



## **Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments**

Pyramid Resources for Infant-Toddler  
Social-Emotional Development  
Juniper Gardens Children's Project  
University of Kansas

Adapted from:  
The Center on the Social and Emotional  
Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL)  
Vanderbilt University

**Days are a series of transitions with many opportunities to support social-emotional learning**



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# PRISM Training Module Series

Introduction & Understanding  
Social-Emotional Development

Focusing on Relationships

**Responsive Routines,  
Schedules, & Environments**

Understanding Child Behavior

Teaching About Feelings

Supporting Active Engagement

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Challenging Behavior

## **PRISM Training Modules\*: Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments**

In Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments, participants will learn how being intentional about establishing daily routines and setting up the environment can help young children feel confident and secure, paving the way for social-emotional growth; promote children's active and safe exploration and learning; and facilitate positive child-peer and adult-child interactions.

### **Learner Objectives**

Describe the importance of caregiving routines and identify strategies to support social-emotional development

Identify key ways the physical environment can promote social-emotional development in infants and toddlers.

Support families in promoting routines and environments that promote social-emotional development of infants and toddlers.

### **Agenda**

- I. Setting the Stage: Review - 10 minutes
- II. Responsive Routines - 30 minutes
- III. Transitions - 15 Minutes
- IV. High Quality, Supportive Environments - 30 minutes
- V. Wrap-up & Reflection - 5 minutes

\*For references and more information about the PRISM Training Modules, please visit [prism.ku.edu/trainings](https://prism.ku.edu/trainings)

**My Notes:**



## Training Preparation

- ☐ Print PRISM Environ - All Handouts, 1 copy per participant, two-sided, or print each handout listed below individually
- ☐ Prepare and review videos
- ☐ Activity: Bringing it Back - Create 5 stations around the room – clean up, hellos, goodbyes, lunch, and nap – with materials such as paper, markers, and posterboard

## Handouts

- ☐ PRISM Environ - 1 PowerPoint
- ☐ PRISM Environ - 2 Agenda
- ☐ PRISM Environ - 3 Responsive Routines
- ☐ PRISM Environ - 4 Infant & Toddler Environments
- ☐ PRISM Environ - 5 Practice Implementation Checklist
- ☐ PRISM Environ - 6 Training Feedback

## Videos

- ☐ PRISM Environ - Care Routines
- ☐ PRISM Environ - Infant Greetings
- ☐ PRISM Environ - Toddler Greetings
- ☐ PRISM Environ - Infant Transition
- ☐ PRISM Environ - Gym Transition

## Materials Needed:

### Technology

- ☐ PowerPoint File
- ☐ Video Files
- ☐ Computer
- ☐ Projector

### Printables

- ☐ Handouts
- ☐ Certificates of Completion
- ☐ Sign-in Sheet

### Supplies

- ☐ Name tags
- ☐ Pens
- ☐ Snacks and drinks
- ☐ Chart paper/white board and markers
- ☐ Tape
- ☐ Table fidgets/manipulatives

### Other Items

- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ \_\_\_\_\_
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## Slide 1: PRISM Training Series: Responsive Routines, Schedules, & Environments

Welcome to your next session in the PRISM Training Series where we are going to learn about responsive routines, schedules, and environments. These trainings are meant to be used hand-in-hand with the practice-based coaching model. We'll give you an overview at these trainings, but you'll get into more specifics with your coach.

I am (name) and (give some personal background history relevant to training). Here with me are (introduce rest of team).

Let's get some logistics out of the way before we begin

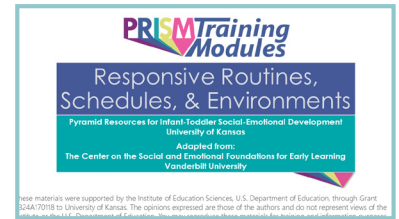
Breaks:

Lunch/Snack:

Parking:

Restrooms:

Last, you should have a set of materials that includes handouts, slide notes, and other useful information. We'll reference these throughout the training, so keep them handy. If you don't have the materials you need, please let us know.



Presenter Notes:

Depending on how familiar members of the training team are with the participants, it may also be important to have participants do introductions, and include classroom, and their role in the classroom, if appropriate.

You may want participants to ask questions when they think of them, or have them write questions down to ask at the end of sections.



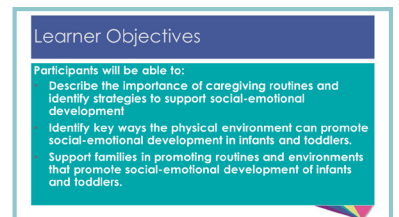
## Slide 2: Learner Objectives

Today we will discuss caregiving routines and how we can use them to support social-emotional development. Taking advantage of opportunities to support social-emotional development within daily routines is critical.

