

PRISM Training Modules

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

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

**Encourage helping
and togetherness**

**Model social
behaviors**

**Provide positive verbal
support for play
between children**

**Read books about
friends**

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PRISM Training Module Series

Introduction & Understanding
Social-Emotional Development

Focusing on Relationships

Responsive Routines,
Schedules, & Environments

Understanding Behavior

Teaching About Feelings

Supporting Active Engagement

Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Challenging Behavior

PRISM Training Modules*: Promoting Positive Peer Interactions

Welcome to the Positive Peer Interactions Module! In this module you will gain knowledge on how to facilitate positive peer interactions and support the development of social and friendship skills. Learn about the developmental stages of social and play skills and apply that knowledge to classroom practices.

Learner Objectives

Learn how to facilitate positive peer interactions.

Learn how to support the development of social and friendship skills.

Agenda

- I. Setting the Stage: Review - 10 minutes
- II. Support the Development of Social and Friendship Skills - 25 minutes
- III. Facilitate Positive Peer Interactions - 25 minutes
- IV. Wrap-up & Reflection - 10 minutes

My Notes:

*For references and more information about the PRISM Training Modules, please visit prism.ku.edu/trainings



Training Preparation

- Print PRISM Peer - All Handouts, 1 copy per participant, or print each handout listed below individually
- Review videos
- Prepare and print certificates of completion
- Activity: Environment & Peer Interactions - Review questions so you have examples of your own to share

Handouts

- PRISM Peer - 1 PowerPoint
- PRISM Peer - 2 Agenda
- PRISM Peer - 3 Development of Play Skills
- PRISM Peer - 4 Strategies for Friendship Skills
- PRISM Peer - 5 Environment & Peer Interaction
- PRISM Peer - 6 Practice Implementation Checklist (PPI)
- PRISM Peer - 7 Training Feedback

Videos

- PRISM Peer - Infant Play Model
- PRISM Peer - Soc Play Skills
- PRISM Peer - Model Social Play
- PRISM Peer - Toddler Turn-Taking
- PRISM Peer - Toddler Peer Interaction
- PRISM Peer - Infant Peer Interaction

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

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Slide 1: Peer Interactions

Welcome to your next session in the PRISM Training Series, where we are going to learn about promoting positive peer interactions and developing social and friendship skills. 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

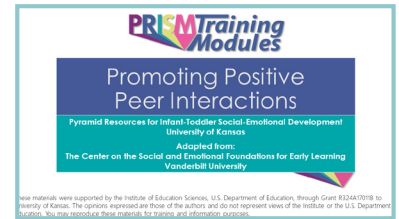
Breaks:

Lunch/Snack:

Parking:

Restrooms:

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



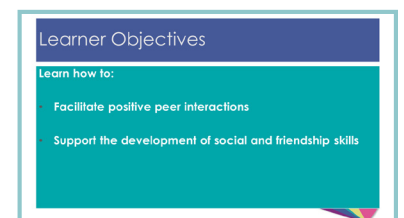
Presenter Notes:

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: Objectives

Today, we will talk about strategies for promoting positive peer interactions, how these interactions can be used to help build friendship skills, and why this is important to social-emotional development. We will learn about specific behaviors that young children engage in which are directly related to having friends, and how you can create opportunities throughout your daily routines for children to practice and develop these behaviors.

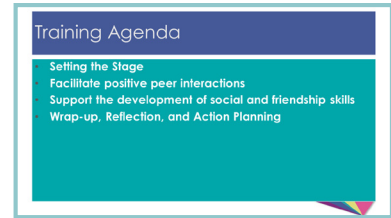


Slide 3: Agenda

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.

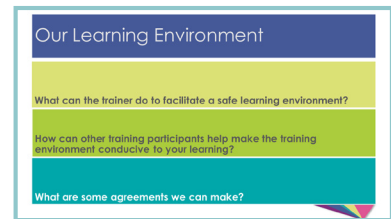
At the end of the training, we will ask you to complete a questionnaire about the training. We look forward to receiving this input, as it will improve the training for others.



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.



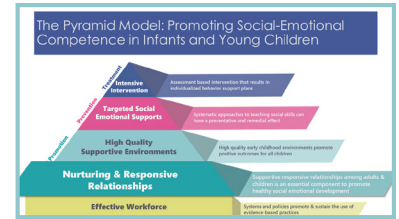
Slide 6: The Pyramid Model

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.

