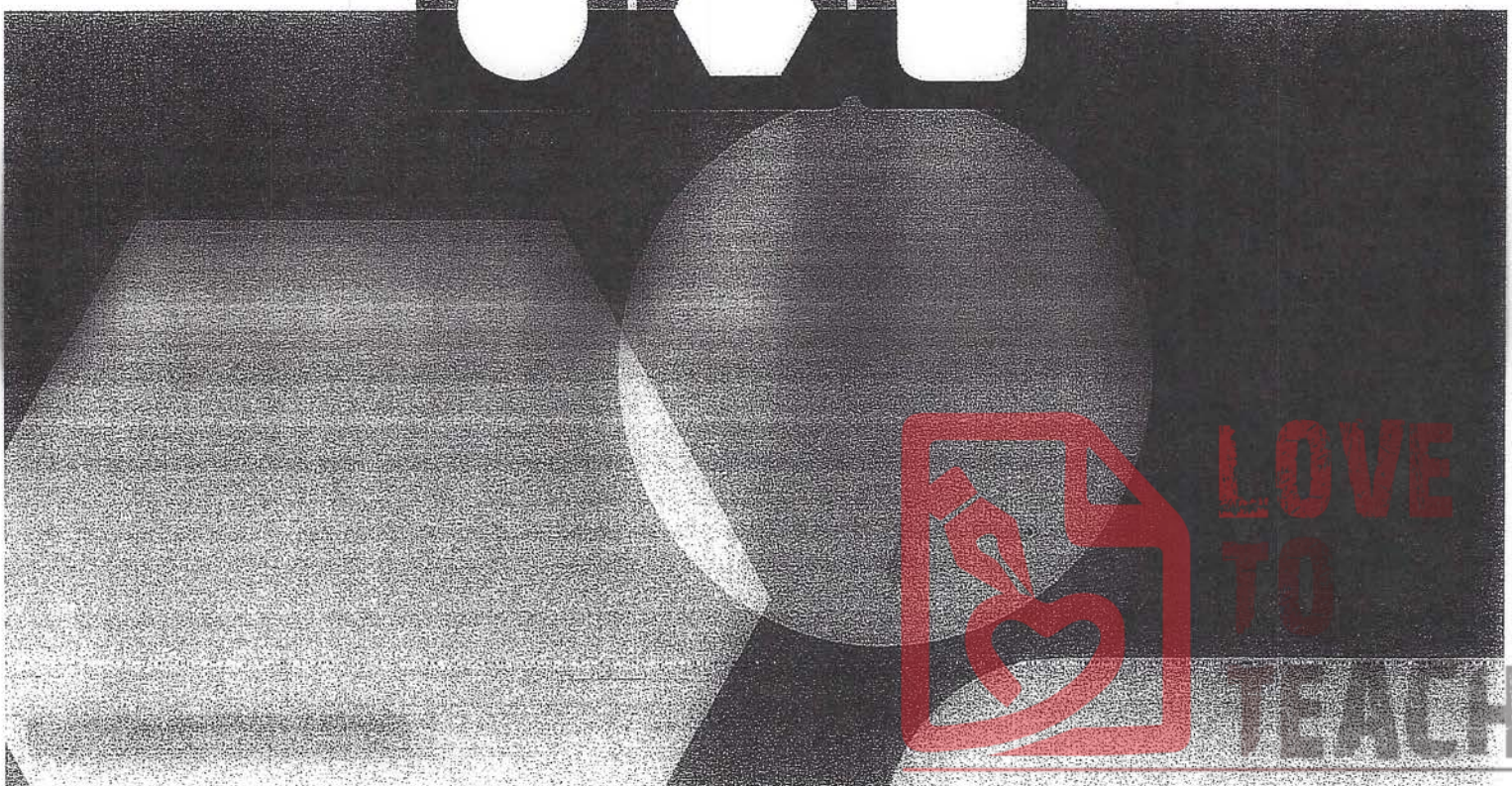
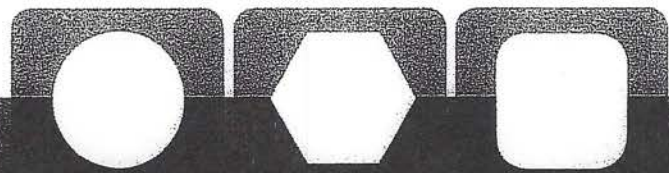


# Dimensions Guide



LOVE  
TO  
TEACH



# Welcome to the CLASS

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) is an observation tool that focuses on the effectiveness of classroom interactions among teachers and children, because it is these daily interactions that promote children's social and cognitive development. Children thrive when teachers create nurturing, well-managed settings and provide frequent and engaging opportunities to learn.



# What does the CLASS measure?

The CLASS describes three broad domains of effective teacher-child interactions—Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support.

- **EMOTIONAL SUPPORT** refers to specific teaching behaviors that help children develop warm, supportive relationships, experience enjoyment and excitement about learning, feel comfortable in the classroom, and experience appropriate levels of autonomy or independence.
- **CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION** describes specific teaching behaviors that help children develop skills to regulate their own behavior, get the most learning out of each day, and maintain interest in learning activities.
- **INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT** refers to specific teaching behaviors that support children's cognitive development and language growth.

Within each of the three domains, there are multiple dimensions that each focus on a different aspect of teacher-child interactions. Each of these dimensions includes a set of effective teaching practices. For example, Positive Climate focuses on how teachers interact with children to develop warm relationships that promote children's enjoyment of the learning community, and Concept Development focuses on how teachers interact with children to deepen their understanding of concepts and to promote analytical thinking skills.

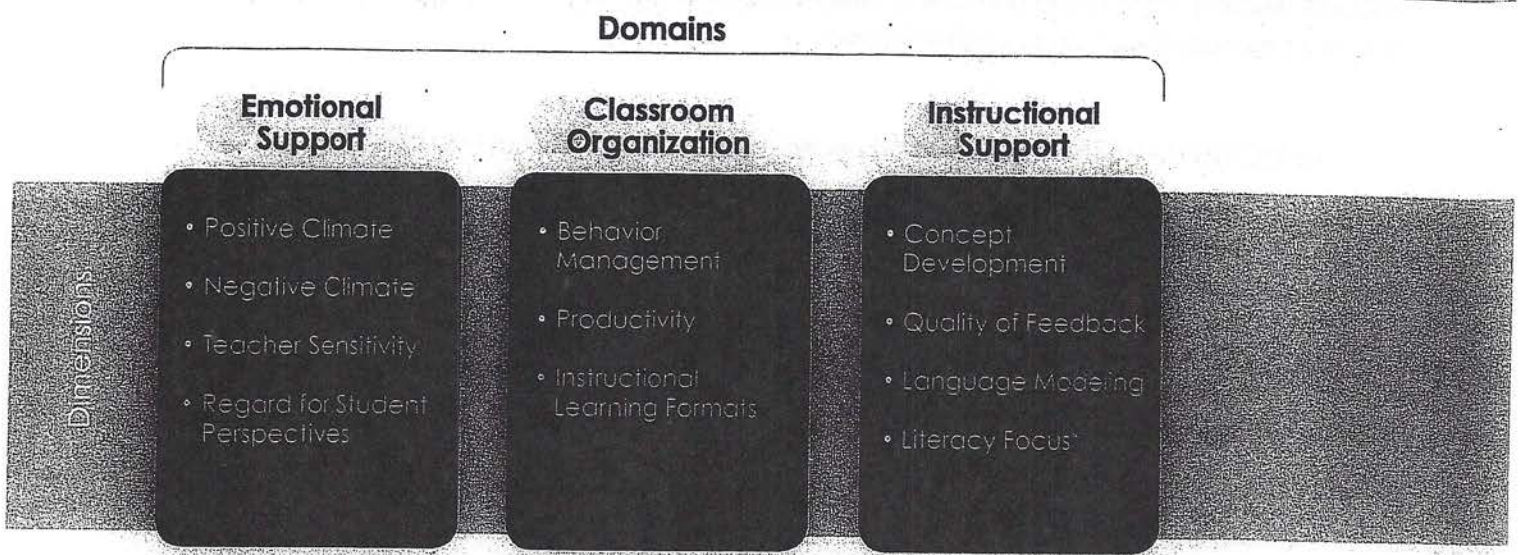
## How do we know that the CLASS measures effective teaching?

