

Introduction

Relationships impact children's social and emotional wellbeing and are the foundation for quality early childhood education and care programs. Teachers and educators have a professional responsibility to intentionally work to support and develop deep and trusting relationships with every child.

Partnerships are formed by people who work responsibly together to achieve common goals. Collaborative partnerships involve teachers and educators working with children, families, and other professionals to improve understanding and expectations about children's learning and development.

Guiding principles

- Children's identity, learning, thinking, and development occur when they have consistent, reliable, secure, and predictable relationships with their teachers/educators.
- When adults make decisions that affect children, children have the right to have their opinions considered. This requires adults to listen closely and involve children in decision making. (*Convention of the Rights of the Child, Article 12*)
- To consolidate secure relationships, teachers and educators should value and take time to build relationships with children, their families and education teams.
- When families, teachers and educators work together, they can share information and focus on meeting each child's needs and progressing their development.
- Collaborative partnerships between teachers, educators, and professionals from other disciplines can improve outcomes for children and families.
- Utilise guiding frameworks such as the [Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics](#) (2016), *C&K Inclusion Practice Inclusion and Wellbeing Guide* (2019); *C&K Birth to Three Approach* and *C&K Code of Conduct* (2018) to inform strengthening relationships with children, families, colleagues, and communities.

Teacher/Educator responsibilities

Interactions with children

- Spend time interacting and talking with and listening to every child. Ask children thoughtful and respectful questions about their ideas, likes and dislikes, to better understand them.
- Display delight and enthusiasm in children's attempts and encourage them to succeed when faced with challenges.
- Be 'close', emotionally available and respond sensitively to children's cues, signals and attempts to initiate interactions.
- Support children's secure attachments through consistent and warm interactions that show appropriate affection and are unhurried and predictable.
- Focus on each child's strengths i.e. what they can do now, what they can do when supported and what it could look like in the future.
- Model pro-social behaviours such as sharing, turn-taking, cooperation, initiating interactions and building empathy.
- Help children make sense of and manage their feelings and recognise these same feelings in others. This can assist them to build friendships and respect the rights of others, while being appropriately assertive and caring.
- Promote social justice, equity, and fairness.
- Create physical environments, programs, intentional teaching opportunities and routines that allow the time and resources needed to support children's ideas and positive interactions with others.
- Tailor support for children by acknowledging individual capabilities, temperaments and behaviours.
- Be responsive and watch for signs of children withdrawing or struggling to participate positively in small or large groups. Children who appear independent and do not seek adult help, may need support in building positive relationships with others.
- Ensure all children, including those with disabilities, medical conditions, and diverse learning needs have access to the required resources to grow and develop optimally.
- Be respectful and considered when responding to children's behaviours by maintaining a calm voice and demeanour. Where practical, take a short break if feeling overwhelmed and/or ask a colleague for support. Refer to [Guiding Children's Behaviour Procedure](#).

Interactions with families

- When families are warmly welcomed, they are more likely to feel valued and a sense of belonging. Consider:
 - Is your attitude, manner and approach welcoming to children and families?
 - Are family partnerships evident and embedded in your centre's philosophy, environment, curriculum and everyday practice?

- Do you invite families to contribute to the program, share in children's investigations, interests and discoveries and contribute to decision making about their child's learning?
- Do you consult with families about preferred communication methods e.g. informal interactions at arrival and departure times, emails, online newsletters, Storypark?
- Actively seek family feedback about their child's experiences and learning e.g. Quality Improvement Plan contributions, feedback box and surveys.
- Consult with families regarding the cultural appropriateness of the learning environment.
- Take an interest in what is happening and is important to people in your community and embrace cultural celebrations to learn about each other.
- Honour family diversity by building trusting relationships that respect cultural, spiritual and lifestyle choices, and stand up to actions that erode their rights.
- Carefully consider and support families who may feel isolated, understanding that past experiences may affect a family's ability to contribute to relationships.
- Support parents in their role as primary caregivers. When required, provide families with relevant information regarding support agencies, training, specialists, counselling and/or funding to enable access and participation.
- Branch only - Facilitate formal teacher/educator and parent meetings at least twice per year to share children's progress and discuss, review, and plan goals for future learning.

Interactions with community

- Gain local knowledge (including traditional knowledge) and work collaboratively with the local community.
- Advocate and raise awareness of issues impacting children, families and the education and care sector.
- Utilise the [Australian Early Development Census \(AEDC\)](#) (and other community data) to inform curriculum planning and strengthen local community networks.
- When appropriate, mentor other teachers, educators, students and volunteers.
- Collaborate and build partnerships with local agencies, professionals, and schools to support positive experiences, transitions and outcomes for children and families.
- When available and appropriate, participate in community stakeholder meetings and respect the diverse perspectives and knowledge of other professionals.

Responsibilities of families

- Share relevant information with teachers and educators about your child's experiences, interests, and needs.
- Carefully consider the advice and support of teachers, educators, and other professional partners.
- Branch only - At all times, follow the [C&K Parental Code of Conduct](#). Comply with reasonable staff requests and respect the diversity and differences of other families and staff.
- Branch only - C&K values feedback and encourages families to share any concerns or comments as outlined in [Complaints Management Procedure](#).

Acknowledgements and references

- ACECQA (2016) [Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children](#) and [Building partnerships with families](#)
- Association for Child International, 2018 [Children's Rights and ACEI's Love Me, teach Me campaign](#)
- Commonwealth of Australia [Australian Early Development Census, 2014-2015](#)
- [Early Childhood Australia \(2016\) Code of Ethics](#).
- UN, 1990, Convention- Rights of the Child