

How To Use myTeachstone to Build Relationships & Support Communication

Overview

For the next 12 weeks, we're going to help you set up and lead professional learning communities for your infant/toddler teachers that will focus on how they can enhance relationships and the use of conversational language with young children.

To get started, we recommend that you

- (1) Create teacher groups of 4–6 teachers
- (2) Recommend one resource each week to each of these groups
- (3) Write a comment when you recommend each resource to spark interest and focus teachers' attention (for your convenience, we've included sample comments that can be cut and pasted)

To lead these groups, we recommend that you

- (1) Encourage teachers to complete the recommended resources and respond to comments and questions each week
- (2) Actively facilitate group online and/or face-to-face conversations each week about the resources, and encourage teachers to practice what they are learning in the classroom

Below are more detailed ideas on how you can effectively lead online learning groups with myTeachstone. Pages 2–8 list the weekly recommendations with comments and guidance on how to discuss each resource.

Encourage teachers to complete the recommended resources

- **Set expectations. Tell teachers**
 - **The goal of the next 12 weeks is to enhance relationships and the use of conversational language with infants and toddlers**
 - **You'll recommend one online resource each week**
 - **You'll include a comment to spark interest and a question to focus attention**
 - **They'll review the resource that same week**
 - **They'll respond to the question that same week**
 - **Additionally, encourage them to respond to follow-up questions designed to enhance learning each week**

Engage in conversations about resources

- Affirm teachers' participation:
 - "My heart is warmed when I think of you all taking the time and energy to discuss this resource to better help your children. Bravo!"
- Ask follow-up questions that are open-ended and build on the interests of your teachers:
 - "Yari, you said that you often sit with your children and talk with them about what they are looking at and/or playing with in the classroom. I think that's a great way to build relationships and support communication! How do your little ones respond when you do this?"

Recommended Resources

Want to know why we're recommending these resources in this order? Check out the resource "Supporting Behavior Change with the *Know, See, Do Approach*" on myTeachstone. Notice how we applied the *Know, See, Do* approach over the course of multiple recommendations:



Know: The courses in weeks 1, 4, 7, & 11 will primarily support teachers' development of CLASS knowledge.



See: The videos in weeks 2, 5, 8, & 9 will primarily support teachers' ability to identify effective interactions, noticing teacher behavior and children's responses both in videos and in their own classrooms.



Do: The blog posts and videos in weeks 3, 6, 10, & 12 will focus on supporting what teachers do, helping them try out new behaviors in the classroom.

To best support teachers as they develop knowledge, increase awareness, and practice new and enhanced teaching behaviors in their classrooms, we suggest that these resources be recommended in the order provided. With that said, we do encourage coaches to modify this unit and the sample comments within to better meet teacher and/or organizational needs and interests. Please note that aligning content is included with each resource on myTeachstone, along with a list of reflective questions for your use in conversations. We anticipate each week's activities taking roughly 30 minutes (depending on the length of the resource and depth of conversations); although this guide offers one resource per week, please modify frequency of recommendations as needed.



Week 1

Recommend: Your Favorite Teacher and CLASS *(15 min. course)*

Comment: “Hello wonderful teachers! I’m excited to join you in learning how to build relationships and support communication with young children. I want to start with an interactive experience that I think you will enjoy. The course is 15 minutes and you can watch it all at once or start and stop as your schedule allows. While the interviews and information provided in the course focus on pre-K teachers, we know that teacher-child interactions are important for children of all ages, especially our infants and toddlers. This week, please complete the course and tell the group about your favorite teacher and why he/she is special. Please type your answer in the comment box below. I look forward to hearing from each of you this week.”

In Your Discussion: Discuss the traits that favorite teachers share, focusing on behaviors that build meaningful teacher-child relationships. Talk about the importance of teachers developing caring relationships with the young children in their care. Follow up by asking, “What are some ways in which you enjoy developing relationships with the infants and toddlers in your classroom?”



Week 2

Recommend: Why We Love Kids: Part Three *(blog post with video)*

Comment: “Hello again! It’s time to have some fun this week with a short blog post that features a great video. The best way to build relationships with children is to genuinely enjoy spending time actively engaging with them. Kids share their enthusiasm and joy with us, and that’s why we love to laugh and smile with them. Please watch the video in the blog post this week and let us know your reaction. What do you see and hear the teacher and children doing to demonstrate enjoyment for each other’s company? I encourage you to watch videos more than once to help you really notice all of the interactions.”

In Your Discussion: Encourage teachers to find the joy in the video, as clearly shown by both the teacher and the children, and to share their reactions. Follow up by asking, “Why do you think it is important for teachers to not only take care of but also genuinely enjoy being around and interacting with infants and toddlers? Thank you for sharing your thoughts with the group.”



