

# Virtual Lab School



Welcome!  
We will start at 13:00 EST

————— You Are a Model for Supportive Relationships: —————  
Why Relationships Are  
Central in CYP Programs

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# To support your learning...

- ✓ All participants have been muted
- ✓ Please type questions or comments into Chat ONLY
- ✓ We will monitor the CHAT and answer questions throughout the training
- ✓ This session is being recorded to share on the Virtual Lab School site
- ✓ We encourage you to participate in the polls throughout the training
- ✓ Share your feedback after the training!
- ✓ If we disconnect – please log back in

ASK YOURSELF:

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*When you are working with children and youth, what helps you be a sensitive caregiver?*



## Poll Results



### **When you are working with children and youth, what helps you be a sensitive caregiver?**

- ✓ Knowing developmentally appropriate practice
- ✓ Good support and connections with coworkers
- ✓ Being less stressed
- ✓ Supportive mentors and coaches
- ✓ Having materials readily available to engage children
- ✓ Having comfortable spaces to play or engage
- ✓ Having sufficient staff to focus on interacting with children



## What is relationship-based care:

*Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development—intellectual, social, emotional, physical, behavioral, and moral.*

# QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER FOR CHILDREN

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Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University (2021)

Larson, Barnett & McConnel, 2020

Liu, Simpkins & Vandell, 2020

Rucinski, Brown & Downer, 2018

Vandenbroucke et al., 2018

Relationship quality and interactions between children and teachers predict children's

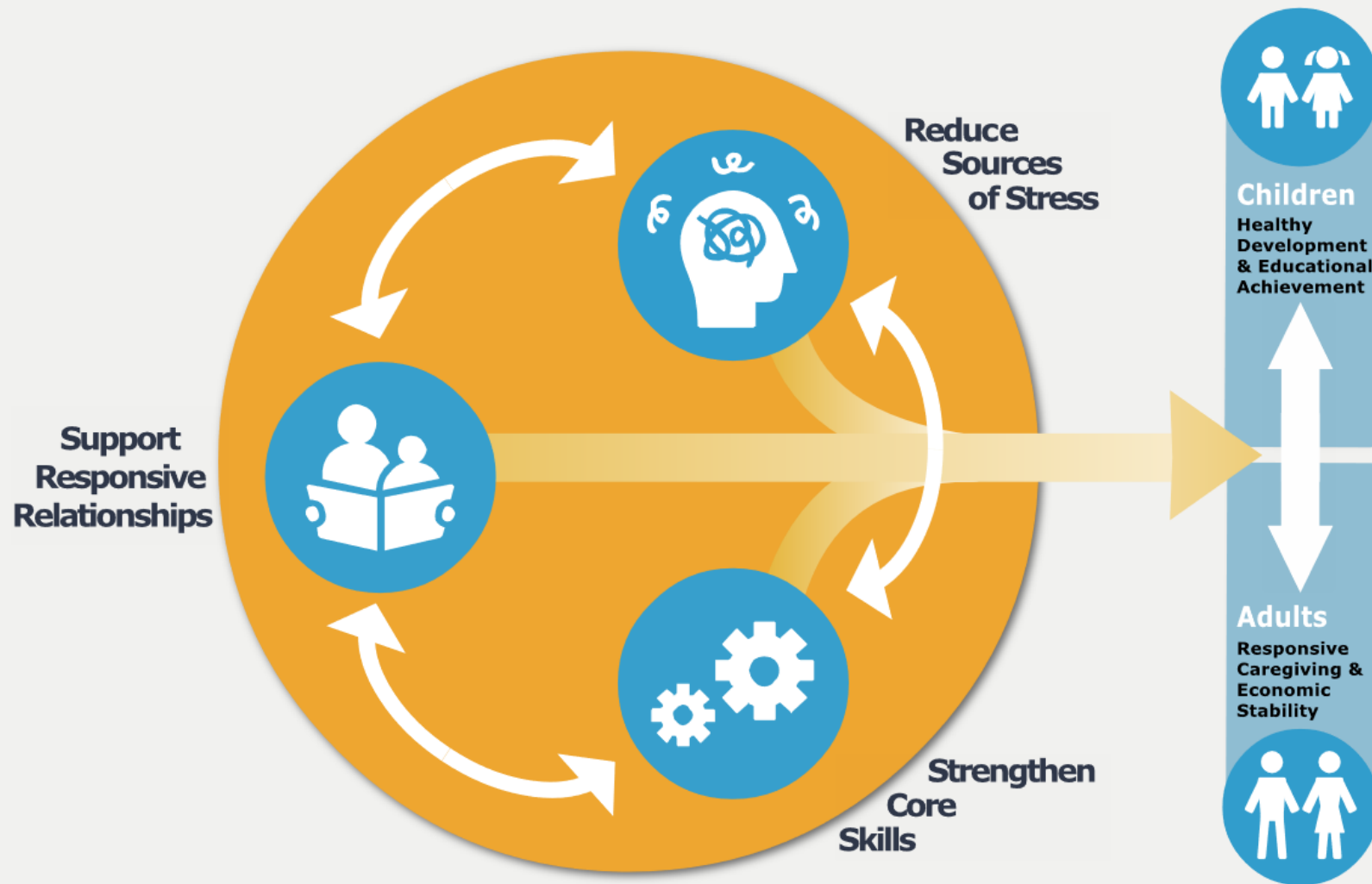
- behavior challenges
- language development
- depressive symptoms
- executive function

(and more!)

# Science to Policy and Practice

## Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families

These principles, grounded in science, can guide policymakers and program developers as they design and adapt policies and programs to improve outcomes for children and families.





ASK YOURSELF:

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*How does your program  
support relationships  
between staff and children?*



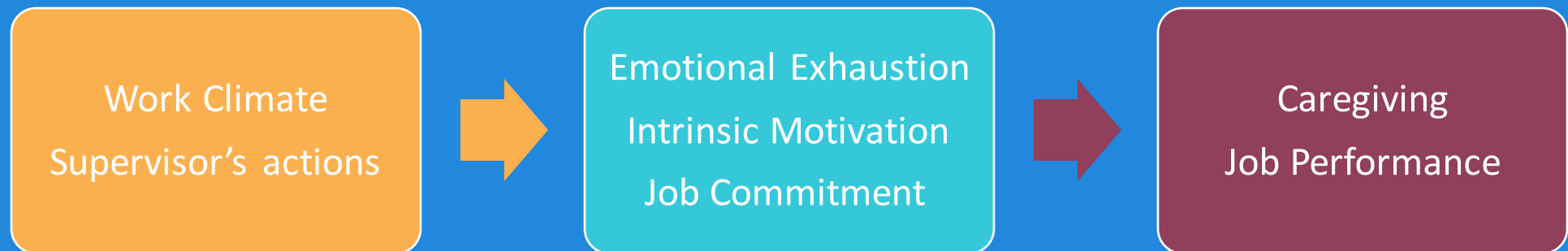
## Poll Results



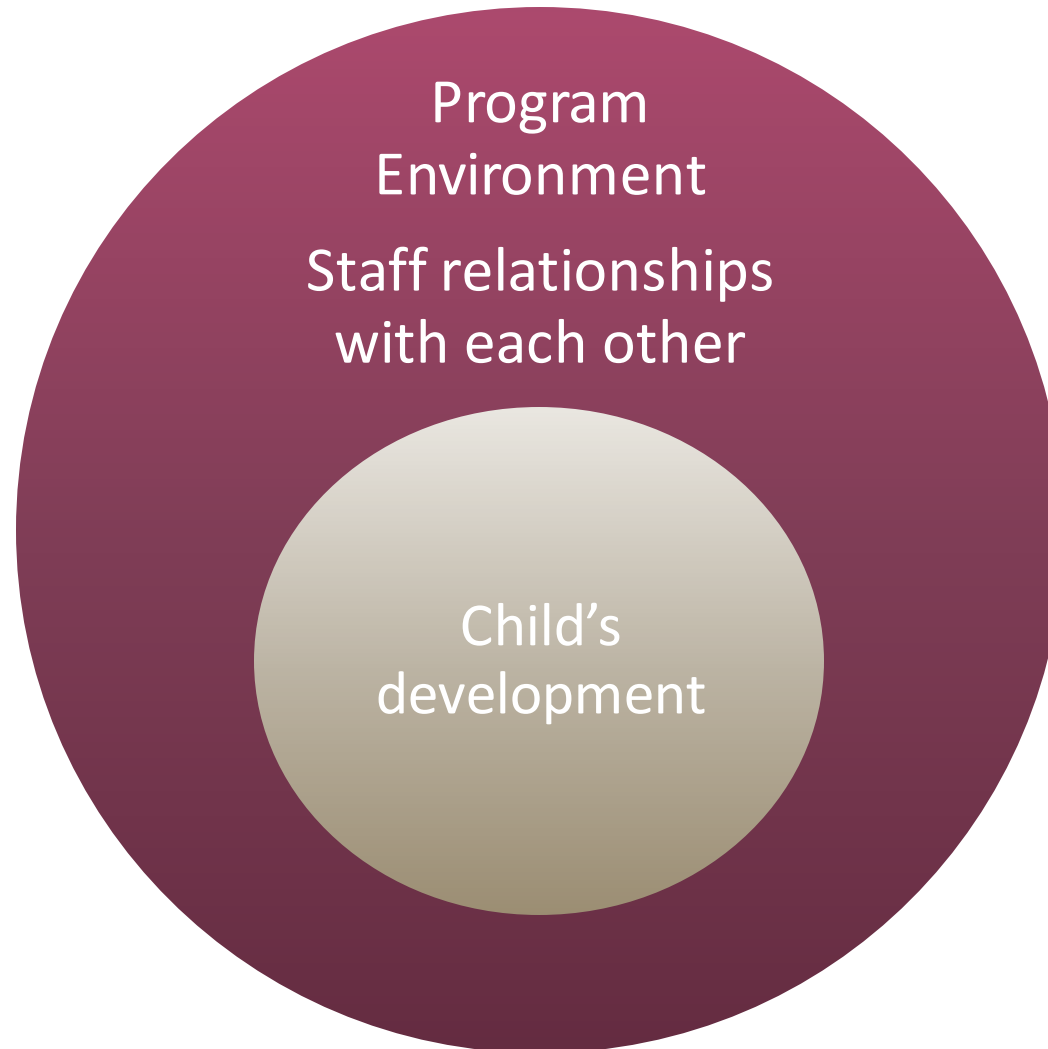
### **How does your program currently support relationships between staff and children?**

