



Relationships and Community

Introduction

Essential learning happens for young children through relationships with friends, siblings, and family members, and as they engage with others as members of a larger community.

The relationships young children build with family and friends help them to feel confident and secure. As children interact with loved ones, they also begin to form their identity and sense of self. They learn traditions, languages, and family stories and gain an appreciation for similarities and differences in others. Through these interpersonal relationships, children also learn valuable skills such as how to collaborate, listen, take turns, solve problems, and understand the perspective of others. Whether through sharing a favorite toy with a friend or sibling, hearing a story from a grandparent, or eating a meal together with family, the experiences children share through close relationships offer a system of support and an opportunity for learning and growth. The caring moments that families share, and even some of the everyday conflicts they experience, help children to grow stronger and to build skills that will allow them to thrive in school and in life.

Important relationships don't end at home. When children participate in their wider community, such as at school, in the neighborhood, or at a playgroup, they begin to discover how they are connected to the people around them. This discovery brings the realization that we must work together and help, appreciate, and learn from one another. Being a part of a community builds a child's sense of belonging and her sense of responsibility.

Building relationships and connecting with community can happen at any time and anywhere. On a visit to the doctor, riding on the bus, or even while out and about doing errands, parents, families, and caregivers can help children investigate some of the many ways that people rely upon one another.

This workshop offers strategies and activities to help parents, families, and caregivers recognize the learning that can happen through relationships and community involvement. Through discussions, hands-on activities, take-home resources, and the "Relationships and Community" video, you'll find resources to:

- Emphasize the importance of recognizing the opportunities for learning in everyday experiences.
- Demonstrate how relationships and community involvement can help a child to learn and grow.

- Show participants how they can prompt and build upon daily interactions to build a child's communication skills, problem solving skills, perspective taking skills, and appreciation for others.
- Suggest everyday activities that will help a child to feel connected to others.
- Guide participants to reflect on how they can apply what they have learned with their own children.
- Try out and practice new ideas with participants.

The Relationships and Community workshop has been divided into the following sections:

- **A Young Child's World**—This section provides information on the value of relationships and community and shares ways that interactions with others can lead to learning and growth.
- **Building Relationships**—This section explores the importance of building positive relationships with family and friends.
- **Part of a Community**—This section explores the value of community involvement both inside and outside of the home.

As you lead this workshop you'll be using the "Relationships and Community" video, which is 6 minutes and 53 seconds in length. In this video you'll meet:

- Marli (age 3) as she interacts with helpers at her neighborhood store.
- Joaquin (age 4) and his older brother Tariq (age 12) as they play together at home.
- Twins Mike and Luke (age 4) and their sister Amelia (age 2) as they learn from a grocery store employee.
- Yoong (age 4) as he uses technology to grow his long-distance relationship with his grandparents.

Preparing for the Workshop

- Read the *Parenting Videos Workshop Overview*, found online in this workshop's Resources section, which contains helpful tips and information about the workshop series.

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- Make copies of the following *Tips for Parents*, available in English and Spanish and found online in this workshop's Tips section. Have them available for participants to pick up before the workshop begins or distribute them at the end.
 - *Conversations Count*
 - *Stories and Traditions*
- Watch the "Relationships and Community" video. Take notes as you watch (and as you read through this guide). Keep a notebook of additional ideas and questions. You know your group best and can adapt the workshop to fit the needs and interests of the participants.
- Do an icebreaker activity to help participants appreciate some of the ways that we can connect with and learn from others. Ask participants to partner with someone they have never met. Encourage the pairs to chat with one another and discover things they have in common. Ask them to notice ways in which they are different, too. As a large group, invite participants to share something they learned from the experience.
- Gather supplies, including pencils, pens, paper, and sticky notes, as well as refreshments. For the "Relationship Stick" activity, you will need craft sticks (one per participant) and decorating materials (such as markers, stickers, pipe cleaners, yarn, ribbon, etc.).
- If you are providing a series of workshops, have a flyer ready with future topics, dates, and times.

Section One: A Young Child's World

Leading Your Group

Begin by sharing examples of learning opportunities that can happen through family and community relationships and involvement. You can mention:

- Nothing is more important to your child than her relationship with you. Her bond with you gives her security and confidence. Through your actions and conversations, she learns how to interact with others and gains language skills and thinking skills.
- Important relationships happen outside of the home, too. Your child has a connection to all the people and places that she encounters in her neighborhood and community.

- Everyday routines and interactions can provide learning opportunities for your child to see how people in the community rely on one another.
- As parents and caregivers, we are models for our children. We help our children learn to interact with others and become valuable members of a community. When we model such actions as listening, asking questions, offering help, getting involved, and appreciating similarities and differences in others, our children are inspired to do the same.
- We can have interactions, meet new people, and learn new things at any time and in any place.

