

Connecting with your *Children's* Community

Children's own communities shape their development. From their family, peers and care givers, to their extended contacts of school, neighbours, activity groups and local community members, each person they connect with helps them to learn. An important part of an Educator's role is to build connections, and ensure that children have the skills to participate and contribute to play and groups.

The Guide to the National Quality Standard, states an aim of QA5 is 'Educators help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork (Early Years Learning Framework, pages 12 and 25).'

When Educators promote a sense of community within their service, they are assisting the children to achieve Early Years Learning Framework:

OUTCOME 2: CHILDREN ARE CONNECTED WITH AND CONTRIBUTE TO THEIR WORLD

Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation

'All About Me' or 'Star of the Week' projects are a great way to help your children connect with each other. They develop the children's sense of identity by helping them feel recognised and respected for who they are. They help children notice differences and similarities between their friends, and give them opportunities to express their likes and interests. It also helps them to share aspects of their home life and culture. Educators can build relationships by ensuring they listen to and learned about each child's understanding of themselves. They can also program and plan extensions for future learning based on what they learn about the children. These projects are also a great way to get family input into your program.



Build children's communication confidence to help them to connect with their communities.

- Give them helpful words to use, encourage open body language and introduce them to cultural rules.
- Role model cultural competence and show respect for diversity.
- Visit and talk about the community frequently for familiarity.
- Children will begin to feel comfortable and open themselves to new relationships when they can sense that the adults in their life feel comfortable too.

Consider developing a set of 'Community Rules' with the children in your care to help them to become good citizens. Ask the question 'What does a good friend do?'. Get their input and focus on positive behaviours. This could be displayed in your service and mentioned often throughout the day.

While it is important to connect with the children's community, it is also vital that children are aware of 'Safe People and Safe Places' and know how to keep themselves and others safe.

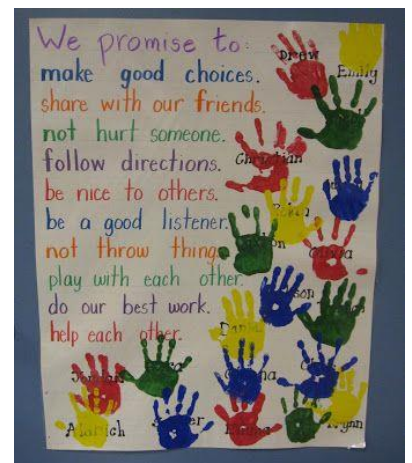
http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0017/11382/2/keeping_me_safe.pdf

is a great resources for teaching community safety.

BELONGING

Experiencing *belonging* – knowing where and with whom you belong – is integral to human existence. Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. *Belonging* acknowledges children's interdependence with others and the basis of relationships in defining identities. In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of *belonging*. *Belonging* is central to *being* and *becoming* in that it shapes who children are and who they can become.

Early Years Learning Framework
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Holistic
APPROACH F D C