- ✓ Invite families to complete an “intake” form to share information about their child
- ✓ Arrange meetings between staff members and families as children or youth transition into your program
- ✓ Keep staffing schedules consistent within classrooms or areas
- ✓ Arrange conferences between families and staff
- ✓ Provide time for training so staff know developmentally appropriate practices
- ✓ Provide clear information about transitions for families and staff
- ✓ Share positive feedback with staff members when you observe great interactions between them and children

# The relationships that staff experience also matter



# Interactions among caregivers matters



Bullough (2015)  
McCormick et al. (2001)  
Shim, Hestenes & Cassidy (2004)  
Young (2017)

# Most Supportive for Positive Outcomes for Children



# Most Supportive of Positive Work from Staff

Clear,  
achievable  
expectations



Support &  
Connection  
to others

ASK YOURSELF:

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*How does your program  
support staff and  
relationships amongst staff?*



## Poll Results



### **How does your program support staff and relationships amongst staff?**

- ✓ Work together with staff to set professional goals
- ✓ Ask for staff members' thoughts about teaching teams
- ✓ Share policies clearly in multiple ways
- ✓ Celebrate successes
- ✓ Keep staff schedules consistent within classrooms or areas
- ✓ Encourage staff to plan vacations
- ✓ Greet staff each day
- ✓ Arrange interested mentors for new staff
- ✓ Special treats to honor staff work
- ✓ Share positive feedback when you see staff collaborating
- ✓ Model teamwork between the program manager and T&CS



# We Support Adults & Children in Similar Ways



(Schweikert, 2014)

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# YOU SUPPORT STAFF BY CREATING A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT

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Management, Social Emotional Development, Lesson 3, Learn

You support staff by engaging in relationship-based leadership practices:

- ✓ Modeling positive relationships with T&CS
- ✓ Acknowledging emotional needs of staff
- ✓ Fostering a sense of belonging
- ✓ Building staff morale

MGT, Social Emotional Development, Lesson 4 & 5

MGT, Self & Cultural Understanding, Lesson 3

MGT, Program Management, Lesson 2

FT, SELF-T, Lesson 4



— **SEE** —



ASK YOURSELF:

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*Do you spend more time on  
relationships or tasks each  
day?*



## Poll Results



**Do you spend more time on relationships or tasks each day?**

- ✓ Relationship-related actions
- ✓ Task-related actions
- ✓ Equal amount of time on each
- ✓ It depends on the day

# VLS TOOLS FOR REFLECTING ON RELATIONSHIPS



## Task and Relationship Questionnaire

(Adapted from *Leadership, Theory and Practice* by Peter G. Northouse.)

