



TURNAROUND  
FOR CHILDREN

# Structuring the Classroom Environment to Support Relationships

**OBJECTIVE:** Educators will be able to structure their classroom environment to support positive developmental relationships.

**PURPOSE:** When educators design relationship-rich environments, it can provide a buffer to stress and students are able to benefit from important developmental and learning opportunities.



## SCIENCE SIGNALS

**Relationships buffer the negative impacts of chronic stress.**

Educators can design environments that are relationship-rich and support healthy development by designing class structures and experiences that promote relationship building as a primary goal.

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## Portrait of Practice

The story below paints a picture of how an educator might use the strategies outlined in this toolkit. As you read the story, notice how Thomas’s teacher structures the classroom environment to build a positive developmental relationship with Thomas.

Mr. Quinn was pleased with the start of his school year. He already observed signs of strong relationships with and among his students. He noticed engaged conversation during group discussions, active participation during morning meeting, and he saw more and more students at lunch and recess talking with a friend. He also was gaining confidence in his knowledge of individual students and their backgrounds, and was starting to proactively plan instruction and culture with their interests in mind.

Unfortunately, these early successes hadn’t translated to Thomas. He rarely volunteered to share or participate, and would often recoil into a blank stare when called on. His attendance was inconsistent, and he often sat alone at lunch and recess. When Mr. Quinn greeted students at the door with high-fives, Thomas would often stare at the floor and try to sneak by without being recognized. Mr. Quinn knew he would have to do more to get to know Thomas, and he started implementing some interventions to support Thomas’s relationship building.

First, he turned to his schedule to find opportunities during the day when he could create time for Thomas. He asked him to be his class “pencil sharpener.” This would require him to bring his breakfast to the classroom while the other students ate in the cafeteria. It would give him 15-20 minutes each day to chat with Thomas while he prepared for the day and Thomas ate and sharpened pencils. At first, he would plan to pick Thomas up in the cafeteria, but he was planning to slowly transition Thomas to walking himself to his class and perhaps giving him more responsibility. Once he and Thomas had a solid connection, he also thought he would start allowing Thomas to select a friend to help.

Next, he thought about how he could support Thomas as he made friends with his peers. He noticed at recess that his students were consistently playing in the same groups. He decided to design a few recess games and projects that encouraged mixed grouping. He noticed Thomas gravitated toward one of the quieter boys in class. He decided to revisit his seating arrangement so that they could be together more often during the day.

Last, Mr. Quinn knew he had to find a way to build Thomas’s confidence. He noticed that he often made little action figures using paper clips, slips of paper, and erasers. He decided to incorporate his creativity by giving students the option to create a diorama to represent a scene from their history unit. He facilitated the activity by modeling and clarifying rules, but then allowed the students to lead while he joined in and prompted positive interpersonal skills. He used Thomas’s action figures as a way to demonstrate how to make the characters, and as he faded his support of his group, he started speaking up and exhibiting confidence.

Thomas didn’t change overnight. But slowly, he started to turn to Mr. Quinn when he needed encouragement or wanted to celebrate an accomplishment. Mr. Quinn noticed an improvement in his attendance, and he was positively interacting with his peers. Mr. Quinn was confident that with time, constant reflection, and a commitment to support Thomas, he could reach new heights. More importantly, his efforts with Thomas had made a better classroom environment for all the students, and he was confident that his relationships would continue to blossom with his entire class.

## Science Grounding

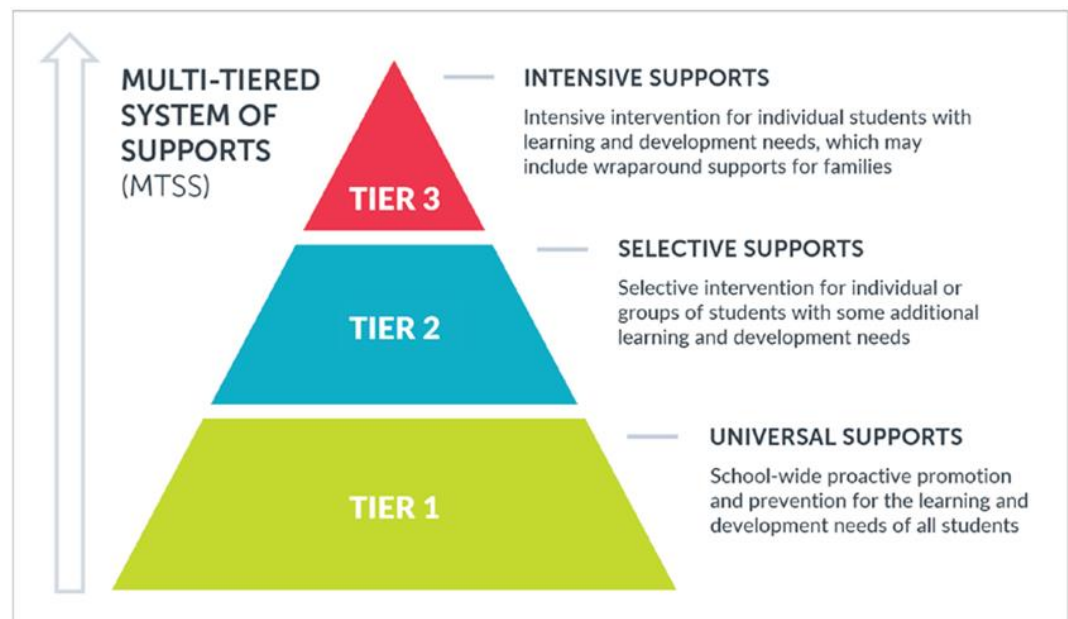
Healthy development begins with the existence of positive relationships. Starting at birth and continuing well into adulthood, strong relationships shape the brain structures necessary for the affective, cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral competencies foundational to learning. Infancy is an especially critical window as research reveals that the patterns between parent and child influence the way the child later interacts with caregivers and teachers. However, because the brain is malleable and children are able to rebuild connections and attachments, the relationship between a child and their caregivers remains important well into adulthood, and can serve as a predictor for positive life outcomes even in the midst of adversity (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019).

