



# Facilitator’s Guide

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## Video

Accompanying video for *The Roots of Early Learning* can be streamed at [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/).

“The Roots of Early Learning” (07:46)

Segment 1: “Build Strong Relationships” (0:00–4:03)

Segment 2: “Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities” (4:03–7:46)

## Introduction

This professional development module highlights the guiding principles that provide the foundation for the *Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers* (see the Learning Guidelines and Standards handout). It is designed to help you lead educators in using best practices to build strong relationships with infants, toddlers, and their families and to offer children age-appropriate learning opportunities that build foundations for language, literacy, and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). One of several modules developed for early childhood educators by the Department of Early Education and Care of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, it provides an overview of the infant/toddler series and a foundation for each of its age-specific modules. For more information about this professional development module, visit [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/).

### About this Guide

This Facilitator's Guide provides instructions and narrative for delivering a video-based training for early childhood educators. You'll find an agenda, learning goals, preparation suggestions, talking points, activities, and handouts. You'll also find general tips and resources to help you facilitate the training. Use these materials with the accompanying video to lead family child care and center-based educators in an engaging, content-rich training.

**Note: To view the video referenced in this guide, go to [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/). Select "*The Roots of Early Learning*." Be sure you are able to stream the video prior to and while leading this training.**

### Key Ideas

- Babies and toddlers need close relationships with a few trusted adults in order to thrive and grow. Curious, observant, loving adults who come to know a child well can provide her with just the right amount of stimulation, human interaction, and challenge to feed her appetite for learning without overwhelming the coping skills that she is just beginning to develop. Over time, through responsive interactions and playful engagement, young children build the relationships that are critical to learning.
- Children's brains grow and change rapidly during the first three years. Their activities and experiences help build the fundamentals of:
  - *Language*: communication, vocabulary, storytelling, and asking questions
  - *Literacy (reading and writing)*: oral language, familiarity with books and print, play with word sounds, hand and finger control, and scribbling

- *Scientific thinking*: curiosity, exploration, cause/effect associations, comparisons, testing hypotheses, and intuitive understandings of physical concepts
- *Mathematical thinking*: concepts of more and less, counting small numbers, grouping like things together, sequence, and patterns
- *STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math)*: learning how the world works and how to use tools and strategies to accomplish a goal
- For infants and toddlers, physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional development are all interconnected. Children learn best when educators and parents use a whole-child approach, engaging the child in play rather than teaching a particular skill or subject in isolation.
- Educators need to respect and nurture each child's natural curiosity and ways of engaging with the world. They need to build relationships with children's families, who can help them understand what a child may be communicating with his behavior. This can then help educators be more intentional about how they arrange learning environments, offer opportunities for children to explore new experiences and master new skills, and use language to support children's learning.

## Learning Goals

After participating in this training, educators will be able to:

- Understand the importance of building strong relationships with individual children and their families.
- Know how to make a family feel welcome in a child care setting.
- Identify how to begin to build relationships with family members by valuing a family's culture, language, understanding of their child, and hopes for what he will learn.
- Offer children investigation opportunities that are interesting but not overwhelming and use language that supports children's investigations and learning.
- Reflect upon how their current practices help children build foundations for language, literacy, and STEM learning.
- Reflect upon what they would like to learn more about and plan formal and informal learning opportunities for themselves.

**Agenda**

Introduction	15–20 minutes
The Roots of Early Learning	15–20 minutes
Build Strong Relationships	20–25 minutes
BREAK (optional)	0–5 minutes
Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities	20–25 minutes
Try It	15 minutes
Wrap Up	5–10 minutes
<b>Total Time</b>	<b>90–120 minutes</b>

**Preparation**

Before leading this training, you should:

- Watch the video and get to know the featured best practices.
- Read through the training module. Think about your own questions and how you might respond to your participants’ questions. Become familiar with the key ideas (page 2) so that you can share them in a natural, conversational way and address any questions that might arise. You may want to use the Resources for Further Learning handout to support and extend your expertise.
- Obtain and test the technology you need to share the video with participants and make sure you have a reliable Internet connection during the training.
- Gather any props or materials needed for the Try It activity.
- Rehearse and fine-tune your presentation to “make it your own.” Time yourself to make sure you are within the allotted time.
- Create a packet with copies of the following handouts for each participant:
  - Self-Assessment
  - Learning Log
  - Try It
  - Best Practices
  - Learning Guidelines and Standards
  - Resources for Further Learning
  - Training Evaluation

- Consider working with a partner the first time you lead this training. You can learn from and support each other when preparing, practicing, and facilitating. After the training, you can reflect on participants' evaluations together.

### Facilitation Tips

Whether you're a new or experienced facilitator, these tips can help your training run smoothly.

- Arrive early to prepare the training room for optimal learning.
  - Place handout packets where participants check in.
  - Have pens or pencils, paper, and sticky notes or index cards on every table.
  - Check your technology setup to make sure the video plays without problems.
  - Create an area in the room (a "parking lot") where participants can submit questions (on sticky notes or index cards) that may be beyond the scope of the current discussion.
- Create a space that is inviting and comfortable.
  - Play soft music as people arrive.
  - Greet participants with a smile and a handshake. A personal introduction helps set the stage for collaboration and learning.
- Invite partner or small group discussion.
  - Before the training begins, invite educators to identify a partner. Explain that people learn best when they have a chance to talk about what they are learning or thinking.
  - Allow a few minutes for partners to introduce themselves to each other.
  - During the training, provide opportunities for partner interaction.
- Keep participants engaged.
  - Follow the "ten-two rule" as you present the training: Speak for no longer than ten minutes at a time and then provide participants at least two minutes of interaction or activity.
  - Avoid simply reading the talking points that have been provided. Become familiar with each point so that you can keep the training engaging, fluid, and conversational.