### Purpose

1. To identify how much you emphasize task and relationship behaviors in your life
2. To explore how your task behavior is related to your relationship behavior

**Directions:** For each item below, indicate on the scale the extent to which you engage in the described behavior. Move through the items quickly. Do not try to categorize yourself in one area or another.

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Make a "to-do" list of the things that need to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Try to make the work fun for others.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Urge others to concentrate on the work at hand.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Show concern for the personal well-being of others.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Set timelines for when the job needs to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Help group members get along.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Keep a checklist of what has been accomplished.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Listen to the special needs of each group member.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Stress to others the rules and requirements for the project.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Spend time exploring other people's ideas for the project.	1	2	3	4	5



## Let's Talk about Policies

(Adapted from Baker & Manfredi-Pettit, 2004, p. 176-178.)

- How do your center's policies strengthen relationships between adults? Between adults and children?
- Do any of your center's policies weaken or undermine relationships? Which policies?
- What do you need to know to establish policies that are more supportive of adult relationships?
- Do your center's policies support caring connections with parents that go beyond cordiality?
- Do its policies limit staff relationships with families? Why?
- Do you need to make changes in staff scheduling so relationship priorities are put first? For instance, is there frequent contact between parents and their child's primary caregiver?
- Is family participation a shared value and goal among center staff? Among parents?
- Does your center feel like home?
- Is relationship and community building a program-wide goal?

You support staff by meeting needs for connection, competency and autonomy

- ✓ Clear expectations and feedback
- ✓ Shared decision making
- ✓ Professional development
- ✓ Reflective supervision
- ✓ Team building
- ✓ Planning time

MGT, Self & Cultural Understanding, Lesson 3

MGT, Program Management, Lesson 2

MGT, Professionalism, Lesson 2



# VLS TOOLS TO SUPPORT CONNECTION, COMPETENCE & AUTONOMY



## Planning for Communication and Shared Decision-Making with Staff: Building Trust and Collaboration

(adapted from Schweikert, 2014)

Adults like to feel a part of the decision-making process when the decisions will affect them and their workplace. You will have more cooperation from the staff when they have a voice in decisions about the program. This is also true for families. When you invite families to participate in an advisory board, they need to truly be a partner on the board and have input into decisions.

Understandably, some decisions do not lend themselves to shared decision-making but must be made by the individual in charge (i.e., program manager or T&Cs). Again, it is still important to explain to staff and families why a decision had to be made.

Leaders engage staff members in shared decision-making whenever appropriate. Providing clear, honest communication with the staff is important to maintaining positive relationships. Think about all the different methods of communication (e.g., notes, staff meeting discussions) you will use to share information with your staff and list them below:

*Communication methods I plan to use:*

*Leaders engage staff in shared decision-making whenever appropriate. Think about the many types of decisions that are made in a care and education program. List below when you plan to use shared decision-making processes with the staff:*



## Child Care Staff Evaluation

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Whether you are child-care administrator, director or a supervisor of student teachers; it is likely you will be evaluating caregivers. The evaluation of staff serves many purposes. In addition to a tool used for promotion and dismissal, staff evaluations can be valuable sources of feedback and tools used for professional growth. Used properly, checklists and performance appraisals can help promote open communication between the daycare staff and administration and clarify expectations.

Many directors will often give new providers a copy of the evaluation so that they know what the work expectations are and can measure their own progress. It is helpful to establish a set guideline for when evaluation will occur. Some programs will schedule staff evaluations at the end of a probationary period and then annually after that. It is helpful to ask the staff member to complete the form first, thereby allowing your ratings to show areas of agreement or discrepancy.

### Sample Evaluation Tool

**F = Frequently**  
**O = Occasionally**  
**N = Never**

General Work Habits	F	O	R
Arrives on time	x		
Reliable in attendance	x		
Responsible in job duties	x		
Alert in health and safety matters	x		
Flexible with assignments and schedule		x	
Maintains a positive attitude	x		
Gives ample notice for absence	x		
Remains calm in tense situations		x	

Interaction with Children	F	O	R
Friendly, warm and affectionate	x		
Eye to eye interaction	x		
Uses modulated, appropriate voice		x	
Shows respect for individuals		x	
Is aware of developmental levels		x	
Encourages independence and self-help		x	
Avoids stereotyping and labeling			x
Reinforces positive behavior		x	
Uses positive discipline techniques		x	

SHARE OUT:

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*What specific ways do you support connection and team building within your program?*



