune while cleaning up. Use your imagination! Here are some good ideas for walking to another room or out to recess:

- Plan ahead! Take along a 4-by-6 card with clues the children can look for in the environment. (Play I-Spy for colors, shapes, sounds, letters, or words.)
- Count steps. Count artwork. Count people. Count smiles. Count doorways.
- Look for favorite drawings or sculptures. Let the children imagine what they will draw or write about when they return to the room.
- Find something with a motor, a moving part, or a specific purpose.
- Have each child think of a compliment to give the child in front of him when they return to the room.
- Play mental math games, so that children have to think about a problem and discuss the solution when they arrive back in your room.

When you return or are finished with a transition, don't forget to compliment the children and tell them how proud you are of how creative and thoughtful they are!

Here are some good ideas for in-room transitions:

- For infants and toddlers, keep music, supplies, and materials lined up in order of their use for the day. Ziplock baggies make great reusable containers to keep the next activity at your fingertips.

- When one activity is completed, make sure the next is already waiting, such as books set out and ready for reading after hands are washed.
- Allow time in the morning for active brain stimulation—so while children are waiting for others to arrive, there are multiple projects and challenges underway that draw children to engage in learning.
- Keep a fantastic book on hand related to the season or unit of study, or just read for fun, but never let a moment pass without engaging minds.
- Have activities and materials waiting when children return from recess or lunch.
- Touch children on the head without talking when it is time for them to line up. Call children by color of shoes, or by letters in names. Ask questions from a lesson and when a child gives the answer, he or she may line up.
- For older children, let them place their materials for the next subject (like writing) on their desks, so that when they return, they know exactly what to begin doing next.
- Create a morning board with a message and assignments for immediate work.
- Leave an envelope on each desk every morning, so that when children arrive, they find instructions and materials enclosed.
- Give time for physical activity and movement throughout the day—before, during, and after transitions. Try yoga, deep breathing, balancing poses, or a meditation (quiet) moment. These brain and body breaks will provide needed exercise, increase concentration, and assist children in learning.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are some other goals or ideas suitable for your specific age group or school that will transform transitions into constructive learning moments?

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### **Principle 21: Punt the Plan**

In the middle of something that is not working, move on to something else. De-stress yourself. Be willing to stay flexible and quickly switch directions when you see that children are unable to focus or need a break.

Stay flexible and responsive to the needs of the children. This will help you meet their needs and enjoy your interactions with them more, knowing that you are responding to their capabilities and interests. If you see that children are having difficulty sitting, vary your teaching to include times for movement, or let them sit on the floor or stand to complete an activity. Keep on hand additional activities, materials, songs, finger plays and motion activities so that children can switch tempo. You can

come back to your scheduled activity later after the children have stretched and are ready to refocus.

No matter how conscientious you are, and how much you hope things might go a certain way, many interruptions will come into your day. Parents may stop in, the principal or director may visit, or a child may get sick. Keep in mind the best interest of the children first, and trust your judgment to make good decisions about how to stay flexible. You will enjoy the day so much more, and the children will enjoy being with you.

Interactions in the classroom are often focused on the whole group. Sometimes you will want to focus on dyadic or one-on-one interactions. The 101 principles work in both situations. They can be used alone and in combination: “When you have put away the tray of sorting blocks, then you may sit with Tabitha” (the When–Then Principle). “Would you like her help, or can you do it yourself?” (the Choice Principle). “Can you arrange the blocks in order by size?” (the Incompatible Alternative Principle). “You and Tabitha used great teamwork in order to put the blocks away. Now you may read sooner!” (the Make a Big Deal Principle). As you become proficient in using them, you will be able to stay flexible in using a variety of approaches that are geared to the needs of the child and situation.

The Punt the Plan Principle, just like all of the 101 principles, places the first priority on the relational aspects of supporting behavior, recognizing that children who are calm and connected are ready to learn. Creating positive memories about learning is as important as the learning itself. Lighten up and enjoy your time with the children each day, because the relationship and experiences you have with them will help them see themselves as the capable and delightful learners they really are.