Research in thousands of early childhood classrooms across the country shows that children in classrooms that score higher on the CLASS make greater gains in language, math, and early literacy development. Children in these higher-scoring classrooms also show more positive social development over the course of the year than their peers in lower-scoring classrooms. This research has included a diverse range of teachers, children, and programs, showing that the types of classroom interactions measured by the CLASS are effective across settings.





# Domains and Dimensions of the CLASS\*



\* Note: The Literacy Focus dimension is currently being piloted

## How can I learn more?

Log on to [www.class.teachstone.org](http://www.class.teachstone.org) to subscribe to the Pre-K CLASS Video Library. Watch video examples of effective classroom interactions related to each dimension as you read through the Pre-K CLASS Dimensions Guide. You can also purchase the Pre-K CLASS Manual on this site. The Manual provides detailed information about indicators and behavioral markers for each dimension of the CLASS.

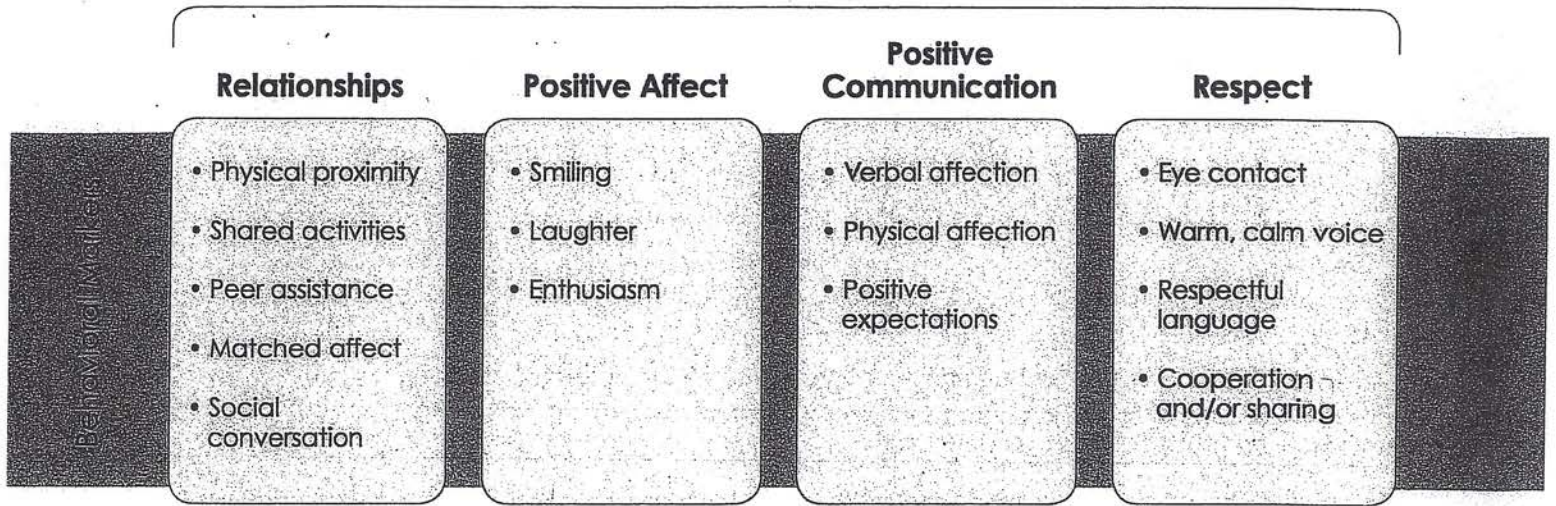


5 ~ Welcome to the CLASS

[www.lovetoteach.org](http://www.lovetoteach.org)

# Positive Climate

## Indicators



## What is it?

In classrooms with a strong positive climate, teachers and children are enthusiastic about learning and respectful of one another. Teachers and children develop warm, supportive relationships with each other and clearly enjoy being together and spending time in the classroom. Their interactions provide children with a secure base for learning and exploration of academic and social skills.

## Why is it important?

Children are more motivated to learn when they feel happy, relaxed, and connected to others. They get more out of lessons when they are excited about participating. When the classroom climate is positive, children have a secure base for learning. Teachers and children enjoy being with each other and are able to get the most out of their time together.





# How can I create a more positive climate in my classroom?

## **Enjoy time with children.**

Share in fun, relaxing moments with children. During free time or while walking to lunch, take time to interact with children and enjoy being with them.

## **Make learning fun.**

Look for opportunities to make everyday learning activities fun for children. Think about the things that make children laugh and smile and find ways to integrate these things into everyday activities.

## **Show your enthusiasm.**

Make sure you let the children know that you enjoy your job and like spending time with them. If you are enthusiastic about classroom activities, the children will be as well.

## **Make positive comments and communicate your warm feelings toward children.**

Look for opportunities to comment positively on children's efforts and participation. Clearly communicate your warm feelings toward children. For example, tell a child that you missed her yesterday when she was home sick. Over time, your consistent positive interactions and warmth will help children feel connected to you and comfortable in the classroom.

## **Engage in social conversation.**

Ask children questions about their lives outside the classroom, then remember to ask about things that are important to them, such as family members or their outside activities. Take time to listen when they come up to tell you something exciting that happened to them.

## **Be respectful and personal.**

Be respectful in interactions with children. Use their names when you talk to them and model the use of polite language, such as please, thank you, and you're welcome.

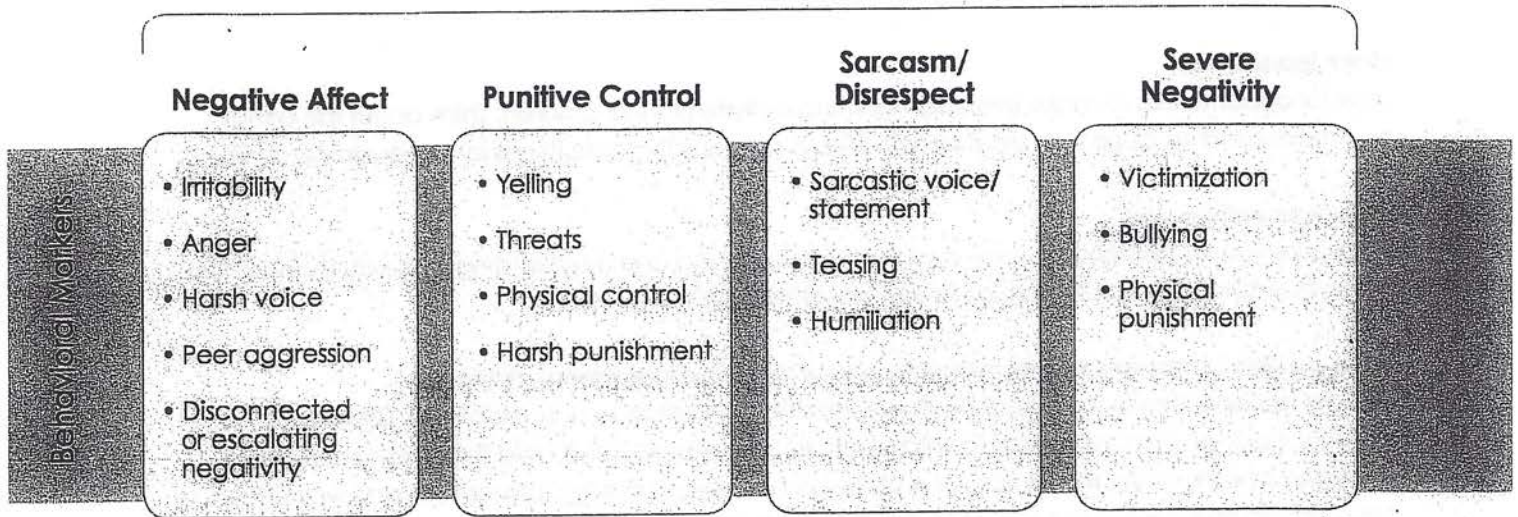
## **Facilitate positive peer interactions.**

Encourage children to engage in positive interactions with each other. Teach and model the importance of sharing, helping others, and being respectful so that children can start using these strategies in interactions with their peers.