We'll also identify key ways the physical environment can support or inhibit infants' and toddlers' social-emotional development.

- For example, when a child tries to climb on a high chair and is told "no," the child may learn not to explore or climb. The child's natural curiosity to explore climbing might be discouraged.
- However, if instead, the play environment includes only age appropriate materials to pull up and climb on, natural curiosity and exploration can be encouraged.

We will talk about a number of ways to set up the environment to support social-emotional development.



## Slide 2 cont.

Having consistent approaches and predictable strategies across multiple settings and relationships helps children understand and feel confident in their environment.

## Slide 3: Training Agenda

You can find our training agenda for today on **Handout 2**.

While the learning objectives represent what we hope you receive from the training, the agenda represents how we are going to get there.

At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about the training. We look forward to receiving this input, as it will help us improve the training for others.



## Slide 4 Our Learning Environment

We'll be spending a lot of time together throughout this training and future trainings. It's helpful to decide together what sorts of agreements are important to the group. Think about what makes a positive learning environment for you. What are those things?

***Pause for responses.***



Presenter Notes:

If participants don't have suggestions, suggest some of the typical shared agreements listed on the next slide

## Slide 5: Possible Shared Agreements

With that in mind, what are some agreements we can make about how our learning environment should look? You can use the agreements on the slide as a jumping point.

***Pause for responses, then summarize agreements.***



Presenter Notes:


Post the list of shared agreements the group created and/or review the list of potential shared agreements on this slide to help generate ideas.

## Slide 6: The Pyramid Model

Let's review where we are on the Pyramid.

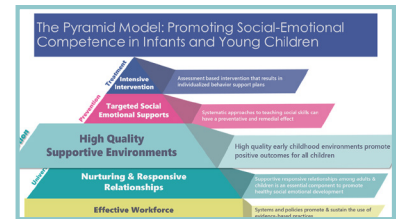
Our first trainings focused on creating positive relationships between caregivers and young children and ways to nurture and support the social-emotional development of infants, toddlers, and families.

At the base of the Pyramid, we highlight universal practices which encourage and promote social-emotional development for all young children and families.

 We are now going to focus on creating high-quality, supportive environments. This element includes universal practices and approaches that are important for all children and families.

There are many ways to support infants and toddlers as they learn and develop social-emotional skills. Caregivers who are intentional and purposeful provide many opportunities throughout the day for young children to observe, experience, and practice social-emotional skills.

These specific opportunities not only help build social-emotional skills and strengths, but also help prevent challenging behavior.



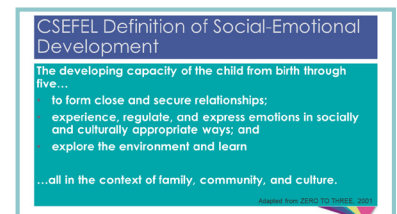
## Slide 7: Definition of Social-Emotional Development

Let's look again at the CSEFEL working definition of social-emotional development.

*Read definition from slide.*

In this module we will focus on:

- making the most of routines with infants and toddlers;
- creating responsive physical environments;
- and developing a repertoire of strategies to support the development of social-emotional skills in very young children.





## Slide 8: Terms We Will Use

We are going to be using the terms “transitions,” “routines,” and “schedules” a lot today, so let’s take a look at how we are using each term.



By *transitions*, we mean the times of change that occur in a child’s day, such as when a group of children move from one experience to another – for example, from indoor play to outdoor play, or from nap to snack.



By *routines*, we mean the regularly occurring events a young child experiences during a day and the way we move through those experiences day by day. They can be thought of as the individual experiences that make up each day, and come to be predictable to young children.

Routines that generally happen in a similar way each day provide children with a sense of predictability and security.

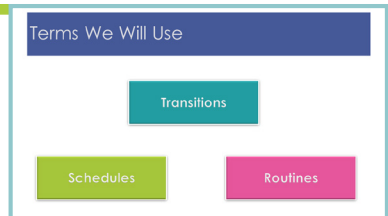
- For example, if the daily routine upon arrival is to snuggle with a caregiver and look at a book, even a young infant will come to expect this.
- A toddler can come to understand that the meal routine begins with hand washing.

When the same things happen day after day, several times a day, in a familiar way, routines become predictable

Predictable routines help infants and toddlers know what to expect and feel more secure.



When we talk about *schedules*, we tend to mean what time we do something. For infants and toddlers, however, we think of schedules in terms of how many hours between feedings, when and how long they sleep, and when play times are during the day. Generally with infants and toddlers, schedules should be more individualized and we want to focus on the timing and sequence, or order, of care routines.







## Slide 9: High Quality Supportive Environments

Responsive schedules and routines contribute to the promotion of children's social-emotional development and can also help prevent challenging behaviors that some young children may exhibit.