### ● THINK ABOUT IT!

What are some signs in children’s behavior that indicate it’s time to move on to another activity, or to present a movement or music break?

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## Bringing Out the Best in Children

When we use these principles, we will be amazed to see that a change in our own behavior has paid off in a change in the way children respond to us. In the past, we have often thought, “That child needs to change his behavior.” Now we will see clearly that our own actions and responses caused or created a reaction or negative response on the part of the child.

It will be exciting to realize that by changing our own behavior, we will begin to see children taking more responsibility for their own actions. We will see a reduced number of conflicts and acting-out behaviors. Children will have improved ability to focus attention, curb impulsivity, and show greater engagement in the classroom.

As you try the principles for the first time, you will see how simple these techniques are to use. The change you feel in yourself and see in your children will definitely be worth the effort. You will notice a difference in how your children respond to you. You will feel calm, rewarded, and confident; energetic at the end of the day and proud of your children as others notice how well-behaved they have become. You will be making a difference every day by bringing out the best that is in them, by bringing out the best that is in you!

## Summary

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The goal of positive guidance is to shift your energy into supporting the skills you want to establish. Adding the 101 principles to your guidance tool box will help you redirect behavior effectively and support the growth of social and emotional skills. The strategies from this chapter will refocus your own attention toward becoming more responsive and proactive with children. Each one is designed to help you to individualize support and assist children in developing self-regulation. The positive skills will help you maximize each opportunity to model and teach effective relationship interactions. By implementing each principle from this chapter, you will encourage independence and healthy interdependence as you enhance the positive climate of your classroom.

## Using the Principles in Your Classroom

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The 101 principles provide 101 options to connect with children so that we can stay connected, enhance relationships, and create positive outcomes without the use of punishment. It is important to learn the principles for guiding behavior in this chapter before moving on to additional principles. The skills you gain will give you lasting solutions that will serve you well in the long run and will equip children with skills for self-regulation and success. To get started:

1. Review the chapter daily.
2. Begin with one new principle.
3. Use the strategy until you feel comfortable. Add the others one at a time.
4. Use the “Getting Positive Results Using the Principles in Action” form at the end of this chapter to practice each principle: “What happened or led up to the interaction? Which principle did you use? How did the situation turn out? (How did the child respond? What did you learn?)”
5. Practice until the strategies become second nature. Those who use them are seen as “magical” teachers because they model skills that help children to become responsive and cooperative. Soon, each one will feel comfortable, and you will see the results in the behavior of your students. You will be thinking of new ways to use all of these strategies each day.

6. Keep track of your efforts. You may want to find a “buddy” and have another teacher watch you—or work as a team with your co-teacher. The more you approach the 101 principles as a schoolwide system of support and encouragement, the more effective you will be in sustaining their use.
7. Print and cut principles from this chapter into strips. Put the principles you have cut into a jar, and pick one each day as you come into the classroom to remind you of your new strategy.
8. Have children pick a principle to focus on for the day. The 101 principles are for everyone, and children will soon be using them as quickly as you do!
9. Apply the 101 principles to common behaviors that you have identified as those you would like to influence.

Here are two scenarios to help you practice. Read each one. Then list five ways you could use principles from this chapter to solve them.

- Martin is a very fidgety child in your classroom. He finds many reasons why he needs to run out of line, lay on the floor during circle time, and roam around the room. He seems constantly distracted. What would/should/could you do?
- Carlos, age 6, is a child in Mrs. Pinneli’s first-grade classroom. This is his first year in an inclusive classroom. When he wants something someone else is holding, he tries to grab it away, often hitting the other child to get it, if necessary. Students, and even a few parents, have begun to complain that Carlos’s behavior is detrimental to the learning of the other children in the classroom. What would/should/could you do?

## Teacher Tips

The following are comments from teachers who have been trained to use the 101 principles in their childcare settings and classrooms.