Fortunately, the benefits of positive relationships are not exclusive to the parent-child relationship. A warm, consistent and attuned relationship with any adult can support healthy development, and schools can play an invaluable role in fostering the healthy development of students. When schools and classrooms attend to the connectedness of their students and promote emotional safety, support, challenge, and agency, they can play a transformational role in a child's development by mitigating or enhancing the relationships a child experiences at home (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

Although creating opportunities for building relationships is important for all students, students who have experienced adversity may benefit most from these practices. Research consistently shows that students who overcome adversity have at least one positive adult relationship. That relationship can help the student modulate stress reactivity, build confidence, and increase a feeling of safety that lessens the cognitive load and allows learning to occur. It also makes the student more likely to ask for help when it is needed (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

## Connections to Other Turnaround Tools

Tool Interconnectedness	Description
<b>Module 4</b> <b>Educational Practice Toolkit 4.4</b> “Proactive Behavior Supports”	This toolkit supports educators in planning proactive behavior supports that contribute to a physically and emotionally safe environment. In this type of environment, students can form trusting relationships with adults in the school. Tools for educators include a protocol for developing classroom rules, checklists and planning templates for teaching classroom procedures, and supports for teacher language.
<b>Module 8B</b> <b>Professional Learning and Educational Practice Tools</b> “Class Meeting/ Advisory”	This session introduces the Class Meeting/Advisory structure and engages participants in each component: Huddle, Share, Team Builder, Townhall and Mind & Body. The components of this structure are aligned to developing a sense of belonging and relationships in the classroom.
<b>Module 3</b> <b>Educational Practice Toolkit 3.4</b> “Strategies to Build Relationships with Students”	In addition to structuring the environment to promote positive developmental relationships, educators can utilize this toolkit for strategies to build relationships with students through daily interactions.



## MTSS Connection

Creating an environment that is conducive to positive developmental relationships is the cornerstone of a robust Tier 1 system for all students. These relationships are especially beneficial to students experiencing chronic stress, and are the key ingredient to intervention success.

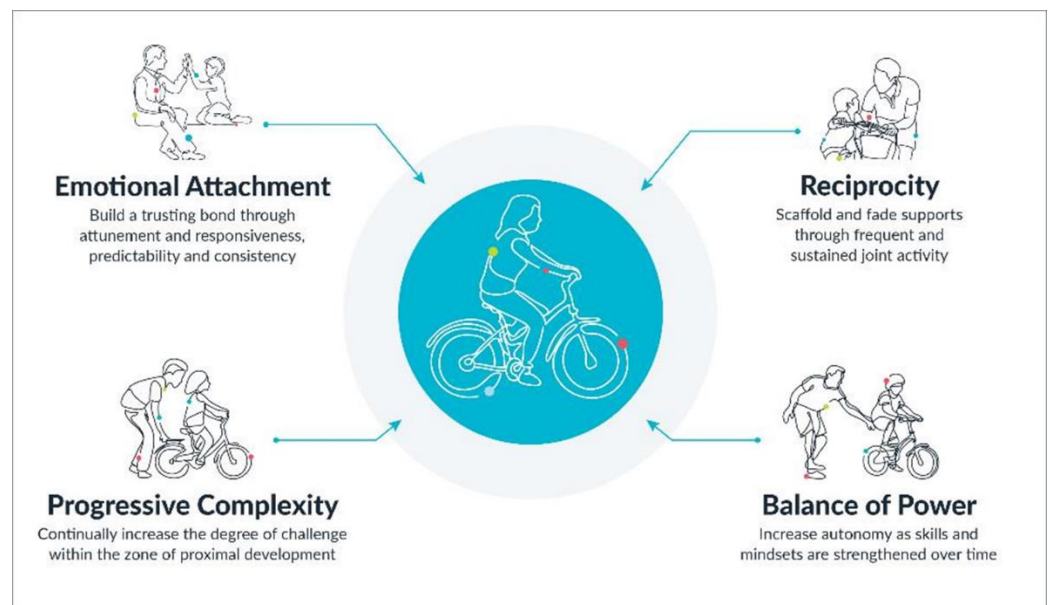
# Context-Setting

## Skills

### Skill 1: Understand the Characteristics of Positive Developmental Relationships

Relationships are commonly understood as either “good” or “bad” based on a feeling, an expected outcome, or the absence of conflict. In contrast, a **positive developmental relationship** is defined by four key characteristics that are anchored in research about how adults can best help students learn and grow. Specifically, this type of relationship promotes lasting attachment, includes reciprocal interactions, provides opportunities for progressive complexity, and supports a shift in power from the adult to the child (Li & Julian, 2012). Positive developmental relationships can drive healthy development by mitigating the effects of stress and supporting students with co-regulating learning opportunities. By clearly defining the characteristics of this type of relationship, schools can begin to design experiences and structures that promote their creation and maintenance.

