

Communicating for Connection:

Fostering Positive Interactions with Children



OVERVIEW

Communicating for Connection teaches participants, through real-world and tangible strategies, ways to create meaningful and connected moments with children and young people through positive, warm and responsive interactions with educators. Best practices and research on creating nurturing, responsive environments that foster children and young people's holistic development is highlighted, explored and demystified.

As we explore *Communicating for Connection*, participants delve into the heart of meaningful interactions and relationships across education and care settings. Reframing 'attention-seeking' behaviours and acquire strategies to identify and respond to 'connection-seeking' behaviours, fostering a deeper bond between educators and children and young people. Strategies will enhance communication techniques to support children and young people's language skills, social and emotional skills and sense of connection and wellbeing. Together, skills and strategies will be explored, enabling educators to proactively plan to support, monitor, manage and engage in a regulation process with children and young people who are experiencing dysregulation.

WE WILL...

- Explore the shift from viewing behaviour as "attention-seeking" to understanding it as "connection-seeking" and needs-driven.
- Discuss practical communication approaches that nurture belonging, co-regulation and trust.
- Engage in reflective conversations and activities that deepen relational practice.
- Learn how educators' own regulation, wellbeing and Skill to Fill contribute to children and young people's sense of safety.
- Work together to develop strategies for strengthening secure, responsive and emotionally attuned interactions.

DELIVERY MODE OFFERINGS:

1. Self-paced online course
2. Full-day face-to-face session (up to 5 hours)
3. Live online webinar
4. After-hours in-service workshops with teams (up to 2.5 hours)

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PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

By the end of this workshop, participants will possess:

1. Increased confidence in identifying and responding to connection-seeking behaviours with empathy and clarity.
2. Enhanced communication practices that support children's belonging, becoming and wellbeing.
3. A stronger reflective practice that improves the quality and intentionality of everyday interactions.
4. Insight into how to fill your own Connection Cup and maintain your Skill to Fill in challenging moments.
5. A personalised plan to strengthen self-regulation and co-regulation with children who are experiencing big feelings.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

Humanistic & Psychology Martin Seligman & Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Emphasises unconditional positive regard and the centrality of belonging and emotional safety for wellbeing and learning. Highlights the role of warm interactions, strengths and belonging in building wellbeing, resilience and emotional capability.

The Phoenix Cups Framework Sandi Phoenix

A model of human needs that positions connection, safety, freedom, mastery and fun as essential drivers of behaviour and wellbeing. Connection is a core basic-human life for all children. Supporting educators to identify and support needs for connection.

Guidance Approach Dr Louise Porter

Focuses on children being supported rather than controlled, prompting educators to respond with empathy, skill-building, and relationship-based practice rather than consequences or rewards, using empathy proactivity to support children's skill development.

Contemporary Neuroscience Dr Lisa Feldman-Barret

Children learn to understand their unique emotional experience through exploration of their world and rich interactions. Supports the understanding that stress, dysregulation and unmet needs affect behaviour when the brain systems are overwhelmed.

KEY LINKS – NATIONAL

Alignment with National Quality Standard

- **QA5** – Relationships with Children (Elements 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1): strengthens warm, respectful interactions, dignity and rights of the child, and co-regulation.
- **QA1** – Educational Program and Practice (Elements 1.1.2, 1.2.1): supports child-centred practice and responsive communication that builds learning and wellbeing.
- **QA7** – Governance and Leadership (Element 7.2.3): promotes professional reflection and educator capability in relationship-based practice.

Alignment with EYLF v2.0

Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships – Central to a needs-based, guidance approach that prioritises co-regulation, emotional safety and strong relational connection.

Practices

- Responsive and reciprocal interactions – Strengthens warm, attuned communication including serve-and-return, “say what you see”, and “connect before correct”.

Learning Outcomes

- Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world- Encourages participation, kindness, empathy and peer connection through intentional relational practices.
- Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing – Deepens capacity to support emotional regulation and positive mental health through connection and safety.
- Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators – Increases opportunities for sustained shared thinking, rich conversations and expressive language within trusting relationships.

Alignment with MTOP v2.0

Principles

- Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships – Central to a needs-based, guidance approach that prioritises co-regulation, emotional safety and strong relational connection with children and young people, and supports a sense of belonging.
- Partnerships – Supports respectful, collaborative partnerships with children and young people, families and colleagues by strengthening educators’ capacity to respond with empathy, shared understanding and relational trust.

Practices

- Collaboration with children and young people – Strengthens warm, attuned communication and shared relational processes, including serve-and-return, “say what you see”, and “connect before correct”, supporting children and young people’s agency, voice and participation.

Outcomes

- Outcome 2 – Children and young people are connected with and contribute to their world- Encourages participation, kindness, empathy and peer connection through intentional relational practices.
- Outcome 3 – Children and young people have a strong sense of wellbeing – Deepens capacity to support emotional regulation and positive mental health through connection and safety.
- Outcome 5 – Children and young people are effective communicators – Increases opportunities for sustained shared thinking, rich conversations and expressive language within trusting relationships.

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KEY LINKS – NATIONAL CONTINUED

Alignment with Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- **Standard 1.2** – Know learners and how they learn: This deepens understanding of children's emotional needs and relationship-based development.
- **Standard 4.4** – Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments: strengthens connection, belonging and co-regulation practices.
- **Standard 6.2** – Engage in professional learning: enhances ongoing reflective practice and communication capability

Alignment with National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

- **Principle 1** – Child safety and wellbeing are embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture. Support a culture where children's rights, needs and wellbeing guide every decision.
- **Principle 2** – Children participate in decisions affecting them. Promote children's agency, voice and active participation in relationships and routines.
- **Principle 4** – Equity is upheld and diverse needs are respected. Elevates inclusion and belonging, reducing barriers to equitable participation.
- **Principle 5** – People working with children are suitable and supported. Provides educators with skills that prevent harm and support safety.
- **Principle 6** – Processes for responding to complaints or concerns are child-focused. Encourages listening, attunement and responsiveness, ensuring children are heard and respected.

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KEY LINKS - QLD

Alignment with the Kindy Uplift Key Priority Areas

Access & Inclusion

- Promotes relational, needs-based and trauma-informed practice that reduces barriers to participation.
- Helps educators adapt environments and interactions to meet diverse needs.

Culturally Safe, Inclusive and Responsive Practice

- Encourages communication that honours each child's identity, background and needs.

Social & Emotional Learning

- Builds children's emotional safety through co-regulation, connection and predictable relational patterns.
- Strengthens educators' understanding of stress responses and how to support children through attuned communication.

Oral Language & Literacy

- Increases opportunities for sustained shared thinking, conversations, serve-and-return interactions and relational language.

Executive Function

- Co-regulation supports the development of impulse control, emotional balance and sustained attention.
- Fosters self-regulation and shared regulation through connected, attuned interactions.

Alignment with QKLG

Wellbeing:

- Deepens educator understanding of stress, emotions and behaviour so children experience emotional safety and co-regulation.
- