Social and Emotional Development

Foundations for Learning in Preschool

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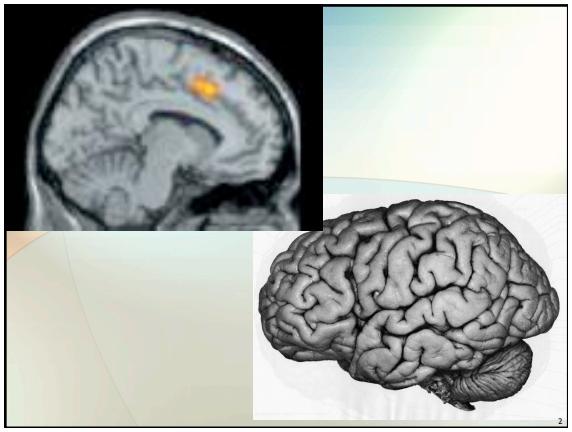

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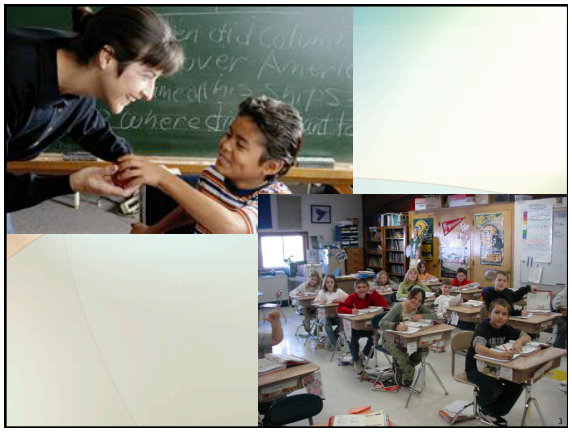

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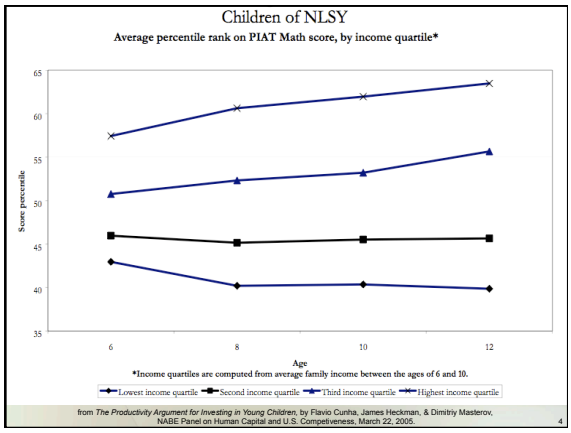
Children of NLSY
Average percentile rank on PIAT Math score, by income quartile*
Score percentile
65
60
55
50
45
40
35
6
8
10
12
Age
*Income quartiles are computed from average family income between the ages of 6 and 10.
Lowest income quartile
Second income quartile
Third income quartile
Highest income quartile
from The Productivity Argument for Investing in Young Children, by Flavio Cunha, James Heckman, & Dimitriy Masterov, NABE Panel on Human Capital and U.S. Competiveness, March 22, 2005.
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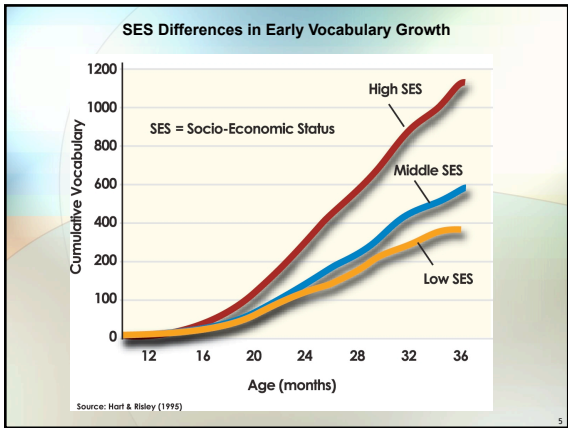
SES Differences in Early Vocabulary Growth
Cumulative Vocabulary
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
100
0
SES = Socio-Economic Status
High SES
Middle SES
Low SES
12
16
20
24
28
32
36
Age (months)
Source: Hart & Risley (1995)
5


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Social and emotional problems can impair early learning and competence

- Roughly 10% of children in kindergarten show disruptive emotional or behavioral problems. For low-income children, the prevalence is double or triple this estimate.
- Head Start teachers report that their children exhibit signs of serious emotional distress, including depression, withdrawal, and problems with aggression and antisocial behavior.
- Early childhood mental health disorders like depression, PTSD, and conduct disorders are being identified as early as age 2 and at surprisingly high prevalence.
- Children who are disruptive, have emotional or behavioral problems, or are absent do not succeed academically.

