

**"Often when you think
you're at the end of
something, you're at the
beginning of something
else." — Fred Rogers**



Welcome!

Everyday
Interactions Matter

Inclusion and Belonging/
Opportunity to Grow



Welcome everyone! Remind teachers that today's Community of Practice meeting will review Inclusion (our previous dimension over the past few months) and then introduce our next dimension which is Opportunities to Grow.

Let's Get Started!

Think about something you are really good at.

How did you get good at it?

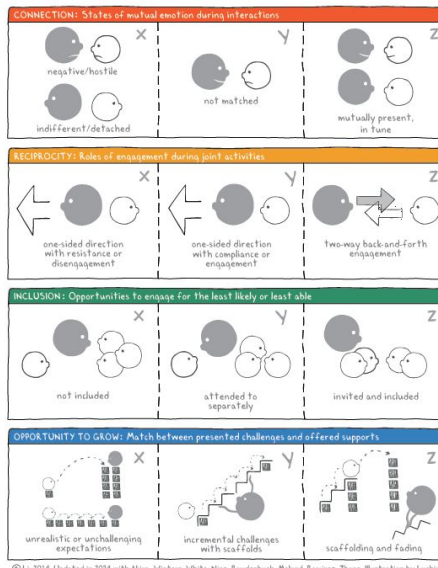
Was there someone who helped you?



Have participants share something that they are good at or that they enjoy. Also have them share how they become good at it. This is really to get the participants minds thinking about how someone becomes good at something.

SIMPLE INTERACTIONS TOOL

Noticing and Appreciating Human Interactions Across Developmental Contexts



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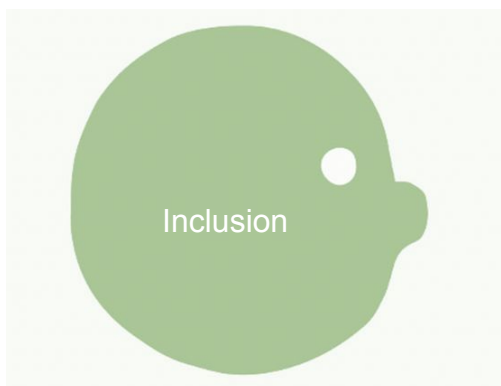
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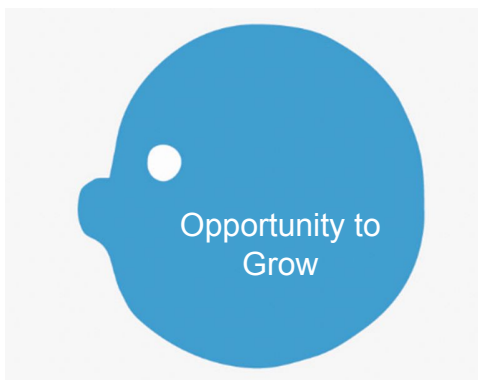
peals

- By now, the teachers should be familiar with this tool. Briefly explain and remind the group that this is a reflection tool—a way for us as early childhood educators to continuously reflect upon our interactions with the children we work with and even our coworkers.
- Review the columns of Connection (X, Y, Z).
- Explain that X, Y, and Z were chosen because the creators wanted to avoid using things like **A, B, or C**, which can sound like an evaluative grade. They also avoided **1, 2, or 3**, which can feel like a points system.
- By using **X, Y, and Z**, it helps the focus stay on reflection rather than a score, as we have fewer associations with those letters.

