

Early Childhood Teaching: From Easing Stress to Increasing Engagement

## KEY STRATEGIES for Successfully Creating a Productive Early Childhood Classroom

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**Our presenter**



**Toni Cacace-Beshears**

SFL Board member  
Retired CEO, Children's Harbor  
Adjunct Professor Tidewater  
Community College

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**KAMNA SETH**  
Webinar Facilitator  
Director, ECE Initiatives  
The Source for Learning

**Assisting today's presenter**

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**Today's Objectives**

- Learn successful strategies to create a child-friendly and productive learning environment to support healthy development.
- Explore methods of direct and indirect guidance to meet the needs of young children during routines and transitions.
- Consider the impact of interactions with young children at play to enrich overall learning.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

**Our Surroundings AFFECT:** We are all affected by our environment.

- How we feel
- How comfortable we are
- How we behave
- How well we can accomplish what we need to do there

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**ENVIRONMENT**


**How do you FEEL?**

Think about how you feel and behave in the following situations:

- Standing in a hot crowded bus or subway.
- Eating in a special restaurant with a friend.
- Preparing a meal in a strange kitchen.

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**ENVIRONMENT**



Sometimes we are not aware of how the environment is making us feel and more importantly act.


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**ENVIRONMENT**

[Redacted]

Think about how you feel and behave in the following situations:  
Think about a store where you enjoy shopping. It can be a grocery store, clothing store, hardware store or any other store.

What makes this a good experience? What makes it easy to accomplish what you want to do there?



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**ENVIRONMENT**

Did you list any of THESE?

- Attractive and inviting displays
- Clean and well kept
- Soft music
- Well organized
- Helpful salespeople
- Soft carpeting
- Well lit
- Well-organized checkout




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**ENVIRONMENT**

Think of a store you DISLIKE going to.

When you are there are you frustrated and angry? What is different about this store?




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**ENVIRONMENT**

Did you list any of THESE?

- Unattractive displays
- Cluttered and disorganized
- Difficult to find what I want
- Long waits
- Narrow aisles
- Dark and dingy
- No logical order to displays
- Poor selection
- Noisy
- Unhelpful salespeople
- Loud music



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**ENVIRONMENT**




Think about your favorite place to be, indoors or outdoors. Imagine yourself in that space.

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**ENVIRONMENT**

[Redacted]

How does it feel? Smell? Look? What do you hear? What are you doing? Are you alone or with other people?



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ENVIRONMENT

**Your Favorite PLACE**

Did you consider any of the following?

- A quiet place to be alone
- A soft and comfortable place to stretch out
- A place where music is playing
- A bright and sunny place or
- A colorful and attractive place

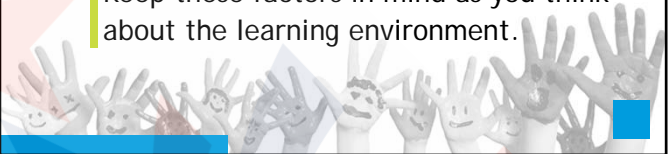


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ENVIRONMENT

Because you like this environment you may feel comfortable and relaxed.

Keep these factors in mind as you think about the learning environment.




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ENVIRONMENT

Many of the factors you identified apply to the classroom environment as well.

Your work environment should support you and work for you.

It should be organized and planned to support the goals you have for children and to make your job easier and more enjoyable.

