

Getting Started: Six Tips for Supporting Positive Behaviors



The early childhood years are full of new experiences, expectations, and opportunities to build developmentally appropriate relationships. Early childhood educators have the potential to support the development of self-regulation skills with intentional instruction, support, and scaffolding. As a reminder for OCFS licensed Pre-k programs, these documents should be used in conjunction with the written behavior management plan established as required by [OCFS regulation 418-1.9](#).

This document provides tips to help early educators in building relationships, classroom communities, and learning environments that foster positive interactions and to promote self-regulation skill development in prekindergarten students. For more resources and information on supporting positive behavior, please refer to Building Relationships and Environments to Foster Positive Behavior in Prekindergarten: a Resource and Reflection Tool.

Self-Regulation

The act of managing thoughts and feelings.

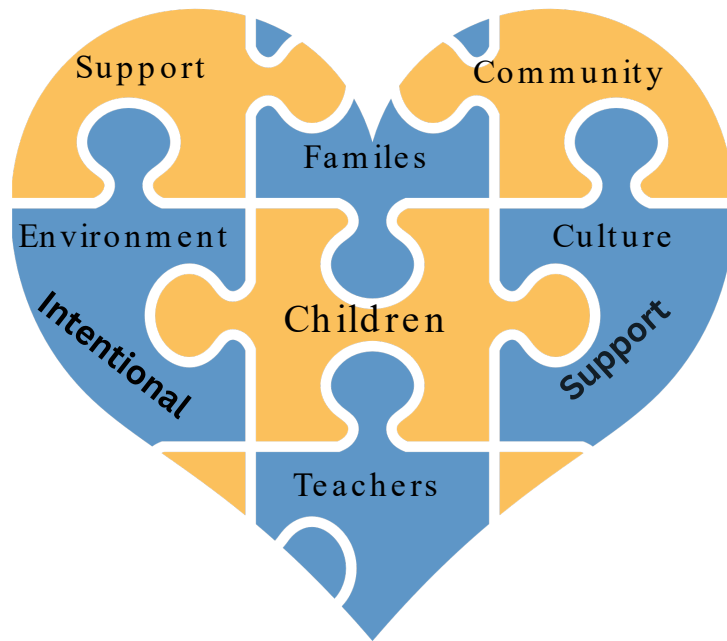
Co-Regulation

The process by which adults provide:

- warm, responsive interactions;
- support;
- structure;
- coaching; and
- modeling.



OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING



- 1** Establish a warm and responsive relationship with each child. Each child is unique and learns to manage their emotions and behaviors better when they feel a positive connection with teachers and peers. For preschool students with disabilities, become familiar with the child's abilities, needs, services and supports.
- 2** Build a Classroom Community that fosters positive relationships in the classroom. A classroom community is a learning space where children feel a sense of belonging and connection to their peers and teachers. It builds relationships among children, between children and teachers, and between teachers and families. For preschool students with disabilities, working with the child's service providers will assist in understanding how to support the child in the classroom and build community
- 3** Create a calm and structured learning environment. Providing a visual schedule, predictable daily routines, and purposeful learning environment will give specific concrete messages to children as to what is expected and valued.
- 4** Intentionally teach behavioral expectations. Teach and model behavioral expectations. Be purposeful and thoughtful in providing comfort and support through practice and problem-solving. Respond to unexpected opportunities as teachable moments. For preschool students with disabilities who have a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) discuss the plan with the special education providers to understand how to implement the plan in the classroom.
- 5** Provide curriculum experiences that are age appropriate. Ensure the materials in the classroom meet the developmental skill levels and interests of the children. Planning activities that meet a wide range of skills is necessary and keeps children from getting bored.
- 6** Partner with Families. Become familiar with and honor each child's cultural customs and practices to learn more about the family's world view. When teachers do not live in the community in which they teach, it is important to get to know the communities.

Establish a warm and responsive relationship with each child.

Each child is unique and learns to manage their emotions and behaviors better when they feel a positive connection with teachers and peers.

- Connect with each child daily.
- Appreciate and celebrate individual student identity.
- Demonstrate ongoing interest in each child's unique knowledge and skills by engaging in conversations with the child and using purposeful questioning.
- Use intentional teaching strategies to provide opportunities throughout the day for children to develop self-regulation skills.
- Use visual and home language cues to connect with each child as needed.
- For preschool students with disabilities, become familiar with the child's abilities, needs, services and supports.
- Implement some simple de-escalation techniques to assist students in managing their emotions and behaviors such as using deep breaths, acknowledging their feelings, sharing ideas for alternative behaviors (asking for help, going to a quiet area), have the child sit next to you, and/or provide options or choices.

Tips for Building Relationships With Students:

- Greet each child by name;
- Listen and learn about their interests;
- Provide praise and encouragement;
- Provide opportunities for students to share about their culture and home language;
- Display children's authentically created work;
- Follow children's lead during play; and
- Let absent children know they were missed.

Classrooms should allow children to feel that:

- I belong here.
- I am safe.
- I matter, and everyone else in the group matters too.
- When we have problems, we can work them out.
- Together we can do great things.



Build a Classroom Community that fosters positive relationships in the classroom.

A classroom community is a learning space where children feel a sense of belonging and connection to their peers and teachers. It builds relationships among children, between children and teachers, and between teachers and families.