As you read about each of these characteristics in the anchor visual below, think about what each characteristic might look like as a child learns a skill, such as riding a bicycle, with the support of a trusting adult. How does each characteristic support the child in moving toward independence?



*Adapted from Li & Julian (2012)*

To better understand the characteristics of a positive developmental relationship, it might be helpful for educators to reflect on the presence of positive developmental relationships in their own lives. Use the far-right column of this chart to dissect a relationship between the educator and an adult in their life. What was the impact of this relationship?

Characteristic	Example	Example in Your Life
Emotional Attachment	<i>"I had a strong relationship with my 7<sup>th</sup> grade track coach. I knew I could count on him, and I knew what I could expect from him."</i>	
Reciprocity	<i>"My coach and I wanted to increase my time on the mile, and he would time my runs and suggest pacing strategies."</i>	
Progressive Complexity	<i>"He also helped me as I mentored my teammates. He gave me strategies for being a role model."</i>	
Balance of Power	<i>"Coach always listened to me, and by the end of the year, he let me design my own practice schedule leading up to the big race."</i>	
<b>Example in Your Life:</b> What was the impact of this relationship in your life? Beyond the concrete interactions, what transferable skills did you take away from this relationship?		

## Positive Developmental Relationships and Intervention

Research posits that positive developmental relationships are the "active ingredient" to intervention success (Li & Julian, 2012). Although there are a variety of classroom management and intervention strategies, systems that are not accompanied by positive developmental relationships will produce short-term benefits at best. As educators select, design, or reflect on their approach, they should consider the below questions to determine the strength of their intervention.

1. Does this approach promote or maintain a positive relationship or connection with the child?
2. Does this approach provide an opportunity for me to work with the child on a shared goal or activity?
3. Will this approach provide the flexibility needed to change with the child as they struggle and/or advance?
4. Does this approach provide opportunities to increase the autonomy and choice of the child?



MAKING MEANING  
OF KEY CONCEPTS

If the answer to one of these questions is “no,” then the educator should consider how to revise their approach to incorporate that aspect of a developmental relationship into the intervention or management system. The **Classroom Inventory – Is My Classroom Relationship-Rich?** tool can help educators reflect on key aspects of the relationships in their room.

In order to better understand each aspect of a positive developmental relationship, read through the following vignettes of relationships in a classroom. After each vignette, mark which characteristics of positive developmental relationships were described.

**Example 1:**

**During reading instruction:** “In my guided reading group, I make sure to intentionally create an emotionally safe environment where students feel seen and heard, as well as feel comfortable to take the risks that are necessary to grow as readers. Rather than jumping right in to targeted reading skill development, I take the time to get to know the students in my group and set the tone for a culture that is inclusive and supportive. I have found that there are many entry points in literacy for these types of conversations.”

**Elements of positive developmental relationships:**

- emotional attachment    reciprocity    progressive complexity    balance of power

**Example 2:**

**During transitions:** “Throughout the year, our transition procedures have changed as students become more capable of staying organized and demonstrating self-control. At the start of the year, I provided lots of cues and all movement was planned and routine. Now, students are able to successfully transition with minimal intervention. Instead of releasing students to the door table by table, I can now ask the whole class to quickly and safely line up, and they can successfully pack up their belongings and move to the line without trouble. I’m so proud of their growing ability to self-regulate.”

**Elements of positive developmental relationships:**

- emotional attachment    reciprocity    progressive complexity    balance of power

**Example 3:**

**During writing:** “This year we are focusing on persuasive writing. Throughout the year, students will produce four polished pieces of persuasive writing, and each piece will be scored on one section of our writing rubric. I am letting each student select which area of the rubric they want to be graded on for each piece that they produce. Next, they will select one of their pieces to be graded using the whole rubric. I’m excited to see if this increases investment and self-reflection.”

**Elements of positive developmental relationships:**

- emotional attachment    reciprocity    progressive complexity    balance of power

**Example 4:**

**During class meeting:** “Today in class meeting, we are tracking our individual and class goals on our bulletin board. I’m so excited that we’ve reached our goal of 95% attendance for two weeks straight. But I also can’t wait to see how excited students are to move their train up

the mountain to college. Every time we finish a new book in class, students get to move their train up the mountain. They love it. Always makes for a great start to the day.”

**Elements of positive developmental relationships:**

- emotional attachment    reciprocity    progressive complexity    balance of power

Now, think about a relationship that you have with a student. Where are you demonstrating each characteristic of positive developmental relationships? How might you structure the environment to develop any characteristics that are missing or weaker?

