

Title: Classroom Interactions

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Summary

Interactions are the heart of the classroom. While the significance of a high-quality early childhood curriculum is well established, its effectiveness relies heavily on how teachers implement it and engage children to provide meaningful learning opportunities. In a preschool environment, teacher-child interactions play a pivotal role in fostering children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. These interactions are characterised by various indicators, such as teachers' responsiveness to children's needs, warmth, and respect when communicating with them. They serve as key mechanisms through which learning and development are supported. Positive interactions create a space that is supportive and inclusive. Children then feel valued, respected, and feel encouraged to explore and learn through positive interactions.

Classroom interactions does not focus on the content of the activity, it focuses on the ways in which teachers interact with children, how an activity is facilitated that not only engages children meaningfully, and also effectively scaffolds different areas of development. Interactions can be seen as a back-and-forth exchange that supports children emotionally and socially, and also lays the foundation for learning, development, and language acquisition. These exchanges may be verbal, where a teacher scaffolding learning experiences based on their children's individual interests, or a teacher identifying a child who is unsure and sitting at the back of the classroom, inviting the child back to the activity. Interactions can also be teachers engaging children in meaningful conversations, or creating learning opportunities that encourage collaboration with others. Positive interactions are also non-verbal, a teacher may also give a warm embrace to a child who is having a difficult time adjusting to the classroom. A teacher may be a facilitator where children are grouped together to brainstorm together to encourage conversations.

The teacher may also engage children in deep discussions about their thinking, where questions are used to prompt thinking and reasoning, and also encourage children to communicate their thought processes. A sustained back-and-forth exchange not only advances children's thinking, reasoning, and verbal skills, but also increases their capacities such as persistence and motivation in completing difficult tasks, or increasing confidence in their independence. By actively listening to children's ideas, providing guidance, and offering constructive feedback, teachers cultivate a safe and stimulating learning environment that promotes curiosity, creativity, and a love for learning. Effective interactions also help children regulate their behaviour, enabling them to fully participate in classroom activities. Emotionally and behaviorally supportive interactions are essential for helping children feel secure and form close relationships with their

teachers. Such interactions and secure attachments have been found to influence children's self-regulation, learning behaviours, emotion management, and behavioural regulation, ultimately leading to higher participation and positive learning outcomes. Children who feel emotionally supported are observed to explore their environment freely, unafraid to take risks, and demonstrate higher levels of participation in various activity settings.

High-quality classroom interactions are important for children's holistic development. Teachers should provide ample opportunities for children to explore their surroundings, interact with peers, and engage with the teacher. Through warm, consistent, and effective interactions that incorporate the principles of sensitivity, responsiveness, and positive affect, teachers can create a supportive and enriching learning environment conducive to the holistic development of children.

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