

Competency Area:	Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance
Introduction:	<p>The Relationships, Interactions, and Guidance Competency Area describes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are expected of early childhood educators regarding their relationships and communication with young children. Whether children’s development is supported or compromised by their participation in early care and education programs is determined in large part by the quality of their social-emotional experiences in those settings, including their relationships with adults and peers (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000). Developmental and educational research has suggested that efforts to promote children’s school readiness should focus on supporting their social-emotional development as well as their cognitive development. Interactions and guidance are a fundamental part of the learning environments and curricula of early childhood programs (Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning [CSEFEL] 2009 & 2010). Thus, this competency area is closely linked to the Learning Environments and Curriculum Competency Area.</p> <p>This competency area encompasses knowledge about the role of social-emotional development in learning and school readiness; an understanding of the social-emotional factors that may impact children’s behavior; developmentally appropriate expectations for children’s behavior (CDE 2008b) and the ability to apply that knowledge in developing strategies for guidance; and attention to the importance of fostering relationships at all levels—adults with individual children, adults with groups of children, and between or among children and adults with other adults setting examples for children and other family members. This competency area is based on reciprocal relationships between and among the adults in a child’s life and the importance of collaborating for the best interest of the child.</p>
Key Concepts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socialization and guidance are ongoing processes that include a variety of strategies to support children’s learning about appropriate behaviors and problem-solving strategies. ▪ Early childhood educators’ reciprocal relationships with families are key to building relationships with children. ▪ Supportive, consistent, responsive relationships with adults promote children’s development and learning. ▪ Perception of behaviors and expectations for interactions are culturally based. ▪ Positive interactions and guidance help children build competence in solving problems. ▪ Effective guidance is based on developmentally appropriate and individual expectations for children’s behavior. ▪ The most effective strategies are evidence-based, and must be grounded in one’s own approach or guiding principles.
Dispositions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Genuinely interested in, supportive of, and seeks to understand children’s feelings, perceptions, behaviors, and interactions ▪ Aware of and takes responsibility for one’s own feelings, emotions, reactions, and biases ▪ Respects children’s expression of all emotions ▪ Respects family’s role in child’s sense of well-being ▪ Trusts children to try to solve their own problems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understands that all behavior has meaning
Performance Areas:	<p>A. Supporting Children’s Emotional Development</p> <p>B. Social-Emotional Climate</p> <p>C. Socialization and Guidance</p>

A. Supporting Children’s Emotional Development

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Expression of emotions	Uses a variety of terms to describe different children’s emotional experiences. Responds appropriately to children’s expression of emotion and facilitates communication about emotional experiences, as developmentally and culturally appropriate. Models appropriate expression of emotions and understands how adults’ emotions affect children.	Establishes an environment where children and adults feel safe to explore their emotional experiences and to receive support as needed. Incorporates materials that help children identify feelings. Incorporates discussions throughout the day with adults and other children about feelings.	Collaborates with families to create a program environment that supports the emotional experiences of children and adults. Provides resources to colleagues and families about early childhood emotional development, including variability in individual preferences and cultural expectations for the expression of emotion.	Facilitates discussions among early childhood educators, families, policymakers, and other community leaders about the role of emotions in children’s overall development and learning. Provides leadership to a variety of early education settings on understanding and responding to variability in cultural expectations for the expression of emotion.
Empathy	Understands the development of empathy and its importance, and has appropriate expectations for children’s empathic responses and pro-social (or helping) behaviors. Supports children’s developing empathy as developmentally appropriate, providing opportunities for children to	Initiates discussions with staff and families about the development of empathy in young children. Plans opportunities that support children’s understanding of emotions and allow them to respond to the emotions of others, as developmentally appropriate.	Provides professional development opportunities to colleagues and resources to families about the development of empathy in young children, including the distinction between empathic responses and pro-social behaviors.	Keeps current on research related to the development of empathy and makes pertinent information accessible to early childhood educators and families.

