



National Association for the Education of Young Children
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Quality Programs Nurture Relationships to Enhance Young Children's Learning

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has developed 10 standards that outline what all preschools, child care centers, kindergartens, and other early childhood education programs should provide to nurture young children. One of the new standards focuses on the relationships that young children develop with adults and other children, which are crucial to early learning and development.

Positive relationships formed through warm, sensitive, and responsive care help children feel valued and gain more from their learning experiences. Children need positive relationships so that they feel comfortable and learn how to cooperate with others. Relationships between teachers and families are also important, and help build environments that nurture children's growth and development.

There are many ways that quality early childhood programs build relationships with children and among adults. When you visit a program, watch how teachers interact with the children, and look for evidence that teachers are fostering positive relationships, such as:

- Classrooms are welcoming to all children, and children are encouraged to join the group.
- Teachers communicate with children in a warm manner, including laughing and showing affection, and respond to their needs. Teachers use a gentle tone of voice with children, and bend down to speak with them at eye level.
- Infants get individual attention from teachers, who communicate with smiles and other nonverbal behavior, and also talk with them, so that infants start to recognize and understand words.
- Teachers provide a balance of group activities and one-on-one activities, to encourage children to develop both group and individual relationships.
- Children have opportunities to play and interact with other children, which helps them build friendships and develop social skills, such as working together and taking turns.
- Teachers and families develop relationships and share information about the children, including family background such as religion and home language.

Quality early childhood programs foster positive relationships – among the children, between children and adults, and among teachers and families – to help children get a great start on learning. To learn more about the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standard on relationships, the NAEYC Accreditation system, and other signs of quality early childhood programs, visit www.rightchoiceforkids.org.