

Session Guide

1

LEADERSHIP

Participants are seated in groups of three or four, no larger than four, unless the total group size is five. A group of two is too small to get sufficient diversity of sharing.

A welcoming address invites each participant to step into this unique learning opportunity. In his or her own words, the Guide conveys a warm message of invitation covering four topics in this order:

Commonality: we share a common interest in truly doing best for children. When we do our best we are truly and deeply satisfied and so are the children and their parents.

Possibility: we desire in our togetherness here a powerful transformation in (a) our effectiveness with young children and (b) happiness with ourselves, way beyond what we now experience.

Opportunity: we have this time to be together to share with each other what is on our minds, to listen to other perspectives, and to explore the same aims with our unique selves, our unique settings, and our unique children.

Commitment: I invite you to make a commitment, lasting week after week for many weeks, to do the work on time and come here prepared to share yourself openly.

OUTLINE

GROUP DISCUSSION I would like us all to learn about who is here, why each of us chose to enter this experience, where we work, and something new that has happened recently.

How the Modules work:

- *An Investigation task is assigned at each session.*
- *A Portfolio, a personal record maintained by each participant in his or her own way, is not evaluated, but doing it well may have significant value in the future. It allows one (a) to understand how one learns, (b) to demonstrate to others the depth of attainment.*
- *A Project of Understanding demonstrates the ability to implement the central idea of each Module. Each documents in photographs and descriptions an observable change in children to show others who care about quality early education.*
- *An Expression of Understanding conveys one's personal experience.*

For most people, the structure of these experiences becomes apparent only later in the sequence, usually in the 4th or 5th session. So, I invite you to be patient with yourself and others, and me, to let this experience unfold, naturally, for you. Everyone here is different; everyone's experience will be unique. It is confusing at times. It is without many boundaries. You don't know where we are going or what will emerge. We help each other make this experience valuable for ourselves to the degree each of us comes prepared and talks openly and honestly with others as we investigate our work and talk about how we want to be with children.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME – 1. Values

When the Guide reads the assignment aloud, the group finishes reading at the same time.

SHARE You have time now to talk about doing this.

D1 — Expressing Warmth to Children

PREPARATION

Handouts:

1. Values

INDIVIDUAL RECORD

Each participant fills out the top information portion and hands it back to the Guide.

Small pack of sticky notes for each participant.

Examples of previous Performances of Understanding to show to participants, both Projects of Understanding and Expressions of Understanding.

Examples are also available online at

connectingtochildren.com

2

LEADERSHIP

During this session participants begin to realize they have complete freedom to share with each other for the first 20 or 30 minutes of the time together. They can talk about anything they want.

Group size is 3 or 4 participants. With large groups, it is important that people sit with people they have not talked with during the first 5 sessions in order for everyone to share with everyone. Later, participants sit with groups they choose.

The presence of the Guide will influence the freedom participants feel in being able to talk freely about anything they want, some of which will necessarily be "off task," such as explaining about places and people at the work site. By standing too close, the Guide may imply that participants should be not talking in certain ways.

The ideal is to be able to listen to a portion of the discussion without influencing its course in any way. It may be possible to sit close by, rotating among groups from time to time, to find out what is happening, not trying to make sure people are on topic.

People who work with children rarely have time to be themselves with other teachers with true freedom to talk about what they want to talk about. Here, building relationships and willingness to risk is more important than staying exactly on task.

OUTLINE

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share what you were able to observe.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

PROCESS TOGETHER 15 minutes

I want to list your thoughts on the board (or large sheet of paper).

1. What are your categories?
2. What did you discover?

Questions the participants have about what they observed form the basis of their inquiry and deserve recording. The Guide can answer questions about the procedures but does not answer questions about the content. The purpose of these Modules is for the group to create its own understanding. Honoring and reflecting back to them their own questions ensures that they are given the responsibility for addressing their questions with other participants. When they do, over the course of these weeks of discussion, the learning is deep and durable.