**MAKING MEANING  
OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Characteristic	Make It Your Own
Emotional Attachment	
Reciprocity	
Progressive Complexity	
Balance of Power	

**Skill 2: Integrate Informal Interactions That Support Positive Interactions and Relationships**

Sometimes the smallest interactions have the biggest impact. This can be especially true in a school setting, where students can easily be overlooked if adults don’t intentionally set goals to connect with each child. The word “informal” does not mean these interactions are not planned and purposely designed. Instead, it means that educators craft opportunities to connect with students without a specific goal or learning objective in mind. With that said, frequent informal interactions with students serve many purposes. They serve as entry points to positive relationships and can provide insight into student need. Sometimes they are the spark that changes a child’s perception of school, and sometimes they can be an avenue for a child to seek help. To be effective, educators must intentionally prioritize these interactions, and remember to use them flexibly to best meet the needs and preferences of each student. The **List of Informal Structures for Building Relationships and Planning Space** tool will help you as you prioritize these interactions in your classroom. Below are some considerations to keep in mind when planning for informal interactions.

**Review the Schedule:**

Consider where there is space to informally interact with students. How could you use transition times creatively to connect with targeted students? For example, perhaps you could briefly touch base with a student while your “paper collector” picks up assignments after math, or you could walk next to a child on the way to lunch, or you could pass a note of

**EDUCATOR TOOL**

List of Informal Structures for Building Relationships and Planning Space  
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encouragement to a student during independent work time. Because school days can be so demanding, the key is identifying where there is time, and setting goals for how to use that time in advance.

### Reflect on Current Interactions:

As you reflect on your current interactions, consider whom you are missing. It might be helpful to track your interactions for a day or two to determine if there are students you are leaving unnoticed. This can be accomplished with a simple class list and tracking interactions with a +/- throughout the day. Also consider the success of your current interactions. Are they resulting in positive developmental relationships? Can the balance of power and reciprocity be observed? Are students taking on more autonomy? If not, perhaps it's time to add an additional strategy or revise an approach.

### Consider Your Message:

Think about what messages you want to send as a teacher, and craft interactions that convey that message. For example, if you want your students to know that you value their attendance and are happy to see them each morning, then you might greet them at the door each day with a smile. These messages should include the characteristics of a positive developmental relationship. For example, your actions can communicate, "I believe you can handle additional responsibility" or "I'm here to work with you and not just tell you what to do." Use the table below to support your brainstorming.

Review the sample messages and examples below, then add your own examples.

#### MAKING MEANING OF KEY CONCEPTS

Message	Example	Make it Your Own
I care about you.	<i>Whenever a student is absent, I send a text to them by the end of the day saying I hope I see them tomorrow.</i>	
I believe you are capable of achieving.	<i>Javonte struggles in math, so before math class we have a 10 second "pep rally." During transition, I give him a high-five and we sing a chant we made together.</i>	
We're a team and my role is to support you.	<i>Before we begin the day, we repeat our class affirmation and cheer.</i>	

## Skill 3: Plan to Implement Formal Classroom Structures and Activities That Support Positive Interactions and Relationship Building

In addition to informal or individualized interactions, educators should also have larger structures within their day and year for the express purpose of building relationships and developing social-emotional skills. Although there are a variety of ways to build relationships,

below are two structures that provide clear pathways to the characteristics found in positive developmental relationships.

### Class Meeting:

Setting aside daily time for a class meeting can be a powerful way to keep relationship building front and center in your classroom. It can also support students with problem-solving, organization and planning, and social-emotional skill development. Throughout the year, student autonomy and choice can be increased, and students can even begin to be the lead planners, offering a safe opportunity for independence. Below is an overview of the components and goals of a class meeting. A more detailed and step-by-step guide for successful implementation can be found in the **Module 8B: Class Meeting/Advisory toolkits**.

CLASS MEETING / ADVISORY					
Component	Huddle	Share	Team Builder	Townhall	Mind & Body
Suggested Frequency	Daily (10 min)	Daily (10 min)	Rotate 3 <sup>rd</sup> Component (10 min)		
Targeted Outcomes	← Sense of Belonging →				
	Executive Functions, Growth Mindset	Relationships (Peer and Adult-Student)	Relationship Skills	Relationship Skills, Stress Management	Self-Awareness, Self-Regulation, Stress Management

Even if your classroom does not have a full class meeting, components of the meeting can be used independently throughout the school day. Two components that lend themselves especially well to this format are the Share and the Huddle.

### Share:

The share is a time for students to offer their thinking, feelings, and reflections on an experience. Additionally, it should allow for students to respond to their peers and identify points of connection and understanding. Shares can give educators powerful insights into students' needs, preferences, and their current state of developmental skills, such as social awareness and self-regulation. These insights can support them as they plan informal interactions and learning experiences. Share topics can increase in complexity as students get to know each other, and they provide an excellent opportunity for student voice and choice.

### Huddle:

During a huddle, students and teachers greet each other and engage in routines that support personal organization and planning, as well as celebrate successes, growth, and personal milestones. This might be a time that the students and teacher set or track class goals on a bulletin board, celebrate birthdays, or highlight an individual's success. Additionally, the huddle can facilitate relationships through guests, such as a former teacher or student coming in to celebrate a success or discuss an upcoming event. The goal of this time is to organize, support, and celebrate the team as they drive toward a shared goal. This is an excellent time to build the element of reciprocity in relationships, and let students know that you are all in this together.

## Collaborative Learning:

In addition to structures within the class schedule, a commitment to collaboration throughout the learning process is a key feature of a relationship-rich environment and healthy student development. Collaborative learning promotes shared, equitable engagement in learning activities where students work with one or more peers toward explicit, relevant, and appropriate learning outcomes. They are intentionally structured and facilitated by the teacher for the clear purpose of developing students' learning of content and of personal and interpersonal behaviors necessary to cooperation, interdependence, and individual accountability to group success.

Well-planned collaborative learning experiences ask students to work together to produce a product, and support students as they practice interpersonal skills, perspective-taking, and problem-solving. The collaboration should require them to discuss their reasoning, assume differing perspectives, and develop consensus. Additionally, although the teacher is the planner and facilitator, he or she should participate from a place of discovering the answer with students.

Collaborative learning directly connects to positive developmental relationships, as it provides a shared goal for the adult and students to work toward, allows opportunities for teachers to scaffold and fade supports, and can increase in complexity throughout the year as students are ready. Below is an example of a collaborative learning task. As you read, take notice of how the teacher has structured the roles and contributions of the students and teacher.

### MAKING MEANING OF KEY CONCEPTS

#### Lesson: Boston Massacre or Incident on King Street?

**Standard:** Students will identify the key players and context surrounding the Boston Massacre and will be able to describe differences in the media coverage of the event.

**Resources to support student understanding:**

Watch: Clip from HBO series John Adams

Read: Chapter 5 of History Alive

**Questions for students to answer:** Was the Boston Massacre a massacre? Why or why not?

**Task:** In groups, read Chapter 5 and discuss whether or not the Boston Massacre was an actual massacre. Warning! Two people in your group have been designated as British loyalists and two people in your group are soldiers in the colonial army. Once your group has reached a consensus, assume the role of a newspaper writer and design a headline that accurately describes what happened on March 5, 1770.

**Grouping:** Groupings will reflect mixed reading levels. Each group will have at least one grade-level reader to support the group with reading Chapter 5.

**Targeted social, emotional and cognitive skills:**

Perspective-taking and consensus-building

**What scaffolds will be put in place to support student success?**

**Introduction of Task:**

- Modeling
- Organizing materials
- Reviewing content
- Other: Providing leveled text to struggling readers

**Content Prompts:** *Prompts to support students' understanding of key content.*

- Where could we find that information?
- Have you considered ... ?
- If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_.

- What does that make you think?
- Let's look at it again; this time, listen for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Social and Emotional Prompts:** *Prompts to support students with social-emotional skill building.*

- What did your teammate say?
- Have you considered \_\_\_\_\_'s perspective?
- What is everyone's role?
- How is this going for your team? What's hard?
- We've talked a lot about \_\_\_\_\_. How is your team doing? What could your team do a better job with?
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

The plan above demonstrates several aspects of successful collaborative learning and positive developmental relationships.

**Notice how the teacher ...**

- Designed an activity that requires students to create or produce a product together. The output in this activity is a newspaper headline. (**Reciprocity**)
- Released autonomy in skill development to students by assigning roles within the groups that are tied to content and encourage perspective-taking and student discussion. In this case, students are role-playing as loyalists or colonists. (**Balance of power**)
- Grouped students in ways that provide scaffolds for struggling students and leadership opportunities for more advanced students. Each child is met at their level and pushed in some way. (**Progressive complexity**)
- Identifies ways that he/she will be working with students to scaffold and fade supports rather than simply telling students what to do. (**Balance of power**)
- Identifies a content goal and a goal for social-emotional growth. (**Progressive complexity**)

**Consider your own practice:**

*Use this space to reflect on a collaborative learning activity you have done in the past. What are 1 or 2 ways to structure the activity to better align to the goals of collaborative learning and/or positive developmental relationships?*

**EDUCATOR TOOL**

Collaborative Learning Planning  
Template  
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The **Collaborative Learning Planning Template** tool can support educators as they plan for group learning experiences and determine their role as the facilitator.

## Skill 4: Self-Assess the Physical Environment to Support Positive Interactions and Relationship Building

One reason educators shy away from collaboration is that it can be a time-consuming and stressful endeavor if not tightly planned. One way to increase efficiency and success is to organize your room in a way that easily facilitates collaboration and relationship building. Not only will this result in more organic interactions among all members of the class community (students and teachers) and therefore stronger relationships, but it will also support the efficient transition to structures such as class meeting or collaborative learning. Below are some aspects of the physical environment to keep in mind while preparing for collaborative activities. A more detailed checklist can be found in the **Physical Environment Checklist**.

### EDUCATOR TOOL

Physical Environment Checklist  
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<b>Seating Arrangement</b>	Are desks arranged in a way that promotes partner or group work? Is there adequate space to safely move around the room? Can the arrangement be easily transitioned to meet the demands of different goals? Is there a space for the whole class to come together without moving desks around?
<b>Visual Aids</b>	Are there visual aids that outline key procedures for collaboration? For example, how to complete a Turn and Talk or how to move your desk for group work. Are the visual aids referenced frequently?
<b>Class Artifacts</b>	Are there artifacts that display the interests and values of students? Is there evidence of students working together to achieve a goal?

## Skill 5: Integrate Opportunities That Allow Student Choice Throughout Daily Activities

Strong developmental relationships increase in complexity and shift the balance of power from adult to child over time. One way to accomplish these goals is to incorporate student choice throughout the year. This allows students a safe opportunity to practice decision-making and risk-taking, while also giving the educator insights into student preference. Below are a few key considerations to keep in mind when offering students choices.

