

The Powerful Parallel Process in Serving All Families

All learning happens in the context of relationships. While it certainly helps to simply be a natural “people person” in our field, there are actual techniques that you can learn to become skilled at developing stronger working relationships with families. In this lesson, we will deeply explore the concept of the parallel process. The parallel process is one of the most important concepts in our work, because when we can speak to the needs of families, then they are better equipped to speak to the needs of their children. Similarly, when other professionals can speak to your needs, you can better serve your families. We will frame this process in the Developmental Relationships model, which is a lens through which you can see all interactions. We will discuss examples of these concepts in action, including strengths-based tools and strategies.

Learning Objectives:

1. Paraphrase and sketch key aspects of the Developmental Relationship (DR) framework for both children and adults.
2. Define & give examples of the concept of ‘parallel process’ in the context of working with families.
3. Evaluate the impact of developmental relationships and parallel processes in your experience.
4. Practice creating relationship-based notes to engage and support families in building their capacity and strengths.

Brain Science to Permeate the Early Learning Landscape: Using a Relationship-Based Frameworks in Practice with Infants & Toddlers

Though the early learning field has come a long way in connecting brain science to practice across different settings, current professional development efforts are being focused on how providers can become more aware, intentional, and articulate about the details. The Neuro-relational Framework (Lillas & Turnbull, 2009) is one approach, an interdisciplinary lens to inform the work of educators, therapists, and other family support specialists. We will explore key findings around modern systems neuroscience, describe how experiences affect early brain development and lifelong learning, and discuss protective factors that promote resilience. Everyday examples will be evaluated through the NRF lens, and participants will examine their own practices in terms of the four brain systems proposed by the framework.

Learning Objectives:

1. Define and exemplify the four brain systems associated with the NRF.
2. Illustrate the Mutual Regulation model by relating it to their own work
3. Appraise practices and behaviors in their workplace according to the NRF brain systems
4. Create an action plan that incorporates aspects of the NRF to address a perceived barrier in a family, to further support their goals

Relationship-Based Notes to Engage & Empower Families

Writing short notes to document data can be a powerful way for educators or practitioners to document a child's development, and to engage families. Notes can be even more powerful when a relationship-based lens is used to target transactional components for families who face challenges. Using the Parallel Process and the Developmental Relationships Framework as foundations, this workshop will analyze examples of verbal, written, and visual notes that capture important developmental moments to engage families. Participants will apply strategies to their own notes with specific cases in mind, reflect on the process, and create a plan for next steps.

OBJECTIVES

1. Define & give examples of the concept of 'parallel process' in the context of working with families
2. Paraphrase and sketch key aspects of the Developmental Relationship (DR) framework for both children and adults.
3. Evaluate the impact of developmental relationships and parallel processes in your experience, examine how notes capture these.
4. Practice creating relationship-based notes to engage and support families in building their capacity and strengths.

Supporting Communication & Language Development in Early Learners

A family is the best expert on their child, while an educator is an expert on best practices. Together, a partnership will provide an ideal learning context. This workshop is framed around a neuro-relational approach that puts emphasis on understanding how the child's regulation and relationships support all communication. We then review some specific evidence-based practices that have been shown to boost communication, particularly for children who are learning English as a concurrent language or who show delays (or have risks). Using cases relevant to the participants, we will explore methods to engage with professional colleagues and families to support these practices to children's lives.

Learning Objectives.

Participants will have support and opportunity to:

- 1) Identify current strengths around supporting language and communication development, and describe ways to translate those strengths into interactions between yourself and the child, and between the child and their family.
- 2) Explain and describe how the Four Brain Systems of a Neuro-relational Framework relates to communication development
- 3) Define and exemplify how Developmental Relationships Framework supports communication
- 4) Prioritize techniques that link language support in homes with high vulnerabilities and/or diverse backgrounds.
- 5) Reflect on and discuss an action plan to adopt new principles into current caseloads, and some next step areas for further professional education.