Chat and Share

Ask participants to think about the people who were important to them as children. This will help them to reflect upon the many ways that others can have a positive impact on our growth and development. You can ask:

- Think of a person who was very special to you when you were a child. What do you remember about that person?
- What was special about your relationship? What did you gain by knowing that person that you still carry with you today?

NOTE: Write down any additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning

Watch the entire “Relationships and Community” video together. (You will have an opportunity to return to various segments of the video throughout the workshop.) Before you watch, tell participants:

- In this video, you’ll see young children interacting with many people in their lives—family, friends, and community members.
- Notice how these people influence their daily routines and the learning that occurs as children engage in these different relationships.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about what participants noticed in the video. You might ask:

- What kinds of relationships did you see children engaging in?

- What role did the parent or family member play in helping the child develop new relationships?
- What do you think the children in the video were gaining as they interacted with these people at home and in the community?
- Do any of these relationships or community interactions remind you of some of the interactions you had as a child?
- Do they remind you of interactions and relationships that your child has now?

Trying It Out

Wall of Important People. Encourage participants to think about the people who are most important to their children.

- *Say, Your children all have people who are important to them, just like you did when you were children. These people are essential to your child's growth and development.*
- *Explain, We are going to think about these people and some of the things our children gain from their relationships with these people.*
- Give each participant a stack of sticky notes and have participants write the names of 5–6 friends, family, and community members who play a part in their child's life. Encourage them to think beyond immediate family members. *Say, I'd like you to list family and friends and also at least one person from your community, such as a teacher, librarian, nurse, or firefighter.*
- Have participants post their notes in one place on the wall to create a "Wall of Important People."
- Invite participants to come up to the wall and tell about one person they added and how or why that relationship is important for their child.
- Encourage participants to ask each other questions about their children's "important people."

Section Two: Building Relationships

Leading Your Group, Part 1

Share the importance of relationships with family and friends. As you discuss, recall supporting examples from your earlier discussion with participants, when possible. Focus on how participants can encourage learning opportunities during everyday interactions. You can mention:

- Just by being a part of the caring relationships you mentioned, your child will develop many skills that will help her to thrive in school and in life. She'll learn skills to collaborate, cooperate, listen, understand another person's perspective, and help out. Here is one example: When Diego plays basketball with his cousins he learns how to work with others and how to listen and follow instructions.
- Important relationships with siblings, grandparents, close friends, and others on our "Wall of Important People" help to form your child's identity and to shape her sense of self. Encourage family and friends to share traditions and stories with your child. This will build her listening skills and help her to learn more about where she comes from and the things she has in common with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. Here is an example: When Naeemah's granddaughter watches her quilt with fabric scraps from old clothes, Naeemah tells her stories about the family members who wore those clothes.
- Relationships aren't always easy but even the challenges can offer opportunities for learning. When your child experiences conflict with a sibling or another child, use it as an opportunity to introduce important skills like sharing, taking turns, patience, and using words to understand each other's perspective. For example, when children argue over playing with the same toy, introduce a "sharing song," that is, give one child a turn with the toy, then switch when the song is over.
- Peer to peer relationships are also an important part of your child's growth and development. As your child relates to a peer he learns to be flexible and to collaborate. He practices listening and communicating and develops strategies for working through problems.
- Encourage your child to talk directly with other children and share their feelings. You might try doing a "morning check-in" by asking your children to share one word that describes how they are feeling. If a child feels down, ask, "What's one thing we can do to help you feel better?"
- Encourage your child to talk directly with members of the community: in stores, at parks, etc., but only under your supervision.

- Make sure your child understands that although he can learn from people he does not know, he should only interact with them when you or another trusted adult are with him.

Chat and Share

Ask participants to think about a recent interaction their child had with a family member or friend. This will encourage them to think about all the learning opportunities that can happen for their child through relationships. You can ask:

- Children interact with friends and family all day long. What is one interaction your child recently had with a friend or family member?
- What do you think your child gained from this interaction? How do you think these types of interactions are important for her learning and development?
- What are some things you do to help your child have positive interactions with others?

NOTE: In your notebook, write additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning

Watch a portion of “Relationships and Community” together. Begin at 2:15 as Joaquin and Tariq work together with blocks and end at 2:49 as they build a ramp.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about what participants noticed in the video. You might ask:

- Tariq and Joaquin work together in many ways through this scene. In what ways did you notice them working together?
- As Tariq and Joaquin build together, they take turns, collaborate, communicate, and listen. What else were they learning as they worked together?
- What interactions have given your child the same learning opportunities?
- If the brothers had had trouble sharing the blocks, what do you think their parents could have done to help them with this conflict?
- What things have you done to help your child resolve conflict with others?

