Social and Emotional Development for Infants and Toddlers

Judi Stevenson-Garcia: Hi everyone, good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. Welcome to Teacher Time. I'm Judi Stevenson-Garcia from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. I'm so excited to be back with you for this new season of Teacher Time. We've got several really great webisodes lined up for you this year, and I'm so happy to be here as your host for this webisode where we're going to talk about infants and toddlers and their social and emotional development.

I'm going to give you some information just about the way this webinar is going to work. We're using some of Adobe Connect features to help us interact with each other. At times we're going to ask you to type in the chat box, and I see some of you have already gotten started there. It's so nice to see all of you who are here today from so many different places around the country and so many different program settings. I'm excited to have a really great conversation with you today and so please, the chat box is right below my video. Feel free at any time to share your thoughts. I'll be asking you some questions to respond to and so hopefully, we'll be able to have a great conversation.

Also right below the chat box, you'll see there's a little spot where there's a file there for you to download. That's our Viewer's Guide. If you want to use that, it basically has all of the — the sections of today's webisode with space for you to write notes. You can either download it and print it out or you can type right into it right on your computer and save it as a file for you to keep your notes. And then also, if you look at the top of your screen, there's a little person raising his hand. At some points, I'm going to ask you guys to ...

I'll ask you a question. If this is something you agree with, just raise your hand. So if you click on that, you have the option of raising your hand, and it'll put a little hand up right by your name in the participant's list. So hopefully, those will be some ways for us to participate and for me to get some feedback from you as we go through this webisode. There's going to be several videos in this session. If you're listening on the phone, you won't be able to hear the audio of those videos over the phone. If you mute your phone and turn on the audio of your computer, then you'll be able to hear those videos.

And if you can't view or hear the videos, you'll be able to see them on MyPeers next week when the webinar is posted. If for any reason you get disconnected from the webinar, use the same link that you used to join, and you'll be able to join right back in. And then finally, at the end of the webinar, we're going to post a link to an evaluation form. We would appreciate it if you would complete the evaluation as we use that information for improving our future webisodes. And when you complete the evaluation, you can download a certificate of completion for your participation in the webinar.

And if you're viewing the webinar with colleagues on one computer and only one person is registered for the webinar, you can forward the evaluation link to your colleagues who also viewed the webinar so they can complete the evaluation and receive a certificate of completion. OK. So just to help you get oriented to Teacher Time for this year, I'm going to

share with you just a little bit of information about what we have planned. So this year, we're going to have ...

Oh, sorry, we're going to have four infant toddler webisodes and we'll have four preschool webisodes. So, eight total. We're going to focus on teacher practices that support children's learning and development related to the Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or the ELOF. Here's your first chance to participate. If you've heard of the ELOF, why don't you give me a little raise of your hands? I'd love to see of those of you who are on the line who's heard of the ELOF.

Oh, look at that, all of those hands raised. Yeah, that makes me happy. OK, that's great. So we're going to be talking about teaching practices that support children's learning and development related to the ELOF, and we're hoping to provide some real time challenges and successes that teachers have shared with us about supporting children's growth and development in these areas. We asked teachers and family child care providers who work daily with infants and toddlers to tell us about where their challenges are and where they've had successes, and then we're hoping to use those stories as a starting point for our series this year. We're also going to be highlighting culturally and linguistically responsive practices that support all young children's development and learning and this includes children who are dual language learners.

And we're also going to highlight specific practices that support highly individualized teaching to help make sure your environment is inclusive for children with disabilities or suspected delays. Just like last year, all of the Teacher Time episodes, including today's, will be available for a short time on MyPeers, and then we'll put them permanently on the ECLKC. And speaking of the ECLKC, I hope you all have visited. The link to ECLKC is right there on the bottom of the screen, and Lauren, I think might put it into the chat box, if you want to click on the link to ECLKC at some point in the future.

If you haven't been there, the new design is super easy to use. It has increased searchability by topic, so it's a lot easier to navigate and find what you're looking for, and there are so many valuable resources there for you and your families and I hope you'll take the time after the webinar or later on to explore that and find some resources that'll be valuable for you. And if you download the Viewer's Guide, the Viewer's Guide does have resources on it related to our topic today, and those will direct you to the ECLKC as well.

So, just as a reminder, when we talk about teachers, this is Teacher Time, we really are referring to any adults who work in group care settings, teachers and family child care providers and other supports. And when we talk about a classroom, this really means your learning environment. So we recognize that you're all from various program settings and you have different learning environments where you're interacting with children and families, and so that's what we mean when we talk about teachers and your learning environments, really who you are as an adult and the children and families you're serving in your environments.

You might work in a classroom with several infants or maybe you're a family child care provider, or maybe you work directly with families and children, but whatever your role is, we're hoping that our information here will help you support infants, toddlers, and that the resources and

strategies we provide will be useful to your specific situation. So as I said, we're hoping for a really interactive hour. Please ask questions, make comments in the chat box as we go along, and we'll address them as we can.

OK. So let's dig in to our topic today: social and emotional development, and we're specifically looking at emotional functioning and identity and belonging, which are two sub-domains in the social-emotional domain in the ELOF. So take a minute in the chat box and tell me what your first thought is when you hear those terms, right? And maybe this picture, poor baby, is not – maybe this is your first thought when you hear emotional functioning and identity and belonging. What do you think that means, in terms of infants and toddlers? They seem like really big terms to apply to really little kids, but they're really important. So just take a minute and let me know what you think.