Responsive routines and schedules are designed with close attention to the developmental needs of all children in the setting and are adapted to the needs of individual children.

- For example, a six-week-old infant will not have the same eating and sleeping schedule as a twelve-month-old.
- Even two 18 month olds can need a different napping schedule.

To support families in planning for their own child's schedules and routines, we can help them think about where their child is developmentally, who their child is temperamentally, and the flow of their household, all in the context of the family's culture.

### High Quality Supportive Environments

Responsive Schedules & Routines



## Slide 10: How Schedules & Routines Support Social-Emotional Development

Think about some of the routines that are important in your life. For example, I like to have my one cup of coffee while sitting on my couch watching the morning news.

Can you share some examples of routines in your day?

*Pause for responses.*

As you think about these important routines, are there some routines that you are more flexible with and some you just cannot live without?

*Pause for responses.*

How does it feel to you when your routine changes or looks different?

*Pause for responses.*

### How Schedules and Routines Support Social-Emotional Development

Important part of each day  
Meet children's basic needs  
Provide opportunities for development  
Develop a sense of security and control  
Provide predictability  
Support competence and confidence

## Slide 10 cont.

How does a consistent routine help you throughout your daily interactions with others, accomplishment of tasks, etc.?

### *Pause for responses.*

Schedules and routines provide infants and toddlers with a sense of security through predictability and help them learn about the world. Very quickly, babies discover and embrace their first routines.

- For example, when an infant cries persistently, her caregiver gently picks her up, saying "Oh, you're so hungry!" The infant quiets as she latches onto the bottle's nipple. In just a few weeks she's learned a routine - she feels hungry, she cries, and food is offered while she's cradled in gentle arms.

Infants feel secure and confident within the framework of nurturing and predictable caregiving routines.

Routines can help toddlers adjust to new situations.

- Daily routines also help toddlers say good-bye to parents and feel safe and secure within a nurturing network of family members and caregivers.
- For example, always reading the same book together in the same cozy corner of the toddler room helps a child prepare for the difficult separation from her parent. This predictable, intimate time can help give a child the courage to say goodbye.

You notice in our trainings that we provide an agenda and a predictable style of presentation. If you feel more relaxed, it may be because you feel more secure and have some sense of what is coming next.

## Slide 11: Using Routines to Support Social-Emotional Development

Infants and toddlers learn so much based on how they move through their daily activities with their caregivers. When children know what to expect and experience predictability and consistency, they can feel safe and secure, and ready to explore and learn. Let's talk about ways to establish routines and use them to help support social-emotional development.

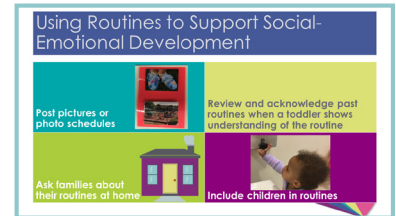
- First, have a schedule for your day. Even if you need to adjust it to meet individual needs around nap, meal, and play times, having a schedule helps adults stay organized.
- For toddlers, post a schedule with pictures or photos and/or text of the day's events and routines at children's eye level, talk about the schedule, and draw their attention to pictures or photos to help them understand the day's events and what comes next. Consider including text in English and home languages.
- In infant classrooms, when all teachers have an idea about what the day will look like, infants can feel the security that comes from consistency and organization within the classroom, even when teachers are providing individualized routines and care.

Reviewing past activities with toddlers when opportunities arise will help them make important connections and make sense of the structure of their day. For example:

- "Remember yesterday when you were such a good helper when putting away toys?"
- "Remember yesterday when mommy picked you up at the end of the day? She's going to do that again today!"
- "You remembered we put our plates away when we are done eating!"

Inviting infants and toddlers to take part in daily routines demonstrates to them that they matter and lets them play an active role in the many activities of the day.

- For example, let an infant hold a clean diaper, or invite a toddler to set napkins on the table.
- Include toddlers in talking about the schedule for the day, such as by asking "What do we do after we come in from playing on the playground?" or "It's snack time! What do we need to do before we sit down?"



## Slide 11 cont.

Ask families about their routines at home. Routines are some of the most inherently cultural practices in a child's life. Different families have different practices regarding routines. Providing consistency of routines and schedules between the home and the center supports children, as well as families.

Reflect back on the routines in your home when you were a child.

- How did mealtime occur?
- Did children and adults eat together or at different times?
- Who put you to sleep?
- What happened if you were sick?

Asking families about their routines and trying to incorporate the ways that they care for their very young children creates cultural responsiveness and continuity in a program.