The classroom can become a community where all students are an active member. Early educators can intentionally provide experiences that foster positive peer relationships.

- Plan small group activities where 2-4 children work together.
- Plan classroom interest areas to foster cooperation among children in the area.
- Model respectful relationships with children, family members, and co-workers.
- Praise children when they are modeling appropriate behavior.
- Give children classroom responsibilities such as watering the plants, passing out materials, being the teacher helper for the day, etc.
- Display children's artwork to give them a sense of ownership.
- For preschool students with disabilities, working with the child's service providers will assist in understanding how to support the child in the classroom and build community.

Examples of classroom community building activities

- "All About Me" projects;
- morning meetings;
- recognize and encourage kind acts;
- create a family picture board;
- celebrate and honor diversity;
- post pictures of students working; and
- create a diverse library.

"People will forget what you said.
People will forget what you did.
But people will never forget how you made
them feel." - Maya Angelou



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Create a calm and structured learning environment.

Providing a visual schedule, predictable daily routines, and a purposeful learning environment will give specific concrete messages to children as to what is expected and valued.

- Create an environment that validates, honors, and nurtures each child's diverse abilities, cultures, and home languages.
- Build time into the daily schedule for purposeful play experiences and opportunities to develop social and emotional skills.
- Use visual cues to provide children with information about classroom behavioral expectations.
- Provide a variety of settings in the classroom so children can work individually, in small groups or participate in whole group instruction.
- Spend time teaching and modeling expectations including how to use classroom materials and learning areas.

When designing learning centers, teachers should:

- Be intentional and purposeful in the selection of materials and activities considering the varying strengths, skills and abilities, cultures, languages, experiences, and developmental levels of individual students.
- Eliminate worksheets and rote activities.
- Plan for meaningful interactions and opportunities for extended conversations with all students throughout the day.
- Allow sufficient time for students to self-select learning center activities, become engaged, and to explore and experiment with the materials and activities that they choose (approximately one-third of the daily schedule).

“Given a rich environment, learning becomes like the air - it's in and around us.”

-Sandra Dodd



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Intentionally Teach Behavioral Expectations and Routines.

Teach and model behavioral expectations. Be purposeful and thoughtful in providing comfort and support through practice and problem-solving. Respond to unexpected opportunities as teachable moments.

- Plan with a clear goal in mind for all activities with strategies that ensure all students can successfully participate.
- Role play solutions to problems such as, “What happens when someone takes a toy I was using?”.
- Provide a few, simple classroom rules that tell children what is expected of them such as, “use walking feet inside”.
- Use teachable moments throughout the day to teach children how to self-regulate their behavior. Guide the child using words and role modeling.
- Intentionally teach how to transition from one activity to another and what is expected across each time span within the daily schedule.
- For preschool students with disabilities who have a behavioral intervention plan (BIP) discuss the plan with the special education providers to understand how to implement the plan in the classroom.

It is important to remember that all behaviors:

- Serve a purpose;
- Are learned over time and can be replaced;
- Are shaped by the environment;
- Are repeated because they have been effective; and
- Are predictable and preventable.



When a child seems angry or aggressive, there are often other feelings hidden under the surface

Image from: Youngminds.org










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Provide curriculum experiences that are age appropriate.

Ensure the materials in the classroom meet the developmental skill levels and interests of the children. Planning activities that meet a wide range of skills is necessary and keeps children from getting bored. For children with disabilities, ensure materials and/or activities are modified according to the needs and goals in each child's individualized education program (IEP).

- Build time into the daily schedule for purposeful play experiences.
- Ensure the materials and activities are not too hard or too easy for the developmental skill levels of the children.
- Provide materials that accurately represent the classroom community including books in children's home language and diversity in play materials.
- When providing whole group reading or learning experiences, ensure all students can see the book and other materials from where they are sitting.
- Take time daily to reflect on the curriculum experiences provided for the day.
- Let children's interests guide the learning. When children become less interested with an activity, learning materials, topic, or theme, it's time for a change.
- When planning learning opportunities, leverage effective instructional strategies to meet the needs of the children throughout the day (see chart below).

8 Effective Instructional Strategies			
Scaffold learning 	Monitor progress 	Provide new material in a way that supports learning 	Provide regular, appropriate feedback 
Model and role model 	Use questions to check for understanding and reflection 	Foster student ownership of learning 	Integrate opportunities for play-based instruction 

“Play gives children a chance to practice what they are learning.” - Fred Rogers



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Partner with Families.

Become familiar with and honor each child's cultural customs and practices to learn more about the family's world view. When teachers do not live in the community in which they teach, it is important to get to know the communities. Where do the children play, shop, spend family time, etc? What are the sources of community support?

- Communicate with families often through in-person meetings, emails, and classroom newsletters. Provide interpreters and translations as needed.
- Acknowledge and accept family compositions according to how the family defines it.
- Partner with family members to provide support for the child when behavior is challenging. Talk with families about potential strategies they use at home that can be supported in the classroom.
- Provide families with information about self-regulation and ways they can support it in the home.

Tips for Building Relationships With Families and Caregivers:

- Understand and be responsive to families within the context of their culture and community.
- Engage in on-going reciprocal communication in preferred languages.
- Actively Listen.
- Be responsive to concerns or changes.
- Attend a neighborhood or community event.

“No school can work well for children if parents and teachers do act in partnership on behalf of the children's best interests.”

- Dorothy H. Cohen



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