Briefly review what was discussed at your last PRISM Training Session.

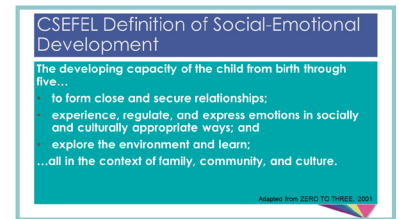
Today, we are going to talk about facilitating relationships between infant and toddler peers.



Slide 7: Definition of Social-Emotional Development

Let's look again at the CSEFEL working definition of social-emotional development, just as a reminder. This is the same definition we have used across all the trainings.

Read definition from slide.

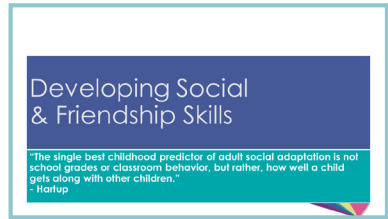


Slide 8: Developing Social & Play Skills

Today, we're going to talk about how we can support the development of social and friendship skills by promoting positive peer interactions. We will talk about the practices you can use to encourage children to be aware of and care about their peers, initiate and maintain positive interactions, and begin to develop friendship skills.

You may recall from earlier trainings, learning skills like these in infancy and toddler-hood helps equip children for a lifetime of healthier interactions. We understand that the capacity to engage in peer interactions and cooperative play is still developing. For infants and toddlers, we are laying the foundation for positive peer interactions and friendships during the early years, so that as children grow, they have the social skills needed to engage in positive interactions and build relationships.

The capacity to engage in peer interactions grows tremendously from infancy to toddler-hood so we will talk about that progression of skills, and how, at every age, there are strategies you can use to support peer interaction throughout your day.



Slide 9: Infant Play Model

Before we begin talking about peer interactions, let's start by talking about *play*, and what that looks like for infants and for toddlers.

We're going to watch a video of a teacher interacting with infants. What sort of play would you expect to see in infants under the age of 12 months?

Give time for responses.

Generally, we'd expect a young infant to play alone, right? But we also want to be modeling and preparing that child for what comes next, so what type of social play would you expect a young toddler to engage in?

Give time for responses.

We'd expect slightly older children to watch other children play, and perhaps join in parallel play.

As you watch this video, note how the teacher is equipping her infants to begin to notice each other and model the next step in social play development - parallel play.

Play PRISM Peer - Infant Play Model

Let's talk about how this interaction is as an example of ways caregivers can support social play skills. What did you notice?

Give time for responses, and share any ideas in Presenter Notes that aren't mentioned.

It is these kinds of interactions that help very young children learn how to play with peers and build relationships. Through watching their teacher, these infants will learn to be attentive to another child's play and imitate that play. This will equip them for toddler-hood where they will be learning how to be attentive to other's play ideas and join in with group play, paving the way to friendship and cooperation skills.



Presenter Notes:

Demonstrates interest in children

Shares toys with children

Prompts to share, but without the inappropriate expectation of sharing

Is prepared with multiples of the same type of toys

Slide 10: Progression of Play Skills

Children's play changes as they grow and develop, but it also varies based on their age, their interests, and the social setting. Some children gravitate toward interactions, while others may prefer playing alone.

We typically see a general progression from unoccupied or solitary play as an infant, to parallel play in which children play side-by-side, to social play, in which they have established rules or guidelines about their play.

This video gives you a brief overview of the developmental progression of social play. As you watch, think about what skills you see children using in your classroom and what skills they are starting to develop.

 **Play PRISM Peer - Soc Play Skills**



Slide 11: Development of Social & Play Skills

The video helps us see the different social and play stages a child moves through as they age. **Handout 2** describes these skills in detail. While caregivers play an important role in the earliest stages of a child's social development, it is important to remember children also begin to notice and play with each other from a very early age.

At what age do you think children begin to notice each other?

Wait for responses and give examples as needed.

What early behaviors might an infant demonstrate to show interest in others?

Wait for responses and give examples as needed.

Development of Social & Play Skills Handout 3	
Age	Play
Birth to 3 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responds to caregivers• Cries and smiles• Responds to familiar voices• Focuses on objects
8 to 12 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begins to imitate play actions or behavior of others, especially caregiver• Plays hiding games, songs & rhymes with adult• Plays alone without caregiver for short periods
25 to 36 Months	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some cooperates and talking with other children• Some pretend play• Still plays alone frequently• Interactive level moving toward (cooperative play)

Presenter Notes:

In infancy, children begin to smile at another face and approach others as they become mobile.