I was playing Ping-Pong with a little boy in the gym. At first the child just slammed the ball. I decided to see if I could focus on only what he was doing right. “I’ll tell you every one you are doing right.” Every time he did anything remotely right, I said, “That’s a good one!” It took a lot of focus on my part not to be irritated when he slammed the ball or when he got carried away. But by focusing on every good one, he finally got to 16! “I won,” he said. It’s not easy to focus on only the positive. It our natural inclination to focus on what is going wrong. We see the results when we focus on the positive because it keeps us connected.

At the end of the day, a mother came in to pick up her 2-year-old. The little boy came up to me with a toy train that had the same name as his. I asked him, “What is the train’s name?” He responded, “It’s Thomas!” “That’s right! And who is this other train?” I pointed to him! I had a big smile on my face and told him that he was doing a really good job cleaning up his train set. Thomas ran over to put the rest of his train set in the bin—which his mother had been trying to get him to do for 10 minutes! She could not believe how much her little boy’s attitude changed in a matter of seconds. I used

the Make a Big Deal Principle to put a smile on his face.

Sam was out of his seat during project time. I told him that he needed to sit. He could sit next to me on my right side, or my left. He thought about it and then sat on my right side. I have done this every day with Sam, and it always works.

I have learned to make a big deal out of positive behavior. A little girl was feeling bored, so she asked me if she could help wash the table. I let her do it and made such a big deal by thanking her a lot. The next day, I had about five volunteers for washing the table.

I used the Validation Principle in a situation where a child wanted a second snack for the day. At my school, they can only get one snack, so I decided to try one of the principles. I told Jonah that I understood why he wanted a snack and that I wanted a snack, too—but we are only allowed one snack a day. To my surprise, he said, “OK!” and he walked away.

We use fun incompatible alternatives and tell children to try not to “wake the bunny” when they tiptoe down the hall. Some pretend there is a big bird on the roof and that the bird cannot see them, but he can hear them. That was with first graders, and they loved it. They tried to “sneak” past the big bird on their way down the corridor. I think the most important thing is that if you are enjoying being with the children, they will enjoy being with you.

One of my students, Davioun, with whom I have frequent behavior issues, was on the playground and refusing to go inside. This seems to be a recurring problem. I found myself chasing him, which he loved. Then I resorted to yelling at him. “Line up right now!” All of a sudden I actually heard myself and what I was doing. I changed my ways. I started hopping up and down and said, “Davioun, I am going to hop inside. Will you hop with me?” and I started hopping towards the door. It took all of one second before he was down the slide and hopping right inside with me all the way to his cubby! Amazing!

## Research on the Run

For further reading and information about the research that supports this chapter, you may want to locate the articles and resources listed below at your local library or on the Internet. By knowing the latest research, you will have the background to sustain positive changes in your classroom with lasting benefits to children.

As can be seen in the following extract from the performance standards for the Head Start program, the 101 principles support Head Start standards.

### § 1304.21 Education and early childhood development.

(1) In order to help children gain the skills and confidence necessary to be prepared to succeed in their

present environment and with later responsibilities in school and life, grantee and delegate agencies' approach to child development and education must:

- (i) Be developmentally and linguistically appropriate, recognizing that children have individual rates of development as well as individual interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles;
- (ii) Be inclusive of children with disabilities, consistent with their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) (see 45 CFR 1308.19);
- (iii) Provide an environment of acceptance that supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity and family composition;

(iv) Provide a balanced daily program of child-initiated and adult-directed activities, including individual and small group activities;

(2) Parents must be:

(i) Invited to become integrally involved in the development of the program's curriculum and approach to child development and education;

(ii) Provided opportunities to increase their child observation skills and to share assessments with staff that will help plan the learning experiences; and

(iii) Encouraged to participate in staff-parent conferences and home visits to discuss their child's development and education (see 45 CFR 1304.40(e)(4) and 45 CFR 1304.40(i)(2)).

