Skills for Building Safe and Trusting Environments

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Goals

Nurture Social, Emotional, Cognitive and Physical Development
Keeping aware of the developmental domains, our goals are:

To Help Children Develop
- Problem Solving Skills
- Critical Thinking Skills
- Self Awareness
- Identity within a Community
  - Cultural Awareness
  - Sensitivity and Caring for Others
- Self Regulation
Emotional Development
Self Esteem
Self Regulation
Awareness of Feelings
Empathy
Social Development
Pro-Social Behaviors
giving, helping, caring, sharing
Social Competence
making friends
self assured
Cognitive Development

Perspective Taking
Critical Thinking
Decision Making
Problem Solving
Physical Development
Impulse Control
Peace Education
Conflict Resolution
Collaboration
Anti-Bias Approach
Community
Action
The Developmental Domains are interrelated.

Development in one domain can facilitate or limit development in others.

Models that focus on all the developmental domains “Teach the Whole Child”

The Peace Education model has a significant positive effect on each of the developmental domains.
Peace Education

Emotional Development
- Self Esteem
- Self Regulation
- Awareness of Feelings
- Empathy

Social Development
- Pro-Social Behaviors
giving, helping, caring
sharing
- Social Competence
making friends, self assured

Cognitive Development
- Perspective Taking
- Critical Thinking
- Decision Making
- Problem Solving

Physical Development
- Impulse Control
Cognitive Development

Critical Thinking Skills

Definition

Critical thinking skills include reasoning, questioning, making judgments, listening, communicating, creative thinking and problem solving.
Critical Thinking Skills

- Open ended questions provoke critical thinking – closed type questions do not.
- Brainstorming encourages risk taking....there is never a “wrong” answer – only an opportunity to learn.
- Thinking is motivated by questions – “How can we keep our school a safe place to learn and play?”
- When encouraged, the child takes a more active role in creative thinking and reasoning.
Rules — are frequently phrased in negative language

- Insufficient Rules
  - Children’s safety at risk
  - Learning Environment not protected

- Over Abundance of Rules
  - Difficult for children to remember
  - Stifles children’s creativity & spontaneity
  - Teachers spend *most* of their time enforcing rules

See Workbook p.53 *From Policing to Participation: Overturning the Rules and Creating Amicable Classrooms*
Kick Ball Rules

Co-created by 3-year olds

- Tree Stump is the Goal, 1 pt
- Teacher tosses the ball
- Start over at 5 points
- No Grabs
- Grabs OK on Grass
- Two Kids only in Grabs
- No Handsies
- Handsies OK in the Woods
- “T” for Times (to rest)
  Everybody sits on balance beam
Agreements – are usually phrased in positive language

- Addresses the dilemma of reversal thinking
- Safety and respect are the standards
- Young children are capable of co-creating guidelines for behavior
  - What do we want to see?
  - What do we want to hear?
- Process nurtures cognitive, emotional, social and physical development
Creating Class Agreements

Creating their own class agreements is a wonderful way for children to develop trust, autonomy and self-regulation.

See Workbook p. 60. Excerpt from *Hearing Everyone’s Voice* on how to guide children in making agreements.
Critical Thinking is enhanced through Problem Solving
Abundant Opportunities for Problem Solving occur during Unstructured Play

- Problems relating to Physical Activity
  - helping peers, building, use of play materials
- Problems connected to Dramatic, Fantasy, Imaginative Play
  - Deciding roles, props and script
Social and Emotional Development

Problem Solving during Physical Activities

Helping One Another fosters trust, patience, and the development of meaningful relationships.
Problem Solving during Dramatic Play

- Decision making skills
  roles, script, props,

- Communication skills
  explaining, listening,
  directing, dialogue

- Dramatic Play is essential for self-regulation

See workbook p. 67 *Recognizing and Supporting the Development of Self-Regulation in Young Children.*
Social Problem Solving

Teaches skills of
- self-control
- listening
- respectful communication
- how to give and receive help
- and how to work cooperatively and fairly in groups.
Scaffolding Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

- Feelings Curriculum
- Communication Skills
- Sign language
- Awareness of basic human needs
- Awareness of child development
Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

A Feelings Curriculum undoubtedly supports social and emotional development.