Language to Literacy: Evidence-Based Strategies to Support Early Learners

This workshop will briefly review the five key emergent literacy skills that strongly predict later conventional literacy skills. Then, we will focus on evidence-based strategies to optimally support children's print knowledge, alphabet knowledge, and phonological awareness. We will include considerations for engaging with families around these strategies, and for diverse cultures and learning needs.

Learning Objectives:

1. Explain the difference between emergent and early literacy, by identifying and giving examples of the 5 key emergent literacy skills that strongly predict later conventional literacy skills.
2. Classify consonant speech sounds into categories according to "beginning 8, middle 8 and late 8" stages, and the "3 point vowels," and describe ways to relate these levels to emergent literacy.
3. Describe and give examples of the hierarchy within phonological and phonemic awareness, from basic to advanced, and demonstrate ways to adapt these to current levels of individual children.

Considerations for Engaging Culturally Diverse Families with Special Needs

This workshop will share perspectives on viewing culturally diverse families with special needs, as well as examples on how to gather information from, and partner with these families. Material will exemplify the wide variety of beliefs about causes of and approaches to disability, and will emphasize the importance of drawing from engagement methods that are reflective, mindful, and parallel process oriented. Several examples will encourage discussion and reflection, and participants will have opportunity to share their own experience.

Learning Objectives:

1. Examine your own beliefs, influences, and assumptions about families, and what effects they might have on your work.
2. Describe how culture, circumstance, and child development can influence the extent of family involvement in early learning settings.
3. Identify barriers that can limit family engagement and develop strategies to facilitate reciprocal and effective collaboration with families.
4. Develop an action plan using relationships as the foundation for work with both children and families, including those with diverse backgrounds and needs.

Strategies for Challenging Conversations

Challenges can come in many forms, some of which may catch us off guard, or cause us to feel unsure or uncomfortable. This lesson will examine ways to identify and describe these challenges, using example scenarios and drawing from your own experiences. The material will emphasize the importance of viewing challenges through cultural lenses of the family, and will also reinforce how solid-ground relationships and collaborations with families can be the antidote to challenges that arise.

Learning Objectives.

Participants will have support and opportunity to:

- 1) Identify new perspectives on supporting families in addressing children's challenging behaviors or developmental concerns.
- 2) Describe a scenario that involved a challenging conversation and reflect on the aspects that made it challenging, as well as what helped (or could help) meet the challenge.
- 3) List and briefly explain strategies to effectively join families in addressing an unmet need that you perceive in your work place or community.

Circle Time for Parents & Providers: A Regroup and Reflection

One of the ingredients for effective intervention or therapy is ongoing opportunity for both providers and parents to pause, reflect, and verbalize what is working, and what next steps are, as well as their own reactions and emotions to the ups and downs of the journey. This session is a time to simply listen and/or share experiences through guided prompts in a supportive environment, welcome to all.

Guided reflection may include prompts such as:

- What have been your biggest a-ha moments?
- What do you wish you knew earlier?
- What are your biggest strengths? Where are the challenges or barriers

While it is facilitated, we will be mindful of the key themes that emerge in the discussions, whether they may be feelings of vulnerability or fear, or of hopefulness and resilience, and use strengths-based lens to draw parallels between what our colleagues say, and our own past or current experiences. Both practitioners and families would be welcome in a community discussion that shares values of respect, learning, equity, and positive learning support. You are invited to bring examples to discuss, goals you are working on, your questions, your ideas, and your open mind.

Supporting Resilience in Families and Young Children Through Engagement

Resilience is a key to overcoming adverse childhood experiences, which are in the life narrative of up to 64% of adults. Fortunately, research is uncovering much about the neuroscience behind risk and resilience, but also about the practices that support optimal growth over adversity. Through intentional and strengths-based partnerships between providers and families, and by promoting equity and awareness within communities, interventions can go beyond their traditional disciplinary scope to support long-term resilience in both children and their families. This talk will summarize relevant findings on both risk and resilience, and will share strategies on how practitioners can strengthen their own relationships with the families they serve.