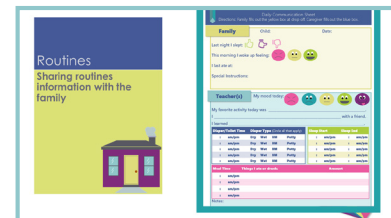
## Slide 12: Routines - Sharing Routines Information with the Family

A daily sheet is one example of how you can share information about routines at home and in your classroom with families. Tools like these can also be used to help parents share information and communicate with you.

How do you think gathering this type of information helps teachers and families support a child's social-emotional development?

***Pause for responses.***

By sharing information about routines at home and in your classroom, everyone can be more aware of the needs of individual children and how to best support them.



Presenter Notes:

Two-way information sharing between parents and caregivers is crucial. If attendees do not provide examples of both teacher and parent communication, introduce examples and discussion around this idea.

## Slide 13: Responsive Routines

Let's look at **Handout 3**. We're going to do this one in groups of 3-4. On your handout, you'll see sections for infant feeding and toddler eating, diapering and toileting, sleeping and resting, and greetings and goodbyes. Pick one of the routines, and as a group, identify strategies that support children's social-emotional development during that routine. It will help if you agree upon the age of the children you are identifying strategies for. Record your ideas on the handout. I'm going to give you about 5 minutes to collaborate on this, and then we will come back together as a whole group.

***Give time for groups to do their activity.***

Pick a representative from your group to share your ideas or strategies. While you're listening to the other group representatives' ideas, take notes using the "my plans" column on your handout.

***Give time for groups to share.***

Hopefully, this activity has provided some ideas for you and shown how individual time spent in each of these routines provides opportunities to build a positive relationship with a child.



## Slide 14: Care Routines

Let's watch these two videos and try to identify the strategies used by the caregivers during these daily routines.

 ***Play PRISM Environ - Care Routines***

What strategies did you identify while watching the caregiver?  
What did you notice?

***Give time for responses. Use the presenter notes to facilitate the conversations.***

What else did you notice?



Presenter Notes:

Meeting children's basic needs

Helping children develop a sense of security and control

Provide predictability

Supporting the children's competence and confidence

Using modeling and songs to help with sense of routine and structure



## Slide 15: Strategies to Support Routines

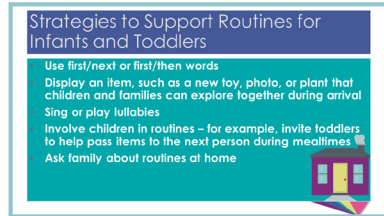
The way caregivers handle responsive routines enables them to help young children build trust and independence.

You can make diapering and toileting a special time between you and a child by telling the child in advance that you are going to pick him up and change his diaper, using warm interactions, using first/next words that are comforting, and encourage the child to participate in the routine in whatever way he can.

- For example, "Sara, first we will change your diaper. Then, we can read a book together."

Display a novel toy, photo, or other item that children and families can explore together during arrival. Goodbyes are very difficult transitions and sometimes families and children are unsure what to do next. Providing an activity or something to focus on can help reduce any anxieties they may be feeling.

Provide infants with their own cribs and toddlers with cots that are labeled with their first name and a picture symbol. Sing, play lullabies, and offer children a book, doll, or other comfort item while they are getting ready for nap time. Providing a familiar and consistent physical setting for infants helps them settle into new routines.



## Slide 16: Transitions

Now that we've taken a look at routines, let's look at what happens both in between and during routines – transitions. Remember, for the purpose of this training, transitions are the times of change that occur in a child's day.



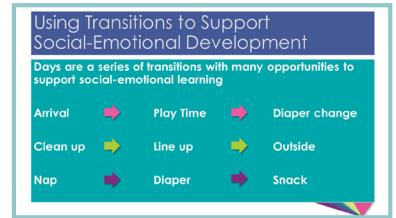


## Slide 17: Using Transitions to Support Social-Emotional Development

Remember, transitions are times of change between routines and activities throughout the day.

Infants' and toddlers' days are full of transitions – moving from arriving at school to playing, going from playing to diaper changing, diaper changing to handwashing, handwashing to meals, meals to nap, moving from one room to another, and any combination of these activities and more. When children do not know what to expect, it can sometimes cause transitions to be a source of challenging behavior.

There are so many opportunities to enhance social-emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors during transitions, and having some ideas in your toolbox for transitions will make the day run more smoothly for everyone from the teachers to children and parents.



## Slide 18: Infant Greetings

This is a short clip from a video that illustrates a responsive greeting of a 15-month-old child and his parents. This time, watch for ways the caregiver makes the morning transition easier.



**Play PRISM Environ - Infant Greeting**

What did you see this caregiver doing to make the morning transition easier?

***Give time for responses. Share ideas from presenter notes, if needed.***



Presenter Notes:

Stops what she is doing and greets the child by name.  
Asks about how his morning has been  
She expresses interest in him.  
Through these things, she lets his parents know that she has a genuine interest in their little boy.