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Developmental neuroscience, developmental psychology, and educational efforts to close the achievement gap are yielding a common focus on development in the early years

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Social and Emotional Development

- The developing brain
- Stress, brain development, and social and emotional growth
- Development of:
  - Self-regulation
  - Cooperation and responsibility
  - Peer relationships
  - Relationships with teachers

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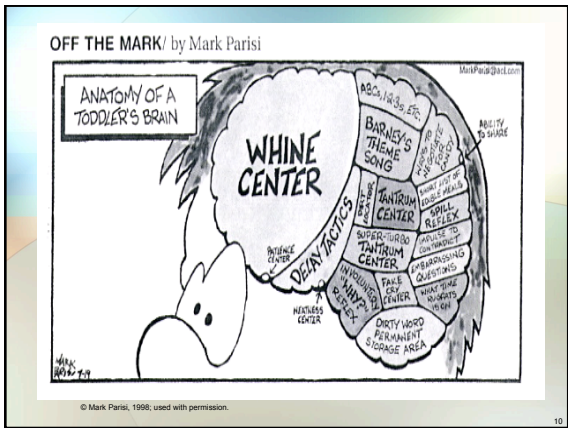

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Brain development is life-long, but *how* it develops changes over time

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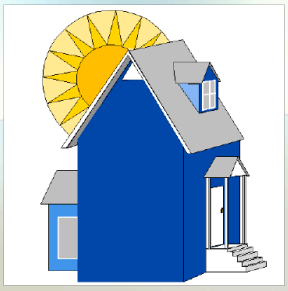

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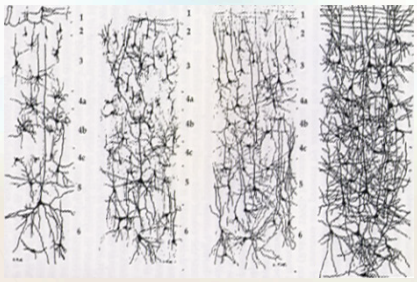
Brain Growth in the Early Months



newborn 1 month 3 months 6 months

from *Postnatal Development of the Human Cerebral Cortex*, Vols. 1-8 (1939-1967) by J. L. Conel, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

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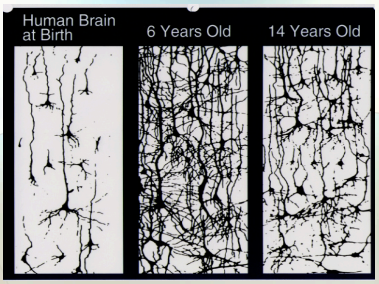
Brain Growth in the Years that Follow



from *Rethinking the Brain* (1997) by Rima Shore, New York: Families and Work Institute; figures provided by H. T. Chugani

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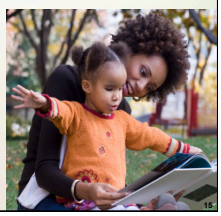
Experiences - positive and negative - are incorporated into the developing brain architecture

- Common human experiences
- Unique personal experiences
- Abusive, traumatic experiences



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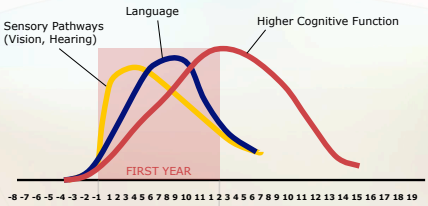
Human Brain Development

Synapse Formation Dependent on Early Experiences



Source: C. Nelson (2000)

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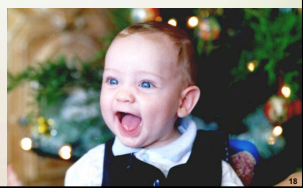
The developing young mind is remarkably active, capable, and self-organizing