- Children learn to recognize and identify their own feelings.
- Children learn to recognize and identify the feelings of others.
- The foundation for empathy is the ability to recognize and identify the feelings of others.
Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

Feelings Curriculum

Photographs, drawings
Storybooks – reading and acting out
Songs and chants
Flannel stories & puppets
Co-created children’s stories and songs
Child-made feelings book
Focused discussions - brainstorming
Feelings Curriculum Story Books

Happy: *A Snowy Day, A Whistle for Willie* (Keats)

Sad: *The Last Puppy* (Asch), *My Friend Gorilla* (Morozumi)

Scared: *When I feel Scared* (Spelman & Parkensen), *Go Away Big Green Monster* (Emberly)

Angry: *Let’s Be Enemies* (Udry), *Don’t Need Friends* (Crimi)
The Wild Things roll their terrible eyes, gnash their terrible teeth and show their terrible claws!
Feelings Curriculum, Cont. - Sad

Sad Little Bird flannel board song

I’m a sad little bird
Because I’m lonely
All alone in the tree
I’m a sad little bird
Because I’m lonely,
All alone - alone in
The tree
Feelings Curriculum, cont. – Scared

Thunder song

I looked up in the sky and saw a big black cloud!
And then I heard the thunder, it was loud, loud, loud
My Mommy said don’t worry about that roar, roar, roar
For it only means that soon the rain will pour, pour, pour
Feelings Curriculum, cont. - Angry

Anger Chant

Fee Fi Fo Fum
I’m getting angry, here it comes!
My anger’s here like popcorn popping
My anger’s here like rabbits hopping
What am I gonna do? Hummm?
What am I gonna do?
Conflict Resolution Skills

Support Structures

Communication Skills

- Children learn to listen to one another
- Children learn to express their feelings and needs
  - “I statements” I feel frustrated when my sand castle gets smashed. I need to have a turn.
Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

Sign Language for feelings

nurtures impulse control
If you're happy and you know it,
    sign like this (x2)
If you're happy and you know it,
    then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it,
    sign like this.

If you're sad...
If you're scared...
If you're mad
Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

Awareness of Basic Human Needs

- Connection – love, relatedness, belonging, closeness
- Autonomy – freedom to think for oneself, empowerment
- Competence – feeling adept, capable, creative
- Safety – trust, emotional & physical safety, security
Conflict Resolution Skills

Support Structures

Awareness of Child Development

Young children think in

- concrete terms
- in the immediate moment and
- from their own point of view

Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

Awareness of Child Development, cont.

- Young children need a good deal of assistance in defining the problem.
  
  Use concrete terms “I see two children want one shovel”

- They need assistance in seeing that there are two viewpoints.
Conflict Resolution Skills
Support Structures

Awareness of Child Development, cont.

- They need emotional support.
- They need assistance in thinking about cause and effect.
- They need to trust the process and know that their ideas will be respected and valued
Peaceful Conflict Resolution

See Workbook p. 84 Conflict Resolution as an Educational Tool
Basic Steps to Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Assess the situation to see if there is immediate danger of someone getting hurt, or if the children are resolving the conflict in an equitable manner themselves. That includes verbal as well as physical equality. If you determine you are needed, approach the children quickly and calmly.
Basic Steps to Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Defuse Anger

Anger is such an intense feeling that it must be defused before any negotiations can begin.
Basic Steps to Peaceful Conflict Resolution

1. Calm children and acknowledge their feelings. Feelings must be acknowledged & understood before children can move into problem solving.
   “I can see that you are really upset.”

2. Ask children, “What is the problem?”

3. When the children are calm, ask each child to express what they want or need.
   “Can you tell Sam what you need?”

4. State the problem clearly and non-judgmentally.
   ”Both Sam and Bill want to use the shovel? Is that the problem?”

5. The children brainstorm ideas about how to resolve the conflict.
   “How can we solve this problem?”

6. Try the idea (take action) and evaluate.
A Safe and Trusting Environment

When children master these skill, they see themselves as

- capable and competent problem solvers
- caring members of their community.
Caring Members of the Community

Alturism

“Altruism is the purest form of caring—selfless and non-contingent upon reward—and thus the predecessor of pro-social cognitions and behaviors”

Robinson & Curry, Journal of the Association for Childhood Education International Winter 2005/06 “Promoting Altruism in the Classroom”

Alturism

When children

- understand their own feelings and the feelings of others,
- have been encouraged to be assertive, self govern and problem solve,
- trust that they will be heard and valued,

they are able to open their hearts to others while remaining true to themselves.
Alturism
Acts of kindness engender acts of kindness.

Stories from Stepping Stones Preschool:

Regan notices Kacey struggling to climb the slide and offers to give her a hand. They play “helping hand” for the rest of the morning.
Alturism

Kacey notices Christopher crying because he cannot find any "campfire sticks."

Kacey says, "Here, Christopher, I’ll help you find some sticks." She takes his hand and together they gather quite a bunch!
Alturism

Christopher discovers Loren crying at the tree stump. He asks, “Loren, are you sad?” Loren nods. Christopher says, “Can I hold your hand?” Loren nods. They stand together by the stump for a long time, holding hands.
Nurturing Healthy Growth:
Balancing Freedom & Responsibility

Teacher Role

Child

Roots:
Basic Needs