## Slide 19: Toddler Greetings

Here's another video showing a greeting routine, this time with a toddler who knows his classroom routine each morning is to tell how he is feeling with a feeling card and with his parent. Watch for other tools and strategies the teacher uses to make greeting/goodbye time a positive routine.



### **Play PRISM Environ - Toddler Greeting**

What did you see this caregiver doing to make the morning transition easier?

***Give time for groups to share.***

Now that you've seen these two examples, do you have other ideas you use in your classroom to make greetings and goodbyes positive?

***Give time for groups to share.***

Did you see anything in the videos you'd like more information about or would like to implement in your own classroom?

***Give time for groups to share, then summarize discussion.***



Presenter Notes:

Involves parent in routine  
Gives child an easy task to focus on  
Assesses how child is feeling through visuals  
Gives child sense of control through picking a job



## Slide 20: Strategies to Support Greetings & Goodbyes

Greetings and goodbyes can be hard for some children and adults. Caregiver support can help make this an easier transition, and help start the day on a positive note.

Some children may need extra support and targeted strategies that are unique to him or her.

Here are some ideas. Some you saw in the videos or are already implementing in your room, and others may be new to you.

**Special Goodbye Area** – Designate a space in the room or an area outside the door as the “special goodbye area.” In the toddler video you just watched, the teacher set up the room





## Slide 20 cont.

so the parent and child could immediately see their feeling chart and welcoming activity upon arrival.

**Family Photos/Objects** – Display family photos or favorite objects around the room so children can see their families throughout the day, especially when they are feeling scared or lonely. You can point out the family pictures, talk about how loved the child is, and remind her that her parents or a family member will be back to pick her up.

**Transitional or comfort items** – Allowing a child to bring his special blanket or toy may help him to transition from home to child care. As he brings his blankie with him he is bringing a little piece of home that reminds him of the safety and comfort of mom, dad, or home.

**Rituals** – Talk to families about creating a “goodbye” ritual that they can do each day with their child. For example, mom might help her daughter hang up her backpack and then give goodbye butterfly kisses while saying, “Here’s my special butterfly kiss to last throughout the day, and I’ll be back to pick you up, so go and play!” Goodbye rituals become a signal to the child that it is time to say goodbye and reassure them that Mom will be back later!

**Games** – Have a fun goodbye game that you play as infants and toddlers are dropped off in the morning. It might be a song or a big hug. This is a great way to get other children involved in helping each other say goodbye as well as practice social skills. In the toddler video, the teacher had a simple bean bag game set up to transition toddlers into her room.

**Books** – Create books about the young child’s day. The title for a book for a child who is dropped off by his mom might be “Mommy Comes Back.” The book goes through the schedule/ routines of the day and shows the child leaving home in the morning or leaving the center at the end of the day with Mommy. You might also involve parents in making the book and have them take pictures of their morning routines to add to the book (what happens before the child comes to the center).



## Slide 21: Infant Transitions

We can use some of the same greeting and goodbye strategies to help with transitions throughout the day. Watch this short video of a transition time in an infant room.



**Play PRISM Environ - Infant Transition**

What did you see the caregivers doing to make the transition easier?

How did the caregiver encourage awareness of peers during the transition?

What are some infant transitions you either struggle with or have great ideas for?



Presenter Notes:

Answers may include telling children what is going to happen, using individual names, telling children what they can do – sit down over here, reminding children she will return.

Answers may include telling children what she needs to do to help peer (sanitize pacifier).



## Slide 22: Toddler Transitions

Now let's watch a longer video of transitions in a toddler classroom. These children are transitioning from free play to walking to the gym. Take note of the different strategies used.



**Play PRISM Environ - Gym Transition**

How did this toddler transition look different from the infant transition?

What did you see the caregivers doing to make the transition easier?

What are some toddler transitions you either struggle with or have great ideas for?



Presenter Notes:

Uses a choice to transition to line

Transition song

Makes sure kids are engaged while waiting

Uses waiting time to work on social skills – initiating hellos to people passing



## Slide 23: Activity - Bringing it Back

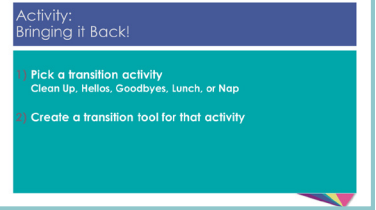
You're now going to have the opportunity to put some of your ideas for transitions into practice. There are signs for 5 stations around the room – clean up, hellos, goodbyes, lunch, and nap.

