

# How to Use myTeachstone to Support Relationships & Communication

## Overview

For the next 12 weeks, we're going to help you set up and lead professional learning communities for your infant teachers that will focus on how they can support relationships and communication with infants in their care.

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 2–6 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 support relationships and communication with infants**
  - **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 provide words for infants as you interact with them by talking with them about what you are doing. I think that's a great way to support relationships and communication with babies! How do your infants 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, 5, & 8 will primarily support teachers' development of CLASS knowledge.



**See:** The videos and blog post in weeks 2, 3, 6, 9, & 11 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 4, 7, 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 support relationships and communication with infants. 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. 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 infants in their care. Follow up by asking, “What are some ways in which you develop relationships with the infants 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 to also genuinely enjoy being with and interacting with infants? Thank you for sharing your thoughts with the group.”



## Week 3

**Recommend:** Building Relational Climate While Playing with a Train (2 min. video)

**Comment:** “This week let’s focus on how to develop warm, supportive relationships with infants. I found a short video to get us thinking about how we support relationships

throughout the day in the ways in which we talk with and interact with infants. How do you see the two teachers responding to the children in this video? What are some things they do and say to encourage warm and friendly relationships in the classroom?"

**In Your Discussion:** Encourage teachers to find the many ways in which the teachers positively respond with relationship-building behavior, such as physical closeness, gentle touches, smiles, warm voice, and enthusiasm for interacting with the infants. Follow up by asking, "How do the infants respond to the teachers in the video? How do the teachers encourage a positive and happy atmosphere in the classroom?"



## Week 4

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

**Comment:** "This week we'll continue our discussion by considering how teachers can help infants 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 encourage your infants to connect with each other in your classroom. How do your infants respond?"

**In Your Discussion:** Learn about the many different ways teachers foster peer relationships. Encourage discussion about infants' responses to teachers' efforts to support friendly child-to-child connections. Follow up by asking, "When and how can you encourage friendly connections among infants during daily activities? Why is this important?"



## Week 5

**Recommend:** [Learn about Relational Climate](#) (*15 min. course*)

**Comment:** "In the past month we've studied the importance of supportive relationships. Now we'll discover how we can encourage friendly connections and communication in the classroom. Check out this interactive resource on Relational Climate this week. How can you tell that teachers and infants enjoy spending time together? Describe what you might see or hear in the classroom."

**In Your Discussion:** Discuss the common elements shared in the teachers' responses. Encourage the group to think about why it is important for teachers and infants to genuinely enjoy spending time together and communicating with each other. Follow up by asking, "How might you integrate the things that encourage you and your infants to interact and have fun together into daily activities?"



## Week 6

**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 the child’s “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 show the child genuine affection and respect?”

**In Your Discussion:** Talk about how the teacher in the video shared in the child’s play experience and responded to the child “in the moment.” 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 in the video.”



## Week 7

**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 young children. When we make time to genuinely connect to and enjoy interacting with infants, we increase our ability to be ‘in the moment’ and truly listen to and respond to infants’ 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 children. 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 infants help to strengthen the relational climate in the classroom? Please share your thoughts with the group so we can learn from each other. Thank you!”



## Week 8

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

**Comment:** “We’ve already discussed ways that we can interact with infants to help establish warm, supportive relationships. This week, let’s go even deeper in thinking about how we can support communication in the classroom to help infants 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, model turn-taking, and imitate the words and sounds infants say.”

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



## Week 9

**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 talked and responded to the child. Follow up by saying, “When teachers talk with infants and respond specifically to what a child says or does ‘in the moment,’ they support and encourage infants’ early language. This week I encourage you to become aware of when and how do you do this in your classroom.”



## 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 our comments and/or questions. Modeling conversational turn-taking helps us to engage infants and encourage them to respond. After trying this conversational strategy a few times, please let the group know about your experiences engaging in ‘conversations’ with the infants in your classrooms. Thank you!”

**In Your Discussion:** Find out about your teachers' experiences talking with infants this week. Be sure to encourage their efforts. Guide your teachers in writing about infants' responses to their conversational efforts. Did the babies vocalize more, make eye contact, reach for them, etc? Follow up by saying, "Reflect on the interactions you've had with your infants this week and let us know what you think the difference is between talking *at* infants and talking *with* them. We look forward to hearing your thoughts."



## Week II

**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 infants' cues. By observing what we see and hear in the classroom, we can become more aware of the messages and/or signals our infants use daily to communicate their thoughts, needs, and wants. What are some things you see and hear infants doing in your classroom to communicate? When and where can you practice observing infants' 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 their infants this week. Follow up by saying, "We can learn a great deal by observing infants. How does focusing on what our infants vocalize and do 'in the moment' help us discover how to interact with them in more meaningful ways?"



## Week I2

**Recommend:** *Encouraging a Child to Verbalize a Greeting* (1 min. video)

**Comment:** "Now that we've discovered more about observing infants, it's time to practice all that we've learned during this unit of study. I'd like to ask you to think of additional ways the teacher in this week's video might support friendly communication among infants in the classroom. As you watch this video, observe how the teacher supports relationship building and uses conversational language with the little boy. What do you see and hear the teacher do to encourage and enhance the boy's use of language? When the child responds by waving and saying his friend's name, what are some additional ways the teacher could support the boy in communicating with his friend?"

**In Your Discussion:** React in positive ways to the suggestions your teachers offer for supporting infants' ability to interact and communicate with others. 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 how you interact with your infants. Thank you for learning with us about supporting relationships and communication. 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.

### *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

### *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