# Negative Climate

## Indicators



## What is it?

Negative climate refers to the level of expressed negativity such as anger, hostility or aggression shown by teachers and/or children. In classrooms with negative climate, teachers and children appear angry or irritated and make sarcastic or disrespectful comments. Teachers may yell or threaten to control children's behavior. In classrooms with severe negative climate, teachers or children may hit or fight.

## Why is it important?

Children learn better and develop positive social-emotional skills in environments free from aggression and threats to physical and emotional safety. Working to improve other dimensions of Emotional Support can help decrease negative climate.





# How can I reduce negative climate in my classroom?

## **Build close, warm relationships with each child in your classroom.**

A strong relationship with the teacher helps children feel safe and secure. When children feel secure, they are less likely to display negative or challenging behaviors.

## **Think about when and why negativity happens in your classroom and come up with a plan to diminish it.**

Ask yourself questions like, "When and why does this child display negative behaviors?" or "Do I react with irritation to specific behaviors or children or during specific activities? Why do I do this? How can I change this?" Then, come up with a plan to diminish these behaviors. For example, when Kejra can't sit still during meeting time, instead of becoming irritated and sending her to time out, I will ask my assistant to take her to the puzzle area to play.

## **Spend one-on-one time with children who present challenging and/or negative behaviors.**

Some children need extra support and attention to build a sense of trust and to develop a close relationship with you. A few times a week, spend one-on-one time with a child who presents challenging behaviors, doing something that the child enjoys. This will help you to focus on the child's positive qualities while also building the child's trust in you.

## **If needed, support children in working through intense, negative feelings.**

When a child behaves in a negative way, such as by using aggression, calmly intervene and clearly let the child know that type of behavior is unacceptable. Afterward, talk with the child one-on-one about what happened and give her alternatives for dealing with intense feelings such as anger. For example, tell a child that if she feels angry she can talk with you about it, stomp her foot, or take some time to be alone and calm down.

## **Implement positive, proactive behavior management strategies.**

Be proactive and plan ahead to prevent misbehavior and/or potential negative behaviors. For example, tell children you are bringing a timer out to the playground so that each child gets a turn on one of the bicycles. Being proactive cuts down on time you spend responding to misbehavior or negative behaviors. However, if you do need to respond to misbehavior, use low reactivity by keeping your face and demeanor calm and directly stating the behavior you expect.

## **Take care of yourself.**

Teachers work hard and have to juggle a lot to implement a nurturing and educational program for children. When teachers feel overwhelmed or fatigued, they are more likely to react with irritation. Take your lunch and other breaks in your schedule, and whenever possible, use the time to relax and decompress.

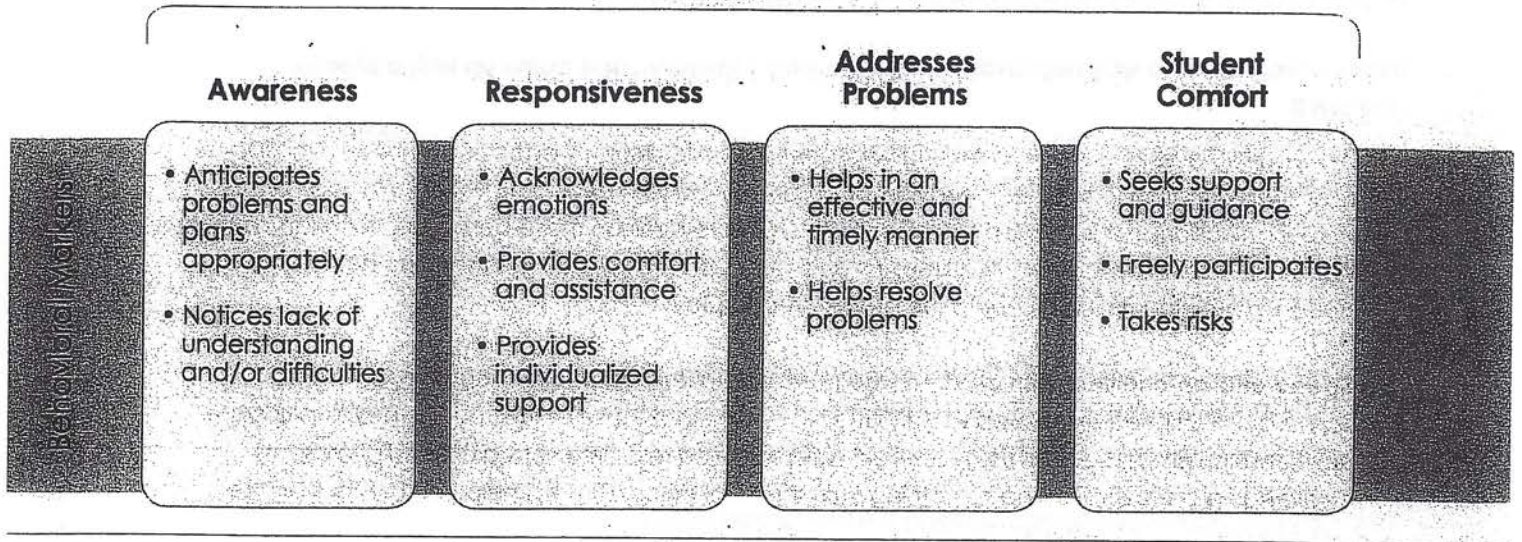


[www.lovetoteach.org](http://www.lovetoteach.org)



# Teacher Sensitivity

## Indicators



## What is it?

Teachers are sensitive when they consistently, quickly and effectively respond to individual children based on verbal or behavioral cues. Sensitive teachers are aware of each child's academic and emotional abilities and needs, which allows them to anticipate areas of difficulty and provide appropriate levels of support. Teachers who are aware of and respond to each child supportively facilitate the ability of all children in the classroom to explore actively and learn.

## Why is it important?

Children in a classroom with sensitive teachers grow to see teachers as a source of support, reassurance, and guidance. Teaching sensitively helps children feel comfortable with sharing their ideas and challenging themselves academically and socially. It also allows children to work well on their own and in groups because they know that if a problem or question arises they can go to the teacher, who will help them resolve their problem effectively.





# How can I increase my sensitivity to children's needs?

## **Understand each child's social and academic functioning and individualize accordingly.**

Use formal and informal assessment throughout the year to understand each child's level of social and academic functioning. Use this information to individualize the curriculum and your interactions with each child. As you plan and implement daily activities, anticipate and respond to each child's strengths and needs so that your activities are developmentally and individually appropriate.

## **Take time to notice how children are doing in the moment.**

Actively monitor how children are doing throughout the day. During center times, walk around the room, get down on the children's level, and engage in play with them. During small group lessons, check in with each child to ensure they all understand the activity. During large group lessons, watch for children who appear disengaged or confused. These "in the moment" interactions will keep you consistently aware of children's individual needs so that you can provide timely and appropriate support.

## **Respond in the moment to children's academic and emotional needs.**

Consistently monitor children to be aware of how they are doing in activities. Be aware if work is too difficult (or too easy) for children and respond in a timely manner. For example, if you are working on making patterns with children and you notice a child does not understand, work individually with the child as soon as possible to help him understand the activity and related concepts. If necessary, adapt the activity to meet the child's academic needs.

## **Tune in to and be responsive to children's non-verbal cues.**

Young children don't always express what they are thinking or feeling. Check in with individual children, especially when a child's facial expressions and body language tell you that the child needs academic or emotional support, and be responsive as needed. If a child can't express his thoughts in words, use language to describe what he might be thinking and then provide comfort or assistance.