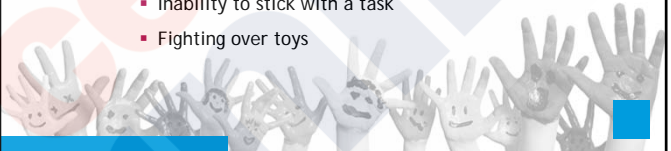


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ENVIRONMENT

**Behaviors to DISCOURAGE**

- Running around the room
- Resistance to clean-up
- Inability to make choices - wandering behavior
- Inability to stick with a task
- Fighting over toys

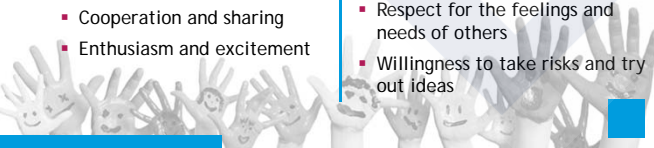


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ENVIRONMENT

**Behaviors to ENCOURAGE**

- Independence
- Curiosity
- Appropriate use of materials
- Consideration of others
- Cooperation and sharing
- Enthusiasm and excitement
- Involvement and the ability to stick with a task
- Joyfulness
- Respect for material
- Respect for the feelings and needs of others
- Willingness to take risks and try out ideas



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ENVIRONMENT

**Messages in the ENVIRONMENT**

**A room that is...**


- attractive,
- orderly, and
- filled with interesting objects

Conveys the message: This is a comfortable place where I can explore, feel safe and learn.



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- Imagine you and 10 of your fellow staff members in your classroom, for 10 hours a day, 5 days a week.
- How would you behave?
- Would you get along?
- Do any of the items you described in the places you did not like to shop apply?

**IMAGINE**

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*Messages in the Environment*




- Neutral colors are on the walls and furnishings
- Furniture is clean and well-maintained.
- Wall decorations are largely made up of children's art displayed at their level and with large spaces of blank walls
- Decorations such as plants, fabric-covered pillows, and colorful tablecloths are used in the classroom.
- Taking some inspiration from the Reggio Emilia, displays of children's projects, with many natural materials.

**This is a good place to be.**

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*Messages in the Environment*




- Cubby or basket for each child.
- Furniture is child sized and in good condition.
- Pictures on the walls, in books and in learning materials include diversity and represent the children.
- Children's artwork is displayed and protected.
- Are there adaptations made for children with a disability?

**You belong here.**

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*Messages in the Environment*



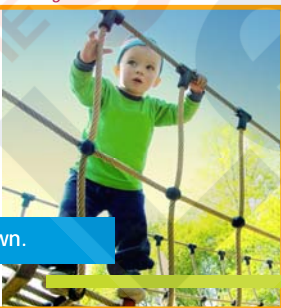
- A well-defined schedule.
- Pictures that illustrate the schedule.
- Consistency is provided in routines.
- Shelves are neat and uncluttered.
- Furniture and materials are arranged and consistently labeled.

**This is a place you can trust.**

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*Messages in the Environment*

- Materials are stored on low shelves vs "inconvenient store."
- Materials are logically organized and located in areas where they are to be used.
- Shelves are labeled with pictures.
- An illustrated job chart shows what each child's responsibilities are.
- Open spaces outdoors for children to use their bodies to move.



**You can do many things on your own.**

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*Messages in the Environment*

- Small quiet areas of your room.
- A large pillow or stuffed chair in a quiet corner.
- There are headphones for the tape recorder or CD player for individual listening.



**You can get away and be by yourself.**

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*Messages in the Environment*

- There are protected areas and defined quiet areas for small group.
- Children have smocks or other protective clothing for art and water play.
- Protected floor space so that children can build with blocks.
- Outdoor area is fenced in and protected
- Attractive displays of materials invite children to use them.
- Toys are rotated so there is frequently something new to interest the children.

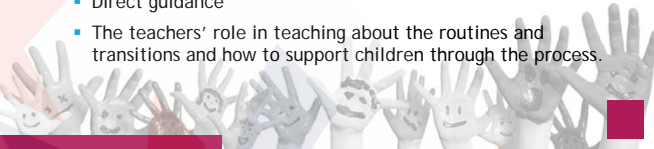
**This is a safe place to explore.**



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**Routines & Transitions**

- Teachers show respect for young children by using direct and indirect guidance throughout the day especially during routines and transitions.
- Indirect guidance
- Direct guidance
- The teachers' role in teaching about the routines and transitions and how to support children through the process.