- Pick a station you'd like to create a transition activity for and go to that station.
- As a group, choose a transition tool to improve the transition time. You could write a song, make a sign that helps with that transition, draw a picture, create a book, or provide other helpful strategies.
- Make sure your creation is specific to the transition time you chose. For example, if I am at the nap station, my group might choose to write a song with hand motions that helps the kids get calm and prepare to nap. For "Hellos" my group might make a sign with simple pictures to show the child what is happening next, or provide some choices for what to do next. If you don't have all of the supplies you need here, start on your creation - you can take it with you to finish up later.
- Have fun planning with your group, and in about 10 minutes we'll come back together as a large group and share the ideas.

***Give time for teachers to complete activity.***

Alright, let's come back together. Who was at the "clean up" station? Show us what you created and tell us about your idea.

***Repeat with hellos, goodbyes, lunch, and nap.***



Presenter Note:

While teachers are working, walk to the different stations and give positive feedback. Take note of what you are seeing and hearing in case there is something great you want to make sure the whole group hears.



## Slide 24: Strategies to Support Transitions

Thanks for sharing all of those great ideas. There are so many ways you can support positive transitions throughout the day.

- We've talked about singing songs relevant to the transition or activity, reading books as a predictable step in a transition, and using visuals like posters and pictures to help with transitions.
- There are other visual cues you can use, like flickering the lights, or audio cues such as fun clapping patterns.
- A transition object can provide a fun and familiar visual cue. Hold up a book or puppet to transition to circle time, or a cup of crayons to transition to art time. Using the same visual cue on a daily basis creates predictability and supports the transition.
- Share what to expect next and provide choices, like the teacher did in the video where the class cleaned up before transitioning to the gym.
- Describe what activities are taking place next, so children know what to expect. For instance, "After we go inside, we can make play-dough."
- Transition objects, such as lovies, blankies, and bottles are familiar objects that work well for transitions, even with young infants.
- Provide individualized support as needed. For example, consider learning basic transition phrases in home languages that can be used during transitions to engage children in transition activities.

You'll also want to think about children on an individual level, greeting each child as they transition and providing individualized support as needed.

### Strategies to Support Transitions Throughout the Day

Songs relevant to the transition or activity  
Visual or audio clues, such as switching lights, clapping, picture schedule  
Using transition objects, such as books, lovey or blanket, or bottle  
Sharing what to expect next  
Greeting children individually as they transition  
Providing individualized support as needed



## Slide 25: Transitions - Clean Up

Let's take a look at a picture from a toddler classroom. What do you think the teacher is trying to do to support transitions in her classroom?

***Pause for responses, then summarize.***

### Transitions

Support clean up with visual labels on shelves



Presenter Notes:

Clean up to show we are moving on to something new  
Consistent place to put toys  
Pictures serve as a visual cue to remind children what to do

## Slide 26: Responsive Environments

We are going to explore another aspect of infant-toddler caregiving that supports social-emotional development – the space where children play and are cared for.

Caregiving environments should be designed to enhance relationships and learning. Because infants and toddlers learn and develop through movement, exploration, and appropriate challenges, their environment should offer a variety of experiences.

It should be a place where they can freely move, make choices, and explore. The environment should be welcoming to everyone— children, families, childcare providers, and other program staff.



## Slide 27: Responsive Environments

Every day, caregivers play a role in:

- deciding what infants and toddlers see, touch, hear, smell, and taste
- determining how much fresh air, sunlight, and exercise young children will get
- setting up engaging physical environments
- choosing appropriate toys, materials, and activities
- and engaging in reciprocal interactions

...all of which make up learning experiences for infants and toddlers.

A well-designed infant-toddler physical environment can have a major impact not only on children's social-emotional development, but also on their language, cognitive, and motor development.





## Slide 28: Group Discussion

Why do you think the environment has such a powerful effect on our thoughts and feelings?

*Pause for responses.*

What would it feel like if you did not have any control over the design of your home?

*Pause for responses.*

Furnishings, accessories, room arrangement, paint colors, and even scents in a room can affect the mood of a person in that room. This is why it is important to consider the purpose of the room before decorating it. Is it a place to relax, such as a bedroom? Is it going to be an entertainment room? The purpose of the room should be the deciding factor in how it is decorated, and subsequently, how that decoration affects the mood.

Here are a few examples of how the environment can directly impact social-emotional development.

- Surrounding young children with attentive, responsive, skilled caregivers and maintaining appropriate child-caregiver ratios supports relationships and self-regulation. When responsive adult caregivers are available for infants and toddlers, their needs can be acknowledged and met.
- Providing safe toys and materials that offer developmentally appropriate challenges support young children in practicing their problem-solving skills.
- Keeping all appropriate materials in the environment accessible to infants and toddlers helps to develop independence and initiation skills.

### Group Discussion

Why does the environment have such a powerful effect on our thoughts and feelings?

What would it feel like if you did not have any control over the design of your home or apartment, or your sleeping/resting space?