Week 3

Recommend: [Teacher Tips: Fostering Peer Relationships](#) *(blog post with videos)*

Comment: “This week we’ll continue our discussion by considering how teachers can help young children develop relationships with each other. Here is a blog post that features videos to help us see how teachers support peer relationships among infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Please tell us how you will try to encourage your children to connect with each other this week. Which activities in your daily schedule do you think might best support relationship building among peers?”

In Your Discussion: Learn about the many different ways teachers foster peer relationships. Encourage discussion about the types of activities and times of day when teachers might focus on cultivating these relationships. Follow up by asking, “How did your children respond to your efforts to help them develop friendships? Why is it important to help young children connect with each other?”



Week 4

Recommend: [Learn About Positive Climate](#) *(15 min. course. Be sure to recommend the Toddler resource.)*

Comment: “In the past 3 weeks we’ve studied the importance of relationships. Now we’ll discuss how relationships are an important part of creating a warm, respectful, and fun classroom environment. Check out this interactive resource on Positive Climate this week. While this is a Toddler resource, creating a warm and positive environment is equally valuable for the infants in our care. How can you tell that teachers and children enjoy spending time together? Describe what you might see or hear in a classroom with Positive Climate.”

In Your Discussion: Discuss the common elements of classrooms with a positive climate. Encourage the group to think about why it is important for teachers and children to genuinely enjoy spending time together and talking with each other. Follow up by asking, “How might you integrate the things that encourage you and your children to interact and have fun together into daily activities?”



Week 5

Recommend: [Relational Behaviors during Outdoor Playtime](#) *(2 min. video)*

Comment: “Thank you for the work you are doing on myTeachstone. I’m excited to find out what you think about this week’s video. It highlights a teacher sitting near an infant and sharing in her “tree house” experience. How does the teacher respond to what the child is doing to show that she enjoys spending time with her? What does the teacher do and say to demonstrate genuine affection and respect?”

In Your Discussion: Talk about how the teacher in the video shares in the child's play experience and connects with the infant. If the comments your teachers write are general, ask for more specific details of what they noticed in the video. Follow up by saying, "Thank you for writing about what you saw the teacher do in the video. Now please respond with a comment on how the child responded to the teacher's efforts during this playful interaction."



Week 6

Recommend: Teacher Tips: Being "In the Moment" with Children *(blog post)*

Comment: "This week, let's enjoy a blog post that reminds us of the importance of being 'in the moment' as we engage with children. When we make time to genuinely connect to and enjoy interacting with children, we increase our ability to be 'in the moment' and truly listen to and respond to children's thoughts, feelings, and needs. I encourage you to plan one or two times in your busy day when you can dedicate yourself to simply being 'in the moment' and focus on having meaningful and enjoyable interactions with your infants and toddlers. Please follow through on your plan this week and share one of your favorite moments of connection with the group."

In Your Discussion: Learn about your teachers' favorite experiences of being "in the moment" with their children this week, and thank them for sharing. Encourage them to reflect on how these enjoyable moments spent interacting with children help to strengthen relationships. Follow up by saying, "Thank you for focusing on being 'in the moment' this week. How does being more present and engaged as you interact with children help to strengthen feelings of warmth, connection and enjoyment in the classroom? Please share your thoughts with the group so we can learn from each other. Thank you!"



Week 7

Recommend: Learn about Early Language Support *(15 min. course)*

Comment: "We've already discussed ways that we can interact with infants and toddlers to help establish warm, supportive relationships. This week, let's go even deeper, thinking about how we can support communication in the classroom to help young children develop early language skills. Please watch this course on Early Language Support. After watching the course, tell us why you think it is important for teachers to talk to infants and toddlers, model turn-taking, and imitate the words and sounds the children say."

In Your Discussion: Discuss the importance of consistently exposing young children to language and encouraging their communication attempts. Challenge teachers to increase how often they talk with the young children in their care throughout the day. Follow up by saying, "Please share why you think early language support matters for infants and toddlers. Thank you!"



Week 8

Recommend: Teacher Talk at the Changing Table *(2 min. video)*

Comment: “Now let’s observe a teacher supporting language during a diapering routine. Notice how she makes the most of this one-on-one time to talk with the child for several minutes. What do you see and hear the teacher do to communicate with and respond to the child? What are some of the complete sentences you hear her say to the child?”

In Your Discussion: Encourage teachers to provide specific examples, rather than general statements. Guide them in noticing how the teacher in the video talks and responds to the child. Follow up by saying, “When teachers talk with young children and respond specifically to what they say or do ‘in the moment,’ they support and encourage early language development. This week I encourage you to become aware of when and how you talk with your children during daily routines, such as diapering and potty training.”



Week 9

Recommend: Supporting Language Development While Reading "Curious George" *(2 min. video)*

Comment: “Now let’s listen to a teacher engage in a back-and-forth exchange with a child about a book during morning arrival time. Notice how she persists in responding to the child’s use of language while maintaining a natural flow of conversation. What do you see and hear the teacher do to encourage the child to continue talking during this back-and-forth exchange? How does the child respond? Please describe a specific exchange you observed.”