At about one year of age, they begin to play with the same toys another child is using, and begin to imitate others.

Offering an item to someone
Imitating another person
Smiling back at someone
Watching or approaching others

Slide 12: Model Social Play

Let's watch a video of more advanced social play. Note what the teacher is doing to expand play on a social level to bring peers together.

 **Play PRISM Peer - Model Social Play**

What do you notice during this play activity?

Give time for responses.

This shows some great examples of how teachers can promote the development of friendship skills.



Presenter Notes:

Adult supports by asking questions, listening and responding, modeling appropriate play, greeting and naming peers, and helps with problem solving.

Slide 13: What are friendship skills?

Research has demonstrated that among preschoolers, there are child behaviors that are typically associated with having friends and engaging in successful peer interactions. We can call these "friendship skills."

Some of these behaviors include:

- Organizing play, such as when children use statements like "Let's play school," or offer suggestions about how to play
- Being receptive to bids to share, or offering to share
- Helping others, including handing toys to other children or helping teachers clean up
- Offering compliments to others
- Engaging in reciprocal (back-and-forth) interactions to sustain longer interactions

While these skills are more typical of preschoolers, let's think about how these skills begin to develop in infants and toddlers, and how the practices you use now can have an impact on friendship skills in the years to come.





Slide 14: Why is Supporting Positive Peer Interactions Important?

Researchers and child development specialists used to believe that very young children were not capable of understanding or empathizing with the experience of others.

More recently researchers have demonstrated that even very young infants can identify and discriminate the emotions of others. Being aware of, or sensitive to the emotions of others is a first step in building empathy – a critical foundational social skill.

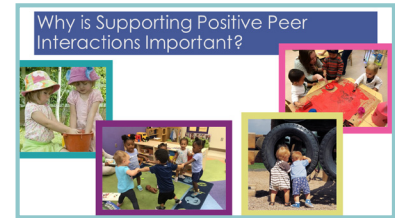
Let's talk about some examples of caring and helping behaviors that demonstrate the empathy that infants and toddlers can have for others.

What examples of these behaviors do you see in your classroom?

Wait for responses, and give examples as needed.

The age when children demonstrate and master skills like empathy varies, but just like other skills, children observe and learn these skills through the day-to-day interactions that they have with their caregivers.

Caregivers are the first example infants and toddlers have for how to engage in interactions. For example, babies as young as 6 months will look to caregivers to gauge his or her reaction to a particular situation. We have all experienced situations in which young children look to a caregiver to determine if a situation is "safe." Just like with peer interactions, infants and toddlers look to caregivers to learn how to interact with their peers.



Presenter Notes:

A toddler provides a pacifier to an infant who is crying
A toddler gives another child his special comfort item
A child pats the back of another child when she is upset
An infant watches, cries, or frowns when another child is upset
An infant smiles back when smiled at



Slide 15: Friendship Skills - Environment

Before we talk more about how interactions lay a foundation for positive peer interactions, let's take a look at some ways you can set up the classroom environment to encourage positive peer interactions and friendship skills.



Creating **space for social activities** is a great way to get started.

- Examine your physical environment – whether it be your classroom or an outdoor space – to ensure that there is enough space for infants, toddlers, and adults to engage in social activities.
- Look for features like comfy floor spaces where you can be together and rocking chairs or gliders that are angled toward each other.
- 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. There are many ways to do this: lofts, block areas, climbing boxes, slides for more than one child at a time, mirrors that accommodate more than one child, or play houses.
- Even young infants can be positioned to face each other, or other children in the room, so they can observe and feel included.

Review your **daily schedule**, thinking about how you can provide multiple opportunities to develop play skills each day within those daily routines, such as lunch or indoor and outdoor play times.

- Ensure the schedule includes small group activities that encourage peer interaction, such as playing restaurant or house, taking turns while going down the slide, rolling a ball back and forth, or using musical instruments to create a "band."
- Whatever the activity is, consider ways that you can plan for interaction that is appropriate for the children in your classroom.

Slide 15 cont.