And I see multiple people are typing, so hopefully we'll get some of your thoughts in there. So as you type, let me just give you a quick overview of emotional functioning. This is the area that really focuses on children's growing and developing and their ability to express a range of emotions and we want to support them in beginning to recognize these emotions in themselves and each other. We also want them to be able to express care and concern for others, and begin to manage their own emotions. I see that self-regulating emotional functioning. Brooke, yes, definitely.

And Chelsea, how they express their emotions, what they need, how children communicate what they need. Yes, this is exactly it. They communicate verbally and non-verbally. Oh, that's really important, especially at this age. Thank you [Inaudible] for this. Having the correct emotions and using them well. Asking for help. Yeah, all of these things. This is what we're looking for. How infants and toddlers communicate, right? Sometimes that's their only way of communicating. The second one that we're going to talk about today is the sub-domain is identity and belonging.

Tell me what you think it means for an infant or a toddler to have a sense of identity or belonging. Oh Michelle, thank you. Non-aggressive ways to communicate, I think some adults are still working on developing that skill, right? How the child is feeling at that time and showing cues to let you know how they're feeling. Verbal cues. Yep. Non-verbal cues, definitely. Also, feeling loved. Yeah, so a sense of belonging, right? For very young children, they want to be able to see that sense of feeling, like they're loved, that they're accepted, their responses to other people, definitely.

Security, part of a family unit. Thanks Wendy Yeah, definitely. A feeling of safety. That's really important, that safety factor and we're going to talk about that today as well. Feeling comfortable in their environment. Having a sense of belonging. Feeling confident. Regulating their behavior. Yep. You guys are typing so fast, I can't keep up. Oh Georgia, thank you. To know who they are culturally in classroom community, as well as faith. Yeah. Thank you. We're going to talk about all of these things. You guys are right on the same page as me here. So definitely, this identity and belonging is, especially in the early years, means that children are beginning to show awareness about themselves, who they are as people.

They begin to understand some characteristics about themselves and others. Some confidence in themselves. Beginning to show that they have skills or abilities, and also a sense of belonging through their relationships with others. We know that social and emotional development for infants and toddlers is so important. It's key to all of their future learning and well-being. We also know that family values and beliefs, culture and language, all influence a child's social and emotional development. So it's really important for us to make sure that we develop regular communication with families to help you make sure that the support that you're providing and the language that you use are meeting the social and emotional needs of each child.

So today, we're going to talk about how you can be that kind of adult, the one that supports children's social and emotional development everyday really creates that sense of safety that you've mentioned, help them express their emotions in really positive ways, and to be there for them to be the one that shows them love and encouragement and care so that they can learn. So as a teacher, your role is really to support infant and toddlers' emotional functioning. It's such an important part of their mental health and their overall social and emotional well-being. You can help children learn to express a range of emotions and begin to recognize and understand the emotions of others.

This starts with the way that you provide nurturing and responsive interactions. So, let me break that down for you just a little bit. First, you let children know that you understand their emotional needs and will respond with consistency. So whether it's an infant who needs some one-on-one soothing, to rock gently to sleep, or a toddler who really needs help to calm and manage the big emotions that come with learning to be more and more independent, they depend on you for your consistent and predictable and reassuring presence. That's how they learn about their own emotional expressions, as well as the emotions of others.

And one reliable strategy for helping children in this area is to ask parents or family members words that they use in their home, in their home languages, or in English to soothe and calm their child. And one way you teach children that you might not even realize is when they watch you be caring and responsive, and then they learn how to be caring and responsive. So for example, if a child falls down and you go to the child and comfort them, maybe you rub their back or give them a hug, other children will see that.

You're actually modeling that responsiveness to them. And very often, I'm sure you've seen this yourself. Sometimes one or more children will come over and do the same thing to that child, right? Pat the child on the back, hug them, ask them if they're OK, and that's how they're learning through observing what you do. So, you're teaching them through your actions the way that you respond to their emotions, but also, you model that with the children that you work with and other children see it modeled and want to — want to replicate it. The other area where you really lend support is in understanding that they are part — they are part of a community of caring adults and friends, whether that's your classroom, your family child care home, the community that you're in, the community where the children live, their home.

All of these pieces, all of these components of a child's daily life really are important to determining their development of a sense of identity and belonging. So, as a teacher or family child care provider, you can help children understand how to connect with others in positive ways. And just like us, building those relationships begins with knowing ourselves. Who am I?

What do I like? What do I like to play with? How do I like to play? How do I like to learn? And ways of being in the world, right? How to be friends, how to eat together, work together, talk together. All of those things are important in terms of building connections. For very young children, this really means helping them get in tune with their preferences for interactions with others.

Maybe some children like to play with one or two peers who they know very well, and others are sometimes ready to join a small group and have fun, and maybe even a large group. So, depending on the child and where they are and what their preferences are, it's important to understand that so we're providing the right learning environment for them. It also means helping infants and toddlers begin to develop a sense of their desires, their preferences, their thinking, what ideas do they have, their abilities.

So with your help, children will begin to develop relationships with others, and then when they do that, it will help build their confidence in themselves and their ability to be a part of a caring community. As you support children to build their confidence, it's important to ask families to share their culture, their cultural traditions, and other important things about their family life. This way you can use some of what you've learned about the families to create learning environments that feels more familiar to children. This provides consistency for young children between their home and classroom environments, and this consistency helps them feel safe, which allows them to explore and learn.