(3) Grantee and delegate agencies must support social and emotional development by:

(i) Encouraging development which enhances each child's strengths by:

(A) Building trust;

(B) Fostering independence;

(C) Encouraging self-control by setting clear, consistent limits, and having realistic expectations;

(D) Encouraging respect for the feelings and rights of others; and

(E) Supporting and respecting the home language, culture, and family composition of each child in ways that support the child's health and well-being; and

(ii) Planning for routines and transitions so that they occur in a timely, predictable and unrushed manner according to each child's needs.

(4) Grantee and delegate agencies must provide for the development of each child's cognitive and language skills by:

(i) Supporting each child's learning, using various strategies including experimentation, inquiry, observation, play and exploration;

(ii) Ensuring opportunities for creative self-expression through activities such as art, music, movement, and dialogue;

(iii) Promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults; and

(iv) Supporting emerging literacy and numeracy development through materials and activities according to the developmental level of each child.

Early childhood is a critical time for teachers to build trust and establish positive relationship. The more energy that is invested in teaching, modeling, and supporting social competence, the more children experience success in school expectations (Masterson, 2008). The commitment to fostering a positive climate and building interpersonal skills is a hallmark of relational guidance. This approach is congruent with NAEYC standards that promote competence by using every available resource.

NAEYC Standard 1.E.03. Rather than focus solely on reducing the challenging behavior, teachers focus on teaching the child social, communication, and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior (NAEYC, 2012).

### ***Benefits of Positive Interactions***

- Emotional support increased the quality of a child's social experience at school. Quality teaching practices, when combined with strong emotional support, were found to have a strong impact on children's behaviors (Rimm-Kaufman, LaParo, Downer, & Pianta, 2005).
- For young children at risk, relationships with teachers are important, as early experiences with low stress and positive climates protect children from stress and risk factors they experience at home (O'Connor & McCartney, 2006).
- For the 30% of children at risk prior to kindergarten, responsive social-emotional support mediates against all other risk factors and provides for increased development for children in every area (Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Silver, Measelle, Armstrong, & Essex, 2004).

- The long-term benefits of positive, sensitive teacher–child interactions include improvements in academic and reading achievement, higher graduation rates, higher IQ, greater cognitive development, better outcomes for children with disabilities, and less referral to special education overall (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001).
- Compliance and self-control are affected by the quality of the adult–child relationship (Eisenberg, Zhou, Spinrad, Valiente, Fabes, & Liew, 2005).
- Cooperation and social skills are influenced by responsive teacher–child interactions (Wachs, Gurkas, & Kontos, 2004).
- High expectations and equity in practice thrive in classrooms that are characterized by positive, responsive support for all children. Positive discipline practices and positive instructional practices are both critical and necessary for children’s school success (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).
- Behavior interactions are central to teacher–child interactions in the preschool environment. Teachers report dealing with behavior problems as their most difficult challenge (Jalongo, 2006).
- Children depend on the caregiver to provide positive, responsive interactions. When they are present, they are the hallmark of a quality preschool environment (Haynes, 2009; Raver, Jones, Li-Grining, Metzger, Champion, & Sardin, 2008).
- Children need time to practice social competence. Teachers must provide learning opportunities for them master social skills (Vaughn, 2001).
- Positive interactions predict high-quality care (Lara-Cinisomo, Fuligni, Daugherty, Howes, & Karoly, 2009).
- Interactions with teachers (negative or positive) provide a lasting blueprint for the way children feel about themselves, school, teachers, and peers, both now and in the future (Cozolino, 2006; Denham, 2005; Miles & Stipek, 2006; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2001; Spencer, Jordan, & Sazama, 2004; Sroufe, 2000).
- “We know that all children benefit from early learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate and instill a sense of excitement and joy for exploration and discovery. Responsive, reciprocal, respectful relationships with caring adults who have a deep understanding of the unique stages of child development and effective strategies for stimulating active learning are critical” (CCSSO, 2009, p. 6).