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

- Provide multiples of popular toys such as stacking toys, cars, dolls, balls, puppets, phones, dress-up clothes, puzzles, or other manipulative materials.
- This way, the children can parallel play or begin to play together easily. It can also reduce conflict, and the need for children to “share” when developmentally, they do not yet have the capacity to truly share.

What are some other ways you plan for supporting positive interactions when you are organizing your schedule or your environment?

Give time for responses.



Slide 16: Friendship Skills - Promoting Development

Now, let's brainstorm some ideas for how we can promote peer interaction and friendship skills in some typical daily activities. Let's consider some of the strategies we can use to support the development of friendship skills.

Think about these strategies in the context of daily routines. What types of social behaviors can you model for the children in your care?

Give time for responses.

How can you provide positive verbal support for playing together and helping each other? What sorts of phrases do you use?

Give time for responses.

How might this look different for younger infants?

Give time for responses.

What about older toddlers?

Give time for responses.

You've probably come across some good books about friendship. What are some of your favorite to read to young children? What friendship skills do those books teach?

Give time for responses.

These are all great ways to encourage social skills, and you can find more ideas on **Handout 3**. Now, let's take some time to look at a specific social skill: turn-taking and sharing.

Friendship Skills: Promoting Development	
Encourage helping and togetherness	Model social behaviors
Provide positive verbal support for play between children	Read books about friends

Presenter Notes:

Offering toys to another child, saying thank you, taking turns

Commenting when children are playing with similar materials, offering encouragement, prompts such as "I think Marco would like to play dolls with Mia."

With younger infants, you will narrate interactions and model more. "Eli is smiling at you. He wants to be your friend." "Ava wants a toy. Here you go, Ava, we will share a rattle with you."

Activities might be more advanced, and there may be more "cooperative" language. "Let's stack together." "First, Emilia will put a block on, then Will can put a block on."



Slide 17: Friendship Skills - Turn-Taking and Sharing

Turn-taking and sharing are concepts children begin to experience and start to learn about in infancy, but don't quite master for several more years. Sometimes, as adults, we may forget how long it takes for sharing and turn-taking skills to fully develop.

Turn-taking and sharing are skills that are learned. We need to "teach" children how to engage in these skills. Children gradually learn about turn-taking and sharing within the context of responsive and nurturing relationships. They observe, and their attempts are reinforced by adults and children around them.

One example of turn-taking for an infant that you have probably experienced is the back-and-forth imitation of the infant's vocalizations. Adult caregivers often imitate a vocalization, repeating the infant's behavior, and then the infant responds with that behavior again. Like a conversation, the imitation goes back and forth between caregivers and babies.

What other turn-taking games do you play with infants or young toddlers?

Take time to listen and respond to answers.

Watch for opportunities to incorporate these fun turn-taking opportunities throughout daily routines is a great way to prepare children for sharing as they grow.



Presenter Notes:

Peek-a-boo

Imitating cooing, laughings,
clapping, wiggling

Handing a toy back and forth

Passing a toy around in a circle

Taking turns with an instrument



Slide 18: Friendship Skills - Sharing: Cultural Considerations

We've talked about some ways to provide opportunities for turn-taking and sharing into your classroom, but it is also important to acknowledge children may come into your room with different experiences with sharing. Some of that may be influenced by culture and community.

For example, some cultures that place independence as a priority may believe children need to have more understanding before they can learn to share. On the other hand, the cultures that value interdependence may believe sharing is taught from infancy.

Thinking about these two perspectives, in what ways do you teach sharing in your classroom? How do you decide when to teach sharing?

Are there instances in your room where sharing is not a choice, but is expected? What does that look like?

Take time to listen and respond to answers.

How might the perspective of the family and your approach to teaching sharing impact the children in your classroom?

Take time to listen and respond to answers.

When children show up to your room, they bring with them things they've learned at home, past experiences, and their cultural reality. By learning from families, examining our practices, observing children's responses to our teaching, and taking intentional steps to broaden the way we teach, we can better engage in practices that support children from all cultural perspectives.

Sharing: Cultural Considerations	
Independence (Individualist Culture)	Interdependence (Collectivist Culture)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children encouraged to do things on their own• Child must understand self as "possessor" before learning to share• Encouraged to share	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children encouraged to rely on others• Sharing is stressed from birth; ownership is not emphasized• Sharing is not a choice

Inoka, I. U., Curenton, S. M., Durden, T. R., & Escaya, K. (2020). Don't look

Slide 19: Turn-Taking Video

Now that we've had some time to talk about turn-taking and sharing in depth, let's take a look at a video of a teacher supporting turn-taking. While you're watching, write down any ideas you have for strategies you would like to incorporate into your classroom.