	respond to the emotions of others.			
Self-regulation	Understands the importance of consistency, continuity, and responsiveness in supporting children's emotional development. Provides individual attention daily to each child in the group to respond to children's emotional needs.	Organizes the learning environment to reflect the importance of consistency, continuity, and responsiveness in supporting children's emotional development. Understands the importance of stable relationships with adults in the lives of children.	Develops staffing policies to ensure stability and consistency. Provides professional development opportunities to staff and resources to families regarding the critical nature of relationships, attachment, responsiveness, and respect. Works to promote staff retention to ensure continuity for children and families.	Stays informed of evidence-based practices that provide consistency, continuity, and stability to support children's emotional development.
Strategies to support children's emotional development	Demonstrates an understanding that children may show a range of emotions at separation or during transitions. Consistently carries out established routines to support children's daily transitions in and out of the program.	Plans for the transitions of children entering and leaving the program by establishing visitations from infant-toddler programs to preschool programs and preschool programs to kindergarten classrooms. Oversees the day-to-day transitions with sensitivity to individual children's responses to separation or transitions. Works with families and staff to develop ways to support children's transitions.	Provides professional development opportunities to staff and colleagues regarding the ways young children express their feelings about separation and transitions, as well as the importance of supporting families during separations and transitions. Establishes program policies to minimize the number of separations or transitions that children experience and the distress they may experience.	Advocates for and facilitates collaboration between and among early childhood educators and key partners prior to preschool and kindergarten to create smoother transitions for children. Addresses system-wide issues related to transitions such as alignment and partnerships with the K-12 system.
Supporting separation and transitions				

Family supports	Understands that daily occurrences and family and community stress can affect children's emotional development and responds to the needs of individual families as appropriate or refers concerns to other staff. Respects the confidentiality of children and families with regard to stress and other family circumstances.	Plans with colleagues to adapt the program and environment to meet the needs of all children and families. Shares knowledge and resources with families in support of family health and well-being.	Works with families to identify family resources and challenges that may affect children's emotional development. Establishes ties with community agencies that may meet the needs of families in the program. Provides professional development for colleagues and families about the impact of family stress on children's emotional development.	Advocates to and collaborates with early childhood educators, community agencies, policy makers, and funders to create a supportive network for families in a variety of early education settings. Stays current on research on family risk and resilience.
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B. Social-Emotional Climate

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Social-emotional climate	Demonstrates understanding that the social-emotional climate is an important component of the learning environment. Provides a responsive and sensitive social-emotional climate to support the children.	Works with staff and colleagues to plan a positive social-emotional climate in the learning environment based on the individual strengths and interests of the children in the group.	Provides professional development, including reflective supervision and mentor coaching, to staff and colleagues on the contributions of social-emotional climate to the learning environment. Ensures that assessments of program quality include evaluation of the social-emotional climate and include family input.	Collaborates with early childhood educators, families, researchers, policymakers, school systems, and other community leaders to ensure that the crucial role of social-emotional climate in the learning environment is a key consideration in a variety of educational settings throughout the early childhood period.
Positive relationships	Models positive relationships between colleagues and with children and families and encourages children do the same. Describes characteristics of positive relationships between and among early educators, children, and families.	Works with staff, colleagues, and families to support positive relationships among early educators, between early educators and children, and among children. Ensures that each child has developmentally and individually appropriate opportunities to engage meaningfully with adults	Develops program policies and practices that allow early educators to spend quality interaction time with each child. Provides professional development opportunities to staff and colleagues and resources to families about the principles of relationship-based	Stays informed of current research about the importance of relationship-based early childhood practice and collaborative learning environments. Provides guidance to staff and colleagues on the implications and implementation of evidence-based practices.

		and peers.	practice.	
Relationship with nature	Models positive relationship with nature and the outdoors. Ensures daily periods of outdoor play. Describes own interest and connection to nature evidenced outside and communicates that interest among early educators, children, and families.	Reflectively works with teaching colleagues, children, and families to give children and adults the opportunity to experience and develop a relationship with nature. Allow nature play that shares the habitats of outdoor living things. Cultivates caring and nurturing among living things in the outdoor learning environment.	Develops program policies and practices to offer children and adults safe outdoor places for feelings of settled calm and wonder and cultivate children's early experiences in nature in order to establish a foundation for the attachment and compassion that builds feelings of stewardship and sustainability.	Advocate with civic leaders, local parks and recreation departments, and regional parks departments to ensure safe and green neighborhood outdoor spaces for families.
Reflective practice to provide guidance to children	Examines and acknowledges own feelings, comfort, discomfort, and questions about emotions and how they relate to relationships with others.	Leads staff in reflecting on and interpreting children's expressions and emotions and on one's own responses to them.	Regularly engages staff and colleagues in shared reflective practice and can articulate specific examples of children's expressions. Provides staff and colleagues with time and resources for professional development to engage in reflective practice.	Provides resources, support, and leadership to early childhood educators in the use of reflective practices that broaden their understanding of children's expression of emotion and enable them to provide appropriate and effective guidance.