Knowledge grows through the brain's activity in response to events that elicit interest and attention -- not through passive instruction

Cognitive, social, and emotional development are deeply interdependent in the early years

Emotional health and social competence are a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities



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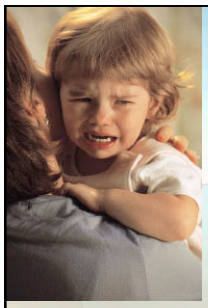

Early childhood stress influences developing brain architecture

Chronic, severe, and/or uncontrollable stressful experiences ("toxic stress") and can lead to stress management systems that respond at lower thresholds, and may impair learning and memory

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But what is stress?

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Positive Stress

- Moderate, short-lived stress responses cause brief increases in heart rate and mild changes in stress hormone levels.
- Causes might be the challenges of meeting new people, dealing with frustration, getting an immunization, or adult limit-setting.
- An important and necessary aspect of healthy development that occurs in the context of stable and supportive relationships.

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Tolerable Stress

- Stress responses that could disrupt brain architecture, but are buffered by supportive relationships that facilitate adaptive coping.
- Causes might be the death or serious illness of a loved one, a frightening injury, parent divorce, terrorism, a natural disaster, or homelessness.
- Generally occurs within a time-limited period, which gives the brain an opportunity to recover from potentially damaging effects.

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Toxic Stress

- Strong and prolonged activation of the body's stress management systems in the absence of the supportive protection of adult support.
- Causes might be extreme poverty, physical or emotional abuse, chronic and serious neglect, enduring maternal depression, substance abuse, family violence.
- Disrupts brain architecture and can lead to stress management systems that respond at relatively lower thresholds, thus increasing the risk of stress-related physical and mental illness.

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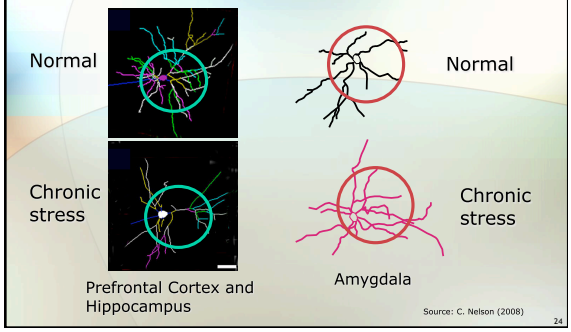
Persistent Stress Changes Brain Architecture



Source: C. Nelson (2008)

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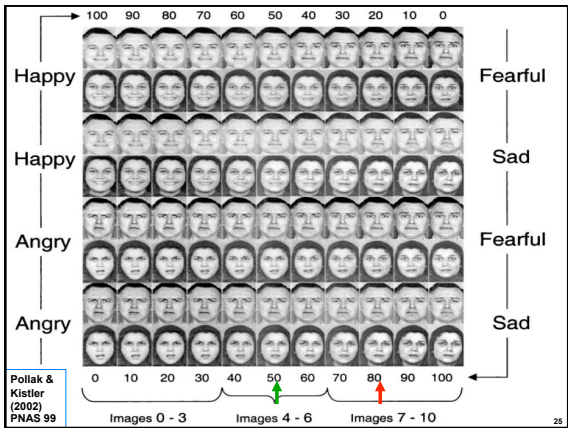

Early childhood mental health is vulnerable to stress

- Early signs of depression, PTSD, conduct disorders, anxiety disorders, ADHD in children as young as two, possibly earlier
- Vulnerability associated with: family disruption and parental mental health difficulties; socioeconomic distress; temperamental vulnerability is also important
- These children are often first identified in early childhood programs as emotionally dysregulated and disruptive (expulsion findings)
- These children are at risk for academic failure

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Questions ?
Comments ?

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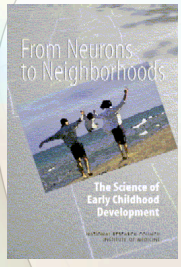
Self-Regulation



"The growth of self-regulation is a cornerstone of early childhood development that cuts across all domains of behavior."