1. Choices should build in complexity – Although surface-level choices such as “what color would you like to write with” provide an entry point, choices should build so that students have agency and experience the consequences (positive and negative) of their decisions.
2. Choices should have outcomes that the educator has previously considered and has deemed acceptable no matter what the student decides; don’t give a choice you aren’t okay with.
3. Take time to reflect on choice and discuss motivation and any natural consequences that came up. This is a powerful way to help students learn to self-regulate.

**MAKING MEANING  
OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Review the non-example and example chart below. Consider what would happen in the first non-example if a child decided to stay in the classroom alone. Would that be a feasible option for the teacher to carry out? What might that require from other staff members? Notice how the teacher in the example provides choices that he/she can feasibly support. In the second example, notice how the teacher provides an option that would be detrimental if the child picked it every day. It would ultimately prevent relationships and confidence building. Instead, the teacher in the example presents choices that allow students to participate at their comfort level while still staying with the group.

	Non-Example of Choice	Example of Choice
1	During recess today, you can either play outside with the rest of the class or sit inside by yourself.	During recess today, you have three choices: You can have free play on the outdoor equipment, you can play soccer, or you can take a book or drawing materials outside. You choose!
2	If you don't like the morning meeting game, you can sit silently at your seat.	While playing our game, you have three options: You can fully participate in accordance with the rules, you can ask a friend to help you, or you can say pass when it is your turn.
<b>Make it your own</b>	During work time, you can either work quietly or sit in the hall.	

**Increasing Complexity Over Time:**

The table below shows how you can increase the complexity of a choice over time. Use progress monitoring and the explicit teaching of expectations to determine when a student or group of students is ready for the next level of decision-making.

**Choices During Class Meeting**

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Teacher presents two surface-level share topics and each student gets to select which one they want to address in their share. Example: favorite food, favorite subject, etc.	Teacher introduces a game that can be played with different sets of rules. Class selects rules and then debriefs impact on game.	Teacher and students compile a list of class share topics and games. Each day the class votes on share topic and game for the day.	Teacher introduces volunteer calendar. Each student selects a day to plan and lead a component of class meeting. Plan must be submitted and rehearsed with teacher during lunch the day before.



**MAKING MEANING  
OF KEY CONCEPTS**

Notice how the teacher in the above example transitions between group and individual decision-making, and starts with small and safe choices before transitioning to high-level decisions that involve leadership.

Make It Your Own: Use the table below to brainstorm phases of student choice during a writing class.

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4
Teacher provides a writing prompt and students may decide what color paper they want to use for their response. They may also decide if they want to share it with the group during share time.			

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## Classroom Inventory – Is My Classroom Relationship-Rich? (6-12)

### PURPOSE

This survey is meant to support teachers as they reflect on student perceptions and plan for informal and formal interactions that will enhance relationships. This survey is best used with students in sixth grade and up, and can be modified to meet the needs of your school setting.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Administer this survey at the end of every quarter or semester.
2. Inform students that their responses are anonymous and that there are no wrong answers. Honest answers will help the classroom improve for all students.
3. Use a blank survey as a class tally sheet. Review the results and look for trends in areas of strength and weakness.
4. Use the survey data to plan informal and formal interactions to support continued improvement.

### 1. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your class?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. I feel like a real part of my class.				
b. People here notice when I'm good at something.				
c. Other students in my class take my opinions seriously.				
d. People in this class are friendly to me.				
e. I'm included in activities in this class.				
f. I can always find a way to help people end arguments.				
g. I listen carefully to what other people say to me.				
h. I'm good at working with other students.				
i. I'm good at helping other people.				
j. I know how to ask for help when I need it.				

## 2. How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. When my teachers tell me not to do something, I know they have a good reason.				
b. I feel safe and comfortable with my teacher.				
c. My teacher always keeps their promises.				
d. My teacher always listens to students' ideas.				
e. My teacher treats me with respect.				
f. My teacher challenges me to achieve new things.				
g. I know I can ask my teacher for help when I need it.				
h. My teacher supports me.				

## Classroom Inventory – Is My Classroom Relationship-Rich? (K-5)

### PURPOSE

This survey is meant to support teachers as they reflect on student perceptions and plan for informal and formal interactions that will enhance relationships. This survey is best used with students in sixth grade and up, and can be modified to meet the needs of your school setting.

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Modify the survey to meet the needs and reading levels of your students.
2. Administer this survey at the end of every quarter or semester.
3. Inform students that their responses are anonymous and that there are no wrong answers. Honest answers will help the classroom improve for all students.
4. Review the results and look for trends in areas of strength and weakness.
5. Use the survey data to plan informal and formal interactions to support continued improvement.

**Directions: Circle the face that best represents how you feel.**

I feel safe in my classroom.			
I learn new things with my teacher and friends.			
My teacher helps me when I need it.			
My classmates help me when I need it.			

I feel like I belong here.			
When I am absent, people notice. I'm important here.			
Kids in my class are nice to each other.			
People listen to me.			
I know how to help my classmates.			

## Survey Reflection and Planning Space

### PURPOSE

Use this reflection sheet to identify trends in your survey data and plan for informal and formal interactions that will enhance relationships.

### DIRECTIONS:

6. As stated in the survey directions, make sure that you use a blank copy of the survey to tally class responses.
7. Use this reflection sheet to identify trends in the data.
8. Think about what existing structures contributed to that result, as well as next steps for structuring the environment to strengthen relationships.