C. Socialization and Guidance

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Strategies for socialization and guidance	Implements, with family input, a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies for socialization and guidance	Plans experiences that incorporate a variety of developmentally appropriate strategies designed to support children's social-emotional development, based on observations of children's behavior and family input.	Facilitates sharing observations of children among appropriate staff and colleagues and facilitates communication with families to ensure that appropriate social-emotional strategies are implemented. Seeks input from outside resources and specialists and shares this information with staff, colleagues, and families.	Collaborates with early childhood educators, representatives from institutions of higher education, and other community leaders to ensure that policies, professional development activities, and systems needed to support social-emotional learning are in place.

<p>Appropriate expectations for behavior</p>	<p>Responds individually to children with consideration for their age, temperament, language, communication, culture, interests, and abilities based on knowledge of child development.</p>	<p>Plans strategies while keeping in mind children's individual interests, temperament, language, communication, and abilities. Determines appropriate sequencing of strategies based on knowledge of child development and the children in the learning environment.</p>	<p>Provides guidance to other adults about individual children's temperaments, skills, language, and communication abilities that contribute to learning and development. Assists staff to reflect on the human development process to maintain a positive perspective on the children. Explains individual and typical development to parents.</p>	<p>Provides leadership in creating an open and safe environment to identify individual abilities and reinforce them as strengths. Stays current of the science of early childhood development and mentors colleagues in the field. Provides professional development opportunities for staff and colleagues on appropriate expectations for behavior and strategies based on an understanding of child development.</p>
<p>Encouraging children's efforts</p>	<p>Acknowledges children's efforts, encourages positive interactions, and recognizes successes to build the children's self-confidence.</p>	<p>Develops concrete strategies and activities to recognize children's efforts by using appropriate language to acknowledge, encourage, and reinforce achievement and success. Explains to families the importance of reinforcing children's self-confidence at home by encouraging children's efforts.</p>	<p>Communicates with families about evidence-based practices to recognize children's efforts for continuous development and to provide successful experiences. Collaborates with staff, colleagues, and families to develop agreements on positive reinforcement strategies.</p>	<p>Synthesizes research and scientific findings to inform early childhood educators about supports for building self-confidence and positive social-emotional development in a variety of early education and community settings.</p>
<p>Challenging behaviors</p>	<p>Implements strategies designed by staff, colleagues, and families to address children's challenging behaviors. Observes and identifies the emotions underlying challenging behaviors. Shares observations appropriately and respects the confidentiality of children and families.</p>	<p>Gathers input from staff, colleagues, and families to inform a greater understanding of children's challenging behaviors and to develop strategies for addressing behavior, including self reflection. Develops, modifies, or adapts schedules, routines, and environment to positively effect challenging behaviors.</p>	<p>Provides professional development opportunities to staff and colleagues and resources to families regarding the use of strategies to respond to challenging behaviors, including behavioral or developmental specialist support, early interventionist, and mental health consultation as necessary.</p>	<p>Provides support and leadership to early childhood educators in the interpretation and response to children's challenging behaviors based on current research. Collaborates with early educators, families, and specialists to incorporate an interdisciplinary approach. Evaluates and addresses the need for behavioral or developmental specialist support and mental health consultation in</p>

				early education programs.
Conflict resolution	Supports children in expressing their emotions and negotiating conflict, as developmentally appropriate. Models appropriate conflict resolution behavior.	Refines and implements developmentally appropriate strategies to support children's ability to express emotions, negotiate conflict, and solve problems. Engages staff, colleagues, children, and families in discussions.	Provides professional development opportunities to staff and colleagues and resources to families about the development of conflict resolution strategies, communication skills, and factors that may influence behavior, in young children.	Provides guidance, support, and leadership to early childhood educators regarding conflict resolution and problem solving strategies among adults and children. Builds awareness of the importance of intentional practices related to conflict resolution and problem solving.

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