# Training

## Introduction

(15–20 minutes)

### Welcome Participants to the Training

- Introduce yourself and share your background and experience. You may want to mention why you enjoy working with infants and toddlers and/or educators of infants and toddlers.
- Announce the length of the training (1½–2 hours) and note other logistics, such as break times, restroom location, and so on.
- Review the agenda and explain the structure of the training.
  - Participants will watch a video that explores how experienced educators support infants' and toddlers' learning.
  - Participants will then watch segments of the video again, each segment focusing on a different key idea.
  - After each segment, participants will briefly discuss the main points and reflect on what they have learned. You will share your expertise as you build on participants' insights and address their questions.
  - Participants will also have the opportunity to share and reflect on their own practices. They will try out some strategies and identify practices they would like to do more often or with more intention.
- Share the learning goals and objectives. Participants will:
  - Strengthen their understanding of why educators of infants and toddlers need to build strong relationships with individual children and with their families.
  - Learn ways to make families feel welcome in a child care setting.
  - Learn how to begin to build relationships with family members that value their culture, language, understanding of their child, and hopes for what he will learn.
  - Learn to offer children investigation opportunities that are interesting but not overwhelming and to use language that supports children's learning.
  - Reflect upon how their current practices help children build foundations for language, literacy, and STEM learning.
  - Identify what they would like to learn more about and plan formal and informal learning opportunities for themselves.

- Introduce the Learning Log.
  - The Learning Log includes questions to help participants identify best practices and distill the important points made in each video segment. The *viewing questions* help focus participants' observations on key themes and strategies. The *reflection questions* help participants draw connections to their own experiences.
  - The Learning Log can also be used to jot down notes, questions, and ideas.
- Explain the “parking lot”—if, during the training, participants have questions that are not addressed or are beyond the scope of the current discussion, they can quietly display them in the “parking lot.” Assure participants that you will address their questions either one-on-one or in the group. In the case that you don't know an answer, try to suggest a helpful resource.
- Do an icebreaker activity to introduce participants to this module's themes and to get them ready to learn and interact. Play Getting to Know You to help participants prepare to engage with and learn from each other.

### Getting to Know You

- Explain that the purpose of the activity is to get participants ready to engage with and learn from each other.
  - Ask each participant to choose a partner, preferably someone they don't already know well.
  - Have partners introduce themselves to each other. Then have partners take turns sharing an important story or fact from their childhood. Encourage the listener to pay close attention and to ask questions to help him understand the story or fact and why it is important to his partner.
  - Give each partner 2–3 minutes to share a story.
  - Then, ask a few volunteers to share their observations. Ask, *How did your partner let you know that he was really listening to what you had to say?*
- After the icebreaker activity, ask each participant to identify a partner to work with during the training and encourage them to share ideas. They can keep the partner they just met or choose a colleague with whom they have an ongoing relationship. (You can offer small group discussions if you prefer.)

### Complete the Self-Assessment

Educators grow and hone their skills by continually identifying their own strengths and training needs and reflecting on their own practices.

- Invite participants to complete the first half of the Self-Assessment to help them discover the skills they already possess and to identify those they would like to work on.
- Explain that toward the end of the training, participants will complete the second half of the Self-Assessment to measure their growth and learning.

## The Roots of Early Learning

(15–20 minutes)

### Introduce the Topic

Caring relationships with adults provide the essential support for all areas of a child's development. They nurture the roots of language, literacy, and STEM, like rich soil nourishes a plant. When family members and early educators provide infants and toddlers with dependable relationships, love, back-and-forth play, and learning opportunities, they grow and thrive.

Infants and toddlers develop language through back-and-forth conversations that build on their natural curiosity and their desire to connect with the people they care about who understand and care about them. Children learn through play—with their bodies, with objects and materials in the world around them, and with people. As they play with objects and materials and try to make interesting things happen, they explore concepts that are fundamental to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They also learn how objects, materials, and living things behave and how they can relate to one another in the world.

By offering intriguing challenges, supporting children's thinking, and sharing in their excitement and discoveries, adults help prepare children to be good readers and writers as well as logical and creative thinkers. Together, these activities and conditions help build children's vocabulary, language, love of books and stories, and ability to ask questions and make connections.

### Introduce and View the Video

Introduce the video featuring Eleonora Villegas-Reimers, Associate Professor of Education at Wheelock College, along with family child care and center-based educators.

In the video, Professor Villegas-Reimers explains the many roles early educators take on as they care for children. Family child care educators Maria and Kathy and center-based educators Demetria, Eileen, and Kerry respond with sensitivity and care to children's communications. They offer stimulating learning opportunities and notice how each child reacts. They continuously talk with children in ways that build the children's language and thinking skills and support their investigations. They mirror children's delight with their own,



"The Roots of Early Learning" (07:46)



further strengthening their special bonds. And, they work in partnership with families to provide their children with supportive relationships and rich, culturally meaningful experiences.

Explain that participants will view the video as a whole, discuss it briefly, and then look at specific strategies in more depth. Ask participants to pay close attention to how parents and educators connect with children and share the children's excitement as they explore, discover, and communicate.

### Group Discussion

Ask a few volunteers to share something they noticed or wondered about as they watched the video. Encourage others to respond. Link participants' contributions to the key ideas and learning goals (pages 2–3) as you note what you will be exploring in more depth during the training. Put questions that are not directly related to the main ideas in the “parking lot” so you can be sure to address them later.