REFLECTION I want to note what has happened today. You saw how important it is to come with your work completed, coming prepared for these sessions in order for the time to be valuable to you and to be most valuable for others. If someone has not done the work, it is like going to a potluck dinner without a contribution. If one person's work is not complete, the missing piece detracts from the experience of the others. We have a mutual responsibility to do what we can to ensure that this experience is as educational as it can be for everyone.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes

1. Responses of Adults

Each week the Guide reads the assignment sheet aloud as the participants follow along, pausing to elaborate as necessary. When the Guide reads the assignment aloud, the group finishes reading at the same time.

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

PREPARATION

Handouts:

2. Responses of Adults

Approval Responses and Disapproval Responses

Blackboard, whiteboard, or large paper to write on is needed in every session.

Session Guide

D1 — Expressing Warmth to Children

Example of **WHAT WE NOTICED** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

The sharing of categories was helpful.

It is nice to see that we are noting the same kinds of things, but also emphases were different.

It is nice to talk to someone about this.

It helps me focus on the positive side.

Children also remember the nice things.

I like taking the time to focus on what is right.

When you take the time to observe you notice more.

You can discover what the children need.

I saw children solving problems on their own.

As an observer, I was less likely to jump in and more likely to let them work it out.

3

Leadership

The essential activity for this session is the making a formal declaration of how each wants to be with children. The wording is first discussed with others and then stated, while standing, to the whole group, who clap and cheer.

Some may need help formulating their possibility in simple language.

It is most memorable if it is stated as a very short list of single nouns, such as, love, respect, responsiveness, positiveness, joy, being present, aware, friendly, caring, etc.

The qualities are beyond established personal strengths, pressing one to be more fully the person one desires to be.

The words are "right" when one feels right when saying them. They give one a tingle of delight and possibly apprehension.

The goal is to state simply and memorably the essential ideas.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share about approval and disapproval.

This is time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the investigation.

WRITING A DECLARATION 20 minutes

I would like you now to list qualities of the ideal person you would like to bring to children when you are with them. People often say words, such as, care, listening, love, or joy, for example. What other qualities come to mind?

Now that you have some listed, it is time to share them with others and listen to what they wrote. You can use other's ideas if you wish.

The challenge is to select the most important single quality, then the next most important, then the next, finding your top 2, 3 or 4 words.

We are going to put these in this sentence: "Who I am is the possibility of _____.
You can have more words than four, of course, but too many lose the essence of concentrated intention with children.

The sentence uses the word "possibility" for a reason. If I say, "*I want to be responsive and joyful*," I am talking about my future, but a future always ahead of you. I can say I want to eat better or to exercise, or whatever, and never make any changes in the present. If I say, "*I am responsive and joyful*," I am talking about now, but that statement may not be true at certain times. If I make a mistake, it sounds as if I am failing to be what I said. If I say, "*I am the possibility of being responsive and joyful*," the words remain true even if I make a mistake. I can still keep that idea with me in the next interaction, without feeling unable to change. I can grow into new ways of being with children.

Now you should have a Declaration written down, completing the blank with your most desired way of being with children. This is a promise you are choosing today. You have a minute now to try out the sound of it spoken aloud and to listen to your colleagues express their commitment to children.

DECLARATION One at a time, stand and read your declaration to the group. Both before and after each declaration I would like all of us to clap and cheer.

GROUP DISCUSSION What are your thoughts about this?

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 5 minutes

1. Habits

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handout:

3. Habits

"What we noticed" compiled from the work in last session.

4

Leadership

The central activity is to construct a clear understanding of how all of us act from our habits. That is the way we are. Yet we can change our habitual impulses gradually by continuous awareness and correction.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share what you found out about "No" and "Don't" and show others how you are putting your materials together in a portfolio.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 15 minutes

On a board or large sheet of paper compile the group's ideas about each of these questions:

When hurting or danger is at stake, what can we say?

How do children react to our saying "No?"

Where do our habits come from?

A relatively short list is expected for this question.

How can we change our habits?

The goal is to get the answers to this second question as complete and complex as possible. These are valuable additions to each participant's portfolio. The Guide can convey that message of importance by typing up the contributions to these two lists and handing them out in the next session.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 5 minutes**4. Non-verbal Recognition**

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handout:

4. Non-verbal Recognition

Session Guide

D1 — Expressing Warmth to Children

Example of answers to these questions as generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

Ideas for what to say at hurting or danger times

“Stop!” “I can’t allow you to...” Shout his or her name.

