

Problem-solving and Relationship Skills with Infants and Toddlers

Woman: Places, everyone. Are the lights ready? Three, two, one.

Mike Browne: Ooh-whee! Estoy aqui, estoy listo. I am here. I am ready and let's rock and roll!

Becky Sughrim: I'm ready, too!

All: [Singing] "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time." "Teacher Time."

Mike: Hello, everyone. You know that never gets old. I'm like sitting here jogging along. Welcome, everyone, to our third infant and toddler episode of "Teacher Time" this program year. I'm Mike Browne. My pronouns are he/him. And I'm joined by...

Becky: Becky Sughrim, and my pronouns are she/her.

Mike: And we are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning. And as always, we are super excited to be here with you all today. Thank you for joining us. We have been focusing all of our episodes this past season of "Teacher Time" on positive behavior support. So far, we talked about many different things. We talked about the importance of relationships. We talked about how to support emotional literacy. Today is going to be another fun one on problem-solving and friendship skills and building friendship skills with infants and toddlers.

I would love to call to your attention to the Viewer's Guide, where you can find it in the Resource Widget. This season our Viewer's Guide is a Viewer Guide from birth to five. It includes age-specific information for infants, for toddlers, for preschool children. It's packed full of so many different things – resources, helpful quick tips, reminders that you can take right into your learning space. And there's also a note-taking space in which you can use to jot down some notes for today. You can download the guide and use it throughout our time together for taking notes, reflecting, planning, and please, as always share the Viewer Guide with your colleagues.

Becky: During our time together, we're going to be focusing on a number of things. We're going to first talk about some positive behavior support teaching practices. Then we're going to take some time to promote your wellness and our wellness and connect our affective practices to brain development in our new segment this season called "Neuroscience Nook."

Then we're going to take a look at the "Teacher Time" basics. In "Small Change, Big Impact" and in our "Focus on Equity" segments, we're going to talk about individualized strategies that build a sense of belonging and promote social and emotional skill with all children, including children who have a variety of learning characteristics.

Of course, we will wrap up our time together as we always do with the "BookCASE," where Mike got to meet with our "Teacher Time" librarian, and we connect our topic to books that you can share with children and families.

Mike: As we begin, let's check in using our famous, world famous, "Teacher Time" Tree. Enter to the Q&A, which is that purple widget, what number are you feeling today? What number creature that you're showing up and you want to relate to us. And, of course, you can jot down why you're feeling like that.

I will get us started. I am feeling a little like, I don't know, I like the lighter colors, I like the 11, 12 because yesterday I got a chance to visit a classroom and one of the first children I had when they were infants, they saw me, they ran up to me and they were like, "Mike?" And I was like, "I haven't seen you in two-and-a-half years!" And like, just jumped up and gave me a big hug and now I'm feeling all cuddly and cozy. What about you, Becky?

Becky: That's such a great story. Thanks for sharing, Mike. That makes me feel warm and fuzzy thinking about it. I feel like a number 10. I'm excited for today. I'm ready to be with everyone and just open arms ready to learn and be alongside with you and all of our participants.

Mike: We got some tens, we got some fives in the chat, we've got some ones. Keep them coming. Let us know how you're feeling and we're going to rock and roll to our next slide.

Becky: Thank you. I got a little excited. We are very excited, as you can tell, that we're going to be focusing on positive behavior supports this season. We have focused on this on our last two infant/toddler webinars as well. And you probably already know this, that social-emotional development is one of the domains in Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or the ELOF. And the practical strategies we're going to be talking about today are going to be focusing on the relationships with other children subdomain of the social-emotional development domain as you can see highlighted here.

We have been working our way through the pyramid. And we've been thinking about the pyramid model, and this is a Positive Behavior Support, or PBS framework that is proactively addressing the social-emotional development and challenging behaviors that young children might experience.

And the framework offers a continuum of evidence-based teaching practices that are organized into four levels of support. The first level is nurturing and responsive relationships. The second level is high-quality supportive environments. Then we have the purple, the third level, social and emotional teaching strategies, and the top of the pyramid, intensive intervention.

And today, we're going to be focusing on that third level of the pyramid, or a second-tier support where we're talking about social and emotional teaching strategies. If you want learn more about the pyramid model, we hope that you will check out the recourses in your viewer's guide from the National Center of Pyramid Model Innovations, or NCPMI in the Resource List section.

Mike: We would love to hear – because I'm already like I need a sip of water – we'd love hear using that purple Q&A widget some of the strategies and practices that you have in place in your center, and your learning environment that really supports problem-solving and relationship skills with infants and toddlers. Once again, type that into the chat using your purple Q&A widget.

Once again, I'm going to start it. I think one practice that I did specifically with infants is whenever we're by the door and it's during pickup time, we will have that child, just look up and we're like, "Oh, is someone's parent here? Or someone's caregiver here?" And they'll go "Dada! Dada!" And I say, "Oh, should we go over to such-and-such, Nico, and say, 'Oh Dada's here?'" "Let's come with me." You're building that relationship with the child and building relationship between the children.