In Your Discussion: Encourage teachers to provide specific examples, rather than general statements. Guide them in noticing how the teacher in the video asked questions and responded contingently based on what the child said and/or did. Follow up by saying, “When teachers use conversational language with young children and respond specifically to what children say or do ‘in the moment,’ they support and encourage children’s continued use of language. This week I encourage you to become aware of when and how you actively engage young children in back-and-forth exchanges throughout the day.”



Week 10

Recommend: [Teacher Tips: Supporting Language Development](#) (*blog post with video*)

Comment: “Conversations with children are important, no matter the child’s age. Check out this blog post with a video that shows a teacher talking with a tiny baby. The author writes about having a back-and-forth flow of genuine conversations with infants by pausing and making eye contact after comments and/or questions. Modeling conversational turn-taking helps us to engage with infants and toddlers and encourages them to verbally respond to us. After trying this conversational strategy a few times, please let the group know about your experiences engaging in ‘conversations’ with the infants and toddlers in your care. Thank you!”

In Your Discussion: Find out about your teachers’ experiences talking with young children this week. Be sure to encourage their efforts. Guide your teachers in writing about their children’s responses to their conversational efforts. Did the babies vocalize more, make eye contact, or reach for them? Did the toddlers stay engaged in a shared activity longer, make eye contact, or use words to express their thoughts? Follow up by saying, “Reflect on the interactions you’ve had with your infants and toddlers this week and let us know what you think the difference is between talking *at* young children and talking *with* them. We look forward to hearing your thoughts.”



Week 11

Recommend: [Infant-Toddler Caregiving: Observing Children’s Cues](#) (*15 min. course*)

Comment: “I’m really excited to share this week’s course with you. As part of the interactive experience, you’ll get a chance to learn about and practice detecting young children’s cues. By observing what we see and hear in the classroom, we can become more aware of the messages and/or signals our young children use daily to communicate their thoughts, needs, and wants. What are some things you see and hear children doing in your classroom to communicate? When and where can you practice observing children’s cues more regularly in your classroom?”

In Your Discussion: Encourage teachers to share their observations. Acknowledge their efforts and support them in practicing the important skill of observing children. Follow up by saying; “We can learn a great deal by observing our children. How does focusing on what our children say and do ‘in the moment’ help us know how to interact with our children in more meaningful ways?”



Week 12

Recommend: Repeating and Extending Children's Language during Lunch (2 min. video)

Comment: “This is our last week in our study about building relationships and supporting communication. I’d like to honor all that you have learned by asking you to watch this week’s video and consider how the teacher might have engaged children in even more conversations during lunchtime. As you watch the teacher talk with a group of five children, what do you see and hear her do to encourage and support children’s use of language? While the teacher has several back-and-forth exchanges with some of the children, how do you think the teacher might get her kids talking even more in this moment?”

In Your Discussion: Respond in positive ways to the suggestions your teachers offer to help get kids talking. Acknowledge all that they have learned, as reflected in the meaningful advice they are likely able to provide at this point. Follow up by saying, “I encourage you to apply all that you have learned to enhance your interactions with young children. Thank you for learning with us about building relationships and encouraging infants and toddlers to communicate. Happy teaching!”

Want More?

Making progress? Want to keep working on conversations? Consider recommending additional resources. Encourage teachers to explore myTeachstone’s resource collection freely and pursue self study on topics of interest. Please note that aligning content is included with each resource on myTeachstone, along with a list of reflective questions for your use in conversations.

Infant Videos

- Shared Positive Emotions While Playing with a Puppet
- Sharing Positive Affect While Singing
- Teacher Talk during Feeding Routines
- Talking with an Infant during the Diapering Routine
- Supporting and Extending a Child's Sounds
- Modeling Turn-Taking with a Young Infant
- Teacher Talk during Floor Time
- Supporting Communication at the Mirror
- Relational Behaviors and Respect during Morning Arrival
- Supporting Language Development during Diapering
- Teacher Talk during Applesauce Feeding
- Displaying Enthusiasm during a Caregiving Routine
- Warmth and Respect at the Changing Table

Infant Blog Posts / PDFs

- What Really Matters for Infants
- Getting to the Heart of Quality Teaching
- Expanding High-Quality Interactions into Infant and Toddler Settings
- Importance of Play

Toddler Videos

- Fostering Relationships While Talking about Justin Bieber
- Fostering Warm Relationships While Singing "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"
- Warmth and Calm Communication during Diapering
- Respect and Affection during Mealtime
- Building Relationships through Musical Games
- Asking Open-Ended Questions about a Child's Book
- Supporting Language Use While Talking about a Picture
- Encouraging Language While Coloring
- Modeling Language at Lunchtime

Toddler Blog Posts / PDFs

- Getting to the Heart of Quality Teaching
- Expanding High-Quality Interactions into Infant and Toddler Settings
- Importance of Play
- Why We Love Kids: Part 2