So we know you're thinking about these things everyday while you're working one-on-one with a child or having a small group interaction or when you're talking with families about how they support children's social and emotional development. So we're going to take a minute and we're going to listen to a toddler teacher. This is Miss Rachel, and she's going to talk with us about how she supports social and emotional development. And as you watch, listen for some strategies that she uses to help very young children. And as you hear strategies or key things that she's saying, put them in the chat box, and then we'll come back and talk about it in a minute.

[Video begins]

Rachel: For social and emotional development, I kind of go off of their age. You know, if I'm working with a 1 year old when I'm trying to help him with social interactions, I would either start off with just building a relationship with that child and myself and then maybe bringing in one other child to help him, you know, communicate. To, you know, offer another person, another child for that child to speak with. Instead of starting out with a larger group, you know, of children, I would start small. Like I said, I kind of follow that teaching practice of using their age. If it's one child, I'll use one other child to help build that social interaction. If it's a 2 year old, I'll probably use two other toddlers.

[Video ends]

Judi: OK. So what strategies did you hear there? She mentioned very specifically ... Yeah, Michelle, right. She mentioned their age, right? Isn't that interesting? So she said she follows their age as an idea for maybe how many children would be supportive in a group. Right, Lori.

Use other children. Exactly. I love her approach to following a child's age. And so that's — so that's her strategy.

Oh yeah, she created a secure connection with them, right. That's definitely ... Follow the child's lead. Yeah, also important and I hope these are things that, if you haven't thought about, maybe it's something that you can put into place. So we also asked Miss Rachel about her — her challenges, so I'm going to play just a few minutes of her and the challenges around supporting children in this area, and as you listen, I'd love to hear if her challenges resonate with you. You could say, "Oh, yup, I've — I've had that challenge," or if you've had any success in terms of strategies to address the challenges she — she mentions, that would be great, too. So let's listen as she talks about her challenges.

[Video begins]

Rachael: I think, you know, the challenging behaviors is probably, you know, one of our biggest challenges. I would say the behaviors, sometimes probably cultural differences with the families and, you know, the teachers. Maybe, you know, the way the children kind of behave at home versus how they behave in the classroom. You know, when they're younger, I feel like, you know, as getting them at such a younger age, it's a little bit easier for us to, you know, kind of work on those behaviors and kind of help the kids, you know, socially and kind of, you know, if their behaviors are challenging, maybe get them to a point where they're not so challenging or that they're a little easier for the kids to deal with. And, you know, it helps even more with the parents kind of being on the same page with us to kind of, you know, help these kids grow, maybe grow out of some of those challenging behaviors and become a part of a group in the classroom.

[Video ends]

Judi: How many of you, raise your hands, have experienced similar challenges, right? Those behavioral challenges, really finding a way. Oh, there go all the hands. Yeah. [Laughing] I had very similar experiences when I was working with infants and toddlers, those challenging behaviors. But definitely, she mentioned it helps with the parents being on the same page, and that's really an important thing. So, as you may have noticed, we have a friend who's joined us because we recognize, and thanks to all of your hands there, I can see that this is a common challenge for — for teachers and those who work with young children — children, we've invited Dr. Sarah Lytle to join us today.

She works at I-LABS, which is one of our research partners at DTL, and at I-LABS, they do research on infant/toddler social and emotional development, and Sarah's sharing strategies — as she's sharing strategies with us, please feel free to respond or ask questions in the chat box 'cause we'll have time for Sarah to respond to some of your questions. So, any questions you have around supporting emotional functioning or developing a sense of identity and belonging, put them in the chat box and we'll have a chance for — for Sarah to answer those questions. So hi, Sarah. Thanks for joining us today. Nice to have you here.

Dr. Sarah Lytle: Thanks, Judi. It's good to be here.

Judi: Yeah! So, based on what Miss Rachel said about how she supports social and emotional development, can you respond and give us some strategies we can try with the children we work with on a daily basis?

Sarah: Yeah, so I love that Miss Rachel is talking about being on the same page with families. That is so incredibly important. It really ensures that we have consistency in the ways that we're modeling and reinforcing positive behaviors with children in our setting, and the ways that the families are doing it at home. That's really important. It gives kids a sense of security, it gives them that consistency that we know helps children learn. It's also, I think, really important for thinking about children who have delays or disabilities that might affect their behavior in how they interact with other children.

And then I would say, finally, being on the same page with families also allows us to be really responsive to children's home cultures and languages. And Judi, I know you're going to talk about that a little bit more today — later today. So, I think one thing that I've always found very interesting about challenging behaviors is that those behaviors might only occur in the group setting. So it's really hard to be a child and to be part of a group all day when you're still developing your abilities to connect and you're still developing that ability to form a relationship with another person.

So it's possible that these challenging behaviors also are the ones that adults find challenging, and that can be difficult. And it's hard to understand and really support children when, as an adult, you're the one that's also feeling like this behavior is a difficult thing. But nevertheless, it's our job to — to really help these children, and to soothe them and — and help them manage these really big emotions that they have. You can imagine that a toddler who's having a hard time soothing or an infant who's crying a lot, it may just be because they don't have the language yet to express what they really need and want.