And something that I like to do with toddlers when they're a little bit older, I love doing like a little scavenger hunt. I'll say, "Oh my goodness! I lost my coffee!" "My adult drink." Well, maybe not adult drink, some coffee. "Let's go find it!" "Hmm, you're getting warmer. You're getting colder" They've been learning about spatial awareness, difference in temperature, things of that nature.

Becky: And also the collaboration of working together as a team if you're in a group care setting, all trying to find coffee that we need in the morning. Let's see what we have in the Q&A talking about having a welcome song with each child's name.

Mike: We're having some redirect. Redirection is always key.

Becky: Having open-ended questions with toddlers. Totally. And one of the things that I like, which I'm sure is going to also come up in the chat is to engage in that narration when a toy struggle is happening or there's a problem where we're talking about what the toddlers are doing, and what we see. And just letting them know what's happening in real-time.

Mike: That sounds like something we should talk about on Parallel Play.

Becky: Yeah. If you haven't checked out our podcast, we hope that you will. Mike and I also host a Parallel Play podcast. Let's think about positive behavior supports. As we know, the pyramid model is one way we can engage in positive behavior supports. And let's think a little bit deeper about what positive behavior supports are and what they mean. This is really a positive approach to prevent and address challenging behavior or behaviors that adults find challenging.

And the number one thing to remember is that PBS is proactive. That we're proactively thinking about ways in which we can prevent challenging behaviors from occurring. It's positive and proactive. And at the heart of PBS is this recognition that challenging behavior is communication. That challenging behavior is used to communicate a message like, "I want to play with that person or that other toddler." Or "I want to turn right now." Or "I want to play in the sensory bin too." Or something like, "I want that green ball."

There's all behavior is a form of communication and children are sending us a message. Educators can be their best detectives and together with the family uncover what the child is trying to communicate through their behavior and then teach the child a more effective way to communicate and problem solve with support.

Mike: We're going to turn it back right to you. I hope your fingers are ready. We're going to be doing this all day. Let's turn the attention back to you. We do our best caregiving and teaching when we feel well ourselves. Really engaging in self-care practices can help educators, admin, everyone build greater social and emotional capacity to work through problem-solving together.

And our ability to support children with problem-solving and relationship skills starts with our ability to really center ourselves by noticing and observing all the little things that are happening within our bodies, with as little judgment as possible and really softening to what is. We can help young children work through challenges with peers, for a more grounded, balance, soft, and objective place by naming what we see happening come. Before we support the children in our care with problem-solving and relationship skills, it's super important that we find ways to regulate our own feelings throughout the day.

Just by taking a minute right now, we're going to do a quick little body scan to know what's happening in our bodies, to really softening to that moment, like I said earlier, slowing down and centering ourselves at any point of the day, but specifically right now since I'm going to ask you all to do it with me. This practice supports our well-being first, enabling us to hold a really non-judgmental space and respond intentionally and responsibly to children cues, behaviors, and communication, as we support them in building healthy relationships with each other. Get your wiggles out.

You might want to start in the seated position, or if you're laying down, maybe you're on a standing desk, I don't know, whatever feels comfortable to you and just start to slowly bring your attention to your body. You can close your eyes. I would love to close my eyes, but the blinding lights are in front of me. I won't do that. Only close your eyes if you're feeling comfortable.

And just start to notice your body wherever you are. As you inhale, and as you exhale have that really sense of relaxation. And you can notice your feet, or your body on the floor. You can notice – for me, I notice the seat underneath me or that if I lean back, the back of the chair against me. That was a lot of words I wanted to say.

Bring your attention now to your stomach area. If it feels tight, right, let us soft it. Imagine you're on a beach somewhere. I know one of our participants says they're going on vacation. Notice your hands, and your arms, and your shoulders. Let them be soft. Let your jaw and your face muscle soften up. And notice your whole body just being present. Then take that one last deep breath.

Now, if you're so inclined to, feel free to share how you are feeling during or feel now after the body scan. What shifts do you notice? Me, oh, I was like, I got a lot of things in my shoulders. I was like, I need to go to a massage place.

Becky: I was thinking the same thing. So much tension I hold in my shoulders and my neck. We're on the same page, Mike.

Mike: There you go.

Becky: As these are coming in let's start to think about problem-solving in relationship skills. Social competencies like self-regulation, empathy, perspective-taking, and problem-solving skills are all really key to foundational healthy social-emotional development. This includes positive interactions and friendships, or relationships between peers. Educators can help children learn these skills that are necessary to develop healthy peer relationships and find ways to work through social conflicts with children and providing support with the child.

The first thing that we can do with infants and toddlers is about modeling problem-solving skills. And if we model problem-solving skills early on, this will build a foundation of problem-solving and relationship skills that children can build on and will be able to access with adult support as they develop and start to use these skills more independently. As children become more independent and more mobile, they tend to run into situations in the natural environment that can lead to frustration or challenging behavior like a toy is out of my reach, or I also want to play in the sensory table and someone is already there.