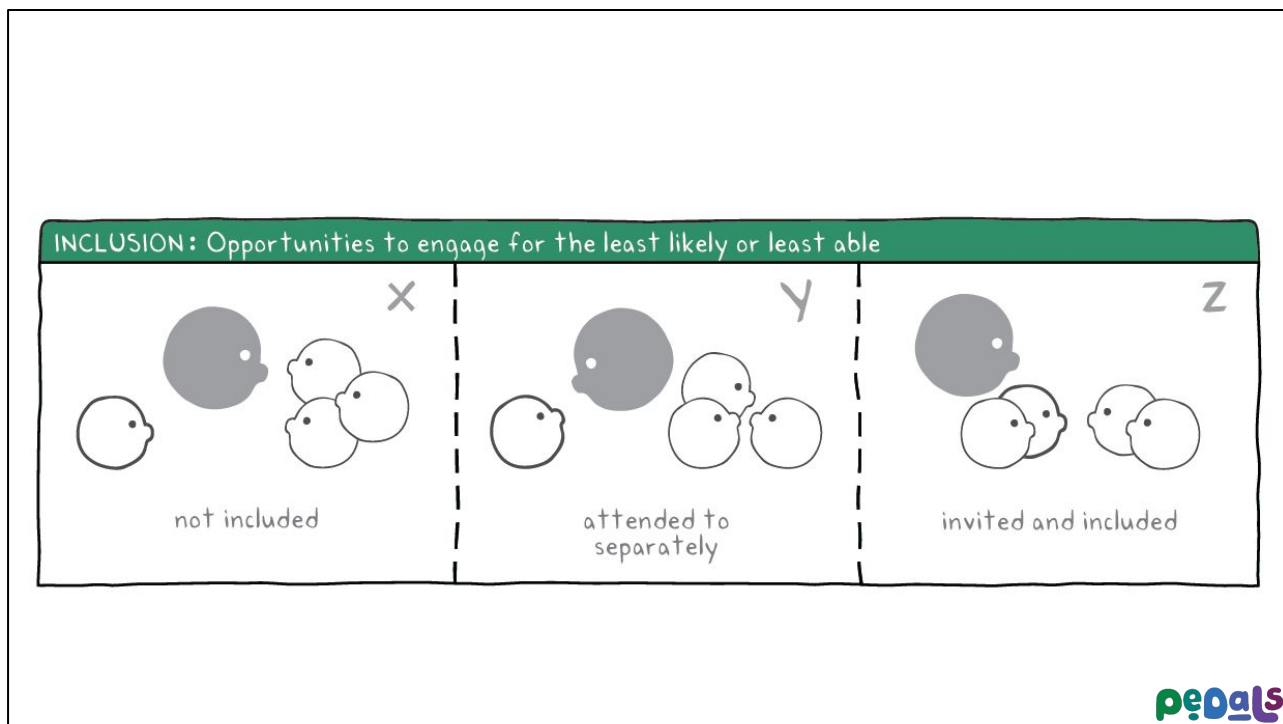
The Plan For Today...



Opportunities to engage for the
least likely or least able



Match between presented
challenges and offered supports



Activity:

- Divide the group into three smaller teams and assign each team a specific letter: **X, Y, or Z**.
- Ask each group to discuss a time in their own practice when they found themselves in that particular column.
- Have the teams report out on one of their scenarios to the larger group, provided they feel comfortable sharing.

Alternative Activity Options

- **Small Group Variation:** Assign a specific mode to each group for a focused deep dive into that particular type of interaction.
- **Individual Reflection:** Have each participant independently think of one personal example for every mode (X, Y, and Z).
- **Follow-up:** Regardless of the chosen format, conclude with a group-wide discussion to share insights and common themes discovered during the reflection.

Inclusion From a Different Perspective



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ACTIVITY:

While watching the video, have the teachers write down one specific detail or moment that sticks out to them.

After the video ends, ask the teachers to work with their table mates to compare notes.

Have each table identify at least two common themes or thoughts that appeared most frequently across their individual observations.

Conclude by having each table share their "top two" with the rest of the room to see where the group's collective focus landed.

Inclusion = Practice

Belonging = Feeling



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Inclusion practices (left)

Left Picture 1 - Responsive, one-to-one interaction

- Getting down at the child's level
- Following the child's lead
- Responding to cues, sounds, gestures, or words

Left Picture 2 - Accessible materials and inclusive engagement

- Materials are accessible to all children
- Children are invited to participate without pressure
- Adults adapt the environment rather than expecting the child to adapt

Left Picture 3 - Supportive guidance and predictable routines

- Scaffolding play or interactions
- Staying close during social moments
- Maintaining predictable, nurturing routines

**** Pictures on the right are the feelings that are brought on by the interactions seen in the pictures on the left (safe and secure, capable and included, *seen and valued*).****

Group Discussion Taking a look at the practices on the left and the feelings they evoke on the right, let's open it up for discussion:

- Looking at the practices on the left, which ones do you find yourself using most often in your daily work?
- Thinking about the feelings listed on the right, which one do you think the children in your classroom currently experience the strongest?

True or False?