Trying It Out

Relationship Stick. Have participants create a tool to help their children listen, take turns, and collaborate.

- Give a large craft stick to each participant and materials to decorate it with, for example, markers, stickers, pipe cleaners, yarn, brightly-colored ribbon, etc.
- *Say, Listening, sharing, and taking turns can be challenging skills for young children to learn. These important relationship skills can take a lot of practice.*
- Ask participants to share ways that their children practice these skills.
- Explain, *This stick can be another tool to help your child learn these skills. At dinner, pass this stick around the table. Whoever holds the stick gets to tell one thing about their day as other family members listen.*
- Note, *You can also make this stick a “choosing stick” or a “turn-taking stick.” The person holding the stick either chooses the activity, for example, the game you will play or the show you will watch, or takes a turn playing with a shared toy.*
- Have participants decorate their stick. You might suggest that they write words and phrases that will encourage their child to be helpful and kind, such as *share, listen, and cooperate.*
- Invite participants to share their sticks and give one example of how they might use it at home.

Section Three: Part of a Community

Leading Your Group, Part 1

Begin by discussing what children gain from interacting with and being a part of different communities. You can mention:

- Being a part of a community teaches your child how to listen and contribute and builds her sense of belonging and responsibility.
- Let your child know that she is a part of many different communities, for example, family, learning center, neighborhood, playgroup. Talk about how people in these communities help, care for, and respect one another.

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- As you are out and about, point out the community helpers in your neighborhood. You might point out a firefighter, a mail person, a sanitation worker, a sales clerk, or a neighborhood volunteer. Talk about how these workers contribute to the lives of the people in their community.
- At the table, share stories about things that friends and community members have done to help you and the things you've done to help others in the community.
- You can help prepare your child to become a responsible community member by helping him to celebrate similarities and differences in people and by praising his kind and helpful behavior.

Chat and Share

Ask participants to name all the communities their family is a part of. This will encourage them to think about the important role that community plays in their life. You can ask:

- What are the different communities that you are a part of? (If possible, have participants write the names of these communities on sticky notes and put the notes up next to your "Wall of Important People.")
- What are some ways that community members have helped you? How have you helped others?
- How does your child interact with these different communities?
- What are some things he gains from these interactions?

NOTE: In your notebook, write additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Watching and Learning

Watch a portion of "Relationships and Community" together. Begin at 3:12 as Marli and her dad head to their neighborhood store and end at 5:18 as twins Mike and Luke talk with the store employee about the sun.

Reviewing and Reflecting

Lead a conversation about what participants noticed in the video. You might ask:

- In the video, Marli, Mike, and Luke all discover that different people in their community play different roles. Marli learns that the deliveryman brings the food and the store clerk

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sells the food to her family. Mike and Luke learn that the people they see everyday can be a helpful source of information and learning. What else do you think these children were learning as they interacted with their neighborhood community?

- How do the parents in the video encourage their child's interactions with community members?
- How can you support your children's interactions within the different communities you're a part of?

Trying It Out

Community Helpers Scavenger Hunt. Help participants create a tool to help their children see the value of community in their lives.

- *Say, Community helpers are such an important part of the world we live in. We rely on community helpers such as police, firefighters and nurses to help keep us safe and healthy. We rely on community helpers such as librarians and teachers to help us learn new things. We rely on postal workers and delivery people to get us the things we need everyday.*
- Ask participants to name helpers in their community, such as postal workers, fire fighters, and sanitation workers. Make a list of these helpers on the board and encourage participants to copy down the list.
- Suggest that they take this list with them as they are out and about with their child and check off the different helpers they see. They can add new helpers to the list as they see them.
- As participants search for these helpers with their child, encourage them to describe and discuss the important responsibilities these people have as part of their jobs.
- As a group, generate a list of questions that children might be encouraged to ask these helpers.

Leading Your Group, Part 2

Discuss the community that exists at home. When possible, recall examples that have already been shared by participants. You can mention:

- You don't have to leave the house to be a part of a community. Your family is its own community.

- Through everyday interactions with your family at home, your child builds the base that will someday allow him to form relationships at school and in other community settings.
- Draw your child's attention to all the ways that family members help one another and rely on one another. Here is an example of how one family helps each other: Rose's mother, Frances, babysits her granddaughters Isabella and Sofia. Rose brings her mother to doctor's appointments. Isabella reads to her grandmother.
- Give your child special helping tasks like setting the table and cleaning up after she plays. Let her know that we all do these things because they are helpful to the entire family. This helps your child to feel important and to feel that she is a contributing member of the family.