## Build Strong Relationships

(15–20 minutes)

### Introduce the Best Practice

Strong relationships develop through shared experiences that build emotional connections, security, and trust. These relationships begin with respect for each other's feelings, priorities, values, and ways of engaging with the world. They deepen over time as two people come to appreciate and trust each other.

Strong relationships with babies and young children begin with respectful, welcoming relationships with their families. Knowing a child's family helps an educator to know the child. The family can supply much of the information the educator needs in order to successfully connect with their child. Family members can show an educator what makes their child happy and how they comfort her when she is upset. They can share their cultural practices, values, and beliefs. They can also help the educator appreciate their child's unique personality and ways of approaching new situations, people, and experiences.

When a parent and educator have a good relationship, they can work together to support each other's goals for the child. They can share information and ideas about the child's day-to-day activities, mood, and behavior; work out an approach together when they disagree about what is best for the child; and celebrate together when the child does something wonderful. When a child sees that her family and her educator feel good about each other and that they both feel good about her, she feels safe, secure, and confident.

- **Identify a primary caregiver for each child.** As primary caregiver, an educator can get to know both a child and the child's family well. The family can help build a special bond

between the child and the primary caregiver, who in turn can help the child build relationships with other educators and with other children in the program.

- **Partner with families.** By establishing good communication in both directions (from the family to the educator and from the educator to the family), educators and family members can help each other. An educator can get to know what matters to each family and what their hopes and dreams are for their child. She can learn from them how their baby likes to be held, comforted, introduced to new people and experiences, and what his favorite activities are at home. She can also share with families the behaviors, preferences, and learning experiences their child has in the program. An educator can support each child's connections to family as they say hello and goodbye each day. And help children do special things for their families (for example, showing a new skill or making a simple gift). She can invite each family to bring family photos, songs, and stories into the program and provide all children with culturally meaningful experiences.
- **Get in tune with children.** When an educator and child are *in tune*, they have an emotional connection. An educator and a young baby get in tune as they take turns looking, vocalizing, and smiling in response to each other. An educator and an older infant or toddler get in tune as they engage in play together and as the educator listens intently to what the child wants to say. Even a young baby can sense when an adult is attentive and when he is distracted. An educator can't give every child his full attention every minute, but he can stay aware of her needs and find opportunities to get to know her. As their relationship grows, the two can begin to have *powerful interactions*—interactions in which the educator uses his knowledge and observations to make mutually satisfying connections; then purposefully extends the child's learning as they play together.

### Introduce and View the Video

Invite participants to watch again a segment of the video that focuses on building relationships. Explain that they will see how the educators welcome families and make emotional connections with them, conveying the message that "I will do anything I can to be there for you and your baby."

Begin at the start of the video and end at 4:03, when Kathy says, "Shake, shake." Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:

- *As you watch, what do you notice about how the educators reach out to parents and make them feel welcome, respected, and heard?*
- *What do you notice about the way the educators and children make emotional connections with each other? How can you tell when they are in tune?*

- *What strategies do you notice the educators using to give children a sense of confidence, belonging, and continuity between home and child care?*

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* or *I wonder if...* rather than *I liked...*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

### Group Discussion

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use some of the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

#### *Why is it important for educators of infants and toddlers to build strong relationships with the children's families?*

- It is important because:
  - Families are the primary and enduring supports for children's learning and development.
  - Families know their children best.
  - Knowing a child's family helps an educator to know the child.
  - Families can help educators understand how a child is used to being cared for, the language(s) she is used to hearing, how she is learning to communicate, and the values that are important to her family and in her cultural communities.
  - Families and educators can work together to support each other's goals for the child.
  - A child feels safe, secure, and confident when she sees that her family members and her educator have a positive, trusting relationship.

#### *How can educators reach out to families and make them feel welcome?*

- Educators can:
  - Make child care centers or homes personal, comfortable, and inviting with seating for guests, attractive displays, and a relaxed approach.
  - Invite families to visit any time and to stay as long as they want.

- Offer to visit families in their homes.
- Reach out to families and initiate conversations. (Recognize that some family members may be shy or uncomfortable at first.)
- Share something wonderful about a child with her family, as often as possible.
- Keep families informed about their child's daily activities, preferences, learning discoveries, and significant events or concerns.
- Find out each family's communication preferences (when and how often; by phone, email, etc.) and provide their own contact information. Encourage communication in both directions (family to educator as well as educator to family).
- Display photos and descriptions of children's activities and creations for families to see.
- Invite families to contribute family photos and items to classroom displays.
- Invite families to share words, songs, stories, nursery rhymes, games, and recipes that will remind their children of home.
- Show interest in family members' lives—as individuals and as parents. Find out what matters to them: their needs, worries, and how the program and community might be able to support them.
- Support the child's connections to his family as they say goodbye and hello each day. Recognize and share how much their child loves them and the important roles they are playing in supporting his learning.
- Help children do special things for their families (such as showing a new skill or making a simple gift).

***How can educators get in tune with individual children as they talk and play together?***

***How can they make powerful connections and purposefully support children's learning?***

- Educators can:
  - Watch a child's face and adjust their tone, pace, and facial expressions to hold his interest.
  - Respond to a child's communications and get him to respond to theirs.
  - Match a child's smiles, laughter, or excitement. Mirror his serious focus when he is working hard at something. Offer calming reassurance when he is upset.