Children’s Responses to adults saying “no”

They ignore me, or just look at me.

They do more of it.

Habits come from

The way we were raised

What we see others do

How we were treated at school

Our parents

Fellow staff members

How we can change

Replace a bad habit with a good one: stop, think, do it a different way, repeatedly.

Recording: seeing how often and becoming more aware.

Recording at a future time to check on habit creep.

Withdrawing from high stress situations, regrouping, calling on another adult.

Put up posters reminding what to do or say.

Help others who work with me to be on the same page, working together.

You have to have something else to try.

Trying what you value on for yourself, aspiring to do better.

Collaborate with others to plan to deal with tough problems.

You have to want to change and be willing to take on the idea that continuing with the old way is a problem.

5

Leadership

The sharing in this session on non-verbal and vocal responsiveness is one of the highlights of this Module. We see the emergence of each participant as a person whose actions have a significant and happy impact upon the children, the other adults and oneself.

The most important outcome is a listing of what the group discovers about making gestures and sounds to support actions they value.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share what you found out about non-verbal and vocal recognition.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 15 minutes

On a board or large sheet of paper compile the group's thoughts.

What did you notice?

This is another addition to each participant's portfolio. The Guide can convey that message of importance by typing up the contributions of the participants and handing them out in the next session.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes

5. Descriptions

This investigation requires you to make some careful distinctions. Descriptions are factual statements that convey in words what you and the child see.

To be effective you have to attend to three things: (a) being **FACTUAL** like in the examples, (b) using them as **RESPONSES** to what children do rather than cueing or prompting them to do, and (c) using them to respond to **POSITIVE** actions, not negative ones.

"I like the way you four have come to circle." versus *"Four kids have come to circle."* (opinions and judgments are held back)

"It is time to be seated everyone." versus *"Mark, Desiree and Kimiko are sitting down."* (after good behavior has spontaneously occurred)

"Jack left the cap off the pen." versus *"The cap is now on the pen."* (what you desire to see is described, not what you don't want to see)

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

5. Descriptions

"How We Can Change Habits" compiled from the work in last session.

Example of **NON-VERBAL RECOGNITION** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

When you give non-verbal positives it is as if the children are searching inwardly for their own goodness, rather than having that being given to them from the outside.

They place their own values on it.

They look more intently at me.

Children are so conditioned to look for praise, but really they are looking for recognition, not praise.

This is a way to provide validation without judgment.

The children really seemed to enjoy it. It was fun.

Doing this really makes you think, "How am I going to react to this?"

It is a way to show more genuine enthusiasm. They see its genuineness.

The children totally blossomed in front of me.

6

Leadership

People can sit wherever they like.

Often by this session people come to understand what the Connecting to Children Modules do. That energy is affecting everyone.

The contributions participants make to this investigation contain understandings at a deeper level than at any time previously.

The most important outcome is a listing of what the group discovers about making factual descriptions to support actions they value.

Outline

SHARE You have 25 minutes to share what you found out about descriptions.

This is a time to mark the individual record of the participants who completed the task as assigned.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

On a board or large sheet of paper compile the group's ideas.

What was the effect of descriptions as positive recognition?

The role of the guide is to probe significant expressions, challenging the participants to fully articulate what they mean without fuzzy statements. For example, one participant in this session said, "This can cause a breakthrough." This expression may become more valuable to everyone if it is more fully explained. To draw out more, the Guide may try these probes: "I'm not sure what you mean." "Can you give an example?" "Can anyone help with this?"

This is an addition to each participant's portfolio.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes

5. Distribution

SHARE You have time now to talk to each other about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

6. Distribution

"Non-verbal Recognition" compilation from last time.

Example of **DESCRIPTIONS AS POSITIVE RECOGNITION** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

It is hard not to put my opinions in it. I want to add a positive comment or some judgment to the statement.

I felt more honest. I was less coddling.

I noticed that the children did more positive actions directly afterward.

It helped with the room cleanup, an area that is hard for my kids.

It kept my involvement with the children more appropriate. As a result we had more teamwork and willingness to follow through until the job was done.

My day went better from my focus upon what I valued.