From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development

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2.0 Self-Regulation	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.1 Need adult guidance in managing their attention, feelings, and impulses and show some effort at self-control.	2.1 Regulate their attention, thoughts, feelings, and impulses more consistently, although adult guidance is sometimes necessary.
Children follow simple rules and routines, seek to cooperate, manage classroom transitions, and make efforts at self-control (such as self-soothing and waiting) with adult guidance. Children also easily lose control of their attention, feelings, and behavior.	*Children anticipate routines, cooperate with fewer reminders, can focus attention on the task at hand, and manage transitions. They are more capable of emotional and behavioral self-regulation but sometimes require adult guidance.*

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Self-regulation consists of . . .

- Inhibition: the ability to resist a strong inclination to do one thing and instead do what is most appropriate or needed
- Working memory: holding information in mind while mentally working with it (such as remembering a goal while acting on it)
- Cognitive flexibility: being able to switch perspective, attention, or mental focus (such as taking into account another's perspective)
- Together, these are also called executive functions, and they affect social, emotional, and cognitive ability
- These skills develop over an extended time – from infancy through early adulthood
- These skills are based on the maturing brain

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Development of self-regulation . . .

At child care, what must you do to go outside when it's raining . . . ?

- Finish your activity
- Put things away
- Go to your cubby and put on your rain gear
  - Take off your shoes
    - Sit down on floor
    - Pull off shoes and put on boots
    - Stand up
  - Put on hat and coat
- Join other children and teacher at the door

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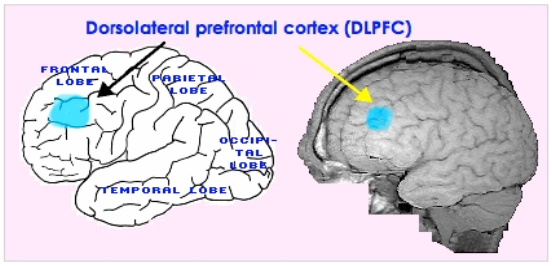

Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex

- Contributes to planning and executing event sequences
- Long developmental timetable: matures throughout childhood and adolescence

from *Brain Basics for Early Childhood Educators* by Megan R. Gunnar, Institute of Child Development, University of Minnesota.

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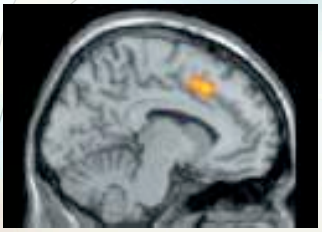
Development of self-regulation . . .

Say the color of these words in columns as fast as you can:

Green	Yellow	Blue	Green
Red	Blue	Yellow	Yellow
Blue	Yellow	Red	Green

33



Anterior cingulate

- Helps people inhibit a dominant response in favor of a secondary, subdominant response (inhibition)
- Has an extended developmental timetable: roughly 12 months to 25 years!

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More on self-regulation . . .

- Stress impairs self-regulation
- Young children who are most economically disadvantaged also show greatest problems with self-regulation
- Self-regulatory problems are most often identified by kindergarten teachers as what children lack when they are not ready for school
- Cultural expectations significantly influence the growth of self-regulation in children

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How do we help young children develop self-regulation?

- Developmentally appropriate expectations (are young children *capable* of the self-control we expect of them?)
- Tell children what *to do* – not what *not* to do
- Plan for transitions
- Help break up complex behaviors into smaller parts, and structure their memory for what to do
- Help children use words to regulate their actions and thinking
- Model emotional self-control, attentional focus, consideration for others
- Create a predictable but flexible daily schedule that encourages self-control by balancing active with quite periods, individual with group activities, and provides opportunities for a "time-out"

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Please talk to the people near you . . .

What are the implications of what we have learned for . . .

- teachers?
- children?
- parents?

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Cooperation and Responsibility

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4.0 Cooperation and Responsibility	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
4.1 Seek to cooperate with adult instructions but their capacities for self-control are limited, especially when they are frustrated or upset.	4.1 Have growing capacities for self-control and are motivated to cooperate in order to receive adult approval and think approvingly of themselves.
Children strive to follow adult instructions to maintain a good relationship with the parent or teacher and because of incentives and rules. Children often become dismayed or distressed when corrected. Children have more difficulty complying with instructions when without adult support or when distressed or frustrated.	*Children's cooperation with adult instructions is more reliable because of better capacities for self-control. Children are motivated by adult approval and by a desire to view themselves approvingly for their good conduct, reflecting their acceptance of adult standards for themselves.*

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Early childhood is an important period for learning to be a responsible member of the group.