So, it's up to us then to really think about supporting that child and help them manage those emotions. So, I have some specific strategies that you can use to identify children's emotional functioning, their sense of identity and belonging, and overall social and emotional development. So we'll put them up here to help you — help you think about some of these now and think about how these really reflect the ELOF sub-domains. And you can also see how these relate to other ELOF sub-domains.

So remember that for infants and toddlers, all of this really comes as a package deal. When we're thinking about supporting children's social and emotional development, we're thinking about supporting children's development all over and across all domains. So when you're thinking about effective practices for supporting children, you might model positive social behaviors, like a gentle touch. So perhaps you're going to put your hand over a child's hand to guide them as they, you know, touch their peers gently.

You might talk about peers as people with feelings, help children understand that other people have feelings and emotions, too. You can support problem-solving strategies with peers by offering different solutions like maybe they're going to find a similar toy but a different toy, or maybe they'll take turns sharing. So these problem-solving strategies that are very critical. You can also allow for personalized comfort items that might be unique to each child, like thinking

about a special blanket in the classroom, a teddy bear, something that really helps that child to manage those emotions. You might promote children's engagement with other children when they are arriving and during their time together during the day. They can see peers then as a source of comfort and a source of support and enjoyment.

So really thinking about — really thinking about promoting peers as supportive people as well. And then finally, you might also be able to comment on children's efforts and describe their accomplishments using positive language. So those are just some strategies and some effective practices that you might think about as you're really trying to work together to support children's social emotional development and their sense of identity and belonging. And so, I think we're getting some questions in from the chat box here. So Judi, do you want to let me know what some of these questions are?

Judi: Yeah, I think maybe what we can do is we have a couple of videos of teachers who are using some of the strategies that you just mentioned. And so, what we'll do is we'll take a minute and watch those videos, and then you can have a second to kind of look at people's comments and questions, and then we can come back and chat about that for a minute, OK? So let's watch this video. As you watch, just keep an eye on the way that teachers are supporting identity and belonging and emotional functioning. There's going to be two different videos, two different kinds of approaches and if you spot any strategies or notice something that a teacher's doing to support a child, go ahead and write that in the chat box and then we'll come back and have a conversation about it. So let's watch.

[Video begins]

Teacher No. 1: Let's see. Put back in it. Getting all the weeds.

Teacher No. 2: Layla, I see you.

Teacher No. 1: Let's go change your diaper. Let's go change your diaper.

Teacher No. 2: I see you.

Teacher No. 1: Let's go change your diaper.

Teacher No. 2: I see you.

Teacher No. 1: I know. You can come back over here when you're done. OK? I gotta go change it.

Teacher No. 2: I see you. [Laughing] What are you doing?

Teacher No. 1: The bus isn't here yet.

Teacher No. 3: Kennedy, who's next?

Teacher No. 4: Want to pick somebody else?

Teacher No. 3: Can you pick a friend? Who's it going to be? Lucas, Selma? [Laughing]

Caretaker: Lucas, Lucas. Lucas. Say Lucas. OK. She wants Lucas.

Teacher No. 3: Lucas is not ready. How about Lejandro? ♪ There was a classroom met a boy ♪ ♪ Lejandro was his name-o ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lejandro ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lejandro ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lejandro ♪ ♪ We are glad you came today ♪

Teacher No. 5: Yay, would you like to pick a friend?

Child: Lucas.

Teacher No. 5: How about Selma?

Teacher No. 4: You ready now, Lucas?

Caretaker: Now Lucas wants to be ...

Teacher No. 4: You ready now, Lucas?

Teacher No. 3: OK. It's Lucas' turn. ♪ There was a classroom met a boy ♪ ♪ And Lucas was his name-o ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lucas ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lucas ♪ ♪ Jump, jump Lucas ♪ ♪ We are glad you came today ♪

Teacher No. 3: OK, Lucas.

Teacher No. 4: Lucas, can you pick someone? Who's next?

[Video ends]

Judi: OK. All right. I see some strategies already that people are writing. Giving children choices by letting them choose a friend. Supporting engagement with peers. Exactly, that was one of the highlights, right? Personalizing the song to each child. There's that identity and belonging, right? We're going to switch up the song just for you and for you individually. For dual language learners, it's important to learn a few words in their home language to try to establish that bond. Definitely, and we're going to talk a little bit about that later on in the webisode. Sarah, what do you think?

Sarah: I love that Stacey recognized that the teacher honored the child's choice to say no and the teacher, I think, really scaffolded that really nicely and just let the other kids know that this child just isn't ready yet, and that's OK, and they eventually circled back and gave him a turn and he was really engaged. But – but I think really honoring that emotion in the moment was really important.

Judi: Well how awful if you would be forced to jump up and down if you weren't ready to jump and down. To me, I'm like, "Oh, I would maybe need a few minutes to like watch other peers do it before I start jumping."

Sarah: Sure, I mean, I need my morning cup of coffee. The child has to acclimate too, right?

[Laughing]

Judi: Yeah, no that was really sensitive, right? So we're going to ... Not only do we want to individualize this experience for you, but we also want to acknowledge your emotion and your emotion right now is, "I don't feel like participating," and that is, you know, perfectly OK. So yeah.