- Inclusive practice means choosing toys and materials that all children can explore and use in different ways, even if they use them differently from one another.
 - **TRUE!**
- A calm, predictable, and emotionally nurturing environment is a key part of inclusion because it helps infants and toddlers feel safe enough to explore, communicate, and take risks in learning.
 - **TRUE!**
- Maintaining a strict routine with little flexibility is inclusive because changing the schedule might upset some children in the room.
 - **FALSE!**
- Providing opportunities for parallel play, one-on-one interactions, and small group experiences supports inclusion by honoring how infants and toddlers naturally engage with others.
 - **TRUE!**
- Focusing primarily on developmental milestones, without considering individual growth, temperament, or abilities, is an inclusive practice.
 - **FALSE!**
- It is inclusive to exclude a child from group activities if their developmental level or behavior might disrupt the group experience.
 - **FALSE!**
- Inclusive practice means adults adjust their expectations, environment, and interactions before expecting infants or toddlers to change their behavior.
 - **True!**
- If an infant or toddler needs extra support, it is more inclusive to wait until they are “ready” before involving them in classroom activities.
 - **False**



How to Play To get everyone engaged, we are going to play a quick game of True or False using the colored paper on your tables.

- **The Setup:** Each participant should have one green and one red piece of paper.
- **The Rules:** I will read a statement aloud. If you believe the statement is **True**, raise your green paper. If you believe it is **False**, raise your red paper.
- **Movement Option:** If the group needs a quick energy boost, we can do a standing version. I will read the statements, and you can sit down if you think it is **True** or remain standing if you believe it is **False**.

Purpose of the Activity This game is a fun, low-pressure way to check our understanding of the concepts we've covered so far. It allows us to see where we are all in agreement and highlights any areas where we might want to dive a bit deeper before moving forward.

Key Elements of an Inclusive Environment

- A safe and supportive physical environment
- Inviting materials
- A predictable schedule with consistent routines
- Connecting and communicating with all children
- Engaging interactions and meaningful learning experiences



Space Focus on arranging the classroom layout to ensure children of all ages and abilities can move freely. The goal is to create a setting where every child can safely play and explore their surroundings without physical barriers.

Materials Regularly review your materials to ensure they spark curiosity and support creative play. Be intentional with placement: ensure items are within reach for all children, including "non-movers." Additionally, place photos of families, the children, and artwork at the children's eye level to foster a sense of ownership and belonging.

Schedule Utilize a visual schedule that is reviewed daily. Referencing the schedule throughout the day helps children understand transitions, providing them with a sense of predictability and security.

Connecting Prioritize eye-level interactions to build trust and connection. Making a point to provide individual attention ensures that every child feels recognized and valued within the group.

Let's watch your amazing work!

What do you notice?

What do you wonder?



Questions to ask the teachers BEFORE watching:

- How is the teacher communicating? Look specifically for non-verbal cues like gestures and facial expressions.
- How is the child communicating?
- What moments of connection do you observe?
- Use your **Simple Interactions Tool** to help focus your observations.

Questions to ask the teachers AFTER watching: * What did you notice?

- Beyond the actions, take a moment to absorb the "feel" of the interaction. It is vital to let these moments of reciprocity really sink in.

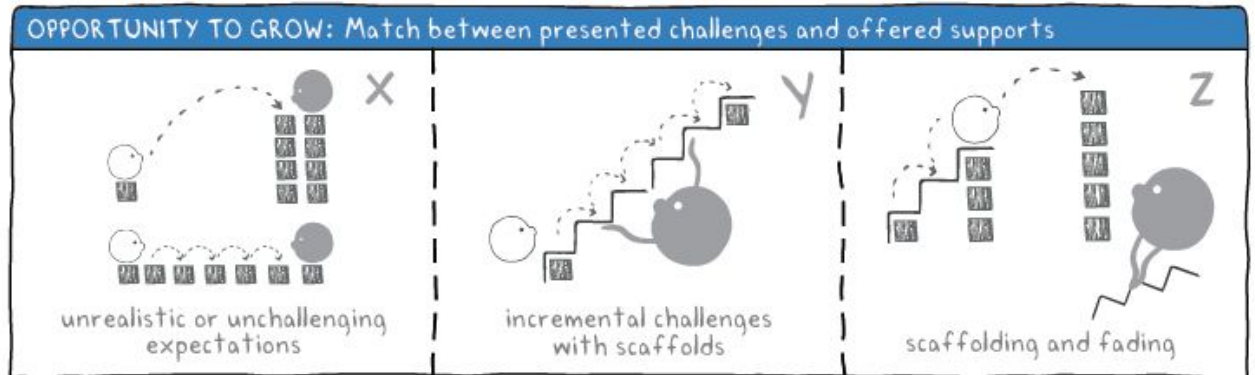
After watching the video and using the Simple Interactions Tool as your guide, think about a time this week when you felt a deep sense of connection in your own work. In your journal, reflect on the following:

- **Participants:** Who was involved in the interaction?
 - **The Moment:** What did the interaction actually look like?
 - **The Feeling:** How did that moment make you feel?
 - **Future Practice:** What intentional steps can you take to extend or recreate that connection in future interactions?
- Closing Thought:** Noticing these details about your own practice is incredibly helpful. Just as we analyzed these videos together, I encourage you to find small moments during your day to check in with yourself and recognize the meaningful work you are doing.