The growing ability to cooperate is based on . . .

- Developing self-regulatory competence
- Growing self-awareness
- Better working memory for expectations & routines
- Improved social and emotional understanding
- Young children's emotional attachments to parents and teachers
- Cultural values and expectations for young children

These are the foundation for conscience development

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How do we help young children develop skills in cooperation and responsibility?

- Developmentally appropriate expectations (are young children *capable* of the cooperative conduct we expect of them?)
- Move beyond rules to a description of the broader principles behind them (e.g., sharing so everyone can be included)
- Build a classroom community with responsibility for "our room" to which everyone contributes
- Warm, secure relationships as incentives for cooperation
- Model (with words) cooperative, responsible behavior to others
- Encourage children to work out problems together; refer children to each other for assistance
- Use children's positive behavior as a model for others

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Please talk to the people near you . . .

What are the implications of what we have learned for . . .

- teachers?
- children?
- parents?

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Peer Relationships

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2.0 Interactions with Peers	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.1 Interact easily with peers in shared activities that occasionally become cooperative efforts.	2.1 More actively and intentionally cooperate with each other.
Children interact comfortably with one or two playmates, although sociability is still basic. Children sometimes share materials and communicate together, occasionally working cooperatively on a mutual goal or project, especially with adult support.	*Children initiate and participate in more complex, cooperative activity with peers. This may involve working together in groups to achieve a shared goal or communicating about how to share materials so all can use them.*

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2.0 Interactions with Peers (cont'd)	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.2 Participate in simple sequences of pretend play.*	2.2 Create more complex sequences of pretend play that involve planning, coordination of roles, and cooperation.
Children play imaginative, complementary roles (such as parent and child) in pretend play but without much planning or a well-developed story line.	*Children develop longer, more complex pretend play narratives involving a shared script, coordination of child-selected roles, and mutual correction within those roles as they play.*

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2.0 Interactions with Peers (cont'd)	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.3 Seek assistance in resolving peer conflict, especially when disagreements have escalated into physical aggression.	2.3 Negotiate with each other, seeking adult assistance when needed, and increasingly use words to respond to conflict. Disagreements may be expressed with verbal taunting in addition to physical aggression.
Children seek adult help when experiencing conflict with another child. Peer disagreements (such as those regarding the sharing of toys) can escalate into physical aggression, although not as readily as happens with children of younger ages.	*Children can suggest simple conflict resolution strategies as well as respond to adult suggestions for resolving peer disputes. Children may taunt or tease another child rather than hitting and may also retaliate when provoked.*

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3.0 Friendships	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
3.1 Choose to play with one or two special peers whom they identify as friends.	3.1 Friendships are more reciprocal, exclusive, and enduring.
Children play with many peers but also seek the company of one or two specific children whom they identify as friends. Children are more cooperative and share more complex play with friends than with other children.	*Children seek to share activities with special friends who, in return, seek their company. Friends act more positively toward each other but may also experience greater conflict. Children respond with enhanced efforts at conflict resolution.*

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Even young children's peer relationships are surprisingly complex! . . .

- They require unique social and emotional skills
  - Initiation skills
  - Social maintenance skills
  - Managing conflict and aggression
  - Managing play – pretend and otherwise
  - Sharing, assertiveness, caring, status, cooperation
  - Social comparison
  - Emotion regulation skills
  - They require unique kinds of social understanding
  - Social problem-solving
  - Fairness and rights
  - Friendship and understanding friendship

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What about problems in children's peer relationships?

Peer status categories:

- **Popular** (many positives; few negatives)
- **Controversial** (many positives; many negatives)
- **Neglected** (few positives; few negatives)
- **Rejected-aggressive** (few positives; many negatives; characterized by aggressive behavior)
- **Rejected-withdrawn or submissive** (few positives; many negatives; shy and hesitant)
- **Average** (everybody else)

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How do we help young children develop skills in peer relationships?