Sarah: You know, I think another thing that I really loved in the first video, the teacher who's, you know, making eye contact with the child, I think she did a really lovely job of – of really matching the child's level in her responses. So she kind of started out whispering, and then as the child was more engaged, her voice got a little bit louder, the gestures got a little bit bigger. And so, really kind of matching the child's emotional level there, I think, is really an important but very small thing to do in that interaction.

Judi: Yeah, I think sometimes, you know, when we think about interacting with young children, we always have to be like big and exaggerated and, "How are you today?" and, "Let's have fun!" But sometimes, children really need to have just those quiet moments. Like, my own son is that way; he's 3, and he — he will — he will kind of draw back a little bit if someone comes in really — really over the top, and so his teacher knows when he walks in in the morning, she walks right over to him and squats down and says, "Hello," as opposed to, you know, making a big ...

There are other kids who walk in the room who are like, "Hey, I'm here! Everybody let's go." But for him, he really needs that little kind of quiet entry into the room before, you know, he gets to pick up his pace. So I think that that was, yeah, and Tai is saying it was great that the teacher was aware of the space between the children. All of these things. Just really paying attention to individual children and what they need and how to respond to them is really great. So thanks for highlighting those and ... Oh, go ahead. You want to ...

Sarah: I was just going to say, and thinking about both verbal and non-verbal cues from children, too.

Judi: Oh yeah, 'cause so many children, especially in younger ages, are going to be really using those non-verbal cues. Definitely. Well Sarah, this has been really helpful. Thank you. Sarah's going to stick around. She's going to be back at the end to answer some of your questions, and I think she's going to be hanging out in the chat box, so maybe you can answer some questions that people have in the chat box as we move along. So thanks, Sarah. We'll see you in a little bit.

Sarah: Thanks.

Judi: So, so many of these comments that we've been talking about refer to skills that overlap with another domain in the ELOF, and that domain is Approaches to Learning. So Approaches to Learning focuses on how children learn rather than what they learn. This domain describes skills and behaviors that children use to learn. It includes emotional, behavior, and cognitive self-regulation under a single umbrella. So this basically means the way children control their emotions, behaviors, and thoughts.

All of that impacts how they approach learning. This domain also includes initiative, curiosity, and creativity, so by applying these skills, children learn new skills and then they start goals to meet them. So for example, if they are working on stacking blocks, right, their goal might be to stack blocks, but for a young child, that could be a really frustrating task, right? The blocks wobble or they fall over. But they're persistence, their ability to control their physical behaviors, their emotional reaction to a block tower falling over, those things are really going to support them in their learning in the future.

So they learn to do things that are challenging, frustrating, or simply take time to accomplish, and those are the skills that we really want to be building. And so when we think about how even the youngest children learn, remember that it's that safe environment that you provide, and your daily interactions, that help children approach learning in a really positive way. So think about the little boy who was, during the welcome song, didn't want to participate. If he was, that ...

The teacher allowing him to say, "no" created a sense of safety for him. "It's OK for me to not be ready. I don't have to do this, I'm safe here. If I say no, a teacher will respect that." And then he was able to join in later. So creating that safe environment allows children to feel like they have the ability to explore and learn, and that's where you really support them in their approaches to learning. And also, when you're creative, they learn to be creative. When you're curious about things, they develop curiosity.

So the same way I mentioned you modeling behaviors and supporting emotions, you also model approaches to learning. And when you interact with them and respond supportively to all of their emotions, even the difficult ones, it helps them understand and manage those emotions. So it's OK to be angry as long as someone is there to support me in managing that feeling. And as they learn to manage their emotions, this has a positive effect on their ability to approach learning opportunities.

So if I have the ability to manage my thoughts and my body and my emotions, then I really have the freedom to approach learning opportunities in this safe environment that you've provided. And then finally, remember that the families have their own approach to learning. They have their own values, their beliefs, their cultural practices, and this is going to affect how children approach and engage in learning.

So it's really important to ask family members how they respond to their children's emotions. So for example, if a child gets frustrated while trying to play with a toy, maybe this child is building blocks at home, do the parents immediately jump in and try to fix the problem? Do they let the child figure it out but stay close by so that they can offer support? Do they maybe just let the child figure it out, no matter how frustrated the child gets with the block tower? These things are going to be different depending on the family that the child is, and the home culture that the child is being raised in.

So it's really important to communicate with families. How do you support your child when they're feeling frustrated? You know, or how do you help your child manage emotions? And sometimes those conversations will — will result in you realizing that families don't have a strategy for those things, and that's really where you can build some supports and say, "Well, here's what we do in our program. Here are some suggestions for you to use at home so we can have some consistency across the program and the home setting." And it's just a really important conversation to have.

So the relationship that — that you develop with the children support them in learning how to manage strong emotions and those related behaviors. And so, as ... And since they're building these self-regulation skills in conjunction with really closely tied to connected with consistent, responsive relationships. So they want to know that every time something happens, that the

response they're going to get is going to be the same. That's how they develop their – their regulation of their emotions.

And then as they get older, they become better at regulating on their own, but it's still, you know, heavily supported by adults. And there are many ways that children use the skills they're developing in regulating their emotions and behaviors. They develop coping strategies to manage feelings when playing with other children and when participating in routines, like hand-washing or diapers or meal times, and this growing ability for children to manage emotions and behavior allows for more positive engagement in learning experiences, and then fewer of those behavioral challenges that we've heard about from teachers today. And remember, too, that this concept of self-regulation, again, may differ across cultures, and it may mean that children need to keep to themselves rather than to self-regulate within a peer group. So that's really important to understand.