If we teach children problem-solving skills and they become good problem solvers on their own, and with our support, their self-esteem increases in their ability to solve problems. They're more likely to cope with a certain level of frustration and engage in less challenging behavior. There might be some children in your care who don't readily learn these skills through foundational teaching strategies like modeling or co-regulation, and this might include children with disabilities or suspected delays.

It's important to be aware of the process of all children and use more individualized practices to teach these skills to children who need more support. And we will talk more about that in the basics. Let's look at some key ideas. When we're thinking about working with toddlers there's three key ideas we want to think about when supporting problem-solving and relationship skills. The first one is promoting healthy relationships. Educators can model relationship skills with things like sharing or helping or cooperating like you were talking about.

Mike: Yeah.

Becky: Earlier, Mike, with everyone helping you to find your coffee, and providing comfort, and making suggestions in play, and then celebrating each other. That's a big piece of promoting healthy relationships. And teachers can also create developmentally appropriate opportunities for practicing these skills throughout the day, like setting up a space for two or three toddlers

to play together at one time. There might be limited space, and limited materials. This way toddlers can practice turn taking and sharing, like we see in this picture on the left.

And we might also start to notice in the toddler years that children could be showing preferences for a particular playmate. This is also a great time to pause and think about what value do we put, or you put, on peer relationships, and how do you expect peers to act with each other? And our awareness of these questions, and our responses to these questions is really supportive of our equitable teaching practices.

Mike: Can I take the middle one?

Becky: Yeah. Yeah!

Mike: Perfect because I love teaching about problem-solving. Conflict happens all the time in case you never have been in an early childhood classroom, but I don't think this – I think this audience knows. Conflicts happen all the time in early childhood environments where children are really just learning to manage their emotions or behavior through co-regulation. Remember, these are the first times that they might be having these types of emotions. They're like, "Whoa! What is going on?"

Toddlers are beginning to reason, and really beginning to understand simple consequences. Educators can describe the problem. We can offer solutions. Then that's how we can support toddlers in trying a couple different new strategies out. Like, how I imagine as I'm looking at this middle photo, I imagine this educator something – I'm trying to channel my inner educator. "I see you reaching out and you're touching Zoa's leg. I wonder if you're wanting some more space. You can say, 'I need some more space please.'"

Becky: Yeah, totally. Thank you so much, Mike. The next key idea we want to talk about is teach problem-solving in the moment. Problem-solving is hard work as we know, and educators can help toddlers use the problem-solving steps in the moment by first being proactive and anticipating social conflicts before they happen.

This might be being close, as we see in this picture on the right, that the educator is close to the child, supporting her through this interaction. We can also provide support by describing steps for solving the problem and modeling them and supporting the child in going through them. We can also generate solutions together and then we can celebrate success.

And, of course, we want to you remember to individualize the strategies you used to provide support on these skills based on the learning characteristics and needs of the children you support. Some children may need the amount of language used to be modified. Some children may need visual cues or gestures paired with verbal language. Some children may need specific feedback on consequences to help them learn the effect of their behavior on the environment. Again, please stay tuned for the basics and we're going to share some more information about providing specific feedback.

Mike: Let's now take a second to pause and watch a clip on teaching problem-solving in the moment and how that might look like with toppers.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Are you guys taking turns? Would you like to have a turn? OK. Cayden's turn. Now, whose turn is it to put one on top?

Cayden: It's Marcos!

Teacher: It's Marcos' turn. Marcos, did you hear that? He said it's your turn.

Marcos: I make a red one.

Teacher: Your turn. Wow! Your turn! Look at how many blocks – you guys, what could you tell Ryan? Say, "Ryan, that was my tower."

Marcos: Stop!

Ryan: That was my tower.

Teacher: Stop. That was a good word. Look it, we could get our – oh, I took my cards off. Look it, we could use our cards. We could use our cards, Ryan. Ryan, we could use our cards. Look it, what could we do? You could wait and take a turn to knock it down. Look, you have your own tower to knock down. And you guys did such a good job of ignoring him when he knocked your tower down. Nice job.

[Video ends]

Mike: There was so many wonderful moments here that I just loved. Use our Q&A, purple Q&A widget to type in what did you notice, what did you see, what did you want to express? And we'll kick us off. The first thing that I'm just thinking about is that the educator was the proximity of the educator. What's close by to really support and to anticipate – not jump in right away, but just to anticipate a little bit around problem-solving in the moment.

Becky: Yeah. Like, what we're talking about. Being close. I notice that the educator was narrating the turn-taking and supported turn-taking too.

Mike: And even when the block fell, the educator gave the child words to say and then asked for the toddler for their input.

Becky: Yes, giving the child the words to say because sometimes in the moment they don't know what to say. That's really helpful. I also love this idea of having the solution cards close by. That they were within arm's reach. She didn't have to leave the block area to go and get them.