### *Consequences of Punitive Practices*

- “When teachers are frustrated with children’s behavior, they often resort to saying ‘no’ or responding punitively” (Brown, Mangelsdorf, Neff, Schoppe-Sullivan, & Frosch, 2009; Lane, Stanton-Chapman, Roorback Jamison, & Phillips, 2007). What comes next is almost inevitable; the child asks “Why?” or resists and then the adult wants to say, “Because I said so” or “Do it right now.” What teachers really need is for children to be respectful and cooperative. They want children to trust their guidance, to take their lead and willingly follow directions as opposed to resisting or engaging in power struggles (Kersey & Masterson, 2011).
- Teachers respond more punitively to behaviors of minority students, and refer them to special education three times more often than white students (NEA, 2007).
- Even when poverty is taken into account, minority students are still punished more often in response to the same behaviors as white students (Zehr, 2010).
- Ethnic and cultural differences play a factor in children receiving more punishment (Serwatka, Deering, & Grant, 1995; Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2000).
- Cultural differences play a role in our expectations and in the way we interpret a child’s behavior (Suizzo, Chen, Cheng, Liang, Contreras, Zanger, et al., 2008).

- The way we interpret words, body language, and behaviors can trigger our response (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).
- We may perceive low-income students as having low competence. Our perception affect our response, such as yelling, separation, and searches, as well as more severe consequences (Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2000).
- Children who get punished the most are the ones who we think are “out to get us,” “did it on purpose,” or had spiteful intent (Thijs, Koomen, & van der Leij, 2008).
- Children who irritate us or with whom we have frequent conflict also receive more punishment (Snyder, Cramer, Afrank, & Patterson, 2005).
- Children who are more physically active present a challenge (Wenar & Kerig, 2000).
- Teacher’s responses to children are complicated by the fact that they may be inconsistent from day to day, and reactions may be influenced by mood, stress, or deadlines (Forman, 1990).
- Teachers are not always aware of their own contribution to behavior interactions (Cassidy, Hansen, Kintner, & Hestenes, 2009; Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001).
- “Disproportionate discipline of minority students is consistent across state and national sources. Teacher training in appropriate and culturally competent methods of classroom management is likely then to be the most pressing need in addressing racial disparities in school discipline” (Skiba, Michael, & Nardo, 2000, p. 17).

## Getting Positive Results Using the Principles in Action

What happened or led up to the interaction?

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Which principle did you use?

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How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?)

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What did you learn?

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What happened or led up to the interaction?

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Which principle did you use?

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How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?)

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What did you learn?

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## Guide to the Principles

- 12. Modeling:** Model the behavior you want. Show the child, by example, how to behave. Children are watching us all the time, and they will grow up to be like us—whether we want them to or not.
- 13. Make a Big Deal:** Make a big deal over responsible, considerate, appropriate behavior—with eye contact, thanks, praise, thumbs-up, recognition, hugs, special privileges, or incentives (not food).
- 14. Incompatible Alternative:** Give the child something to do that is incompatible with the inappropriate behavior. Say, “Let’s pretend we are on a secret mission and see if we can walk

all the way to the cafeteria without anyone hearing us.” “Help me pick out six markers” (when the child is unfocused or annoying). If a child is bothering you by playing with his shoestrings, instead of mentioning it, simply ask him to help you by sorting the papers or crayons by color.

15. **Choice:** Give the child two choices, both of which are positive and acceptable to you. “Would you rather tiptoe or hop over to the carpet? You choose or I’ll choose.” “We need to clear off our desks. Do you need one minute or two?” (Then set the timer.) The Choice Principle gives the child two incompatible alternatives. The teacher states the desired goal and then gives the child two choices about how it can be accomplished. “We need to put away the toys. Would you rather help with the puzzles or the blocks?”
16. **When–Then/Abuse It–Lose It:** “When you put your books on the shelf, then you may put on your coat.” “When you finish putting the play-dough away, then you may choose a partner for the game.”
17. **Follow-Through/Consistency:** Don’t let the child manipulate you out of using your better

judgment. Be firm (but kind)! Trust your intuition. If it doesn’t feel right, don’t let the child do it. Come up with choices and alternatives that can help your child to focus on more appropriate behavior and positive learning experiences.