- Watch what a child reaches out for, what fascinates him, and who he likes to play with or near. Notice and acknowledge his interest, then help him explore it further.
- Empathize with a child's feelings and put his feelings into words.
- Take cues from a child's family about what a child may want to do, explore, or talk about.
- Give the child full attention. Understand his agenda and find a way to make a connection and support what he is trying to do. Then add something that relates to his goal or activity but will also extend his learning.
- Listen intently to what toddlers have to say and to what they communicate without words. Educators can help toddlers tell their stories by supplying missing words and details and by asking questions to check or further their understanding.

### **View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

### **Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they've learned about building strong relationships and what they do in their own program. Ask educators to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

## **Break (optional)**

**(0–5 minutes)**

## **Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities**

**(15–20 minutes)**

### **Introduce the Best Practice**

For babies and toddlers, everything is a learning opportunity. Unlike adults, young children don't set out to master particular skills or learn a particular subject. They learn through play. Babies and toddlers are drawn to anything that is surprising or that offers them a chance to discover something new. They practice physical skills such as reaching, rolling over, and standing. They experiment with how to make things move, how to fit things together, how to find what they can

no longer see, and how to use tools to reach their goals. As they connect with people, they learn to communicate with gestures, words, and eventually with sentences, questions, and stories.

Trusting relationships, a well-arranged environment, and a daily rhythm that is both flexible and comfortingly familiar enable babies and toddlers to play and learn with confidence. In a calm and orderly setting, they can pursue their own investigations without distracting interruptions. By offering learning opportunities that are stimulating (but not overwhelming), caring adults help babies and toddlers engage in the activities and interactions that shape their rapidly developing brains.

- **Support children's investigations.** Offer children interesting opportunities to explore and investigate. Put out just a few materials at a time to help children focus. Notice what children are trying to do and what holds their interest; then offer support and encouragement. When a child succeeds, share in his delight.
- **Use language to expand learning.** Talk with children about what they are doing. Give them words to go with their discoveries. Share books that introduce new words and concepts, expanding their horizons. With toddlers especially, use language to help them make connections between known and new experiences and between related events or ideas.

### Introduce and View the Video

Tell participants they will watch a video segment that focuses on STEM and language learning. Explain that they will see the educators offer children interesting materials to explore, interesting processes to investigate, and interesting problems to solve. The educators use language to connect with children, invite and encourage their exploration, share their triumphs, and expand their learning.

Begin at 4:02 as Kathy says, "Shake, shake" and watch to the end. Ask participants to look for effective strategies used by the educators in the video. Use these questions to guide their viewing:

- *As you watch, what do you notice about how the educators help children focus?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators support children's investigations and offer encouragement for their efforts and achievements?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators use language to expand children's learning?*

### Partner/Small Group Share

After viewing the video, get participants thinking, talking, and learning together.

- Invite participants to share with each other, in pairs or small groups, what they noticed as they watched. Challenge them to use the language stem *I noticed...* or *I wonder if...* rather than *I liked...*
- Suggest that participants jot down notes, ideas, or questions in their Learning Log.

### Group Discussion

Share and expand on key points covered in the video. Use some of the following questions and talking points in your discussion. Ask participants to offer examples from the video as well as to draw upon their own experiences.

#### *How can educators help babies and toddlers focus as they pursue interesting learning opportunities?*

- Educators can:
  - Make sure that the overall environment is orderly and calm. Reduce background noise, clutter, and visual stimulation, which may be distracting.
  - Provide protected spaces where children can pursue investigations without too much interruption from others.
  - Minimize transitions so children have time to finish what they are doing. When a transition is necessary, give a few minutes' notice so that a child is not taken by surprise when he needs to end an activity.
  - Arrange play materials in an organized way so that children know where to find them and can see and get what they want to use, without being overwhelmed by too many choices.
  - Offer only a few, well-chosen items at a time.
  - Offer just a bit of help when children seem to lose focus.
  - Talk about what they notice children doing.
  - Use a child's name to get her attention and let her know that their talk is meant for her.

#### *How can educators support and encourage babies' and toddlers' investigations?*

- Educators can:
  - Make a connection with a baby or young toddler by playing alongside, imitating what she does, and then doing something new that she can imitate.

- Set up interesting problems for children to solve, such as getting an object that is out of reach or partly or fully hidden, getting things into and out of containers of various sorts, making things “go,” and fitting pieces together.
- Show toddlers how you use tools to accomplish goals and let them use them in their own way.
- Provide just enough help so that a child can have the thrill of solving a challenging problem.
- Talk with children to encourage their efforts and suggest new possibilities. Share the joy of children’s discoveries and their pride in their accomplishments. Use specific words and an encouraging or appreciative tone. (“Wow! You made the ball go really fast down that steep ramp!”)

***How can educators use language to expand learning for babies and for toddlers?***

- Educators can:
  - Use “I noticed” statements to talk with children about what they are doing.
  - Use “I wonder” statements to provoke children’s thinking.
  - Talk about the tools and materials children are exploring and the strategies they might use to try to solve problems they encounter.
  - Share songs and rhymes; make up songs about what children are doing or what they have learned.
  - Talk with children, back and forth, responding to what they say and giving them time to respond with words, sounds, or actions.
  - Share books with children in ways that engage their active participation. Talk about the pictures as well as the story. Encourage children to point to and name pictures, make sound effects, repeat words and phrases, and ask questions. Help them connect things in the book to their own experiences.
  - Tell children stories and give them more information about things they show interest in.
  - Use specific, interesting words in conversations with older infants and toddlers, for example, delicious, daffodil, ramp, smaller, wood shavings, and collected.
  - Talk with toddlers about what they remember, plan to do, think may happen, or imagine.
  - Help older infants and toddlers to tell their own stories about something that happened. Listen intently. Use questions, prompts, and nonverbal responses to show interest and better understand what happened.