Mike: As we think about educators and being responsive and thinking about everyone in the learning environment, really, I saw the educator also talking to all the children who were involved. It wasn't just to the child who knocked off the block. Talk to all the children involved about what they can do in order to solve this problem moving forward or next time because it will happen again.

Becky: Yes. And the educator provided positive feedback, which I saw come through the chat giving specific feedback and praise and of utilizing the solutions. We also saw that the educator was very attentive. She was calm, and encouraging, and involving everyone. More comments about being calm and a soft tone of voice which makes a huge difference.

Mike: Exactly. As we move through this presentation, and this, our time together, remember to take time – or let's do it right now. Let's take another moment to pause and reflect on these questions that will support equitable teaching practices. I think the three that you mentioned earlier were how do you expect peers to act with one another with each other? Another one that you said was – you remembered it, you said it.

Becky: Yeah, it was think about how do we feel about conflict or disagreement, or debates?

Mike: That reminds me. The last one that you said was do you listen openly to all children when there is a problem. Just keep these in the back of your mind and because we're probably going to revisit this in a little bit.

Becky: Thank you, Mike, for those reflective questions. Let's think about key ideas for problem-solving and relationship skills with infants since it's slightly different than toddlers. When we think about promoting healthy relationships with infants, that's what the work is all about. It's all about relationships. This means modeling healthy relationships with the infants in your care so they can feel what it feels like to be in a healthy relationship. It also means modeling healthy relationships with other adults in the learning environment, so infants can see what healthy relationships look like.

Educators can create opportunities for infants to play side-by-side and interact with each other like we see in this picture on the left. The two educators are sitting close together with three infants in their laps. The infants are close enough to notice and reach out for each other, and maybe after they're done reading the book, the infants are placed on the carpet together where they can explore the books on their own and with each other.

Mike: When I just think about the other photo, this where it says, "Practice problem-solving." The one on our right, this is about being aware of infants' cues. Remembering that some infants may not give clear or predictable cues. All infants have different temperaments and varying temperaments, and that creates varying abilities to give cues.

Also, think about infants with disabilities or suspected delays. They may not be using behaviors we're typically accustomed to, such as eye gaze or vocalization, especially if they are the only – and especially if we're working with children who are typically neurotypical. It's important for

adults to be very intentional about their observations and what behaviors they recognize as cues. Watch for situations that may trigger stress, or conflict, and provide comfort to those infants while describing what the problem is or was and possible solutions.

Narrate what you are doing in the moment to problem solve as you go along. Like in this picture on the right, you might say something like – I always like pretending to say something, you might say something like, "Oh, I see your holding on to this book. And this looks like it might be a problem. You both look very upset. Hmm. How about we try looking at the book together at the table?"

Becky: Right now, let's watch what promoting healthy relationships with infants might look like. As you're watching this clip, please put in the Q&A what you might say to the two infants that would help promote peer relationships.

[Video begins]

Teacher 2: Thank you. Do you want to stand up? Do you need a diaper, Ivy? You need a diaper? She actually [Inaudible] because she was doing something at the table.

Teacher 3: Okay. You going back?

Teacher 2: [Inaudible] Wow! Look at you.

[Video ends]

Becky: I love this video so much.

Mike: I'm, like, grinning ear-to-ear.

Becky: What did you notice, Mike, about the video?

Mike: I noticed that these two infants are playing next to each other and they're naturally sharing. They're naturally being in community with one another, which involved naturally taking turns, holding, and lifting up the basket.

Becky: It's such a beautiful moment and I love, like you said, the natural turn taking that's happening. As comments are coming into the chat, one of the things I might say to the two children in this video clip are, "Oh, I see you are both using the basket. Look at how you can take turns."

Mike: Or I would say something like, "Oh, you two are playing next to each other." Acknowledging this beautiful interaction, with a lot of excitement and warmth in my tone, a voice.

Becky: And yes, the tone of voice is so important because what we say is just as important as how we say it and how we say it is just as important as what we say.

Mike: And I would even say in just say the joy that's happening, because we often don't look at our Black children, our Black boys, as joyful beings. You can tie that all in together.

Becky: There's so much joy happening in this clip, but I think it gives us a both a lot of joy. Let's see in the chat we're having some comments coming in about, "Oh wow, good job sharing," or let's see here, I'm looking, there's so many things that coming up.

Mike: "It's nice to see you two playing together with the basket."

Becky: "I see you are sitting together, and you are being kind to each other."

Mike: "Wow, good job sharing." And that positive tone, once again.

Becky: Yes, lots of comments about – and stating the child's names and how they are sharing the joy. It's wonderful. Keep bringing those in and our wonderful Q&A team will send them out. Mike, I want to hear more about neuroscience now.

Mike: Of course, you do. Research tells us that the early years are foundational. Most important part, especially when brain development, in adults we play a vital role in supporting a healthy brain development, connection and architecture.