Play PRISM Peer - Toddler Turn-Taking

What practices did you observe that supported turn-taking?

Give time for responses.

What would you like to try in your classroom?

Give time for responses.



Presenter Notes:

Uses children's names

Has enough materials for everyone

Teacher models taking her own turn

Slide 20: Toddler Peer Interaction

Let's take a look at another teacher in action. This time, watch for how she facilitates peer interactions, in general.

Play PRISM Peer - Toddler Peer Interaction

What were some of the words you noticed the teacher use to encourage peer interaction?

Give time for responses.

What else did she do to promote friendship skills?

Give time for responses.



Presenter Notes:

Asking open ended questions

Giving choices

Supporting ways to ask and ways to share

Using children's names.



Slide 21: Infant Peer Interaction

Infant peer interaction looks quite different than toddler interaction, so let's watch one more video, this time of two infants interacting. Then, we'll look at ways to encourage peer interaction during specific routines.



Play PRISM Engage - Infant Peer Interaction

What did infant peer interaction look like? How was it different than toddler peer interaction?

Give time for responses.

What are some strategies a teacher could use here that would further encourage infant peer interaction?

Give time for responses.



Presenter Notes:
Physical proximity
Reaching out
Smiling
Making sounds
Eye contact

Teacher could turn them to face one another, describe what they are doing using their names, model waving hi to each child

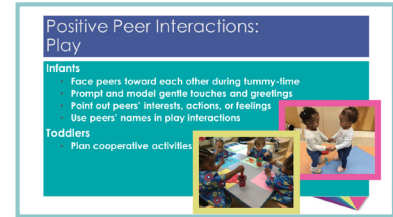
Slide 22: Peer Interactions - Play

We've already talked about some ways to encourage interaction during play, and you saw examples in the videos we just watched.

Here are a few more specific ways to encourage peer interaction.

- For children who are not mobile, such as young infants, think about how their position in the room can encourage interaction.
- Place babies where they can observe each other and exchange smiles.
- You can also encourage awareness of peers by talking about peers' actions and feelings. For example, "I see Bruno playing with a bear."

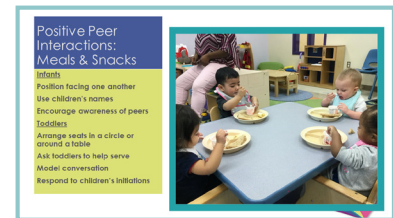
What are some ways you might differentiate these practices for infants or for toddlers?



Slide 23: Peer Interactions - Meals & Snacks

You can use similar strategies to encourage peer interaction during meals and snacks.

- By sitting at a table or turning high chairs to face each other, children have more opportunities to observe and interact with each other.
- If you have young infants, hold or position them in such a way that they can see each other.
- For children eating table foods, as you are serving the food, name each child and what you are doing. "I'm giving Joey his milk."
- While the children are eating, you can encourage awareness of each other by asking questions about the other children, such as "What is Naomi eating?"
- As children get older, consider modeling mealtime conversations, and show them what it looks like to listen and respond to initiations.





Slide 24: Peer Interactions - Clean Up

The routine of cleaning up encourages both independence and cooperation, which makes it a great naturally-occurring opportunity for social-emotional growth.

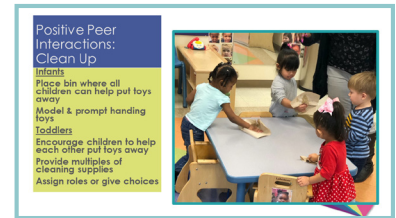
- Teaching clean up routines can start at an early age. Babies enjoy taking things in and out of containers, so this can be a first step to cleaning up. By placing a toy bin where all children can help, you can lay the foundation for cooperation.
- This does usually require more adult facilitation, so the toys don't end up getting dumped out. While cleaning up, it helps to have a teacher available to model how to hand toys over and put toys in.

As toddlers age, they will begin to understand they can help each other put toys away.

- By providing multiple of cleaning supplies, such as towels or brooms, children can continue working on cleaning parallel to each other, which can lead to cooperation. Even if they are not working together, talk about how they are a great cleaning team and are working so well together.