- Ask toddlers questions that make them think or explain their thinking.
- Use language to direct toddlers' attention to something that is happening and to help them make connections between steps in a process.
- Talk with a child in their native language (or in other languages they speak fluently), where they naturally use a lot of interesting words. Talk with a child in his home language too, if possible. Babies and toddlers can learn multiple languages and gain many benefits from doing so.
- Talk with children all the time! The more language they hear and respond to, the stronger their language will grow.

### ***What makes “I noticed” and “I wonder” statements good conversation starters?***

- They are good conversation starters because:
  - “I noticed” statements help to make a connection. They reflect your focus on what the person you want to talk with is doing or on what you are looking at or doing together.
  - “I noticed” statements open the door to understanding the other person's perspective. They help speakers avoid interpretations (that might be off base) and judgments (that might be argument starters or conversation enders).
  - “I wonder” statements invite two people to think and wonder together.

### **View Again (optional)**

Emphasize the key messages by showing the video a second time, if possible. Seeing the video again will give participants an opportunity to notice things they may have missed and to expand their learning.

### **Reflect**

Help participants make the connection between what they've learned about offering children engaging learning opportunities, supporting their investigations, and using language to expand their learning and what they do in their own program. Ask educators to answer the reflection questions in the Learning Log.

### **Try It**

**(15 minutes)**

The Try It activity helps educators think about how to apply new ideas to their own programs. Direct participants' attention to the Try It handout.

**Make a Friend**

Educators will use language to make connections, build and deepen relationships, and expand learning.

- Provide each participant with several pipe cleaners or with a paper lunch bag and colored markers.
- Give participants a few minutes to “make a friend” (that is, a puppet, animal, creature, or doll) and to play with their pretend friend.
- Ask participants to notice what those around them are doing as they play and to wonder how their pretend friends might play together. Have participants find someone whose pretend friend they think their pretend friend would like to play with.
- Have participants introduce their pretend friend to another participant and his pretend friend. Encourage them to help their pretend friends talk and play together.
- After a few minutes, ask participants to reflect together:
  - How did you decide who your pretend friend might like to play with?
  - How did you make a connection with each other and begin a conversation?
  - How did you help your pretend friends connect?
  - Did you use any “I noticed” or “I wonder” statements in your conversations and play?
- As a group, discuss:
  - How might strategies that participants practiced throughout this training, such as observing closely, looking again, and using “I noticed” and “I wonder” statements, help them connect with parents and children?

**Wrap Up****(5–10 minutes)**

- Give participants an opportunity to share something they noticed or wondered about as they watched the segments of the video or participated in the Try It activity. Address any questions that arise, as well as questions in the “parking lot” that would add to the group’s experience.
- Invite participants to complete the second half of the “Self-Assessment” and then measure their growth and learning.
- Ask participants to look over their notes from the training and jot down three things that they want to remember from today in their Learning Log.

- Invite partners or small groups to meet and share their three “keepers.” Then ask a few participants to share their “keepers” with the larger group.
- Thank participants for attending. Remind them to revisit the video or get activity ideas at Resources for Early Learning: <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/>
- Encourage them to fill out and return the Training Evaluation.

## Glossary

**getting in tune:** making an emotional connection with a child; paying full attention to her verbal communications and nonverbal signals and responding in ways that strengthen your relationship; also known as *synchrony*

**powerful interaction:** an interchange between an educator and a child in which the educator uses what she knows and observes about a child to make an emotional connection and purposefully extend the child's learning

**primary caregiver:** the educator who has primary responsibility for a particular baby, builds an enduring relationship with him and his family, and can help him connect with others in the program

**STEM:** science, technology, engineering, and mathematics as interrelated areas of learning; for babies and toddlers, STEM means learning how the world works and developing concepts like cause/effect, space and time, how much and how many, order and sequence, and how to use tools and strategies to accomplish a goal

**whole-child approach:** providing learning opportunities that support children's development and their pursuit of their own learning agendas, rather than teaching particular subject matter; focusing on a child's interests, feelings, and physical, social, and emotional development along with his cognitive and language skills



## Self-Assessment

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Before the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your current comfort level.

**After the training:** Place a ✓ in the box that best represents your new comfort level.

1 = Very uncomfortable 2 = Uncomfortable 3 = Neutral 4 = Comfortable 5 = Very comfortable

	Before					After				
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
<b>General</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Respect families as the people who know their children best and are the primary supports for their children’s learning and development.										
Understand how babies and toddlers develop and learn and how families and educators can support their learning.										
<b>Build Strong Relationships</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Partner with families to support their children’s well-being, development, and learning.										
Get to know children as individuals, with the help of their families.										
Make emotional connections with children as we talk and play together.										
Give children a sense of confidence, belonging, and continuity between home and child care.										
<b>Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities</b> I am comfortable with my ability to . . .										
Offer children interesting materials, objects, and processes to explore.										
Help children focus and support their investigations.										
Use language to expand children’s learning.										
Use “I noticed” and “I wonder” statements as I talk with a baby’s or toddler’s family or with a colleague about how we understand his behavior and support his development.										
Stay curious. Continue to reflect on my practice and seek out new knowledge and ideas.										