Break Time



Opportunity to Grow



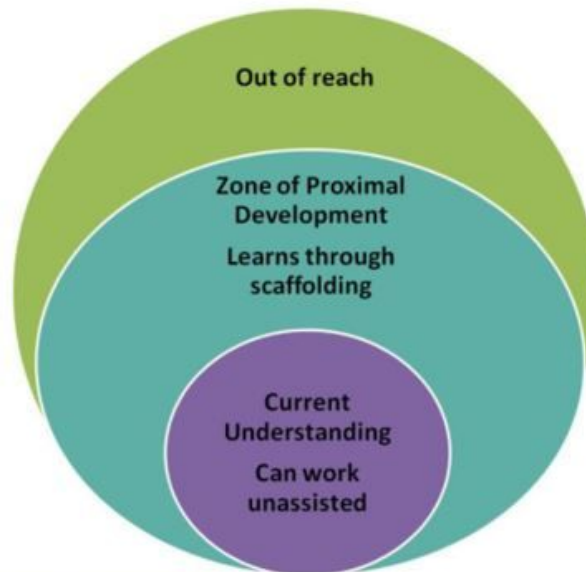
Introduce all three interaction types in this dimension:

X: An adult assigns children unreachable tasks without any support, or repeats unchallenging tasks.

Y: An adult provides incrementally more difficult challenges and scaffolds children for steady progress.

Z: An adult stretches children with a desirable level of difficulty that pushes them beyond their comfort zones. As appropriate, the adult withdraws (fades) some of the scaffolds children have gotten used to in Y.

Zone of Proximal Development



Ask participants if they are familiar with the Zone of Proximal Development.

Then explain:

The zone of proximal development was developed by psychologist and social constructivist Lev Vygotsky.

Vygotsky introduced the ZPD concept to criticize psychometric testing which only measured current abilities, not potential for development. He argued assessment should be collaborative to reveal emerging skills.

Actual definition: The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers.

So, for teachers this means - For teachers, the ZPD is the space between current teaching knowledge and potential new level with assistance.



Explainers

Scaffolding: What Does it Look Like?

- Responsive caregiving
- Modeling and demonstrating
- Encouraging and reinforcing
- Offer assistance
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Observation and assessment



Overall, scaffolding for infants and toddlers involves providing responsive support, modeling, encouragement, and guidance to help them learn and grow within a nurturing and stimulating environment.

Responsive Caregiving: Scaffolding begins with responsive caregiving, where caregivers tune into infants' and toddlers' cues and signals to understand their needs and interests.

Modeling and Demonstration: Model behaviors and actions to demonstrate new skills or concepts. For example, if an infant is learning to grasp objects, a caregiver may demonstrate how to pick up a toy and encourage the infant to imitate the action.

Encouragement and Reinforcement: Provide encouragement and positive reinforcement to motivate infants and toddlers to engage in learning activities.

Offering Assistance: Offer assistance and support as needed to help infants and toddlers navigate challenges and obstacles. This may involve providing physical support, such as holding a baby's hand while they practice standing, or offering verbal encouragement to help a toddler problem-solve.

Gradual Release of Responsibility: When you gradually release responsibility to the children as they become more independent and capable. Initially, caregivers may provide hands-on support and guidance, but over time, they allow children to take more initiative and explore on their own while still being available to offer assistance when needed.

Observation and Assessment: By understanding children's strengths, challenges, and emerging abilities, caregivers can tailor their support to meet individual needs effectively.

Scaffolding: What Does it Not Look Like?

- Completing a task for a child
- Forcing independence
- Ignoring individual needs
- Setting unrealistic expectations
- Focusing solely on outcomes



By recognizing what scaffolding should not look like for infants and toddlers, caregivers can better understand the importance of providing responsive, supportive, and developmentally appropriate guidance to foster children's learning and development effectively.

Forcing Independence: Scaffolding should not involve pressuring infants and toddlers to achieve milestones or skills beyond their current capabilities. Forcing independence by expecting infants to self-feed before they are developmentally ready or encouraging toddlers to walk before they are steady on their feet can be counterproductive and potentially unsafe.

Ignoring Individual Needs: Scaffolding should not overlook the individual needs and preferences of infants and toddlers. Ignoring a child's cues for comfort, interaction, or exploration and imposing a one-size-fits-all approach can hinder the child's sense of agency and well-being.