The Brain Science of Relationships: Changing the Game for Early Learning

The brain is shaped by experience, and all learning happens in the context of relationships. These two principles are not new, but the recognition that they are central to early learning is fortunately experiencing renewed attention. This talk will first introduce a modern take of a classic relationship-based learning paradigm, using examples from everyday experiences between young children and their Important Adults. We will then examine how the four main brain systems affect all learning, even in the smallest moments. With a deeper understanding of the neuroscience of relationships, we can better engage not only with our children but also with their educators. Participants in this session will have the opportunity to identify their own team's strengths, and appraise how elements in the talk relate to their own experiences and goals.

Late Talkers: How to Spot Red Flags, and What To Do (besides making a referral)

Everyone knows one: A toddler who seems to be "more quiet" than peers, or whose family or teachers wonder if the lag they observe is within typical limits, or if it warrants further evaluation. When is it best to 'wait and see' and when should there be a referral? What is the difference between a speech and a language delay? What are some evidence-based ways to support speech and language development in those children in everyday ways? These are some of the topics covered in this workshop. We will discuss ways to help predict which late talkers will become "late bloomers" versus ones who will need more support. We will also identify strategies to make the most of every conversation to boost a child's skills.

Young Dual Language Learners

There are more people in the world who speak more than one language, compared to monolingual speakers. What does current best evidence say about the best way to develop young children who are exposed to multiple languages, or whose home language is different than what they will learn in school? This workshop will explore myths and current best evidence around best practices to support young children's capacity to develop multiple languages, and to best prepare them for school and in life. We will discuss cognitive benefits of using more than one language, ways to engage culturally diverse families in decisions, and research findings that support the use of a family's heritage language as much as possible.

About the Instructor

Dr. Gina Lebedeva (LEH-ba-dev-ah) uses an interdisciplinary approach to support families and professionals in early learning. A certified speech and language pathologist, she uses principles of infant mental health, and developmental and cognitive psychology, to coach children, families, caregivers, and educators. Specializing in the first five years, she serves diverse families with children with communication challenges.

A dynamic and engaging speaker, she has developed customized workshops and keynotes, and has served as an advisor and consultant throughout the early learning community. She was the founding director of the Outreach division at the University of Washington's Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences. Gina is a WA State Approved Trainer, and is a faculty member at the University of Washington Department of Early Childhood and Family Studies, where some favorite courses are *Family Engagement* (online learning), and *Risk & Resilience in Infants & Toddlers*. In all her work, she continuously draws upon her experiences in developmental neuroscience research, clinical practice, and as a parent of a kindergartner and toddler twins.

She holds a Magna Cum Laude BS in Psychology and Linguistics from Cornell University, and a PhD in Speech and Hearing Sciences from the University of Washington. Gina enjoys tending to her backyard hens, playing the oboe, and cheering for her hometown Pittsburgh Steelers.

Feedback from students & participants:

It has been a great experience taking this course. I think that this specific area is one of my weakest working in this field, and I have learned so much! Thank you so much for wonderful lectures and providing great resources. -M.W.

I wanted to thank you for teaching this class. I learned so much! But the best part was witnessing your modeling the concepts we were studying in your, watching it all unfold in real life. The caring, the responsiveness and sensitivity, the parallel process, the developmental relationship framework, your guidance... Thank you for all of the information, I can see from the other side how effective our words and caring can be, and why they are so important for the families we work with. Thanks again for everything. You are amazing! -N.D.

This workshop helped to shed light on the importance of understanding families and working collaboratively with them to offer the best educational experience for their children. - Anon.

There were many things to consider that I hadn't thought of before that I can use in my workplace and interactions with families. It changed my practice and out of all the classes I've taken, I found this one to push me into being a "professional". -Anon.

Amazing session – she was easy to listen to first thing and extremely knowledgeable. -Anon.

Great info, A+. I could have listened to her longer. -Anon.

Fascinating and applicable. Dr Lebedeva provided information that will be very useful in my social work practice and child advocacy work. -Anon.

Great to have cutting edge research aligned with practice. -Anon.

So rich! So relevant! Thank you. -Anon.