# Learning Log

## Build Strong Relationships

### View

In the video:

- *What do you notice about how the educators reach out to parents and make them feel welcome, respected, and heard?*
- *What do you notice about the way the educators and children make emotional connections with each other? How can you tell when they are in tune?*
- *What strategies do you notice the educators using to give children a sense of confidence, belonging, and continuity between home and child care?*

### Reflect

In your program:

- *How do you build strong relationships with families?*
- *How do you build strong relationships with children?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

### Notes

### Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities

#### View

In the video:

- *What do you notice about how the educators help children focus?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators support children's investigations and offer encouragement for their efforts and achievements?*
- *What do you notice about how the educators use language to expand children's learning?*

#### Reflect

In your program:

- *What learning opportunities do you offer that children find especially engaging?*
- *How do you help children focus, support their investigations, and use language to extend their learning?*
- *What did you learn that you will take back to your learning environment and put into practice?*

#### Notes

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## Try It

### Make a Friend

**Use language to make connections, deepen relationships, and expand learning.**

1. Use the materials provided to make a pretend friend—a puppet, animal, creature, or doll—and play with your pretend friend, speaking to and/or for her.
2. Notice what others around you are doing as they play with their pretend friends. Find someone whose pretend friend you think your pretend friend would like to play with.
3. Introduce your pretend friend to another participant and his pretend friend. Together, help your pretend friends start a conversation and play and talk with each other.
4. After a few minutes, reflect together:
  - *How did you decide who your pretend friend might like to play with?*
  - *How did you make a connection with each other and begin a conversation?*
  - *How did you help your pretend friends connect?*
  - *Did you use any “I noticed” or “I wonder” statements in your conversations and play?*
5. Discuss as a group: *How might strategies that you practiced throughout this training, such as observing closely, looking again, and using “I noticed” and “I wonder” statements help you connect with parents and children?*



## Best Practices

Caring relationships with adults provide the essential support for all areas of a child's development. They nurture the roots of language, literacy, and STEM, like rich soil nourishes a plant. When family members and early educators provide infants and toddlers with dependable relationships, love, back-and-forth play, and learning opportunities, they grow and thrive.

Infants and toddlers develop language through back-and-forth conversations that build on their natural curiosity and their desire to connect with the people they care about and who understand and care about them. Children learn through play—with their bodies, with objects and materials in the world around them, and with people. As they play with objects and materials and try to make interesting things happen, they explore concepts that are fundamental to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). They also learn how objects, materials, and living things behave and how they can relate to one another in the world.

By offering intriguing challenges, supporting children's thinking, and sharing in their excitement and discoveries, adults help prepare children to be good readers and writers as well as logical and creative thinkers. Together, these activities and conditions help build children's vocabulary, language, love of books and stories, and ability to ask questions and make connections.

## Build Strong Relationships

Strong relationships develop through shared experiences that build emotional connections, security, and trust. These relationships begin with respect for each other's feelings, priorities, values, and ways of engaging with the world. They deepen over time as two people come to appreciate and trust each other.

Strong relationships with babies and young children begin with respectful, welcoming relationships with their families. Knowing a child's family helps an educator to know the child. The family can supply much of the information the educator needs in order to successfully connect with their child. Family members can show an educator what makes their child happy and how they comfort her when she is upset. They can share their cultural practices, values, and beliefs. They can also help the educator appreciate their child's unique personality and ways of approaching new situations, people, and experiences.

When a parent and educator have a good relationship, they can work together to support each other's goals for the child. They can share information and ideas about the child's day-to-day activities, mood, and behavior; work out an approach together when they disagree about what is best for the child; and celebrate together when the child does something wonderful. When a



child sees that her family and her educator feel good about each other and that they both feel good about her, she feels safe, secure, and confident.

- **Identify a primary caregiver for each child.** As primary caregiver, an educator can get to know both a child and the child's family well. The family can help build a special bond between the child and the primary caregiver, who in turn can help the child build relationships with other educators and with other children in the program.
- **Partner with families.** By establishing good communication in both directions (from the family to the educator and from the educator to the family), educators and family members can help each other. An educator can get to know what matters to each family and what their hopes and dreams are for their child. She can learn from them how their baby likes to be held, comforted, introduced to new people and experiences, and what his favorite activities are at home. She can also share with families the behaviors, preferences, and learning experiences their child has in the program. An educator can invite each family to bring family photos, songs, and stories into the program and provide all children with culturally meaningful experiences. She can help children do special things for their families (for example, showing a new skill or making a simple gift) and support each child's connections to family as they say hello and goodbye each day.
- **Get in tune with children.** When an educator and child are *in tune*, they have an emotional connection. An educator and a young baby get in tune as they take turns looking, vocalizing, and smiling in response to each other. An educator and an older infant or toddler get in tune as they engage in play together and as the educator listens intently to what the child wants to say. Even a young baby can sense when an adult is attentive and when he is distracted. An educator can't give every child his full attention every minute, but he can stay aware of her needs and find opportunities to get to know her. As their relationship grows, the two can begin to have *powerful interactions*—interactions in which the educator uses his knowledge and observations to make mutually satisfying connections; then purposefully extends the child's learning as they play together.

### Why is it important for educators of infants and toddlers to build strong relationships with the children's families?

- It is important because:
  - Families are the primary and enduring supports for children's learning and development.
  - Families know their children best.
  - Knowing a child's family helps an educator to know the child.

- Families can help educators understand how a child is used to being cared for, the language(s) she is used to hearing, how she is learning to communicate, and the values that are important to her family and in her cultural communities.
- Families and educators can work together to support each other's goals for the child.
- A child feels safe, secure, and confident when she sees that her family members and her educator have a positive, trusting relationship.