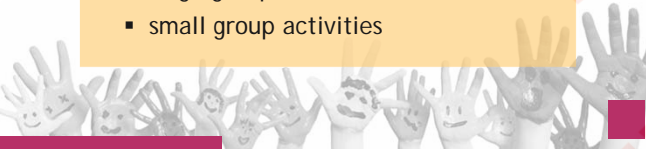
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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**Routines**

**TYPICAL DAILY ROUTINES INCLUDE:**

- arrival and departure
- large group activities
- small group activities




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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Arrivals & Departures**

**WHAT CHILDREN NEED:**

- Steps in the routine
- Expectations
- Acknowledgement



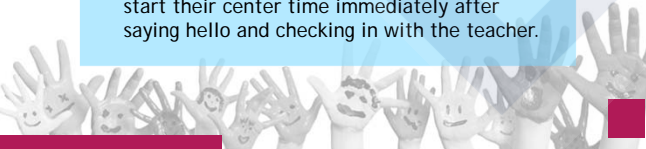
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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Arrival & Departure**

**INDIRECT GUIDANCE**

- How you set up the room for arrival.
- Structuring the schedule to allow children to start their center time immediately after saying hello and checking in with the teacher.



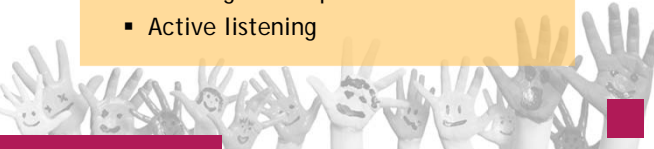
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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Arrival & Departure**

**DIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Limit setting
- Calming techniques
- Active listening



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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Large Group Activity**

**PURPOSE**

- reflection on how the day went.
- reading stories.
- instruction in content areas such as math or science.
- talking with a guest speaker.
- dance, drama or music.
- Social skills can be learned if teachers imbed the skills into the time.

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Large Group Activity**

**WHAT CHILDREN NEED DURING LARGE GROUP TIME**

- Structure of large-group time
- Expectations
- Feedback

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Large Group Activity**

**INDIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Content worthy of children's time
- Time
- Seating
- Arrange seating ahead of time
- Materials

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Large Group Activity**

**DIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Guide by using appropriate limits.
- Determine what you need to say to children to support them.
- Possibly restate limits as needed.

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Small Group Activity**

**PURPOSE**

- A gathering or meeting of only part of the total class.
- Use of small groups to introduce children to concepts from any of the content areas.
- Children enjoy small groups - they work with other children in a relaxed learning environment and have a chance to socialize as they learn

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Small Group Activity**

**WHAT CHILDREN NEED DURING SMALL GROUP**

- Structure of small-group time
- Expectations
- Acknowledgement and feedback

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Small Group Activity**

**INDIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Time
- Seating
- Location
- Materials

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**ROUTINES & TRANSITIONS**

**ROUTINES: Small Group Activity**

**DIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Setting Limits

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**TRANSITIONS**

- Changing from large group activity to the next activity
- Moving into any large group activity
- Moving from small group activity back to "center learning" time
- Moving from one area/"Center" to another
- Arriving at or departing from program/school
- Going from the classroom to work with a specialist
- Moving from the classroom, to the gym, lunchroom, or outside

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**TRANSITIONS**

Routines and care make up the majority of a child's day in an infant room. Transitions occur constantly throughout the day, driven by the individual child, not a set routine.

Toddlers will start to have a schedule with some planned transitions feeding, toileting and napping, learning time. This will remain flexible based on the ages of the children in the group.

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**TRANSITIONS**

**WHAT CHILDREN NEED DURING TRANSITIONS**

- As few transitions as possible.
- Transitions that have been planned.
- Transitions that contribute to the development and learning.