Setting Unrealistic Expectations: Scaffolding should not set unrealistic expectations for infants and toddlers based on arbitrary timelines or benchmarks. Expecting all children to reach developmental milestones at the same time or rate can create undue pressure and anxiety for both children and caregivers.

Focusing Solely on Outcomes: Scaffolding should not solely focus on achieving specific outcomes or performance goals. Placing undue emphasis on achieving a particular skill or milestone may overshadow the importance of the learning process and children's individual progress.

Scaffolding Video



Observation Focus: Ask participants to keep a close eye on the adult's interactions and intentions while watching the video. Have them try to spot the specific scaffolding strategies being used.

jump-start the discussion with these questions:

- What kind of scaffolding strategies did you see the adult use?
- How did the adult adjust their support in the moment?
- Where did you notice the adult step back or "fade" their support?
- What do you think would have happened if the adult hadn't stepped in (or stepped back) when they did?

Reflection Questions: After the initial discussion, wrap up by asking:

- Which of these strategies feels most comfortable or natural to you?
- Is there a strategy from the video that you'd like to try out more often in your own classroom?
- What do you find the most difficult or tricky about scaffolding?

Walk a Day in My Shoes



How to Play:

1. Each teacher or group draws a card and takes on the scenario described.
2. The group or teacher works to determine what they can do to scaffold and fade for each scenario.
3. Think about how you can model, provide assistance, give verbal cues, gradually increase complexity, repeat and reinforce and encourage independence.
4. After reflecting, each person/group shares what they might do to provide opportunities to grow for each moment.



- **Supplies Needed:** Have your pre-made scenario cards ready. Each card should describe a child working on a specific skill, such as finishing a puzzle, stacking cups, or learning to use a spoon.
- **How to Play:** * Have each teacher or small group draw a card.
 - i. Ask them to brainstorm exactly how they would handle that scenario. The goal is to figure out how to **scaffold** (help them get started) and then **fade** (step back so the child can do it alone).
 - ii. Encourage them to get specific: Will they model the action first? Give a little physical help? Use verbal cues? How can they make the task slightly harder once the child gets it?
- **Connecting to the "Human" Element:** Once they've planned the child's scenario, shift the focus to the educators themselves. Ask each person to share one thing *they* personally need from their peers or leaders to feel supported and included in their daily routine. It's a great way to show that adults need scaffolding and inclusion too!
- **Group Reflection:** Wrap up by discussing which of these strategies feel the most "doable" for their own classrooms. This is a great chance for them to walk away with a solid plan for supporting growth in their students.

Trainer Note: This activity is really about giving teachers the "space" to plan. It turns the theory of scaffolding into something they can actually use on Monday morning.



In the next CoP as well.

Skills to Support when Scaffolding

Fine motor skills



Social Skills



Self-help skills



Gross motor skills



Language development



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Fine Motor Skills:

- Offering a variety of graspable toys and objects that encourage infants to practice grasping and manipulation.
- Providing hand-over-hand assistance to help a toddler hold a crayon and make marks on paper during a scribbling activity.
- Offering stacking blocks and demonstrating how to stack them, then gradually allowing the child to attempt stacking independently while offering verbal encouragement and assistance as needed.

Language Development:

- Engaging in responsive and interactive conversations with infants, using simple language and gestures to label objects and actions.
- Reading picture books with toddlers, pointing to and naming familiar objects, and encouraging them to repeat words or sounds.
- Expanding on toddlers' language by repeating their words and adding new vocabulary or descriptive language.

Social Skills

- Facilitating parallel play by providing toys and materials that encourage children to play alongside each other while modeling sharing and turn-taking behaviors.
- Encouraging children to engage in social interactions by arranging group activities such as peek-a-boo games or group singing sessions.
- Intervening in conflicts between toddlers by modeling conflict resolution strategies and helping them negotiate solutions, such as taking turns with a desired toy.

Gross Motor Skills

- Creating a safe and supportive environment for infants to explore movement by providing soft mats and cushions for crawling and cruising.
- Setting up obstacle courses with low ramps, tunnels, and balance beams to encourage toddlers to practice crawling, walking, and climbing.
- Offering hands-on support and guidance to help a toddler practice kicking a ball or

- climbing stairs while ensuring safety and providing encouragement.

A Message from Fred Rogers

“There’s a world of difference between insisting on someone’s doing something and establishing an atmosphere in which that person can grow into wanting to do it.”

— **Fred Rogers**