**Positive Trends:** Use this space to identify the positive trends in your class.

Trend	Raw Results	Structures That Contributed to Results	Next Steps
<i>Students feel listened to.</i>	95% of students responded "strongly agree" to questions 1c and 2d	<i>Consistently incorporate share time into morning and afternoon instruction. Have tight procedures for think-pair-share activities.</i>	<i>Celebrate results with students, and revisit think-pair-share procedure to consider offering more student autonomy.</i>

**Areas of Growth Trends:** Use this space to identify areas of growth.

Trend	Raw Results	Structures or Lack of Structure That Contributed to Results	Next Steps

# List of Informal Structures for Building Relationships and Planning Space

## PURPOSE

This list is intended to support educators as they brainstorm and plan relationship-building strategies in their classrooms.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Review the list to spark brainstorming.
2. Consider additional times in your day that create space for relationship building.
3. Set goals for students to target and with what frequency.

Opportunities During Transition	Opportunities at Lunch/ Recess
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Greet students at the door.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> High-five, hug or handshake</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Personalized “secret” greeting for each student</li> </ul> </li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk with a student between classes or locations in the building. Perhaps assign them a job or task such as carrying your papers or books.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Have a private pep-talk with a student while other students are packing up or transitioning. Remember to keep all students in view.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assign class jobs that give you contact with targeted students during key transition times – paper collector, line leader, line caboose, etc. Use their jobs to prompt recognition and encouragement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Schedule rotating lunch bunches or lunch dates with key students. Perhaps once a week you meet with a different group of students.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sit with students at their lunch table.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ask a student or students to help with classroom clean-up or set-up during the last 10 minutes of lunch.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write a note to a student for them to read at lunch. If appropriate, ask them to respond.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Arrive for recess, pick up a few minutes early, and join in a game.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Help students advocate for their ideas of improving lunch or recess procedures or activities.</li> </ul>
Opportunities Throughout Instruction	Opportunities Beyond the School Day
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Design a “secret code” or gesture to help a student know when to refocus.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use students’ names in examples and/or practice problems.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate student interests and talents in instruction.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate chants and cheers to celebrate positive participation and growth by individuals or the whole class.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Check in with individual students during independent work time. Help launch students who find it hard to start.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Pass a note of encouragement to a student.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use writing conferences and share opportunities to connect with students.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share and comment on student work in public ways.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use choice boards for work time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Attend after-school activities – dances, sporting events, community events.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Write a note home to a student’s parent highlighting an achievement from that day.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate family pictures and/or classroom pictures on the classroom walls or on the class website.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Make phone calls or text to check in on absent students or students who seemed to have a tough day.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Find time in class to celebrate birthdays, nonacademic or school-related achievements, and family events.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide students with a way to appropriately contact you outside of the school day – email, text, etc. This should be in accordance with school policy and your comfort level.</li> </ul>



## Informal Interaction Planning Space

What student or group of students will be targeted?	When can this interaction take place? How frequently?	What message do I want to communicate?	What strategy or interaction will I use to communicate this message?	Important notes to consider for individual students.
<i>Whole class.</i>	<i>Every day when students arrive.</i>	<i>I'm happy to see you.</i>	<i>Greet each student with a high-five, hug, or handshake. Their choice.</i>	<i>Tommy does not like to be touched. Allow him to wave.</i>

# Physical Environment Checklist

## PURPOSE

This checklist is intended to support educators as they reflect on their classroom environment and create structures that promote positive developmental relationships.

## DIRECTIONS:

Use this checklist at the beginning and middle of the year to evaluate your classroom environment.

Seating Arrangements	Visual Aids
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are desks arranged in a way that promotes partner or group work?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there adequate space to safely move around the room?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can the arrangement be easily transitioned to meet the demands of different goals?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a space for the whole class to come together without moving desks around? Ex: for class meeting.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a space for small groups to meet with the teacher?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a space for the teacher to have one-on-one conversations with students?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Can all students easily see instructional content? Ex: the front board or projector screen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there visual aids that outline key procedures for collaboration? Ex: how to complete a Turn and Talk or how to move your desk for group work</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the teacher's name posted prominently?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are class jobs and student names posted prominently?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the class schedule posted?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a place to capture upcoming events, birthdays, field trips, etc.?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are places to turn in homework, pick up make-up work, and pick up needed supplies clearly labeled? Do they have posted directions to follow?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is a map of the school posted?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is a classroom contract or list of classroom expectations posted?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are anchor charts that support academic content up-to-date and relevant to what is currently being taught?</li> </ul>
Class Artifacts	Classroom Structures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there artifacts that display the interests and values of students?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there evidence of students working together to achieve a goal?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is student work posted and accompanied by specific positive feedback?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the classroom reflect the cultural diversity of the student body and community?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the classroom have artifacts that reference the achievements of current and prior students?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there artifacts that include students' families?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are there artifacts that reference students' individual goals and aspirations?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the class library accessible to students?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the class library stocked with books that reflect student interests, reading levels, and cultural backgrounds?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Does the class library highlight teacher and/or student favorite books?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Are needed supplies accessible to students – pencils, paper, tissue, hand sanitizer?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is there a space within the classroom for students to take a break?</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is the take-a-break area positive, calming, and conducive to reflection?</li> </ul>

## Opportunities for Student Choice and Planning Space

### PURPOSE

This tool is intended to support educators as they structure the environment in a way that increases student choice, voice, and autonomy throughout the school year

### DIRECTIONS:

1. Use the column on the left to brainstorm times or structures within your day where you can incorporate student choice or offer more autonomy.
2. Use the three middle columns to outline how you will transition to more choice and autonomy throughout the school year. Do not feel the need to use every column. Also, remember that individual students may need scaffolded supports. This is simply a general overview to help plan for the year.
3. Use the far-right column to identify the progress-monitoring technique you will use to determine when students are ready to take on more independence and choice. You may also want to note what social-emotional skills students would need to acquire to be successful.
4. For additional ideas, review the Opportunities for Student Choice List on the next page.