## **Make every effort to listen to and respond to children.**

Teachers are often overwhelmed with questions and children's requests. Try to take time to respond to all questions or requests. Respond immediately or let the children know you heard them and will respond at a later point – and then make a point to follow up. This lets children know that they are important to you and that you are someone who helps and is responsive to their needs.

## **Actively encourage children to see you as a source of comfort and support in the classroom.**

Although some children rely on the adults in their life for comfort and support, others have had fewer positive experiences with adults and may need explicit teaching and experience in how to rely on adults for emotional and academic support. Making statements to the class or individuals such as, "I can help if you are having a hard time," and regularly providing comfort and assistance to children encourages them to see you as someone they can go to for support.

## **In challenging moments, try taking your children's perspectives.**

Every teacher experiences moments that test his or her patience. By making an active effort to take children's perspectives during these challenging moments, you may find yourself being less reactive and more responsive to children's needs.





# Regard for Student Perspectives

## Indicators

### Flexibility and Student Focus

- Shows flexibility
- Incorporates students' ideas
- Follows students' leads

### Support for Autonomy and Leadership

- Allows choice
- Allows students to lead lessons
- Gives students responsibility

### Student Expression

- Encourages student talk
- Elicits ideas and/or perspectives

### Restriction of Movement

- Allows movement
- Is not rigid

Behavioral Markers

## What is it?

Teachers with a high regard for children's perspectives intentionally and consistently place an emphasis on children's interests, motivations, and points of view. In classrooms high on this dimension, teachers promote children's independence by providing meaningful roles for them within the classroom, encouraging them to talk, listening to their ideas, and allowing them to make decisions for themselves when appropriate.

## Why is it important?

Few moments are more exciting for young children than realizing that they can do something on their own. By looking for opportunities to facilitate these moments and actively seeking out children's thoughts and ideas, teachers increase children's motivation and desire to learn.



# How can I increase my regard for children's perspectives?

## **Actively seek out, listen to, and support children's ideas, points of view, and active participation.**

Take the time to ask children questions that help them develop and express their own ideas. Listen closely to what they say and make sure that your lessons aren't dominated by teacher talk. Provide many opportunities for children to talk and make meaningful contributions in a variety of classroom activities.

## **Be flexible and go with the flow of children's ideas.**

While there are times in the day when you need to follow a schedule or implement a teacher-directed activity, make an effort to be flexible when you can. For example, if you are reading a book on animals and the children start making animal sounds and movements, go ahead and let them do this. Playing an active role will increase their engagement in the story.

## **Give children a choice.**

There are many times during the day when you can give children some choice in what they are doing. If you are planning on singing a song during circle time, ask them which song you should sing. Let a child choose which book to read in the cool-down time after recess.

## **Provide time for child-initiated activities and learning.**

During activities such as center time, allow children to select where they will play and what they will do there. Observe children as they work in centers, then follow their lead, and embed learning opportunities into your interactions with them based on what they are doing and the skills and abilities you observe.

## **Provide children with real responsibilities in the classroom.**

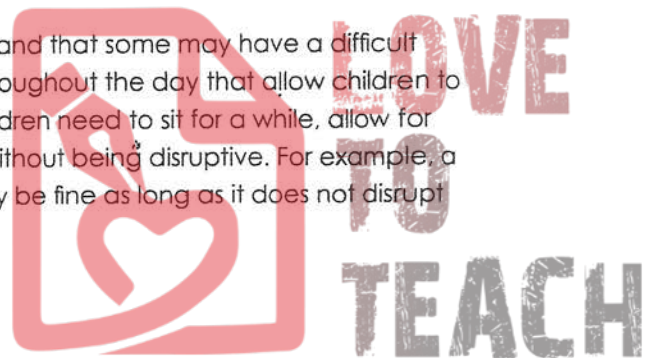
Many classrooms have "jobs" for children. Make sure that these jobs provide some real responsibilities for children and think about ways to increase their level of responsibility as the year goes on. Perhaps at the beginning of the year the calendar leader simply points to the days of the week, but later leads the whole morning calendar routine. Try not to micromanage these jobs, but let the children take them on and make them their own.

## **Encourage children to mentor others.**

Even young children love the opportunity to feel like experts among their peers. Look for opportunities to facilitate these peer interactions. For example, you may identify a child as an expert on block building and structure a construction project in which this child acts as the leader of the group. It is important to monitor and facilitate these interactions as needed to provide the child with an optimal balance between support and independence.

## **Allow children reasonable freedom of movement.**

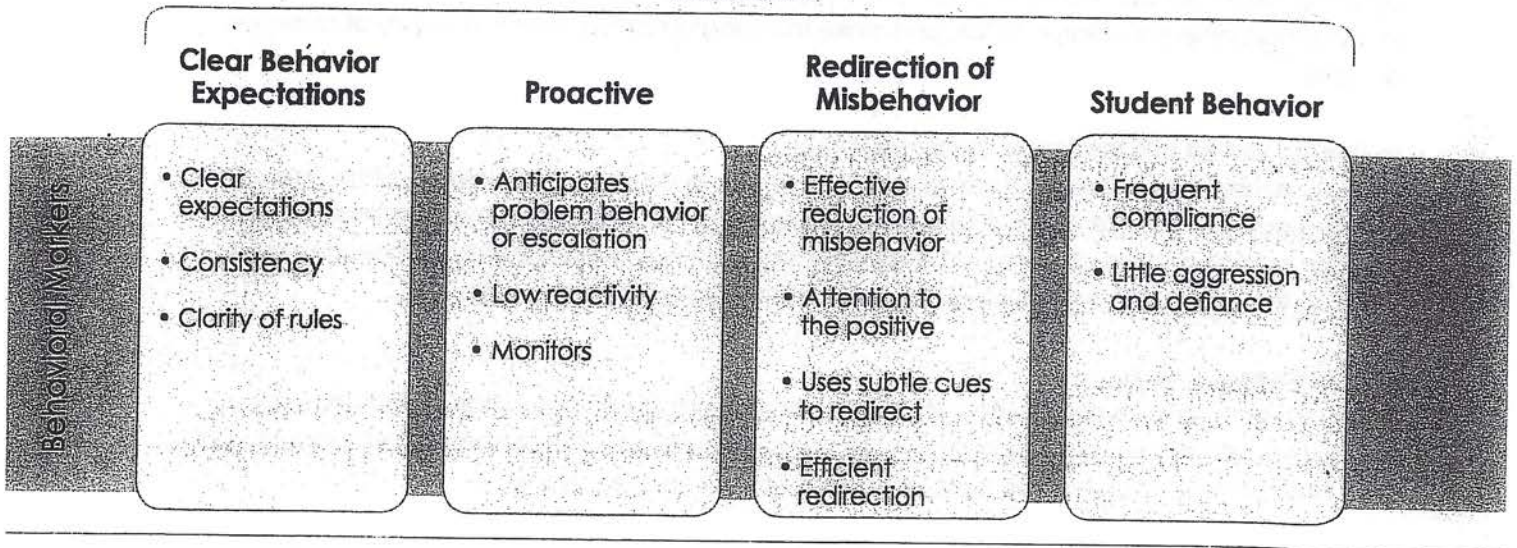
Recognize that young children tend to move around a lot and that some may have a difficult time sitting still for long periods of time. Provide activities throughout the day that allow children to be active. During activities such as meeting time when children need to sit for a while, allow for movement that is natural and comfortable for them without being disruptive. For example, a child wiggling or sitting up on his knees in the back row may be fine as long as it does not disrupt others.





# Behavior Management

## Indicators



## What is it?

Children are most likely to behave appropriately in the classroom when rules and expectations are clearly and consistently communicated. Behavior management works best when focused on proactive intervention and redirection of minor misbehaviors. Effective behavior management provides children with specific expectations for their behavior and then repeated praise when they meet these expectations.