In this segment, Neuroscience Nook, we are so excited to connect this research to everyday teaching practices. An important side note before we continue, and as questions using that purple Q&A widget comes in, remember we absolutely want to hear from you. We just don't want to sit here and talk, we want to hear from y'all. If you got questions, comments, concerns, thoughts, ideas, share them with us, or post them in the "Teacher Time" Community in My Peers.

Executive function. The pre-mental cortex begins to develop early on in life. This area of the brain is responsible for what are known as the executive functioning skills. And it's essential for the development of strong and healthy relationships. As you can see on this graphic, it includes so many different things.

Attention, being able to focus on a task. Working memory, being able to remember rules and procedures. Self-regulation and the ability to control impulses which I didn't have last night when I was eating ice cream. Organization, switching between tasks, flexible thinking, problem-solving, planning behavior, decision-making, motivation.

All of these skills are important to problem-solving and healthy relationships. We can help young children, support young children, to start developing this critical relationship building and problem-solving skills through responsive caregiving and affective teaching practices that are responsive to the individual child's needs. Just like we mentioned in our most recent episode of "Teacher Time," in case you missed it you can go back on...

Becky: DTL Push Play, and you can access our first two infant toddler webinars about building relationships and emotional literacy.

Mike: There you go. I always like to throw it to you because I always forget where exactly it is. But yes, just like she said. We encourage you to look back at the last two years guides, Building Relationship with Children Birth to Five, and Emotional Literacy with Children Birth to Five to see more about the importance of nurturing relationships and the impact on the developing minds. Looks like I also have the next slide. Now let's hear from Dr. Juliet Taylor as she described the development of executive functioning skills.

[Video begins]

Juliet Taylor: I'm going to show you a graphic of how executive function develops over time. Here's sort of a graphic representation. And one thing to point out is that we are not born with executive function skills in place. We're born with the potential to develop them, or not, depending on our experiences, our neurophysiology, and the interactions between those things.

This graph shows that on the horizontal axis you can see this is ages birth to 80. And notice that there's not an even distribution between the ages. And that is because there are particular peaks in executive function development. You can see skill proficiency on the vertical axis. And I'm going to highlight a couple of areas where you see tremendous growth and executive function skills. And that is really in the preschool ages between three to five. And then in early adolescents to early adulthood, there's another spike in development.

The foundations of executive function are laid down in the earliest months and years of life. And that really happens through basic, sort of serve and return it's sometimes called, or those basic interactions between child and adult that happen over, and over, and over again. And that spike really does happen in the preschool years after children have verbal language.

[Video ends]

Becky: This is such a helpful graphic and such a helpful explanation of executive functioning skills. I'm a visual learner, it meets my learning needs.

Mike: Exactly. We are not born with executive function, but we are born with the potential to develop them. That is why our work, whether it's your direct support, or your indirect support, or you're just hanging out in the back. It's so important that our work is with infants and toddlers to create that lifelong success. We can't say it enough to you. What you are doing is important work. I know we tired sometimes but stick with it. We love you. And thank you for being here with us.

Becky: Yes. I second that. I also, from this video, I think about these peaks in executive functioning that there's a peak between three to five years old right after children have verbal language. And toddlers are just entering into that spike in executive functioning skills which is – I love thinking about that and what does that mean, and what does that mean for toddler behavior, and toddler development.

Mike: And the last two things that are really coming up for me in this one is the foundation of executive function is laid out in the very few first months and years of life. Learning is having in the room and right out as soon as you leave. I was like, I don't know how I'm going to work that. The last thing I was thinking of is the importance of serve and return. If you're like, "What is serve and return?" You know where you can find that? In our last webinar that we did.

Becky: In our "Building Relationships with Infants and Toddlers," we talk a lot about serve and return. Now it's time for the basics. We've talked a lot about the importance of problem-solving and relationship skills. Let's shift to looking at practical strategies for how to support these skills with infants and toddlers.

We're going to do that by getting back to the basics. The basics are a collection of strategies that could be used in any setting with infants and toddlers. And the "Teacher Time" basics are behavioral expectations in advance, attend to and encourage positive behavior, scaffold with cues and prompts, increase engagement, create or add challenge, and provide specific feedback.

In this season of "Teacher Time," we have been focusing on two letters of the basics every episode. We hope that you will join us for all of the webinars this season. And remember, if you've missed the last two webinars on building relationships and emotional literacy with infants and toddlers, you can access those on DTL Push Play. We invite you to tune in to our future webinars. There's a registration link in the resource list if you want to sign up for that now so that you can get all of the basics of positive behavior of sorts.

Today, we're going to be looking at examples of C, create, or add challenge and S, specific feedback to support problem-solving and relationship skills. Let's take one look at how we can create or add challenge. When we're thinking about supporting problem-solving and relationship skills, we can add challenge by carefully selecting toys and materials for the learning environment that support taking turns, waiting, and learning how to share.

This might look like putting out a ball track, or a car track, or a toy that naturally supports turn taking where the children have to wait before sending a ball or a car down the track, or where one ball or one car will fit on the track at a time. Or maybe you put out stacking rings and encourage children to stack together since only one ring could be stacked at a time like we see in this picture on the left.