Areas to Add Choice	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Progress Monitoring
<b>Example:</b> Morning Arrival Procedure	<i>Students enter, sit in their assigned seat, organize their materials for the day, and can select one of the two provided free-write prompts to respond to.</i>	<i>Students enter, and may sit down or silently visit the class library. Once seated, students should organize their materials and may free-write on one of the provided topics. Students may whisper-share their response with their tablemate if they choose.</i>	<i>Students enter and may visit the library and/or quietly mingle with friends until the teacher rings the warning bell. After the warning bell, students should take their seats and organize their materials for the day.</i>	<i>I'll be tracking the % of students who start the day with the proper materials. I'll also be taking note of the "feel" of the room. Do students seem calm and ready to learn, or does the room feel chaotic and disorganized.</i>
Morning Arrival Procedure				
Class Meeting				
Independent Work Time				
Unit Projects				
Topics of Study				
Lunchtime				
Group Work				

## Opportunities for Student Choice List

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### What resources will you use?

- What color pen or paper would you like to use?
- Would you like to use the computer or paper?
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### Who will you work with?

- Would you like to work alone, with a partner, or in your group?
- Pick your partner. (only in environments where you are confident no one will be left out)
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### What do you want to learn?

- Students help develop unit essential questions.
- Students develop their own research topics.
- Students develop their own topics for class shares.
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### How will you show what you know?

- Allow students to select their own unit project.
- Support students as they select or develop their own rubric.
- Provide alternatives for how to take notes.
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### What are your reflections?

- Ask students to identify what they need to work on.
- Ask students to determine their next steps and goals.
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### How will you manage our time?

- Support students as they set their own due dates.
- Allow students choice in how they record and organize their responsibilities.
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

### Where should you sit?

- Allow students opportunities to determine where they will do their best work.
- Promote times where students may move to a comfortable spot for reading and/or independent work.
- Add your own: \_\_\_\_\_

# Collaborative Learning Planning Template

## PURPOSE

This template is intended to support educators as they design collaborative learning experiences.

## DIRECTIONS:

1. Identify the learning goals you want to achieve.
2. Identify a task that would demonstrate your learning goals while also requiring discussion and group work.
3. Identify social-emotional skills that can be taught alongside the academic content.
4. Plan for your role in supporting students throughout the activity.

## Collaborative Learning Planning Template

**Standard:**

**Resources to support student understanding:**

**Questions for students to answer:**

**Task:**

**How will students be grouped:**

**What social-emotional skills could be targeted within this activity?**

## Teacher Facilitation

**What scaffolds will be put in place to support student success?**

**Introduction of Task:**  Modeling  Organizing materials  Reviewing content  Other:

**Content Prompts:** *Prompts to support students' understanding of key content.*

- Where could we find that information?
- Have you considered ... ?
- If \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_.
- What does that make you think?
- Let's look at it again; this time, listen for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Social-Emotional Prompts:** *Prompts to support students with social-emotional skill building.*

- What did your teammate say?
- Have you considered \_\_\_\_\_'s perspective?
- What is everyone's role?
- How is this going for your team? What's hard?
- We've talked a lot about \_\_\_\_\_. How is your team doing? What could your team do a better job with?
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary of Understandings

### **Understand the Characteristics of Positive Developmental Relationships**

- A positive developmental relationship is defined by four key characteristics. This type of relationship promotes lasting attachment, includes reciprocal interactions, provides opportunities for progressive complexity, and supports a shift in power from the adult to the child (Li & Julian, 2012).

### **Integrate Informal Interactions That Support Positive Interactions and Relationship Building**

- Informal interactions are opportunities that educators seek out to connect with their students. Although they don't have a specific academic goal, they are planned and convey important messages to students.
- Educators should reflect on their current interactions and review their schedule to determine when there are opportunities to connect with all of their students.

### **Self-Assess the Physical Environment to Support Positive Developmental Relationships**

- The physical environment of a classroom can either support or hinder the development of relationships. Educators should reflect on how structures within their classroom facilitate easy collaboration among students and with the teacher.
- The classroom environment should reflect the cultural backgrounds and interests of the students.

### **Plan to Implement Formal Classroom Structures and Activities That Support Positive Developmental Relationships.**

- Time and structures should exist within the school day and year for the explicit purpose of building relationships and developing the social-emotional skills of students.
- Class meetings and ongoing collaborative learning are two ways to focus on social-emotional learning and support the development of positive developmental relationships.

### **Integrate Opportunities That Allow Student Choice Throughout Daily Activities**

- Providing opportunities for student choice is highly aligned to the creation of positive developmental relationships. It is a natural way to balance power and increase the complexity of student participation.
- Choices should increase in depth and complexity as students build confidence and develop their self-regulation skills throughout the year.

## References

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<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
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