## Why is it important?

In the presence of effective behavior management, children typically understand how to act in the classroom so that little time is spent on managing their behaviors. This minimizes distractions and disruptions, allows the majority of classroom time to be spent on instructional activities, and increases the amount of time that children are immersed in learning throughout the day. Furthermore, dealing with misbehavior can be draining for teachers and children. By reducing the frequency and intensity of behavioral problems, everyone in the classroom enjoys being there more.



# How can I provide effective behavior management in my classroom?

## **Be proactive.**

Intervene before situations escalate and help children problem-solve. Anticipate moments when misbehavior is likely to occur, such as during transitions, and provide children with preferred alternative behaviors: "Put all the blocks away and then join us in the circle."

## **Monitor and redirect children's behavior.**

Look for cues, such as body language and facial expression, that indicate children may be moving toward more disruptive or inattentive behavior. Redirect before minor misbehavior escalates. Effective and quick redirection for individual children includes eye contact, gentle touch, a known gesture, moving closer to the child, or using the child's name: "Ella, what do you see happening in this picture?" Develop classroom routines that quickly reorient the whole class when they are too loud or not paying attention, such as clapping your hands twice, lowering your voice, or singing a song.

## **Clearly state expectations for behavior.**

Make classroom rules easy for children to understand and repeat them regularly. Be specific about expectations so that children know exactly what behavior you expect. If a child is poking a peer during circle time, prompt him to stop by saying "Robert, please put your hands in your lap and focus your eyes up here," rather than, "Stop that, Robert."

## **Be consistent with consequences.**

Immediately following any misbehavior, provide children with a predictable response to the behavior. If it is a classroom rule for children to raise their hands in order to respond, be consistent in only calling on children with a hand raised. Make sure that children know when this rule is or is not in effect.

## **Provide specific feedback when children behave well.**

Rather than telling children, "You are doing a nice job," or "You're behaving really well today," give children specific information about what they are doing well. Saying, "I really like the way Cindy and DeQuan are working together to clean up the blocks area," encourages this behavior and shows the other children which types of behavior you expect.

## **Encourage children to settle disputes.**

Teach children a set of problem-solving steps to handle disputes so that they learn over time how to address problems with minimal help from you.





# Productivity

## Indicators

### Maximizing Learning Time

- Provision of activities
- Choice when finished
- Few disruptions
- Effective completion of managerial tasks
- Pacing

### Routines

- Students know what to do
- Clear instructions
- Little wandering

### Transitions

- Brief
- Explicit follow-through
- Learning opportunities within

### Preparation

- Materials ready and accessible
- Knows lessons

Behavioral Markers

## What is it?

Productive classrooms consist of clearly defined learning activities that are consistently provided for children throughout the day. The classroom feels like a well-oiled machine where everyone knows what is expected of them and how to go about doing it. Little to no instructional time is lost due to unclear expectations for children, lack of materials, time spent waiting around, or extended managerial tasks, such as checking work or giving directions for a center.

## Why is it important?

Highly productive classrooms provide children with a consistent level of learning throughout the day with few lost instructional opportunities.



# How can I be productive in my classroom?

## **Provide consistent, clear learning activities.**

Think about squeezing as much instructional time into the day as possible. Provide an alternative activity for children who complete a task early. Give short, simple instructions to let children know exactly what they are supposed to do.

## **Be organized and efficient, and plan ahead.**

Prepare for instructional activities in advance so that all materials are ready and accessible. Practice lessons ahead of time and plan your daily schedule with efficiency in mind. Make sure that your children know the plan and provide them with clear instructions for what comes next.

## **Minimize disruptions to learning.**

In the face of inevitable distractions, such as announcements or someone entering the room, keep the children's focus on the activity at hand with quick redirections. Be proactive in thinking about how to reengage the children as soon as a disruption is over.

## **Minimize time spent on managerial tasks.**

Take care of managerial tasks, such as recording attendance, quickly or during times when children are involved in a learning activity on their own or with another adult.

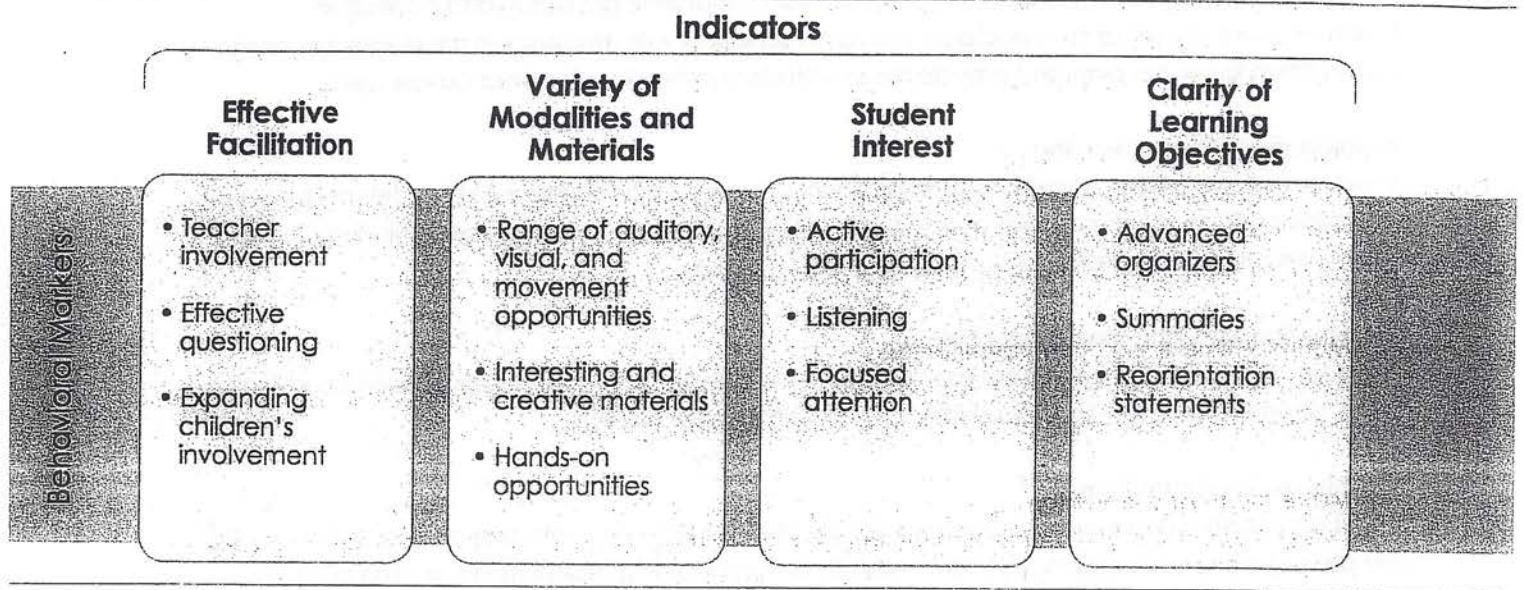
## **Make the most of transitions.**

Develop consistent and interesting routines to help children transition from one activity to the next or one area of the room to another. Think of ways to embed learning moments in transition activities. For example, dismiss children from a whole-group activity by calling on children whose names start with specific letters.





# Instructional Learning Formats



## What is it?

Instructional learning formats measures ways in which teachers maximize children's interest, engagement, and ability to learn from lessons and activities. In classrooms with effective instructional learning formats, teachers provide instruction using many modalities, such as visual, oral, and movement, look for opportunities to actively engage children, and facilitate learning during group lessons, centers, and one-on-one time.

## Why is it important?

Children who are interested and engaged in classroom activities and lessons learn more. By facilitating active interest and engagement, teachers ensure that children will get the most out of the instructional opportunities presented in the classroom.



# How can I provide effective instructional learning formats in my classroom?

## **Use appropriate materials and make them available.**

Prepare and use age-appropriate, interesting and relevant materials. Make these materials available to children at centers or workstations. Look for opportunities to include interesting materials in group lessons as well.