# VLS TOOLS TO SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF & CHILDREN

## Strategies for Building Relationships with Children

Activity / Center	Examples of Positive Comments
Designing the environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include family pictures and photos into the environment</li> <li>Post visual cues around the room to remind you to say positive comments and use positive gestures                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give lots of smiles, thumbs up, and high fives</li> <li>Encourage children to compliment each other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Arrival	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greet children and parents by their name during arrival and departure.</li> <li>Ask the parents and children about their favorite games and activities. Embed into the day.</li> </ul>
Book Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make books about each child with their pictures and favorite things (or have children or families make books about themselves). Keep them in the library and encourage children to read their own and their peers'.</li> </ul>
Dramatic Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage children to compliment each other</li> <li>Comment on their creativity and pretend play. Join in their play by asking for a role or cue. "You are playing together with the bear family so well, Julie and Margo! Can I take a turn making dinner for the bears? What should we eat?"</li> </ul>
Block Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sit down and play with the child. Let him or her direct how you will play with the blocks.</li> <li>Comment on or ask a child about her or his creation. "What is your favorite part of the tower?"</li> </ul>
Water table	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comment on children who are playing with each other "Look at Mikey and Luke playing together with the boats! They are having so much fun!"</li> </ul>
Art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Comment on or ask a child about his drawing. "What a cool way to mix those colors!"</li> </ul>

## Responsive Staff Member Checklist and Reflection Guide

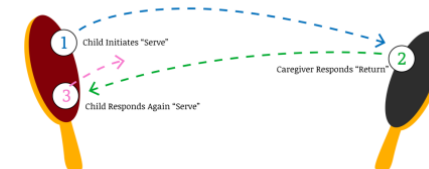
This chart is designed to be a self-reflective tool, but for this exercise you will use it to practice really watching staff members interactions. Use the chart below to observe a staff member. What evidence do you see or not see for each item? How would you use this information for professional development?

After you have used the tool to practice really watching interactions, offer this checklist as a self-reflective tool for staff members. Then use the reflective questions that follow to spark discussion and improvement.

Responsive Teacher Checklist				
Category	Do you...?	All the time	Sometimes	Not yet
Response Quality	Respond immediately and appropriately to children who are asking for help?			
	Respond with excitement when a child is excited about doing something new?			
	Respond quietly and calmly when a child is hurt or crying?			
	Respond immediately and appropriately to match a child's needs?			
Synchrony	Work to ensure you have reciprocal and rewarding relationships with each child?			
	Laugh together with all children about events, stories, games, songs, etc.?			
	Play/interact with children with the activities or games they enjoy in the classroom or on the playground?			

## Serve and Return

Read the examples below that show different ways caregivers have responsive interactions with children at various developmental stages. The ping-pong effect, or back-and-forth interaction, is called serve and return (Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2017).



1. Child Initiates "Serve"	2. Caregiver Responds "Return"	3. Child Responds Again "Serve"
<p>A 12-week-old infant who has been regularly eating every three hours has become fussier, wanting to eat as often as every hour-and-a-half.</p>	<p>The caregiver understands that it is common for young infants to have "cluster feedings" where they eat more often for a period of time. While this can be demanding, the caregiver responds to the infant's needs and feeds on demand.</p>	<p>The child's fussiness lessens and the caregiver notices the child is beginning to engage in more quiet alert time.</p>
<p>A 16-month-old tugs at your shirt with arms up in the air while grunting.</p>	<p>Caregiver warmly looks at the child and says, "You want me to hold you? I'm going to finish washing my hands, and then I will pick you up."</p>	<p>The child patiently waits till the caregiver picks them up. Letting the child know their request will be met, supports the child's development of self-regulation.</p>
<p>When preparing to go outside, a caregiver observes a 4-year-old child become visibly frustrated while struggling to independently put on a coat.</p>	<p>The caregiver approaches the child on their level and responds, "I see that you are frustrated because it is hard to put your coat on. Is there something I can do?"</p>	<p>The child says, "help me" and gladly accepts assistance. Modeling words that describe the child's feelings, "frustrated", gives language to the emotion. Using an open-ended question supported the child in problem-solving the situation.</p>



“  
Every child deserves a champion—an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.  
”

-Rita Pierson

————— Thank you! —————

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Feedback form: [https://osu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_00wd41sZmhqv8ea](https://osu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_00wd41sZmhqv8ea)

Questions/support: [support@virtuallabschool.org](mailto:support@virtuallabschool.org)