Finally, older toddlers can choose or be given roles and choices during clean up.

- When two children want the same job or aren't able to "help" each other in a positive way, you can provide an alternative choice for one of the children: "Sara is picking up the blocks. Would you like to pick up the dinosaurs or the babies?"
- By providing this type of choice, you increase the child's awareness of peers, encourage self-awareness through providing a choice, and provide an alternative to the conflict of wanting something someone else has.





Slide 25: Handout 5 Environment & Peer Interaction

Take out **Handout 5**. We're going to use this handout to apply the strategies for promoting peer interactions to our classrooms. If you are here with your teaching team, you can fill this out together. If not, you can get with a group of 3-4 people around you and come up with ideas together. As you are working through this handout, think of items you already have in your classroom and how they can be used to facilitate peer interaction. We will take about 15 minutes to do this activity, then come back together to share ideas.

Your group might need to agree on an age group, as these practices might look a little different for infants and toddlers.

Be available to answer questions and help quiet groups get the discussion started.

What ideas did your group come up with to encourage peer interaction during mealtime?

Give time for responses.

What about play time?

Give time for responses.

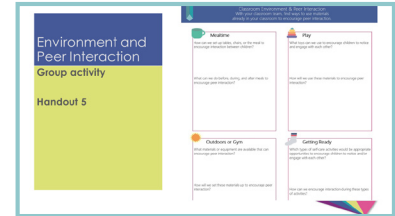
Outdoor or gym time?

Give time for responses.

What about getting ready, or self-care activities?

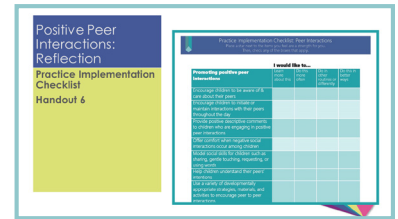
Give time for responses.

I hope hearing from different groups has helped you come up with ideas for your own classrooms!



Slide 26: Practice Implementation Checklist

Now that we've had a chance to come up with some ideas to implement in the future, we're going to have the opportunity to do some self-reflection. Take out your Practice Implementation checklist, a tool you can use to reflect on your own teaching practices. This is the same type of checklist you've had in past trainings. This time, it's focused on strategies to support peer interactions. First, star items you feel are strengths for you. Then, check any of the boxes that apply. You may even find you want to check some boxes for items that are a strength for you. This checklist is just for your information; we won't be collecting it. However, you may find you'd like to follow up with your coach on some items.

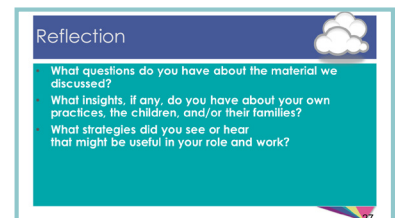


Slide 27: Reflection

We're about to wrap up this session with some reflection time, but before we do, do you have questions about the material we've covered today?

Today we've learned strategies that promote children's engagement in interactions, how those can be used to set the stage for positive interactions and friendships, and why this is important to social-emotional development.

We've talked about ways to embed friendship skills into daily routines you're already doing in your classroom, paving the way for a lifetime of healthier interactions.



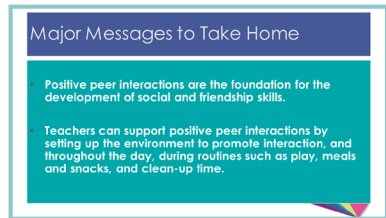
Slide 28: Major Messages to Take Home

Today we've learned strategies that promote children's engagement in activities and interactions, how those can be used to set the stage for positive interactions and friendships, and why this is important to social-emotional development.

We've talked about ways to embed friendship skills into daily routines you're already doing in your classroom, paving the way for a lifetime of healthier interactions. We have talked about how this might look a little different for infants and toddlers.

As you go back to your classroom, think about if there are any questions or ideas you have that you'd like to discuss with your coach to further support friendship and play skills with the children you care for. If this is an area you'd like to focus on, you and your coach can work together to come up with a plan.

Thank you for attending this training. Next time, we will focus on...



Major Messages to Take Home

- Positive peer interactions are the foundation for the development of social and friendship skills.
- Teachers can support positive peer interactions by setting up the environment to promote interaction, and throughout the day, during routines such as play, meals and snacks, and clean-up time.