## **Actively involve children.**

Plan activities that encourage participation. Think about questions to ask and ways to invite children to participate. Encourage children to count aloud or chorally respond to shared information, such as a repetitive line of story text, a song, or a nursery rhyme. Ask children to pass out materials, turn pages, or use manipulatives.

## **Present information using a variety of modalities.**

Plan activities so that children have interesting things to look at, listen to, or touch. When appropriate, provide opportunities that allow children to move. This may be as simple as doing hand movements during a song or as active as reenacting a story.

## **Get involved.**

Although children can learn a lot during independent and peer play, they learn the most when their play and learning are facilitated by an adult. This is particularly important during center time. Make sure to move around to different centers, talk to children about what they are doing, and push the learning opportunities provided by the center. It is important to note that you can enhance these learning moments without being overly directive or interfering with children's independence. For example, if a few children are playing in the block area, sit down with them, ask about what they are building, and talk to them about what their plan is for their building. This will help develop their planning skills and keep them productively engaged in the activity for a longer time.

## **Share their interest and enthusiasm.**

Have fun, too! Clap, sing, or join in. If you demonstrate your interest and enthusiasm for activities, the children will as well.

## **Ask many questions.**

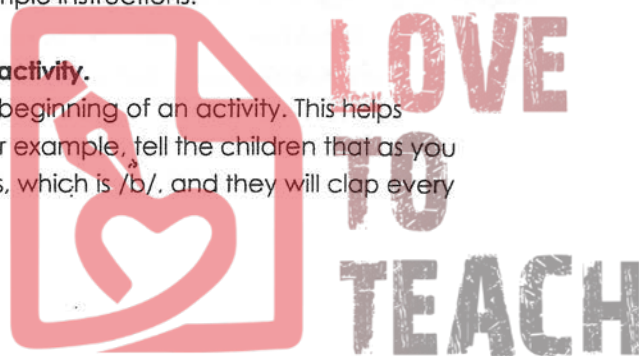
Ask questions that direct the children's attention to what you are discussing. Young children can quickly lose focus if they don't have an active role in an activity.

## **Provide consistent, clear learning activities.**

Think about squeezing as much instructional time into the day as possible. Provide an alternative activity for children who complete a task early. Give short, simple instructions.

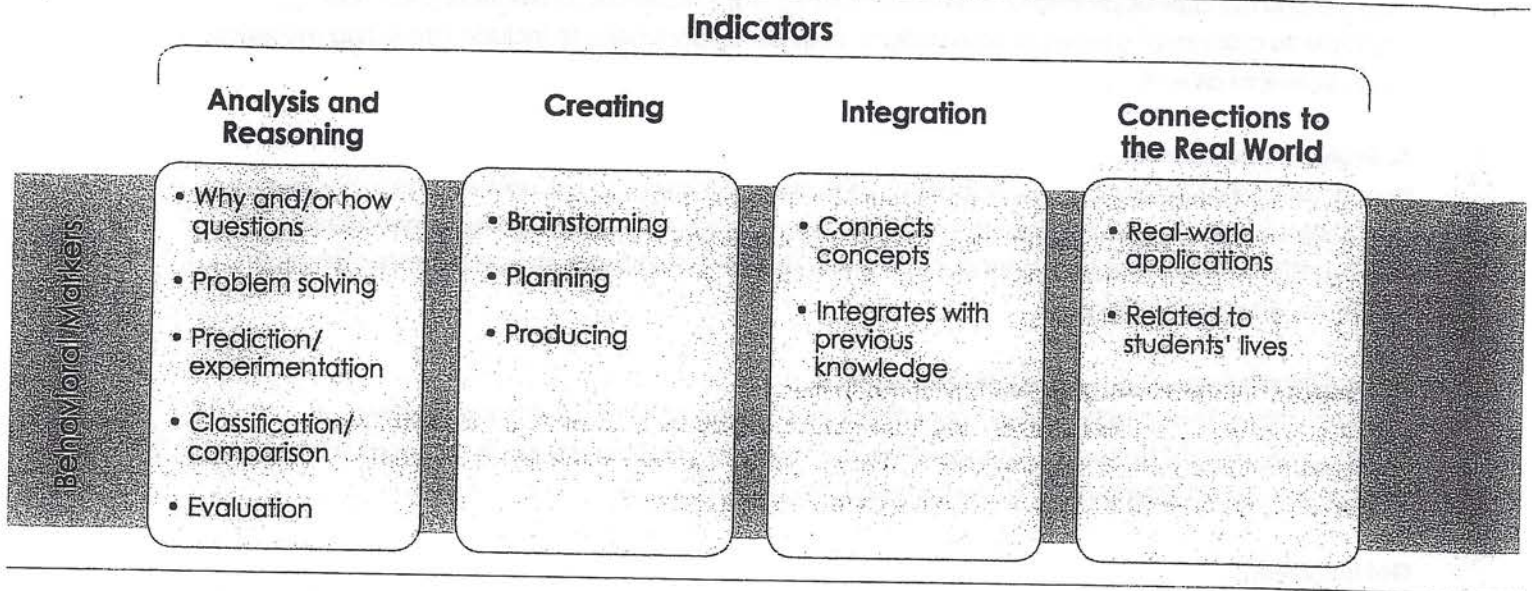
## **When appropriate, clearly state the learning objective of an activity.**

When appropriate, explicitly state learning objectives at the beginning of an activity. This helps children to focus their attention on the learning objective. For example, tell the children that as you read a poem they will listen for the sound the letter 'B' makes, which is /b/, and they will clap every time they hear the /b/ sound.





# Concept Development



## What is it?

Concept development refers to teachers' ways of making learning conceptual and facilitating children's broader understanding of concepts and ideas, rather than concentrating solely on rote instruction and recall of facts. Effective concept development provides children with opportunities to use analysis and reasoning in their approach to problems, to be creative and generate their own ideas and products, and to understand their world through experimentation and brainstorming. Concept development also describes an intentional approach by the teacher to tie together concepts across activities and bring concepts to life by applying them to children's everyday worlds.

## Why is it important?

Effective concept development strategies and questions help children obtain a deeper understanding of concepts and develop analytical thinking skills. Children learn more and understand concepts better when teachers provide opportunities for them to analyze and problem-solve, rather than just memorize and recite facts. Concept development strategies also contribute to children's interest in exploration and ability to apply knowledge to the real world.



# How can I provide effective concept development ?

## **Focus on understanding concepts.**

Challenge children to think about the hows and whys of learning. Focus their attention on the process of generating solutions to a problem rather than just getting the correct answer. Ask open-ended and thought-provoking questions, such as, "Why doesn't this shape belong with the others?"

## **Encourage use of analysis and reasoning skills.**

Use instructional strategies that focus on critical thinking, such as sequencing, comparing and contrasting, and problem-solving activities. Ask questions that promote thinking, such as, "Why do you think Jon is smiling?" and "How would you feel if this happened to you?"

## **Promote exploration of concepts.**

Ask children to predict, experiment and brainstorm as ways to explore concepts and expand approaches to learning. If a child provides one possible answer to a question, praise her for the thought and then encourage other children to think of alternative solutions.

## **Link concepts across activities.**

Purposefully choose learning activities, both within a given day and across weeks and months, that focus on similar concepts. Make clear connections among these concepts for your children so that their knowledge and understanding can be generalized and flexibly applied in different situations.

## **Apply concepts to the real world.**

During explanation of a concept, use examples that are likely to occur in children's lives and encourage them to add their own examples. For example, if you are teaching children sequencing, ask them to tell you the order of the steps necessary for brushing their teeth.

## **Take time to plan for concept development.**

While you are putting together your lesson plans for the week, take a moment to think about how you might embed more concept development into a few of your lessons. Come up with questions or activities that will stimulate the children to think deeply and understand concepts more fully. For example, during a lesson on identifying letters, rather than testing children using letter cards, encourage them to generate a list of letters they know and then look around the room for those letters.