### **How can educators reach out to families and make them feel welcome?**

- Educators can:
  - Make child care centers or homes personal, comfortable, and inviting with seating for guests, attractive displays, and a relaxed approach.
  - Invite families to visit any time and to stay as long as they want.
  - Offer to visit families in their homes.
  - Reach out to families and initiate conversations. (Recognize that some family members may be shy or uncomfortable at first.)
  - Share something wonderful about a child with her family, as often as possible.
  - Keep families informed about their child's daily activities, preferences, learning discoveries, and significant events or concerns.
  - Find out each family's communication preferences (when and how often; by phone, email, etc.) and provide their own contact information. Encourage communication in both directions (family to educator as well as educator to family).
  - Display photos and descriptions of children's activities and creations for families to see.
  - Invite families to contribute family photos and artifacts to classroom displays.
  - Invite families to share words, songs, stories, nursery rhymes, games, and recipes that will remind their children of home.
  - Show interest in family members' lives—as individuals and as parents. Find out what matters to them: their needs, worries, and how the program and community might be able to support them.

- Support the child's connections to his family as they say goodbye and hello each day. Recognize and share how much their child loves them and the important roles they are playing in supporting his learning.
- Help children do special things for their families (such as showing a new skill or making a simple gift).

### **How can educators get in tune with individual children as they talk and play together? How can they make powerful connections and purposefully support children's learning?**

- Educators can:
  - Watch a child's face and adjust their tone, pace, and facial expressions to hold his interest.
  - Respond to a child's communications and get him to respond to theirs.
  - Match a child's smiles, laughter, or excitement. Mirror his serious focus when he is working hard at something. Offer calming reassurance when he is upset.
  - Watch what a child reaches out for, what fascinates him, and who he likes to play with or near. Notice and acknowledge his interest, then help him explore it further.
  - Empathize with a child's feelings and put his feelings into words.
  - Take cues from a child's family about what a child may want to do, explore, or talk about.
  - Give the child full attention. Understand his agenda and find a way to make a connection and support what he is trying to do. Then add something that relates to his goal or activity but will also extend his learning.
  - Listen intently to what toddlers have to say and to what they communicate without words. Educators can help toddlers tell their stories by supplying missing words and details and by asking questions to check or further their understanding.

### **Offer Interesting Learning Opportunities**

For babies and toddlers, everything is a learning opportunity. Unlike adults, young children don't set out to master particular skills or learn a particular subject. They learn through play. Babies and toddlers are drawn to anything that is surprising or that offers them a chance to discover something new. They practice physical skills such as reaching, rolling over, and standing. They

experiment with how to make things move, how to fit things together, how to find what they can no longer see, and how to use tools to reach their goals. As they connect with people, they learn to communicate with gestures, words, and eventually with sentences, questions, and stories.

Trusting relationships, a well-arranged environment, and a daily rhythm that is both flexible and comfortingly familiar enable babies and toddlers to play and learn with confidence. In a calm and orderly setting, they can pursue their own investigations without distracting interruptions. By offering learning opportunities that are stimulating (but not overwhelming), caring adults help babies and toddlers engage in the activities and interactions that shape their rapidly developing brains.

- **Support children's investigations.** Offer children interesting opportunities to explore and investigate. Put out just a few materials at a time to help children focus. Notice what children are trying to do and what holds their interest; then offer support and encouragement. When a child succeeds, share in his delight.
- **Use language to expand learning.** Talk with children about what they are doing. Give them words to go with their discoveries. Share books that introduce new words and concepts, expanding their horizons. With toddlers especially, use language to help them make connections between known and new experiences and between related events or ideas.

### How can educators help babies and toddlers focus as they pursue interesting learning opportunities?

- Educators can:
  - Make sure that the overall environment is orderly and calm. Reduce background noise, clutter, and visual stimulation, which may be distracting.
  - Provide protected spaces where children can pursue investigations without too much interruption from others.
  - Minimize transitions so children have time to finish what they are doing. When a transition is necessary, give a few minutes' notice so that a child is not taken by surprise when he needs to end an activity.
  - Arrange play materials in an organized way so that children know where to find them and can see and get what they want to use, without being overwhelmed by too many choices.
  - Offer only a few, well-chosen items at a time.
  - Offer just a bit of help when children seem to lose focus.
  - Talk about what they notice children doing.

- Use a child's name to get her attention and let her know that their talk is meant for her.

### **How can educators support and encourage babies' and toddlers' investigations?**

- Educators can:
  - Make a connection with a baby or young toddler by playing alongside, imitating what she does, and then doing something new that she can imitate.
  - Set up interesting problems for children to solve, such as getting an object that is out of reach or partly or fully hidden, getting things into and out of containers of various sorts, making things "go," and fitting pieces together.
  - Show toddlers how you use tools to accomplish goals and let them use them in their own way.
  - Provide just enough help so that a child can have the thrill of solving a challenging problem.
  - Talk with children to encourage their efforts and suggest new possibilities. Share the joy of children's discoveries and their pride in their accomplishments. Use specific words and an encouraging or appreciative tone. ("Wow! You made the ball go really fast down that steep ramp!")

### **How can educators use language to expand learning for babies and for toddlers?**

- Educators can:
  - Use "I noticed" statements to talk with children about what they are doing.
  - Use "I wonder" statements to provoke children's thinking.
  - Talk about the tools and materials children are exploring and the strategies they might use to try to solve problems they encounter.
  - Share songs and rhymes; make up songs about what children are doing or what they have learned.
  - Talk with children, back and forth, responding to what they say and giving them time to respond with words, sounds, or actions.
  - Share books with children in ways that engage their active participation. Talk about the pictures as well as the story. Encourage children to point to and name

## Best Practices (CONTINUED)

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pictures, make sound effects, repeat words and phrases, and ask questions. Help them connect things in the book to their own experiences.