## Slide 29: A Well-Designed Environment

When planning your environment, it helps to think about how the developmental toys and play areas support engagement and social interaction.

- Ensuring the setup of the room allows for caregivers to not only easily see children, but to easily access and get on the child's level to avoid challenging situations.
- This also helps with peer relationships, because caregivers can facilitate interactions between children more easily and help prevent conflict.
- The materials in the room can also facilitate interactions. For example, the number of materials can be adjusted to encourage interaction. You may need more blocks, so children can stack together. If you would like children to roll a ball back and forth, perhaps you only want to put out one ball.

Thinking about your desired outcomes will help you determine what toys you want accessible and how many of each toy to make available.

When designing early childhood classrooms, there are also developmental considerations.

- Younger babies and early crawlers need soft spaces to crawl and start to move around.
- In a toddler room, you can prevent injuries and the need for redirection if you limit wide open spaces and provide well-organized play areas.

The materials that go into the space should be safe for the age of the child.

- For example, think of a toy and the outcome if an infant puts that toy in her mouth. Perhaps it is a good opportunity for the child to explore, but conversely, if the material is too small or can easily be bit into chunks, it would not be ideal for an infant room.

By putting in well-thought out and safe materials, you will reduce the amount of time you spend limit-setting, which in turn allows the children to feel more secure and encouraged to explore.

### A Well-Designed Infant-Toddler Environment

#### Supports & encourages:

- Social-emotional needs
- Responsive care from adults
- Peer relationships

#### Is developmentally appropriate:

- Age appropriate
- Individually appropriate
- Culturally appropriate

## Slide 29 cont.

Finally, the materials brought into the classroom should encourage social awareness and help children learn about cultural and individual differences.

- You can do this by providing books and toys representing differences in cultures and abilities, as well as including family photos that show children in the classroom they all come from families that have similarities and differences.

## Slide 30: Environment

Take out **Handout 4**. We are going to look through a few pictures of classrooms and take a couple of minutes to review each photo and discuss whether or not you believe the environment supports the items noted in the handout.

Generally, the environment should support and encourage social-emotional needs, responsive care from adults, and peer relationships.

It should be developmentally appropriate, both for the age group and individual children.

And the classroom should also be culturally appropriate.

Where you cannot tell if the environment is appropriate for a given situation, share your thoughts about additional information you'd need to make a decision about that space.





## Slide 31: Environment

Thinking about the questions on the left, and referencing Handout 4 if needed, how do you think this environment could affect the social-emotional development of infants or toddlers?



Presenter Notes:  
Rocking chair to build relationships, warmth and responsivity between caregiver and child  
Mats on floor at child level to promote peer interaction and exploration; active engagement  
Individual cribs for responding to needs and consistent routines

## Slide 32: Environment

How about in this picture?



Presenter Notes:  
Age appropriate toys at child level for active engagement  
More than one of some toys  
Round shelf provides peer interaction and face to face interactions while pulling to stand with other peers

## Slide 33: Environment

What do you notice about the environment in this picture?



Presenter Notes:

Pictures on the wall of peers

Age appropriate toys for older toddlers

Couch provides room to sit and engage peer to peer

\*multiple seats at table

encourage playing with peers and possible adult relationship building in play schemes

## Slide 34: Environment

How about this one?



Presenter Notes:

Age appropriate size and enough space for many toddlers to explore

Soft space on floor with pillows allows for possible communication and relationship building

More than one child can explore at a time encouraging peer interactions



## Slide 35: Environment

Last one... How do you think this environment can influence social-emotional development? What sorts of opportunities does it provide?

Now that we've looked at a variety of environments, what could be added to the environments to support more individual needs? For example, what environmental factors might be added for a child who has a hearing impairment or an older toddler with mobility impairments?

***Pause for responses.***

This is a great start to thinking about how the physical environment impacts social-emotional development. You can take **Handout 4** on Infant and Toddler Environments back to your classroom to use as you work on your own classroom environment.



Presenter Notes:

Couch allows for child and adult to sit together; may be used to increase communication and relationships ... may be a good space to be responsive to a child's emotions if they are upset ... or as a place to respond when children are upset or displaying challenging behaviors and need a quieter space



## Slide 36: Environmental Elements to Consider

Let's talk about different elements of the environment to consider.

**Cozy/private spaces:** These types of spaces are critical to the development of the young child's self-concept.

- Often, the meltdowns and struggling moments we see young children experience in group care settings can be linked to the stress of being in a large group for an extensive amount of time.
- Creating safe spaces where children can retreat for extra rest, to observe, and recharge emotionally throughout their day can help to alleviate this stress.
- Private spaces can also be achieved by incorporating into the classroom a tunnel, a very large cardboard box, an empty plastic sandbox, a carpeted built-in cabinet with the doors removed, or a cozy loft space.
- With access to these cozy spaces, two toddlers who are just beginning to develop a relationship can also go off together to quietly play.
- 

**Safe lofts and climbing structures:** A developmentally appropriate and well-designed climbing structure or loft supports motor exploration as well as offers a private space for a young child to relax and watch his peers by himself. It is also a place where an adult caregiver and young child can cuddle and read a book together.