You could also create waiting games with the materials and routines that you have in the learning environment, like waiting to go down the slide or waiting to go through the tunnel like we see in this picture on the right. You might also sing a song while you wait to wash your hands, or like one of our participants said in the beginning, you have a greeting song in the morning where the children have to wait to do their special dance, or their special move until they hear their name.

Mike: I think that is a great segue, it's almost like you've seen this before, into us watching a video of what a waiting game might look like in the learning environment with a toddler. As you

watch the video, we invite you to share once again in the Q&A how you see the educator supporting waiting, and what would you do to support toddlers with waiting in your program center?

[Video begins]

Teacher 4: OK, one, two, three, go!

Connor: Whee!

Teacher 4: Good job, Connor.

Teacher 5: You want to count? OK. One, two, three, four, five, go!

Girl: Go!

Teacher 5: Yay! One, two – Oh, she couldn't wait, could she? She just couldn't wait. That's fine. She went on two. That's good. You want to count? Ah! Hailey didn't want to wait either. That's fine.

[Video ends]

Mike: You can see right away, like you heard the counting, the toddler is down before they can actually go down the slide.

Becky: And I loved that the educator honored when the toddlers did wait and when they just couldn't wait. And she said, "Oh, she couldn't wait. That's fine."

Mike: And it looks like someone in our chat just beat us to it before we said that. There's so much waiting to happen in this video in taking turns, waiting at the top of the slide, toddlers waiting for their turn.

Becky: There's so much and it felt like this was a very natural turn taking game for this group of toddlers. It felt like it was familiar to them. And it felt like it was something that they were enjoying.

Mike: And just thinking about like my own culture being Afro-Caribbean, in my culture we love to give children control over the waiting time. They want to wait until they are down the slide, the first child is down the slide to climb up, they have that control. Or we'll say, "Hey, how many seconds do you think we should wait?" We're giving them that power, that control.

Becky: I love that. The real traces and the agency. We have a few comments coming in from the chat. Just the encouragement and patience from the educator. That there was a countdown as a verbal strategy and we also saw that the educator was giving examples of waiting, like naming who waited and who couldn't wait.

Let's think about specific feedback and providing specific feedback is another way that educators can support problem-solving and relationship skills. Providing specific feedback is about naming and acknowledging when you see a child engage in building relationships.

It might sound like, "Oh, you're helping me put on Natalie's coat." Or "I saw you get a tissue for Kai. That was so kind." And the key to specific feedback is being specific. Thinking about what you see and what you saw that toddlers or infants do. Educators can also provide specific feedback to a child when they see them taking turns or sharing, or trying to solve a problem, or playing next to each other, or even playing with a child. That might sound like, "Oh look, Nora is watching you. I think she wants to play too."

And providing specific feedback is a helpful tool to teach children what to do. You might provide feedback on how to be a friend, or how to solve a problem like, "Hmm, I see that you two are frustrated and have a problem. Let's get our solution kit for some ideas." Or you might say, "Oh, you knocked into Lucas because you were running, and you didn't see him. Let's see if he's okay."

It's about offering specific ideas of what the toddler can do next and then supporting the infants and toddlers with those next steps and those skills. Remember that, again we said this earlier, how feedback is given, including what you say and how you say it is important and should be individualized to meet the learning characteristics and temperament of each child.

Mike: Do you remember those three questions I asked earlier? Or you asked them and then I reiterated them? Here's where it comes up again. Three questions. How do you expect peers to act with one another? How do you feel about conflict? And do you listen openly to all children? This is where we are going to apply them.

In our segment Small Change Big Impact where we share how small adjustments to the way we set up our learning environments, modify a curriculum, or engage with children can make a huge difference in a child's learning. We know that children vary in their learning characteristics and how they engage with people, and materials, and learning environment.

These small changes, and these curriculum modifications are made so that the individual child - they're made thinking about the individual needs of a child in order to promote their engagement, their participation, and we know that children are more engaged when they have opportunities to learn.

Some children might need more highly individualized teaching practices to help them learn problem-solving such as imbedded teaching or intensive individualized teaching, making curriculum modifications based off a child's individual learning needs can be a great place to start to support this engagement.

Today we're going to be focusing on environmental supports like making physical adjustments to the learning environment to promote participation, engagement, learning problem-solving, relationship skills, the two things of today's talk. When you think about the strategies of

physical adjustments, I would love for us to consider changing the space, the location, and arrangement of materials, of activities, to really support the needs of individual children. Like, setting up the smallest space, for example, for a few toddlers to sit together and read a book, or a small sensory table where a few children can play together at the same time. Do you got any ideas?

Becky: I think about managing materials and supplies. Materials could be used in many ways to support individual children with problem-solving and relationship skills. We can think about adding in materials, taking out materials, varying materials, and strategically using the materials to support a desired behavior. You might take out some materials to encourage sharing and turn-taking between toddlers, or you might bring in materials that support waiting. Like, we talked about in the basics.