It seems to not be at all intrusive. The children could choose to respond to me or not.

It takes it out of having to support children. It frees me and frees the children.

The children are not as dependent upon others for their self-worth.

It keeps me present and more human.

I find myself treating children as friends.

Even at times when children make mistakes ("Your milk spilled a little.") it is not punitive.

It creates a more respectful environment.

Descriptions shine a spotlight on the child, so he or she stands illuminated and can figure out what they feel about it.

I feel like a teacher. So this is what it is about. I can be a positive enabler.

7

Leadership

For the rest of this Module sitting with the same group of people can foster deeper communication. Participants will be working on a project with children. Having continuity from session to session can be valuable.

At this time, the participants have completed all the investigations that are assigned. They have one more week to keep track of their distribution of positives in the hopes that they will see the challenge of addressing those children that they miss with increased vigilance.

Group discussions may be wide ranging now that rapport is established with each other and each group creates its own culture.

The role of the guide is to attend to the issue of praise, saying “good job” or “I like how you...” or “that’s great.” If individuals have not grasped the distinction between these judgmental positives and the 2 types of non-judgmental positives, non-verbal and descriptions, they may need an additional investigation assigned.

One possibility for an additional investigation is to do a test. Try saying, “Good job” experimentally to a child (a) to see if the child “lights up”, (b) to see how the other children in hearing distance respond, and (c) to feel what it feels like inside oneself. Compare the results with the previous investigations.

Outline

SHARE You have 20 minutes to share what you found out about reaching each and every child.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

On a board or large sheet of paper compile the group's ideas about this question:

If you could establish a policy on how adults best respond to children, what would it be?

This is another addition to each participant's portfolio.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME 10 minutes

7. Project

This project will take two weeks. List the class dates on the board and show the date this project is due to be presented in final form. One more session, the last in this Module, follows the presentation of the projects.

This project is about changing ONE SMALL THING, e.g., getting one child active outside, getting a child to play with another child, etc., by simply expressing warmth.

SHARE You have time now to talk with each other about doing this. What could you work on? What is not happening?

GROUP DISCUSSION The most important thing right now is to take pictures of what the current situation is. It is very difficult to capture the “before” pictures, but these are the ones you most want to show after this is all finished. Like the “before” of a weight loss program or the “before” of a garden project or house remodel.

If you can get your photos processed in time, others here would enjoy seeing them next time.

Preparation

Handouts:

7. Project

"Descriptions as Positive Recognition" construction from last time.

Session Guide

D1 — Expressing Warmth to Children

Example of **POLICY** generated by one group. Every group is different and constructs understanding uniquely. No group will create an identical list.

If you could establish a policy what would it be?

Get down on their level.

No grabbing children physically.

Listen to what children are saying.

Don't ignore them.

Make positive recognition equitable.

Make each child feel unique.

Hug.

I'd like people to recognize the difference between misbehavior and a mistake.

Every day is a new day, even for me.

Understand more; judge less.

Remember what it was like when you were a child.

Children have a lot of knowledge worth understanding.

Share our adult experiences with them.

Remember when things are bad that it isn't personal.

8

Leadership

The intent is to let the groups help each other focus the project on a particular child. The group now becomes an audience for telling the story to, so each person can gather more ideas.

The guide's role is to try to listen to everyone and ensure that every participant is on track. When helping, the role is to offer alternatives as choices, rather like a menu at a restaurant. The guest can select the meal of his choice from a range of selections. Offering several (four or five) alternate choices avoids the pitfall of giving advice or telling participants what to do.

Some participants may need reflective listening, paraphrasing, and examples to draw out from them a clearer distinction of what is going on.

The difficult distinction for some people is that one is *waiting and responding warmly*, not cueing or asking or offering. The idea is to be behind the child, not in front. The child acts, the teacher responds, not the other way around. Those who are describing how they are *cueing* the child may need examples of ways to try *responding* in order to see the difference. Others in the group are the best source of ideas.

Showing an example of excellent project documentation and an example of weak documentation can be helpful in developing standards of quality.

Ideally documentation should have a white background, text printed neatly or computer printed, with no colors or fancy additions. It is about the child, not the adult's cleverness. The story speaks for itself.