- Model cooperative, constructive social interaction skills and explain why you are acting this way
- Use your words to help children understand each other, especially when they are in conflict
- Work with children to use and practice conflict negotiation skills
- Praise models of cooperative conduct among children
- Introduce social complexity into children's pretend play stories
- Use books, puppet stories, and discussions to talk about peer interaction and getting along with others
- Coach social skills in children who have peer difficulties, and communicate with parents about these efforts

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Please talk to the people near you . . .

What are the implications of what we have learned for . . .

- teachers?
- children?
- parents?

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Relationships with Teachers

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Social Interaction

1.0 Interactions with Familiar Adults	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
1.1 Interact with familiar adults comfortably and competently, especially in familiar settings.	1.1 Participate in longer and more reciprocal interactions with familiar adults and take greater initiative in social interaction.
Children comfortably interact with familiar adults in play or problem solving, ask questions or communicate about their experiences, cooperate with instructions, or demonstrate skills to the familiar adult, especially in familiar settings.	*Children take increasing initiative in interacting with familiar adults through conversation, suggesting a shared activity or asking for the adult's assistance, and cooperate readily.*

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2.0 Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.1 Seek security and support from their primary teachers and caregivers.	2.1 Take greater initiative in seeking the support of their primary teachers and caregivers.
Children use their primary teachers and caregivers as sources of security and support, especially in challenging circumstances, by obtaining comfort, requesting help, and communicating about feelings.	*Children seek the support of their primary teachers and caregivers, especially when they are in difficult situations, by requesting the adult's help in resolving conflicts with others, initiating cooperative problem solving, or seeking comfort when distressed.*

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2.0 Close Relationships with Teachers and Caregivers (cont'd)	
At around 48 months of age	*At around 60 months of age*
2.2 Contribute to maintaining positive relationships with primary teachers and caregivers.	2.2 Contribute to positive mutual cooperation with primary teachers and caregivers.
Children prefer interacting with their primary teachers and caregivers, choosing them for sharing activities, seeking comfort and assistance, and displaying discoveries or achievements.	*Children demonstrate an awareness of the mutuality of close relationships in their efforts to be helpful, showing interest in the teacher's feelings, preferences, or well-being and sharing personal experiences with the teacher.*

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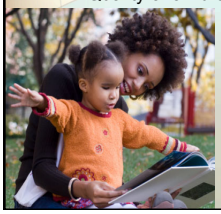
Quality of relationships is critical for young children's readiness to learn in school

- Warmth and support of mother-child relationship predicts later academic and social success in school
- Quality of child care and education (and of relationships with caregivers) predicts later school success and classroom behavior
- Child-teacher relationship and peer relationships contribute to school adjustment



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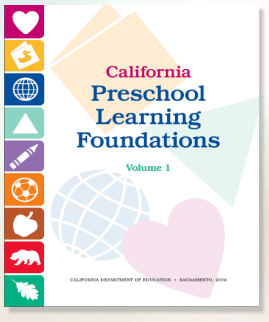
"Although these relationships are not interchangeable, and close relationships outside the home do not diminish the strength of a young child's attachments to the parents, it is apparent that both kinds of relationships are developmentally important."



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In close relationships, adults interpret the psychological world to young children

- security for the child to share experiences, thoughts, and feelings with another
- conversations that clarify the emotions, motives, and thoughts underlying people's behavior
- opportunities for the child to closely observe the reactions of someone they know well
- portrayals of the child's characteristics and abilities
- learning cooperation, sharing, mutual respect
- becoming a member of the culture

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- You didn't like that he was bouncing your guy off the game, and that made you really mad.
- It's hard when you feel so angry. You're going "AAAH, she's bouncing my guy off there!" Right?
- It makes you sad thinking about it, doesn't it?
- You know, after you stopped the game, the other guys said, "You know, Joey wasn't really doing so bad." You thought you were losing, but you weren't.

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How do we help young children develop their relationships with teachers?

- Be part of the child's daily experiences and activities
- Talk with children about their experiences at home and in the classroom, showing interest and asking questions
- Ensure that a special teacher greets the child at the beginning of the day, provides support as necessary, and says good-bye at the day's end
- Applaud the child's accomplishments and provide specific feedback about the child's efforts
- Develop relationships with the child's parents, and be friendly and respectful toward them in the child's presence
- Show respect for and interest in the child's culture

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- parents?

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Thanks!

Comments welcomed:
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