- Tell children stories and give them more information about things they show interest in.
- Use specific, interesting words in conversations with older infants and toddlers, for example, delicious, daffodil, ramp, smaller, wood shavings, and collected.
- Talk with toddlers about what they remember, plan to do, think may happen, or imagine.
- Help older infants and toddlers to tell their own stories about something that happened. Listen intently. Use questions, prompts, and nonverbal responses to show interest and better understand what happened.
- Ask toddlers questions that make them think or explain their thinking.
- Use language to direct toddlers' attention to something that is happening and to help them make connections between steps in a process.
- Talk with a child in their native language (or in other languages they speak fluently), where they naturally use a lot of interesting words. Talk with a child in his home language too, if possible. Babies and toddlers can learn multiple languages and gain many benefits from doing so.
- Talk with children all the time! The more language they hear and respond to, the stronger their language will grow.

### **What makes “I noticed” and “I wonder” statements good conversation starters?**

- They are good conversation starters because:
  - “I noticed” statements help to make a connection. They reflect your focus on what the person you want to talk with is doing or on what you are looking at or doing together.
  - “I noticed” statements open the door to understanding the other person's perspective. They help speakers avoid interpretations (that might be off base) and judgments (that might be argument starters or conversation ends).
  - “I wonder” statements invite two people to think and wonder together.

## Glossary

**getting in tune:** making an emotional connection with a child; paying full attention to her verbal communications and nonverbal signals and responding in ways that strengthen your relationship; also known as *synchrony*

**powerful interaction:** an interchange between an educator and a child in which the educator uses what she knows and observes about a child to make an emotional connection and purposefully extend the child's learning

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**whole-child approach:** providing learning opportunities that support children's development and their pursuit of their own learning agendas, rather than teaching particular subject matter; focusing on a child's interests, feelings, and physical, social, and emotional development along with his cognitive and language skills

View the self-paced video workshop at <http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators>.



# Learning Guidelines and Standards

This professional development module is aligned to Massachusetts learning guidelines and standards.

## Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers

**This module highlights the Guiding Principles that provide the foundation for the Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers:**

- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support for the development of the child.
- Learning is embedded in the child's culture. Young children learn best through a comprehensive, whole-child approach integrated in culturally meaningful experiences.
- Nurturing, respectful, and responsive relationships are essential for healthy growth and development, providing a context for learning.
- Each child develops at an individual rate and has a personal approach to learning.
- Rich, responsive language experiences, in the family's home language when possible, prime children for later academic success.
- Play is the foundation of early learning.
- Learning in each domain is interconnected.
- Informed, reflective, curious adults can support and respond to the infant and toddler's rapidly changing needs and development.

This module showcases interactions among educators, infants and toddlers, and family members that support children's development in the interrelated domains of social-emotional development, language and communication development, cognitive development, physical health and well-being, and approaches to learning. However, this module does not go into depth on specific guidelines within these domains.



### Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

#### Center and School Based:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1A: Curriculum, Assessment, and Diversity: Level 2**  
Materials that promote cultural and individual identity, family relations, cultural appreciation, and cognitive and social development are integrated into the curriculum and children's everyday experiences.
- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**  
All staff complete orientation, participate in ongoing formal professional development, and receive supervision in how to develop and maintain positive relationships through positive, warm, and nurturing interactions.

#### Family Child Care:

- **Curriculum and Learning 1B: Teacher-Child Relationships and Interactions: Level 2**  
Educator has participated in formal professional development on how to support positive relationships and interactions with children through positive, warm and nurturing interactions.



BRAIN BUILDING IN PROGRESS

Resources for Early Learning

The Roots of Early Learning

## Resources for Further Learning

Find more information on supporting young children's early learning.

Bardige, Betty and Bardige, M. Kori. (September 2008.) Talk to Me, Baby: Supporting Language Development in the First Three Years. *Zero to Three*, pp. 4–10.

[http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/29-1\\_Bardige.pdf?docID=6641](http://main.zerotothree.org/site/DocServer/29-1_Bardige.pdf?docID=6641)

Introduction to the Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers. (November 2010). In *Massachusetts Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers*, pp. 4–12.

[http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Workforce\\_Dev/Layout.pdf](http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/Workforce_Dev/Layout.pdf)

Lally, J. Ronald. *The Art and Science of Child Care*. The Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC).

[http://www.pitc.org/cs/pitclib/download/pitc\\_res/151/04\\_The\\_Art\\_and\\_Science\\_of\\_Child\\_Care.pdf?x-r=pcfile\\_d](http://www.pitc.org/cs/pitclib/download/pitc_res/151/04_The_Art_and_Science_of_Child_Care.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d)

National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness. *Code Switching: Why It Matters and How to Respond*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start.

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/docs/code-switching.pdf>

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Simulation. Online, interactive simulation of a first meeting between a family and an early educator. Head Start National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement.

[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce\\_simulation](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/center/pfce_simulation)

Powerful Interactions

<http://www.powerfulinteractions.com>



# Training Evaluation

Thank you for your participation. This evaluation is designed to evaluate what you have learned at this training. Please take the time to complete the evaluation by rating each question “1” through “4” with “4” being the highest.

Training: \_\_\_\_\_

Presenter: \_\_\_\_\_

	1	2	3	4
Did the presenter identify the learning goals at the start of the training?				
Were the learning goals met?				
Did the material presented meet your needs and expectations?				
Was there time for discussion and questions and answers?				
Were the handouts current and relevant?				
Was the presenter knowledgeable and able to answer relevant questions?				
Did the presenter make use of different learning modalities (audio, visual, etc.?)				

What did you learn that you will be able to apply to your work?