Or maybe, you set up larger items like tumbling mats, or a large balance beam like we see in this picture in the middle where one child is walking at a time and one child takes a turn at a time. You could also bring in materials that are more engaging and fun with two children, like a rocking boat, or a toddler-safe seesaw.

Mike: For our last one, you can always add visual cues. You could add simple ones. You could add complex ones. I don't know. Do you. Individual cues can really promote relationship between peers and problem-solving skills like sharing a hug or giving a high-five.

Once again, check out the viewer's guide for more suggestions and resources on ECLKC. We encourage you to observe each child to see how they engage in specific areas with a group, and with each other. This can help us think about what are some of the best ways to support the child in building peer relationships and problem-solving skills by individualizing the support that you provide and how to you modify the environment.

Once again, viewer's guide has all these information and tips and tricks of the trade. Let's take a break. Well, we're going to take a break. Y'all aren't going to take a break. To watch a video of how an educator intentionally changes the setup of the environment to support her interactions. And of course, whatever comes to your mind, type it into your purple Q&A widget.

[Video begins]

Teacher 6: There we go. Are you ready to make soup? Come here. Oops. This one is not broken. We can put water in it. We can hold water. Ready? Oh, Joy wants to do it. Joy, do you want to put some water in here?

Boy: I would.

Teacher 6: You want to help, too? Can you wait one minute? Just wait for Joy's turn? Oh, I don't think she liked that. Can you give it back to Joy, please? Oh!

Boy: Oh!

Teacher 6: What happened?

[Video ends]

Mike: This educator knows how much the toddlers at the table loves to play with water. To support this toddler were peer interactions and relationships. The education staff set up the water vents near the dramatic play areas. Did you notice that? Where two toddlers were making soup.

Becky: And as we got to see the children interacted with each other and the soup making moved from the dramatic play area to the table. The educator really supported turn taking at the end of this clip when she narrated what was happening, she used sign language, and asked specifically asked one toddler to give the scoop back to another toddler. We saw a lot of individualizing practices in this video where thinking about a child's interest, thinking about some games that other children were playing, and how we can bring those two together.

Mike: If you are in my classroom, we're making caldo, we're making pozole. But that's neither here or there. Throughout this webinar we have been discussing ways to foster social-emotional skills for all children. Becky, what are we going to talk about more in this segment?

Becky: Thanks, Mike. We're going to think about those reflective questions that we've been mentioning throughout the webinar. In our focus on equity segment, we're going to be using our equity lens to take a closer look at implicit bias and how that impacts how we interact with children and support them in building problem-solving skills, and relationship skills. The value we place on peer relationships and the way we go about building and maintaining them are influenced by our family, our culture, our community, and our experiences.

Sometimes our subtle biases can interfere with our ability to approach conflict between children with an open mind and help them solve problems in a way that is respectful and fair to all children involved. Uncovering these biases take time and reflection. Again, some of these helpful questions to reflect on are – what value do you place on peer relationships? How do you expect peers to act with each other? How do you feel about conflict, disagreements, or debates?

Mike: Do you listen openly to all children when there is a problem?

Becky: And is there a child that you are more likely to make negative assumptions about when a problem involves that specific child? We just encourage you to ask a friend, or a colleague, or a coach to video record you during a time of day when there tends to be more conflict between children. Then go back and watch the video and notice how you respond and interact with each child involved in the conflict. And again, ask yourself, "Does every child receive the support and instruction they need?"

Mike: I am just a little bit excited for this because I'm featured on it. "Teacher Time Library," Emily Small, with someone you clearly recognize that you see in this video, me, Mike Browne, I

got to sit with our "Teacher Time" librarian, Emily, and I'm so excited about this month's book. Let's watch me, Emily, make the CASE.

[Video begins]

Mike: Welcome to "Teacher Time Library." My name is Mike Browne. My pronouns are he/him and I'm joined by the wonderful...

Emily Small: Emily Small. And my pronouns are she/her.

Mike: I am so excited to be here today with you all because we have a great selection of books that Emily has curated to be able to share with us today. And it is all centered around our theme of relationships with other children, which is within the social-emotional development domain of our ELOF goals.

Today, we are going to make the case. The CASE, what is that? You might be unfamiliar. You might not. But either way I'm going to refresh your memory. CASE is an acronym that we love to use in order to make connections between the books and what we're trying to hope to achieve within our ELOF domain.

C is pretty simple, C for cookie, also means connecting to ELOF, which is our Early Learning Outcome Frameworks. A, which is about advancing vocabularies. Books are an amazing opportunity. It is both a window, a mirror, and a sliding door into worlds that can really build children's emotional language, vocabulary, and concept development.

S, now this one is a bit of a long one, but it's about supporting engagement. And engagement looks different for each and every single child. Books stirs creativity. It stirs or imagination and by listening to the voices of children, we can really find ways to support them in being active participants not just in their learning, but of their learning environment.