## **Encourage children's creativity.**

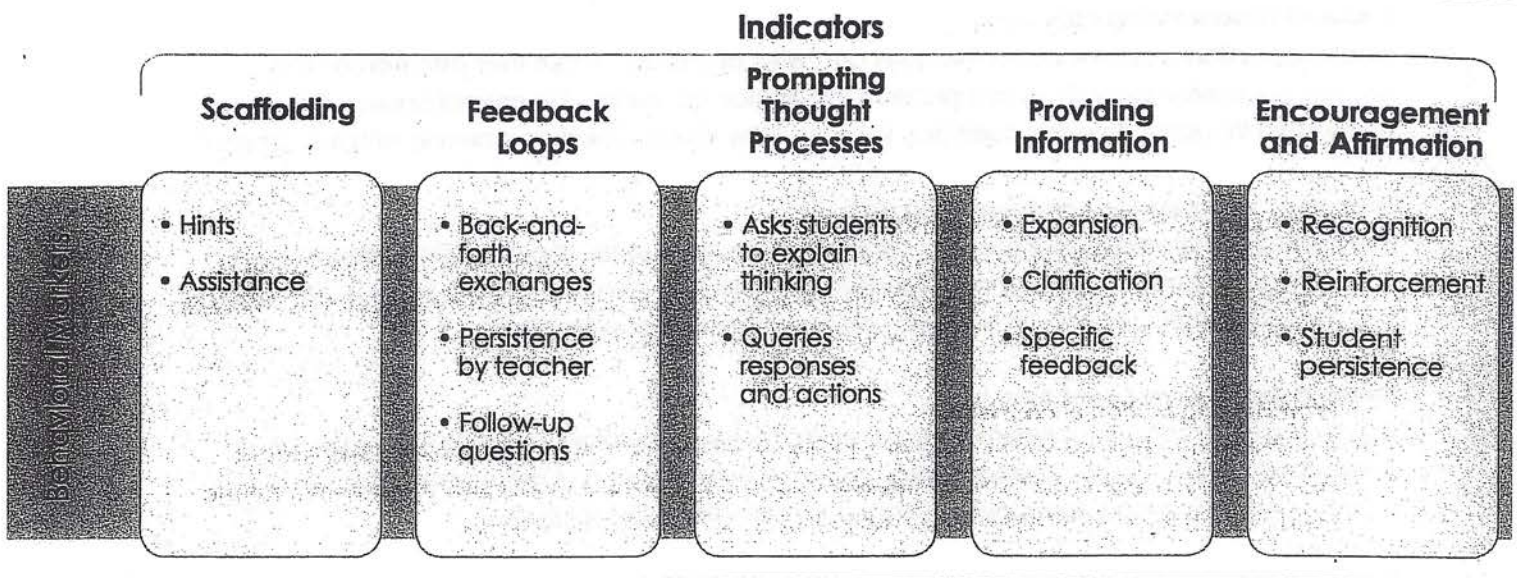
One way to facilitate children's creativity is to encourage them to explore a variety of open-ended materials and use them in different ways. For example, children might use blocks to build a house or railroad. Later, they might cover the blocks with paper and turn them into cell phones to use in dramatic play. When appropriate, take time to support children in brainstorming and planning before they create something. If children want to build a castle with blocks, help them brainstorm the different parts of a castle and who lives in a castle, and provide them with paper to draw their castle before they build it.



[www.lovetoteach.org](http://www.lovetoteach.org)



# Quality of Feedback



## What is it?

Children learn the most when they are consistently given feedback that expands their knowledge or builds on their performance of a task. Feedback works best when it helps children to refine their knowledge and gets them to understand how they came up with their ideas, rather than simply focusing on getting the right answer. Effective feedback provides children with specific, expansive information, related to their work or something they said, that helps them reach a deeper understanding of concepts than they could get on their own.

## Why is it important?

Effective feedback helps children obtain a deeper understanding of concepts and provides motivation for children to stay engaged in, and get the most from, lessons and activities. By intentionally looking for every occasion to provide meaningful feedback to children, teachers create many more learning opportunities throughout the day.



# How can I improve the quality of feedback I provide?

## **Focus on the process of learning.**

When children give correct answers, use this as an opportunity to create a learning moment by asking follow-up questions such as, "How did you know that?" or "How did you figure that out?"

## **Scaffold learning.**

If a child is having a hard time understanding a concept or coming up with an answer, provide hints to help her get to the answer rather than just telling her or moving to another child. For example, you may begin by asking a child an open-ended question related to a topic. If he doesn't respond, clarify the concept and give him a range of possible answers or things to think about. If he is still unable to answer, try simplifying your questioning to something more concrete, like a yes or no question, to support the child in responding.

## **Provide specific information about why answers are correct or incorrect.**

Rather than telling children "nice job" or "good work," give them specific information about why their answers are correct or incorrect. This not only provides the child with more information, but it also may help other children who weren't sure of the correct answer.

## **Engage in "feedback loops".**

Some of the best feedback occurs when teachers ask a series of follow-up questions to elicit a deeper understanding from children. After a child responds, ask another question of that child or of the whole class. Keep this conversational "feedback loop" going until you are sure children really understand what you are trying to teach.

## **Give lots of specific feedback.**

Always be on the lookout for opportunities to provide feedback to children. Walk around the classroom when children are working independently. Take the time to listen and respond in a thoughtful way to what children have to say during group lessons.

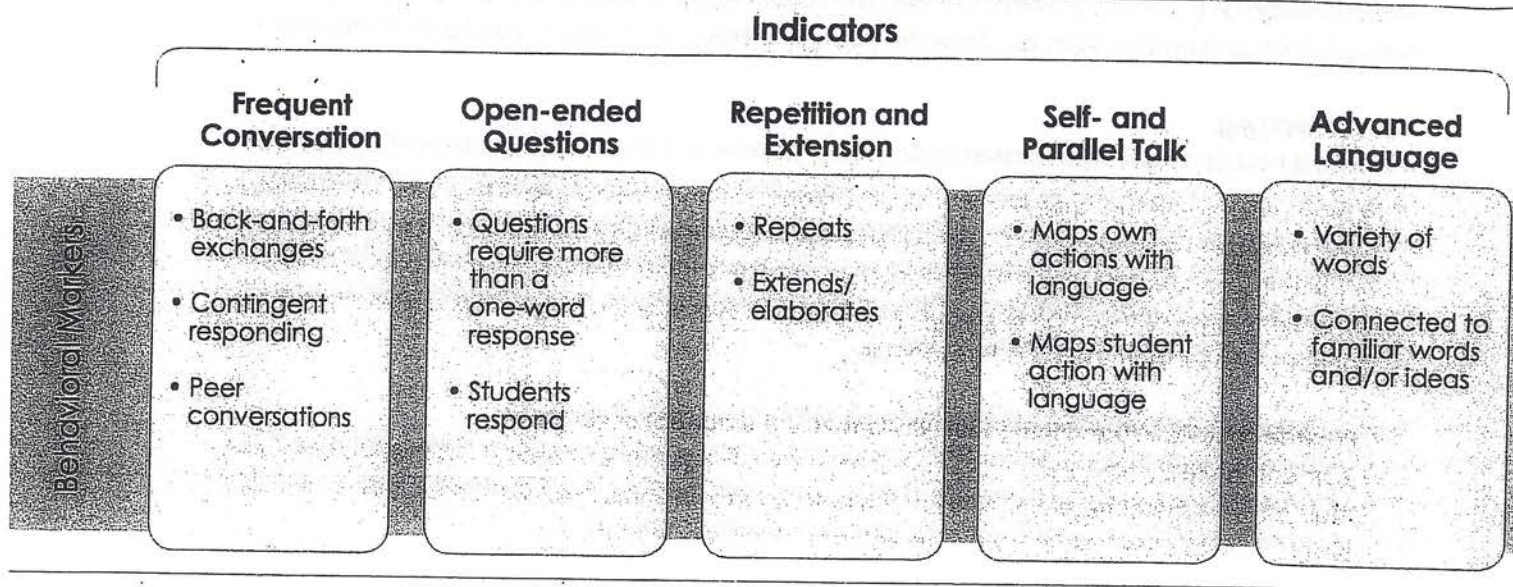
## **Encourage children to persist in their work.**

Recognize and praise children's efforts and encourage them to persist in thinking about something or completing a task. For example, you might say to children who are working on a large floor puzzle, "I see how hard you are working on that big puzzle. With teamwork, I know you guys will be able to do it. Call me over if you need any help!"