And find out from families what this concept might mean to them, how children really learn to regulate their emotions, so that you can have open communication about your approach to it and your program and how families can continue to support that at home. Make sure that you're on the same page. So I want to share with you a couple of stories that we've heard from teachers who are very busy everyday supporting children's social and emotional development. So here's a quote from one of our teachers who works with toddlers. This says that, "One of our children has a very difficult time at drop off. He clings to his dad and cries. I usually have to hold him while his dad leaves.

We've tried many things to help comfort him through this transition. One thing that helps is going to the book corner and reading a favorite book. We usually invite one or two other children to join us. Those children pick out books to give to him, recognizing that it will comfort him. It's amazing to see such young children learning to care for each other." I love this story, and if you look at this, she's highlighting some of the things that Sarah mentioned earlier about the strategies for supporting young children.

Using peers, and also responding to the child's need. I remember I had a very similar child when I worked in a toddler room, and I was the only person he would go to. He's probably 20 years old now. [Laughing] That I think about it, but I still remember him because his response to being dropped off was so intense, and his — his need to connect with me on a daily basis was so intense, and I'm glad that I was able to be that person for him. But also, using other children to comfort is great, right? So we're modeling it and then we're also showing children what they can do to support children and support their peers.

So the second story I have is from another teacher who works with younger children in the 1-year-old range. She says that, "My favorite thing about this age is watching the children learn to interact with each other. They are silly and they love to make each other laugh. They give each other toys when they're sitting together. And they babble back and forth, like having a conversation that they both understand. The challenge comes when they get upset or maybe hit each other or grab toys, but we try to stay close, watch them as they play, and model gentle touches. We also try to say what they might be feeling like, 'When you take Nico's toy, he feels frustrated.' "

So this is a great example of both recognizing what we love about children at this age and their ability to just be like silly and goofy, and even if they don't have a lot of words, they still interact with each other every day. And then also, the strategies that she uses, right? So she recognizes that being close so that she can be preventative is really important. And also, verbalizing for the children who maybe aren't really able to verbalize yet what it is that they might be feeling. So we're already building, you know. It's never too early to start talking about and recognizing the feelings that children have and what their behaviors might be expressing, and verbalizing that for them so that they feel, again, supported and safe.

OK. So what I would love to know from you is, "How do you help children express their emotions?" These are great strategies that we've just heard from these teachers. Tell me some of your strategies. Everyone here, you all have, I'm sure, important things to share and we'd love to learn from you. This is a great community for us to learn from each other. So, share your strategies. Maybe tell me the age group that you're working with because different strategies work for different age groups, and then we can have that documented so that we can learn from each other.

OK. So as we chat, we're going to shift a little bit and just talk about the role of ongoing assessment related to social and emotional development, because we know observing and documenting children's learning and development is the best way for us to figure out how to support their growth. So observing and documenting growth and social and emotional development requires really focused and intentional engagement with children. Often, it's the time that children fail to manage their emotions that we remember, right? The big outbursts or the hitting of a child with a block, but unless we really plan to observe and document skills in this domain, we might not recognize when children are making progress in managing their emotions and expressing their preferences.

So for example, you know, you might have a child who's really resistant to diaper changes. And so, you remember those moments, right, because it's a struggle. But if you're not intentional about your documentation, you might not remember to document the time when it went more smoothly. Or maybe this, "Oh, we managed to get through diaper time without any resistance. You want to document that, too, because that's progress, right? And often, we want to make sure that it's important to have two-way communication. So the other key thing that we want to remember is that we want to have two-way communication with families. I think I may have mentioned this already, right?

So, especially for these really little ones, we want to make sure that we're communicating with how children are managing their emotions at home or in other environments. As Sarah said, sometimes these things will show themselves either only at home or only in the program, right? And I've had parents say to me, you know, "I have such a hard time with my child, you know, getting them to eat breakfast," or whatever it is. And I'll say, "Oh, we've, you know, had no problems here," or vice versa, right? So it's really important to figure out the whole child and what's going on with the whole child, and whether behaviors are consistent at home and with what you're seeing, or if there are differences, and then being able to discuss the approach. And a lot of this relies on how we as caregivers, teachers, family members, help infants and toddlers manage their emotions in different situations.

So what might work for them at home might not work for you, or vice versa. So we want to make sure that we're communicating about that. And remember, families are really the best source of information about their children's development of identity and belonging. So being on the same page about our shared role and developing identity and belonging, you know, this is how we show children are valued in our home, and we want to make sure that we replicate that in our program. So we share — so we show children that we value them in the same way.

Something that's familiar to them so that they have consistent and positive modeling and support across the different situations that they're in. So, I want to share with you again, Miss Rachel's going to come back and she's going to tell us a little bit about her challenges when assessing social and emotional development. So again, listen for her strategies that she uses and maybe some of her challenges, and if you pick up on any of them, let me know if they resonate with you, and if you have any strategies that you've used to help with those or any of your thoughts about what she's saying in terms of her challenges with assessing. So, let's listen.

[Video begins]

Rachel: I think for me, successes that I've experienced with the assessments is just using that as kind of like my base on where to start planning for my children. How to make sure that I'm planning appropriate activities and developmentally appropriate activities for them. You know, it gives me an idea of kind of where to start and what I need to do next. And, you know, the assessment also is kind of like my support, my backup support from when I'm meeting with parents, you know, and sharing information with parents about where their children are developmentally and why I'm coming up with the goals that I'm coming up with to move forward with their development.

