

# Building Trust in Preschool–Kindergarten Settings - Trust

## EXPLANATION:

Good relationships early in life help children to connect with others, build positive friendships, and self-regulate their emotions. Trust is a key component of relationships. Building trust with young children requires collaborative action between teachers and parents/guardians.

**GRADE LEVELS:** Preschool–Kindergarten

**STUDENT GROUPING:** Teacher-parent/guardian communication about promoting trusting relationships with young children

## CASEL CORE COMPETENCY: *RELATIONSHIP SKILLS*

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships
- You can learn more about the CASEL framework [here](#)

## SCOPE OF TASK:

Children begin to cognitively understand “trust” and develop the verbal capacities to define it between the ages of five and eight. Younger children build trust via their experiences of secure, reliable relationships.

According to an article published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, young children develop “positive social and emotional health as a result of close relationships with their teachers”; the authors specify that the creation of trusting relationships is a key factor (Ho & Funk, 2018). When attention is given to building connections and maintaining relationships over time, children are more likely to feel a sense of security, confidence, well-being, and belonging. Processes that schools can enact to build trusting relationships include:

- Minimizing the number of different educators who work with children—especially very young children—to support relationship building
- Creating well-defined and consistent transitions so children feel secure during arrival and departure and throughout the day
- Engaging in active listening with children to demonstrate the importance of their voice, agency, and individual interests and needs
- Building understanding of children’s uniquenesses (e.g., culture, language, and religious diversities)
- Engaging in games and activities that explore trust, such as “Feely Bag” games, which require the use of blindfolds; hide and seek, which demonstrates permanency; and sensory activities



Teachers and parents/guardians can also work collaboratively to build partnerships, creating a sense of trust for young children. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) stresses the importance of “authentic partnerships” between schools and families, since “[r]esearch suggests that evidence-based SEL programs are more effective when they extend into the home” (“SEL,” 2021). Relationships with parents/guardians create positive, secure environments that benefit young children and help promote mental health and well-being.

There are many ways that schools can develop trusting relationships with parents/guardians that model trust to young children:

- Engaging in sharing conversations with parents/guardians to learn about families and their structures and interests
- Developing regular communication with parents/guardians informing them of school activities
- Informing and educating parents/guardians about the importance of developing trust and trusting relationships at a young age
- Sharing with parents/guardians relevant research and policy
- Providing parents/guardians with ideas for games and activities that explore trust and confidence

## RESOURCES:

There are many reference sites that can provide resources and information about building trust:

- **Article:** Ho, J., & Funk, S. (2018, March). Promoting Young Children’s Social and Emotional Health. *Young Children*, 73(1). Published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Accessed from: <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/mar2018/promoting-social-and-emotional-health>
- **Article:** Joseph, G. E., Ph.D., & Strain, P. S., Ph.D. (2010, February). Building Positive Relationships with Young Children. *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, Vanderbilt University*. Accessed from: <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module1/handout5.pdf>
- **Professional Development Trainings (Birth–33 Months and 3–5 Years) and Classroom Activities:** *Resources for Early Learning*. (2014). Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care and WGBH Educational Foundation. Accessed from: [http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators\\_pd/](http://resourcesforearlylearning.org/educators_pd/)
- **Social and Emotional Development Domain of Early Learning Outcomes Framework:** *Interactive Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework: Ages Birth to Five*. Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families. Accessed from: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/interactive-head-start-early-learning-outcomes-framework-ages-birth-five>
- **Website:** *SEL: What Are the Core Competence Areas and Where Are They Promoted?* (2021). Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Accessed from: <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>
- **Website With Links to Preschool SEL Standards by State:** *Social and Emotional Learning: What Is Social and Emotional Learning?* (2018). National Conference of State Legislatures. Accessed from: <https://www.ncsl.org/research/education/social-emotional-learning.aspx>