How to Build Positive Social Emotional Engagement with Early Learners

Part 1: Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

The essential foundation to healthy social development: relationships that are responsive, consistent and nurturing benefit the developing child in many ways:

- Influence emotional, cognitive and social development
- Help reduce the frequency of behavior problems
- Develop secure relationships with other adults
- Develop good peer relationships
- Develop positive self-esteem

A growing body of evidence points to one common answer:
Every child who winds up doing well has had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult. -The Science of Resilience

Step One: Create Positive Adult-Child Interactions

- Engage in one-on-one interactions, at eye level
- Listen to children and encourage them to listen to others
- Follow the child’s lead and interests during play

Step Two: Maintain a 5:1 Ratio of Positive to Negative Interactions

Make lots of positive interaction “deposits”

- Greet every child at the door by name
- Give hugs, and high fives for accomplishing tasks
- Praise a child to their parent in front of them

Take very few negative interaction “withdrawals”

- Using a loud voice
- Giving negative commands
- Making demands or giving directions

Step Three: Reframe Challenging Behavior

Instead of saying:

“Shé’s so clingy.”

Reframe the child’s behavior as a response to her environment:

“She might be slow to warm up to new people, especially in a new setting.”

Instead of saying:

“I have to watch him like a hawk.”

Reframe with:

“He is very active and may not understand my expectations about staying with the group.”

Strategies here provided by SW-PBIS and PW-PBIS frameworks.
Start with the Heart represents an approach to implementing one of the critical pillars of the Get Georgia Reading Campaign: positive learning climate. To see how all four pillars help children on a path to reading proficiently by the end of third grade visit getgeorgiareading.org