And last but not least we have E. E is about extending the learning well beyond the books. Think about the questions in your curriculum, your provocations, and the activities that you do each and every single day. How can you plan that, so it connects to STEM? How can you use STEM to connect to dramatic play. How can you connect dramatic play to mental health? And so on and so forth because we're all about loving and nurturing the entire child. But that's enough about me, we going to throw it over to these books. And this first one is my favorite, not just because we are matching.

Emily: Yes, we do match today. A quick note before we get into them. I actually borrowed these from my local library. But also, I encourage everyone to check out their local library rather than just having to purchase the items.

Mike: Yes.

Emily: Our first one is "Blocks" by Irene Dickson. We have two friends, Ruby and Benji who are in parallel play with one another in the block area. Benji would really, really like one of Ruby's

red blocks and he takes it. And we see what happens next. How they problem solve, how their peer relationship grows, and then we actually have a third friend enter the picture at the end named Guy. There's a chance to make a prediction about what will happen next.

Mike: STEM.

Emily: Yes. We have that nice high gloss cover, we've got "Mine, Mine, Mine, Yours" by Kimberly Gee.

Mike: We hear, "Mine, mine, mine" a lot with toddlers.

Emily: Yes.

Mike: Not so much "Yours," but that's okay.

Emily: We have some great examples in this one of some repetitive phrases on every page. For instance, we have "Jump, jump, jump, bump."

Mike: That happens.

Emily: All the time. And then we have "Sorry, sorry, sorry." "That's okay." But in the pictures, we're seeing a chance for the children to check in on one another.

Mike: And I think that's so important. Especially when we're talking about social-emotional development is that it's not just enough to say, "Sorry," but how are we also coaching in educating our children in order to say, "Hey, check in, what do you think might help them feel better?" We can take it to another level.

Emily: Definitely. That's "Mine, Mine, Mine, Yours." Then we have this tiny little board book called "The Last Marshmallow." It's part of the Storytelling Mass series. There's a bunch in this series. I highly recommend them. You can, again, see I borrowed it from my library. And it is a very cold day, just like it is today, and some friends would like two cups of hot chocolate but there's three marshmallows.

Mike: I'm already hearing the STEM, the math right there.

Emily: They each get one but there's one left and they have to problem solve to figure out how they're going to make this fair.

Mike: Oh, like you said, it's a very cold day, give it to me.

Emily: That's the "The Last Marshmallow" by Grace Lin. And then the one we're going to make the case for is "You Hold Me Up" by Monique Gray Smith and Danielle Daniel. This one, I love the illustrations in this book so much. For our connection, our C, this book uses the phrase, "You hold me up when," and then it gives us very specific examples of how people feel connected and respected to one another. For our advanced vocabulary, we see words such as

kind, learn, respect, comfort. Those are great words to be using as part of your daily routine with children.

For our S for supporting engagement, the words on the page reference the illustrations but they don't say specifically what's happening. As children are showing interest in them, talk about what is going on in the illustration. We're seeing this family it looks like baking together. You can comment on that.

Mike: You can even talk about how the intergenerational family is well in this one.

Emily: Yes. There's multiple images throughout this book that show intergenerational families. And then for E, extending the learning, one of the other examples they give is "You hold me up when you sing with me," and so, we know that singing is a great thing to do with infants, especially for those early verbal skills. I would encourage you to incorporate some singing and then of course some musical instruments as well.

Mike: You can even point out and say, "Oh, what type of instrument do you think this is?" And it's perfect because there's this book that was written and illustrated by First Nation People. You can talk about Indigenous people and how they're still alive and they're thriving. There's multiple ways to tie in so many key concepts.

Emily: Absolutely. That's "You Hold Me Up" by Monique Gray Smith and Danielle Daniel.

Mike: Now, what we don't have is one of my other favorite books and that's "Kindness Makes Us Strong," which you can always pick up at...

Emily: Your local library. It comes in a really nice big board book format which is great for both reading individually with children or in a group setting.

Mike: Well, I don't know about you, Emily, but I am ready to go read some books...

Emily: Awesome.

Mike: ...to color, to do it all. Maybe not first. Right now, we are going to say goodbye. But until next time, take care of yourselves and we can't wait. We are wrapping up today's episode and I can't wait to check out my local library to see all those great books that they have. Remember to check out the viewer's guide for complete book list. And if you work with toddlers, Emily also made the case for another book not shown here, "Kindness Makes Us Strong." Again, all the info is in your viewer guide.

Becky: We just want to say thank you so much for joining us today. We are so excited that you are here and I also want to invite you to next months "Teacher Time" webinar, "Problem-Solving and Relationship Skills in Preschool." And you can find the registration link in your Resource List Widget for the next three "Teacher Time" webinars. Sign up now. We hope to see you there.

We are also excited to let you know about our Dual Language Celebration Week coming up. Please make sure to register for that as well. And that widget is going to pop up on your screen right after we say goodbye. Thank you so much and we just can't wait to see you until next time.

Mike: Happy Black History Month, everyone. Happy Dual Language Learner Celebration Week. Until next time.