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**TRANSITIONS**

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**TRANSITIONS**

**INDIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Using as few transitions as possible

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**TRANSITIONS**

**DIRECT GUIDANCE**

- Set clear limits
- Teach expected behavior

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**TRANSITIONS**

**Visual SUPPORTS**

*Child Development and Teacher Support.*


- Development in self-control, skill development, understanding themselves and other people, managing stress on their own, takes several years, and occupies most of early childhood.
- The front part of a child's brain is responsible for planning and self-control, and it takes all of childhood and into young adulthood for this section of the brain to be fully formed.
- We need to help children with things such as learning to control impulses, switching from one activity to another, and planning or thinking through what they want to do.
- All young children need help with dealing with stress. - this could mean less transitions.
- Children on the autism spectrum or hearing loss will have additional challenges on top of their typical developmental needs.

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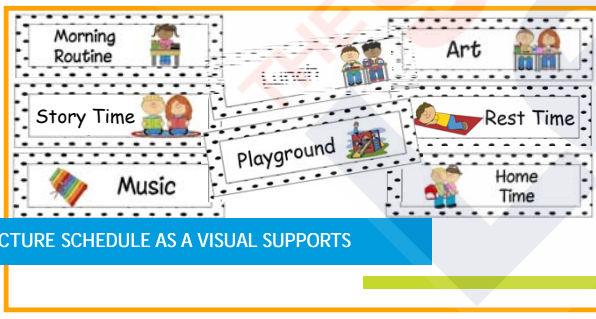
**Visual SUPPORTS**

*Have a Part in Guiding Children*

- Child's photo in cubby
- Child's name printed on a card under her photo
- Illustrated hand washing instructions above a sink
- Drawing of a classroom object, such as a chair with the word printed in the languages spoken by the children in the classroom
- Emotions chart
- Drawings or pictures to put materials away (blocks where blocks will go when done)



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**PICTURE SCHEDULE AS A VISUAL SUPPORTS**

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**High Quality INTERACTIONS**

*"Research indicates the ways teachers interact with children is crucial in determining how children develop over time."*

*-Curby and Brock 2013*

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/news/2016/interactions-matter>

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### High Quality INTERACTIONS

- Developing good relationships with children.
- Teachers - strive to help children develop in all domains.
- To satisfy their inborn curiosity by learning eagerly and joyfully.
- Help children feel safe and secure and develop healthy self-esteem as well as a strong moral compass.
- We want them to honor and respect themselves and others.
- Learn how to deal with a variety of stressors.
- Help children understand and deal effectively with an array of feelings, such as joy, anger, sadness, love and jealousy.
- Help children become compassionate individuals.

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### High Quality INTERACTIONS

- This takes some thinking and reflection.
- Teachers need to acknowledge their role and the ability to build good relationships with children.
- Guidance starts with adult reflection.
- We are responsible for constructing the interpersonal environment.
- We set the tone, have life experiences, knowledge about child development.
- The first step in guiding children effectively is to develop a good relationship with them
- If teachers do not have a strong bond with children, then they cannot expect to guide them well.

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STRATEGIES

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STRATEGIES

DEMONSTRATE RESPECT & SHOW INTEREST

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STRATEGIES

ACKNOWLEDGE CHILDREN

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STRATEGIES

LEARN ABOUT EACH CHILD

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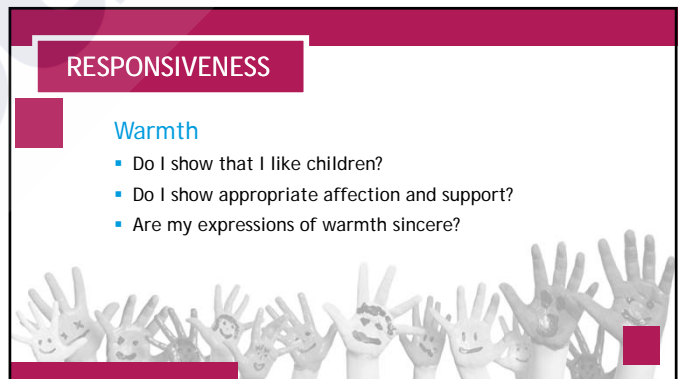
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## RESPONSIVENESS

## Child Development Knowledge

- Do I have a have a knowledge base in child development?
- Do I understand how families affect children?
- Do I understand how a child's culture affects him or her?