Other than that, sometimes when I'm doing the assessment, I may or may not have that child's cooperation when I'm planning an activity with the child so that I can, you know, mark the assessment correctly, based on the child's capabilities.

[Video ends}

Judi: OK, that was great. I see some of your strategies. You're already ... Yeah, always use a baseline. Oh, I lost it. Lori, thank you. Always use a baseline to plan future activities. Exactly. Getting down to their levels. Making sure you have age-appropriate activities. That's important, right? She mentioned that one of her strategies — or one of her challenges is that, you know, she might be planning an activity and the child just wants to do something else. I mean, that could happen if your — if your learning opportunity is age appropriate, but it's also really important to consider.

If I want to find out this information, let's do it in a way that is responsive to what the child is interested in or maybe I can find a different time of day or a different — a different opportunity to engage. But still, I mean, one thing that's important to remember is even if the child is not responding the way that you want them to, there are still some things that you probably could document and learn from their response to your — to your approach. Oh yes, Margaret, exactly.

Activities are planned on each child's individual needs and educational levels. Exactly, especially at this age, and well, at all ages really, but definitely for infants and toddlers, they should be really focused on the individual child and based on their needs. Document everything. Yes, so documentation is key and one thing that I would say, and this is really important, is making sure that we're using documentation, not just as a way to have this, you know, running record of what children do or what they say, but that it's really going to — we're going to document those things that really tell us what we need to know so that we can communicate with families, so that we can communicate with others. We're going to use this information to say, "Oh, something new happened today," or, "Something different happened today," or, "This is important. I want to make sure that I do remember this because I want to bring it up with a family member."

And I don't know about you, but I have a really hard time remembering what I ate for breakfast, right, so when you have a day that's full of activity and craziness and, you know, lots of interaction and lots of busyness, sometimes it's hard. I say, "Oh, there that was one thing that I wanted to share with the family and I can't remember what it was," so documentation is key so that we can really make sure that our two-way communication really stays solid. So you want to talk with parents, and parents can contribute to this documentation, too, in lots of different ways. Parents and families, again, as I said, are your key source of information.

They don't necessarily have to write you a note, but you could say, "You know, this week, can you just pay attention to how diaper changes go so that we can kind of, you know, compare notes?" or, "You know, if you're working on a," if their child is playing with toys and they get frustrated, "Can you just let me know what happens, you know? Do they throw toys or do they just keep playing?" So they don't have to necessarily write you notes. They don't have to take pictures, but asking parents to focus their observations while you're focusing yours will really allow you to build that communication. And then finally, sharing with others, you know. We want to remember to keep others in the loop, in terms of what we're observing and documenting.

So this could mean your supervisor, it could be a coach, it could be a specialist, or a social worker who's working with the family, especially when it comes to infants and toddlers and their social emotional development. There may be others in your program or supporting this child who would benefit from your focused observations and so, making sure that you have clear documentation of what you've observed can be really helpful to others who are working with the children and families that are served by your program.

And, you know, sometimes children just have different plans, and that's OK, but that's part of — part of what you do, right, is to be flexible, and like I said, sometimes you can still document really valuable information based on the child's response to what you've provided. So that's really important as well. So, we're going to make one last transition here today, to what I think is just a really important topic in this area, and it's because we know that for infants and toddlers, their emotional development is tied so closely with their interactions with adults, and parents and family members are the most important adults in young children's lives.

And you are, too, obviously as well, but in thinking about this close connection, we want to consider really carefully how family's cultural backgrounds and their language impacts infants

and toddlers as they begin to manage and express emotions and develop a sense of identity and belonging. I'm going to share a quote with you. Just take a minute and read this quote. I love this. What's normal in your home might be different from what's normal in someone else's home. I love this; homes are different and it varies by culture, right? So in my family, you know, when you greet adults, you kiss them, and when you say goodbye to adults, you kiss them. It's very important, it's a sign of respect, but that's not a "normal" for everybody. It's a normal in a lot of places, but those things are really important in terms of creating that sense of safety for the children that you work with.

And so, what we're going to do is we're going to spend just a few minutes listening to one of our friends here at DTL. I had the chance to speak earlier with Deb Mazzeo. She's the cultural and linguistics practices coordinator here at DTL and she's going to share some important ways children's culture and language impact their social and emotional development. So as you listen, tell me in the chat box what you're thinking and what your experiences are and maybe where your challenges are in this area, and then we'll have a chance to chat with that. So let's watch now. Hi Deb, how are you?

Deb Mazzeo: Hi Judi.

Judi: Hi. So, thanks for taking the time to talk to us today. As you know, we've been talking about children's social and emotional development — infants and toddlers specifically. And so, we're excited to have you here today because I know that one of the things that you really value and one of the ways that you really support us here at the National Center is to think about the ways that children's cultures and languages and backgrounds impact their learning and development.

And so today, we're hoping that you can help us think a little bit about the way that children's backgrounds impact their social and emotional development, specifically their development of identity and belonging and emotional regulation. So, maybe you can just start by telling us a little bit about what it is that we should be thinking about in terms of how children's backgrounds impact their development in these areas.