Outline

SHARE You have 30 minutes to share what you are working on in your project.

GROUP DISCUSSION 10 minutes

Your task is to prepare a presentation that can tell your story to the audience that truly cares what has happened. Who does care?

We care. This room is full of people who have come to know you and authentically do care about what you have been trying to do. We want to know what you have done. Who else cares?

The group can come up with the others. The child's parents care. The other parents may care. The other teachers may care. The director may care. And so on.

In learning of your story audiences can be transformed, too.

I invite you to put together your photographs and journal entries into a storyboard or book. It is indeed a story. It has a **beginning** with characters and setting; it has a **middle** with a problem and struggles to overcome; it has an **end** with a resolution and closure.

This is what is required to complete the Module. You show that (1) it used to be a certain way and you had an objective, (2) you used positive warmth to respond and support (not cueing or pushing), (3) the child or children changed for the better, and (4) you share it with us.

You could also tell the story to the child and to the child's parents, if you make that possible. Your work can transform others if they can see what you have done.

SHARE You have time now to talk about doing this.

Preparation

Handouts:

'Policy' construction from last time.

9

Leadership

The role of the Guide is to ensure that participants meet the standards of performance in order to complete the Module.

Projects must meet all four criteria:

- ☐ Be shared with the group
- ☐ Have a clear objective for the child to achieve
- ☐ Employ expressing warmth
- ☐ Show observable child change

If not quite complete, offer the opportunity to add to the story in the next session.

Clap and cheer.

Examples are at <http://tomdrummond.com>

Outline

PRESENTATIONS OF PROJECTS

*On the **INDIVIDUAL RECORD FORM** is a space to briefly describe each person's project and check off that it meets the criteria for performance.*

Projects that may not be complete can be shared in the next session.

ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT TIME**8. Expression of Understanding**

The key idea here is that it is easy to notice trouble and what a child is not doing. It takes effort to hold yourself back and take care to attend to what is good and needs positive support. Then it takes skill to respond with positive support in a way that actually works!

Can you imagine what the world would be like if every child had parents and teachers who really understood this as you do? That is the possibility of these Modules.

The challenge now before you is to show that you understand this. You truly, deeply, and unforgettably understand in an Expression of Understanding and do it in a way that is uniquely you.

In the past people have,

Stood before the group and simply described what this has meant for them personally.

Written and sung a song, transforming lyrics or creating a new piece.

Written and read a poem, with or without calligraphy.

Painted or drawn picture.

Created a collage.

Written a letter to someone and read it aloud.

Played a recording and danced.

Created a short dramatic piece.

Created a poster.

Drawn a cartoon.

Diversity and uniqueness are valued. You find your own way to tell your own understanding. We want to hear and see and cherish what you create.

Preparation

Handouts:

8. Expression of Understanding

10

Leadership

This is a heart-warming celebration of becoming an early childhood educator.

Clap and Cheer.

When signed and dated, with all information complete the **INDIVIDUAL RECORD FORM** becomes the certificate of completion and certifies 30 hours of education (10 in session time and 20 equivalent hours on-the-job).

Outline

PRESENTATIONS

(1) Projects that were not ready last time.

(2) Expressions of Understanding.

*On the **INDIVIDUAL RECORD FORM** is a space to briefly describe each person's Expression of Understanding and check off that it was shared with the group.*

SUMMARY

Congratulations on stepping into the world of being a professional early childhood educator. You have shown you can make a difference to children and to yourself.

You have now joined the ranks of those adults who understand how to bring joy and happiness to their teaching. This is a significant accomplishment.

You have seen how easy it is to think in terms of trouble, to focus on the negative. People think they are a positive force, but they lapse into habits of attending to the difficulties in the classroom or home and not the desirable. They see the trouble children cause and dwell upon the things they do wrong. That is natural.

You, however, have changed. You have done the work. You have had the opportunity to meet here week after week to tell your stories and hear the stories of others that face similar struggles, problems and joys.

This module is about systematically opening our perceptions to see the positive in the complexity of events, and focus upon the good things children are doing. This is a huge step for everyone who makes it.

I invite you to spend the time to compile all your work in this Module and put it in a fancy binder. There is a good possibility that you will want to show this to a future employer or parent.

Preparation