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## RESPONSIVENESS

## Children and Adults as Partners in Interaction

- Do I really understand that both adults and children have a part in any interaction?
- Do I also understand that my adult role carries greater responsibility?

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## RESPONSIVENESS

## Communication Style

- Do I communicate in an open and direct way?
- How do I send messages, especially limits?

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## RESPONSIVENESS

## Giving Explanations

- Do I use a reason along with a guidance strategy?
- Do I know how to state reasons well?

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## DEMANDINGNESS

## Boundaries, Limits, and Expectations

- Do I have age and individually appropriate expectations for behavior?
- Do I clearly state appropriate limits?

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## DEMANDINGNESS

## Monitoring and Supervising

- Do I know how to create an orderly, consistent environment?
- Do I monitor children and supervise them well?


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## DEMANDINGNESS

### Discipline Strategies

- Are my discipline strategies positive, age appropriate, individual appropriate, and culturally sensitive?




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## DEMANDINGNESS


### Style of Confrontation

- Am I willing to confront children when necessary? (Name calling, clearly hurtful or inappropriate behavior.)
- Do I confront in a firm, yet kind way?



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### 3 Powerful Interactions Steps



Step 1  
Be Present


Step 2  
Connect

Step 3  
Extend Learning

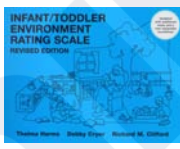
Dombro, A. L., Jablon, J. R., & Stetson, C. (2011). Powerful interactions: How to connect with children to extend their learning. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

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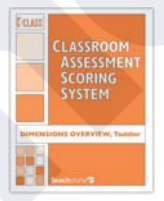
### Tools to Assess Environment and Interactions



ECERS  
Early Childhood  
Environment  
Rating Scale



ITERS  
Infant/ Toddler  
Environment  
Rating Scale



CLASS  
CLASSROOM  
ASSESSMENT  
SCORING  
SYSTEM

CLASS is used to assess classroom interactions (Pre-K, Toddler, and Infant)

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## Resources

1. NAEYC - <https://www.naeyc.org/>
2. CSEFEL - <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>
3. Zero to Three - <https://www.zerotothree.org/>
4. West Ed - <https://www.wested.org/>
5. Challenging Children - <https://childrenwithchallengingbehavior.com/about-us/>
6. IRIS - <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

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## Resources

7. IRIS Resource Locator - <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/iris-resource-locator/>
8. AI's Pals - <http://wingspanworks.com/>
9. TCC - <http://tcc.edu/>
10. PITC - [https://www.pitc.org/pub/pitc\\_docs/home.csp](https://www.pitc.org/pub/pitc_docs/home.csp)

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## Resources

11. Creative Curriculum for Early Childhood, 3rd edition, Diane Trister Dodge and Laura J Colker, Teaching Strategies, Inc. 1992
12. Guidance of Young Children, Tenth edition, Marian Marion, Pearson, 2011
13. [https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Session-Slides-Powerful-Interactions10\\_1\\_14.pdf](https://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Session-Slides-Powerful-Interactions10_1_14.pdf)

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## NEXT webinar

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING: From Easing Stress to Increasing Engagement

Fostering Cultural Sensitivity and Raising Diversity Awareness in Early Learning Programs

Tuesday, December 10, 2019 @ 1:00 PM ET

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