Chat and Share

Ask participants to name ways their child helps out at home. This will encourage participants to begin thinking about opportunities to teach their child how to be a responsible member of a community. You can ask:

- Does your child have a helping task?
- What task or tasks does she do?
- What do you think she learns from helping out at home?

NOTE: In your notebook, write additional questions that you would like to include. Is there an anecdote from your own life that you can share? Add that, too.

Trying It Out

Helping Hands. Encourage participants to generate a list of ways they might encourage their child to help at home.

- Ask participants to call out the everyday tasks they do to keep their household running, such as grocery shopping, making dinner, folding laundry, etc. Write their ideas on a whiteboard, chalkboard, or easel pad or in some other visible place.
- Break participants into groups and have them brainstorm ways their child might assist in these tasks. Give examples; say, *Your child can help by sorting socks as you fold laundry or by setting out the napkins and spoons at the dinner table.*
- Ask participants to add their ideas to the list under the appropriate task.

- Encourage everyone to copy down the “helping ideas.”

Wrapping Up

End your session with an activity to help participants bring new knowledge home.

Pair Share. Encourage participants to reflect upon the things they have learned during your workshop.

- Write the following questions and display them somewhere visible.
 - What’s one new way you will encourage your child to share with a friend or sibling?
 - What’s one thing you will do to help your child connect with her community?
 - What’s one way you will encourage your child to help at home?
 - What’s one thing you look forward to doing together with your child?
- Give participants a sheet of paper and ask them to answer the questions on the board.
- Ask participants to turn to a partner and share their answers.
- Before participants leave, say, *You’ve formed a new community here at this workshop. I encourage you to share contact information and keep in touch. You can be a wonderful source of support and information for one another.*

As you say goodbye to your group, review how children learn from the relationships they share and the communities they are a part of. You can mention:

- Having loving relationships at home and elsewhere helps your child develop the strong foundation she’ll need to thrive in everything she does.
- Being a part of a community helps your child learn that she is connected to other people in the community. She also becomes aware that people in communities are responsible, helpful, and caring towards others.
- Interactions with others help your child develop respect and understanding as well as listening and communication skills.

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- Even some of the more challenging aspects of relationships, such as having to share and compromise, help your child to learn and grow. (You might want to remind participants of any examples that were shared and mention that even though the interaction was challenging it was also an important learning moment.)

If possible, leave time so participants can mingle and chat with one another, talk with you individually, and browse the handouts you've brought.

Massachusetts Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences

The Relationships and Community workshop has been designed to meet the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences. The purpose of these guidelines, developed by the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children for the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) in 2003, is to provide a comprehensive view of the development of preschool aged children while documenting the experiences that support this development and school readiness. The guidelines are for families as well as early education and care professionals.

For more information about the guidelines, including definitions of terms, visit <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/curriculum-and-learning/>.

This workshop aligns with the following guidelines:

Learning in English Language Arts

Children will be able to:

- Participate actively in discussions, listen to the ideas of others, and ask and answer relevant questions.
- Communicate personal experiences or interests.
- Listen to and use formal and informal language.
- Use their own words or illustrations to describe their experiences, tell imaginative stories, or communicate information about a topic of interest.
- Generate questions and gather information to answer their questions in various ways.

Learning in Mathematics

Children will be able to:

- Explore and describe a wide variety of concrete objects by their attributes.
- Listen to and say the names of numbers in meaningful contexts.
- Use concrete objects to solve simple addition and subtraction problems using comparative language (more than, fewer than, same number of).

- Organize and draw conclusions from facts they have collected.

Learning in Science and Technology/Engineering

Children will be able to:

- Ask and seek out answers to questions about objects and events with the assistance of interested adults.
- Record observations and share ideas through simple forms of representation such as drawings.
- Explore and describe a wide variety of natural and man-made materials through sensory experiences.
- Explore sunlight and shadows and describe the effects of the sun or sunlight.
- Observe and identify the needs and characteristics of living things: humans, animals, and plants.

Learning in History and Social Science

Children will be able to:

- Identify and describe cause and effect as they relate to personal experiences and age-appropriate stories.
- Discuss examples of rules, fairness, personal responsibilities, and authority in their own experiences and in stories read to them.
- Discuss roles and responsibilities of family or community members who promote the welfare and safety of children and adults.
- Observe and discuss the various kinds of work people do outside and inside their homes.

Learning in Health Education

Children will be able to:

- Recognize and describe or represent emotions such as happiness, surprise, anger, fear, sadness.

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- Talk about ways to solve or prevent problems and discuss situations that illustrate that actions have consequences.
- Talk about how people can be helpful/hurtful to one another.
- Describe members of their family and discuss what parents do for their children to keep them safe and healthy.
- Talk about some basic ways they can keep their environment clean or take care of it.