# Language Modeling



## What is it?

Teachers model language when they intentionally encourage, respond to, and expand on children's speech. Strong language modeling also consists of engagement in meaningful conversations between teachers and children. That is, teachers repeat children's words in more complex forms and ask follow-up questions. Children are consistently exposed to a variety of language uses and forms, such as requesting, rejecting, commenting, conversing, predicting, and affirming.

## Why is it important?

Children's language expands when they are given opportunities to use the language that they know and when adults model more complex language. By hearing various uses and forms of language, children develop new language skills. These language skills are important to children's academic and social success. For some children, a language-rich classroom can be an important supplement to the language they hear in their home environment.



# How can I improve language modeling in my classroom?

## **Ask open-ended questions.**

Children generate thoughts, information and reasons when asked a question that doesn't have a known answer. Questions like, "What do you think?" or "How do you know?" encourage children to use language in more sophisticated ways, rather than just giving right answers or short responses.

## **Have conversations.**

Conversations can occur throughout the day during structured times, such as meeting time, and unstructured times, such as snack and free play. Converse with children individually and in small and large groups. Listen to what children say and respond in a way that shows you are interested in what they have to say. Ask follow-up questions to keep the conversation going and include some open-ended questions to encourage children to contribute more to the conversation.

## **Promote child-initiated language.**

Encourage children's use of language by giving them opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas. Provide relevant and interesting topics and things for children to talk about.

## **Repeat and extend children's responses.**

Build on what children say, model appropriate and more complex language and syntax, and provide examples for the different ways we use language. For example, if a child says, "That boy gives me his boat," a teacher may respond, "Evan gave you his boat." This response models the social language skill of using a person's name and offers correct grammatical forms.

## **Use self-talk and parallel talk.**

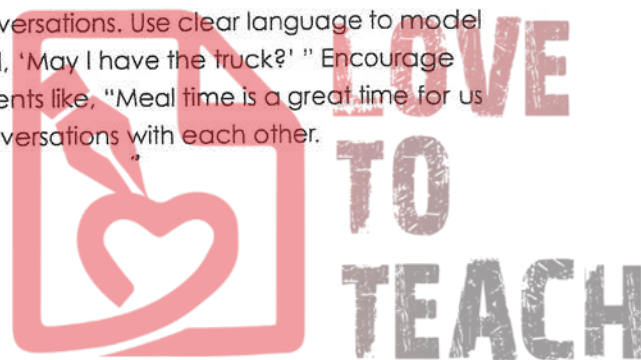
Talk about what you are doing or what the children are doing to help them link language and action in a way that can help develop their vocabulary and language skills. An example of self-talk would be: "I'm going to give each of you two graham crackers. I'm opening the box, and now I am handing them out to each of you." In parallel talk, you provide language for children's actions such as, "You put on a chef's hat and an apron, and now you're getting out a pot."

## **Use advanced language.**

Use different kinds of words, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and prepositions, as well as new or unfamiliar vocabulary. Talk about these words in simple terms that relate to the children's lives. For example, if a child lists all the colors in her hat, "Red, blue, yellow, green," respond with, "It's a multi-colored hat." This links what the child knows to more advanced language and summarizes known concepts with a new related word.

## **Encourage children to talk to one another.**

Provide opportunities for peer interactions and model conversations. Use clear language to model interactions: "Kiara, do you want the truck? Ask your friend, 'May I have the truck?'" Encourage children to share stories and talk with one another. Comments like, "Meal time is a great time for us to talk with our friends!" encourage children to initiate conversations with each other.





# Literacy Focus\*

## Indicators

### Explicit

- Uses literacy-related terms
- Draws attention to literacy concepts

### Purposeful

- Explains importance of print
- Connects to or is embedded in real world applications

Behavioral Markers

\* Note: The Literacy Focus dimension is currently being piloted.

## What is it?

Effective literacy focus occurs when teachers clearly and intentionally help children understand literacy-related concepts of written and spoken language. During effective literacy instruction, teachers deliver well-planned and sequenced literacy activities that engage children in the code units (letter, words, phonemes) of oral and written language. Teachers purposefully link the code-based activities to the broader purpose of written or spoken communication and explicitly focus children's interest on the elements of the code (letters, sounds, etc.) and clearly state the purpose of the activity.

## Why is it important?

Children who start kindergarten with basic early literacy skills, such as knowing some letters and sounds and being able to listen for parts of words, make a more successful transition to the kindergarten classroom. Preschool teachers can help children develop these skills through the provision of frequent, well-planned literacy activities that get children interested in and excited about learning to crack the literacy code.





# How can I best focus on literacy in my classroom?

## **Be on the lookout for print and encourage children to look with you.**

Print is all around your classroom. Point out or ask children to find words, letters, and numbers in your classroom or building. For example, as children are waiting to wash their hands, help them look for places around the sink where they can find the letter that starts their name.

## **Use print in purposeful and meaningful ways with children.**

Help children to learn that print and being able to read and write can help them in their everyday lives. For example, when taking children to the restroom, point to the word "girls" on the door and say, "The word on this door says 'girls'. These letters tell us this is the bathroom for girls." If a child is building a fort and is worried that someone will knock it down, help the child make a sign that says, "Declan's Fort. Please do not knock down."

## **Get students interested and excited about letters, words, and sounds.**

Play games with letters and words. Ask children to think of words that rhyme with one another, reminding them that silly words are okay too. Play word games like the Name Game (also known as "The Banana Song,") or "Willaby Wallaby Woo."

## **Use literacy-related terms to focus children's attention on literacy concepts.**

Use words that explicitly identify literacy concepts (like word, rhyme, sound, and letter) to focus children's attention on the literacy concepts you want them to learn. For example, when opening a box of crayons say, "Listen to the sound at the beginning of this word, 'crayons.' Can you tell me the beginning sound? /c/ is the first sound in the word 'crayons'. The letter 'c' makes the /c/ sound." Or, before reading a recipe with children, identify the letters in a word by saying, "We are going to make bread. This word is bread. There are five letters in the word bread. The letters are b-r-e-a-d."

## **Plan literacy activities that relate to children's lives.**

Connect literacy activities to children's lives. For example, say to the children, "Did you know that the words we say and the songs we sing can be written down? I've written down the words to your favorite song! This is the title. It says, 'Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed.'" Track the words with your finger as you read the first verse together. Point out to the children that there is a space between each word, and that's how you know it's a new word. Linking literacy concepts to children's favorite songs will help them to learn the concepts in a more meaningful and memorable way.

## **During story time, take some time to explicitly teach different literacy concepts.**

Plan ahead how you will focus on different literacy concepts during story time. For example, you are teaching the children about rhyming words, so you decide to read a rhyming story to help build their knowledge of rhyming words. You begin the lesson, "Let's listen for all the words that rhyme in this book. The title is, 'The Cat in the Hat.' Did you hear words that rhyme in the title? Remember, words that rhyme sound the same in the middle and the end. 'Cat' has 'at' and 'hat' has 'at'. Now let's read this great story about a cat and we'll stop sometimes and listen for rhymes."





**Plan explicit and purposeful literacy activities for each day throughout the year.**

Over time, plan activities that target children's learning of a variety of literacy concepts in an appropriate sequence. Plan how you will be explicit in using literacy-related terms that draw children's attention to literacy concepts in meaningful ways. For example, rather than just having a general plan to clap out syllables of words with children during meeting time, come up with a more detailed plan like the following: 1. Explain to children that words are made up of different parts that you can hear, called syllables. Some words have one syllable and some have more. 2. Demonstrate clapping syllables for two of the children's names. 3. Ask the children to join as you clap the syllables in other children's names.