**Places for children to crawl, walk, and climb:** Self-initiated exploration and movement is essential to a young child's emotional development.

- Crawling to a desired toy and picking it up, climbing to the top of a loft, and going down a slide are all activities that help a young child develop feelings that she is capable, can achieve, and through practice, can master.
- While older children can begin to grasp limitations to their play and movement, such as "in ten minutes we'll be going outside and then you can run," a toddler will struggle understanding such limitations. The toddler's focus is, "I need to crawl and climb now!"
- It is important that the environment encourages and supports this fundamental developmental need. Providing plenty of physical outlets for movement can also reduce challenging behaviors.



## Slide 36 cont.

- When toddlers have appropriate places to jump, throw, climb, and be active, they may be far less likely to climb on furniture not meant for climbing or engage in inappropriate behaviors.

**Lighting:** Poor lighting can strain the eyes of young children and adult caregivers. Certain types of lighting (such as the lamp seen in one of the classroom photos) can help a care setting look and feel more like a home. Lighting that can be adjusted can help to calm and soothe an infant or toddler and help modify the mood in the room.

**Sound:** Consider the noise level of the room. Consider adding soft surfaces such as carpet or drapes to help absorb sound. The noise level in a room can impact young children's mood, anxiety level, ability to tolerate frustration, and ability to calm.

**Room decoration and visuals:** Consider if the decorations in the room are child-centered or adult-centered. Are visuals age-appropriate and at the children's eye level? Is there too much clutter, or does the room feel bare?

**People:** Consider who is in the environment. Are there more females than males? How might having more males impact young children's social-emotional environment and/or view of themselves, the world, and relationships?

What is the ethnic, racial, and language diversity of the caregivers in the environment? If no one in the environment speaks a child's language, a child may feel he or she is not understood. Similarly, if the cultural practices in the center are very different from those practices in the home a child may feel less secure in his surroundings.



## Slide 37: Setting up the Environment for Developmental Play & Friendship

Let's review some ways that we can set up the environment to encourage social play and friendship, this time with some specific ideas you may be able to implement in your own room.

Examine the physical environment to ensure that there is enough space for infants, toddlers, and adults to engage in social activities.

- Examples: comfy areas on the floor, rockers/gliders.

Evaluate the physical environment for spaces for two or more children to enjoy side-by-side activity and for adults to be seated close by for supervision.

- Examples: lofts, rocking boats, block areas, climbing boxes, slides for more than one child at a time, mirrors that accommodate more than one child, or play houses.

Evaluate the daily schedule for multiple opportunities to develop play skills each day.

- Examples: indoor and outdoor play times.

Provide enough materials and equipment that allow and encourage two or more children to interact.

- Examples: stacking toys, cars, dolls, puzzles, or other manipulative materials.

Provide duplicates of children's most popular toys and materials.

What other environmental strategies have you used in your classroom to promote play and friendship skills?

### Setting Up the Environment for Developing Play and Friendship Skills

Enough space for infants and adults to engage in social activities

Spaces for two or more children to enjoy side-by-side activity and for adults to be close for supervision

Daily schedule includes opportunities to develop play skills each day

Materials and equipment allow and encourage two or more children to interact

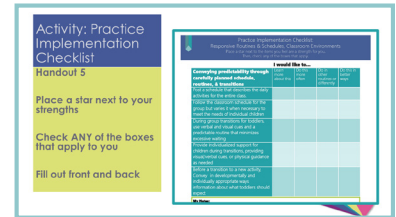
## Slide 38: Wrap-up & Reflection

This training has focused on the importance of responsive routines and schedules, physical environments, and providing specific and targeted opportunities to support the social-emotional development of infants and toddlers. Now you are going to have an opportunity to reflect on your own classroom's schedules, routines, and environment.



## Slide 39: Practice Implementation Checklist

Take out **Handout 5**. Place a star next to items you feel are your strengths. Then, check ANY of the boxes that apply to you. You may have a strength that you'd like to do in different routines, or there may be some items you feel you have down.



*Give time to complete.*

Did anything stand out to you when you were completing the checklist?

## Slide 40: Reflection

What questions do you have about the material we discussed?

What insights, if any, do have about your own practices, the children, and/or their families?

What strategies did you see or hear that might be useful in your role and work?



## Slide 41: Major Messages to Take Home

Today we learned that caregiving routines are a prime opportunity to promote social-emotional development in the classroom.

We looked at many examples of physical environments and thought about the role they play.