18. **Validation:** Acknowledge (validate) the child’s wants and feelings. “I know you feel frustrated with your friend and want to keep both books to yourself. I don’t blame you. I would feel the same way. However, she needs to have one. Do you want to choose which one, or shall I?”
19. **Extinction:** Ignore minor misbehavior that is not dangerous, destructive, embarrassing, or an impediment to learning. (Pretend that you didn’t hear, move away, or focus on something else.)
20. **Take Time to Teach:** Often we expect children to read our minds and know how to do things they have never been taught. Although our expectations may be clear to us, our children may not have a clue.
21. **Punt the Plan:** In the middle of something that is not working, move on to something else. De-stress yourself. Be willing to stay flexible and quickly switch directions when you see that children are unable to focus or need a break.

## Study Guide

- a. **Goal Setting:** Describe the child who, when present, makes the day go better for everyone. Next, describe the child who, when not present, makes the day seem easier. What skills does the first child have that the second does not? What could be done to model and practice the needed skills and create a positive experience for this child? In what areas do you need help or support in improving your interactions and reactions to this child?
- b. **Questioning and Reflection: *Topic 1:*** *Punishment* refers to inflicting pain on purpose. There are many ways to hurt others that do not include physical punishment. Can you think of examples? What are some ways that others hurt us, maybe without even realizing it? Can you think of some reasons why punishment might be unfair to children? ***Topic 2:*** How do you feel when you need to teach a classroom of children, yet several are not following instructions? In what way might your upbringing or beliefs about discipline affect the way you feel about or respond to children at that time?
- c. **Case Study: *Scenario 1:*** Jason is a very fidgety child in your classroom. He finds many reasons why he needs to run out of line, lie on the floor during learning time, and roam around the room. He seems constantly distracted. What could you do? Use the principles in this chapter to create solutions. ***Scenario 2:*** Carlos is a child in Mrs. Pinneli’s

first-grade classroom. This is his first year in an inclusive classroom. When he wants something someone else is holding, he tries to grab it away, often hitting the other child in order to get it. A few parents have begun to complain that the behavior is detrimental to the learning of the other children. What could you do? Use the principles in this chapter to create solutions.

**d. Personal Examples/Group Brainstorming:**

**Topic 1/Ultimatums:** What is one ultimatum you have given or that you have heard someone else give? What does the child learn when he is given an ultimatum? How does an ultimatum place the interaction in an unstable place?

**Topic 2/Consistency:** What type of behavior is most likely to cause teachers to be inconsistent? What do children learn as a result? Describe one scenario in which an adult you observed asked a child to do something, but did not follow through. What could the adult have done differently to create a more positive outcome?

**e. Learners as Experts:** Review the “Strengthening Transitions” section. Which strategies for transitions would be most effective for the chil-

dren in your classroom? What are some other goals or ideas that fit the specific age group (or school community) that will transform your transitions into constructive learning moments?

**f. Principles in Action:** Using the “Getting Positive Results Using the Principles in Action” sheet, share one principle you implemented from this chapter. What happened or led up to the interaction? Which principle did you use? How did the situation turn out? (How did the child/children respond?) What did you learn?

**g. Research on the Run:** After reviewing this section, what benefits listed did you personally experience through positive interactions with a teacher when you were a child? Do these benefits still affect you? Consider a time when a teacher or someone else responded punitively towards you. How did you feel then? Does that interaction still affect you today?

**h. Looking Ahead:** Set the purpose for upcoming study by introducing chapter objectives. Thank you for sharing your personal insight about responsive, positive guidance and for your commitment to making a difference in the lives of children.

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