Deb: Absolutely. Well, thanks again for having me, and this is my favorite topic to speak on and so I am so happy to be here. Well, let's just start by talking about language and culture and how they are really inextricably linked. So language really is the way in which the cultures, values, and beliefs are transmitted, you know, between parents to children and then out into the wider communities. I often like to think of this image of an iceberg when talking about culture because oftentimes what we more readily see are what is above the surface, right? The food, the music, the dance, the dress, and what we don't see is what's underneath the surface, and that is the manner in which children are raised.

So parenting, ways of parenting, and ways of attitudes and beliefs, and so it's those things that are underneath the surface that really can make or break relationships between families and the early education staff. What happens when children start attending early learning programs away from their family members is sometimes when there is a disconnect, that children can become confused, and they can begin to lose their self-identity, and so it's really important that there be a continuity between the two. When there isn't, what happens is this downward spiral

effect where the children develop some poor self-identity, and then later on in the schooling, their academic skills begin to suffer. This can also lead into poor health later in life. And so, we really want to ensure that children can maintain their home language and the earlier exposure to that by having ongoing communication with the family is critical.

Judi: Yeah, that makes — that makes a lot of sense, right? So, especially for an infant, right, who's still very much learning about what the world is, to go from a place where they, you know, where they were born, right their home, their family life, and then all of a sudden to be in a different context, that seems very different. I can see how that could be a challenge for an infant or a toddler. Be a challenge for me as an adult, right? So the closer that we can bring our learning environments to — to what the children are used to experiencing on a daily basis in their homes, I can see that it would make those transitions between home and the learning environment much easier. But I can see how it also would really support that feeling of safety and security that children need in order to learn, right?

Deb: Yes, exactly.

Judi: So, in thinking about the context that you just gave us, about how children's cultural and — and family backgrounds are really like what's beneath the surface, what is it that we want to keep in mind as we work to support children's development in these areas? What are some things that we really want to make sure that we're doing or thinking or remembering while we're engaging with families and these young children?

Deb: Yes, the key factor to keep in mind for early education staff is there is wide variability among cultural groups, and so the main point to keep in mind is that we get to know children and families at an individual level. And also, it's important to understand that sometimes the cultural backgrounds can influence how children express themselves, their emotions, and how they fit within a group. And so, for example, some children might not overtly share how they're feeling, whereas others might tend to keep that inside. So again, even though there are these characteristics that we know that are specific to cultural groups, we want to ensure that we get to know each child and family on an individual level.

Judi: That's great, I really appreciate that. I think — I think it's so important, too, especially when you're thinking about infants and toddlers, who still maybe aren't able to express everything about where they're coming from, getting to know their families and how, what they value and how they communicate and what they see important, in terms of their children's growing identity and sense of belonging.

You really need to understand that from the families in order to be able to support it with the young children, right, 'cause that's something that you would want to foster. And again, going back to what you said about creating a space that feels like home, right, if the family is very much about being a family unit and you're supporting high levels of independence, you know, in your setting, that could be confusing for the child, right? Like it could be – it could create that conflict that you were talking about earlier.

Deb: Exactly.

Judi: OK. So, the last thing that I want to think about, and I think this is really where our focus is for Teacher Time, is thinking about if we take all of this information that you just gave us about what we need to think about, what does that mean for us as teachers or family child care providers, in terms of our practice, right? So what does this look like? Now that I know these things and I'm keeping these things in mind, what does it look like? What do I need to do with my children in order to support their growth and development in this area?

Deb: Sure. Well, aside from actually speaking directly with the families and getting to learn their caregiving routines at home so that you can make sure that that's carried over into the early learning setting, you want to seek out authentic sources of knowledge and understanding about the culture, and you can do this by going out into the community and, you know, checking with maybe a local college or even different places of worship or have volunteers come in and be able to share the language with the program and in the setting. You'll also want to learn some of the common phrases to help children feel calm and secure and comfortable in the classroom.

And again, these community members can help with that. Maybe some of those survival phrases might be "hungry" or, you know, "something's hurting," or you know, words like that so that you can be able to communicate effectively with the child. Also, you'll of course want to be sure that in the environment, there are books that are reflective of different groups of people and different languages. You'll want to make sure that the posters on the wall reflect the diversity of the children that are served. Have mirrors in the room so that children can look at themselves and you can point out their different features. All of these are really critical.

Judi: Thank you, Deb, so much for joining us. That was really powerful and you gave us so many things to think about. And so I just want to say, because we're hitting the end of our Teacher Time, I wanted to leave you with these links, and they will be available for you in the chat box if you want to participate in any of our opportunities. We have a MyPeers Group, which many of you are familiar with, and I want you to know that we just started Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practices Group on MyPeers.

So please look that up in the Community section. You can find it there. We also have an opportunity to participate in Text4Teachers, which is a texting service. So you'll get links to important information. And then ELOF2GO. You all raised your hands about ELOF2GO, but it's a new app. You can find it in your iPhone or in your Android app guide. ELOF2GO is an interactive ELOF reference for you. The recording is going to be available next week on MyPeers.

Make sure to fill out the evaluation. Lauren's going to leave that in the chat box for you. You can print out your certificate at the end of the evaluation. And then we're going to have three more episodes focused on infant and toddlers. And so, you can see those listed there. Please make a note from them and you'll get an announcement about that with a registration link. Thank you so much for being here. This was a great conversation and we're really excited to continue it with you next time.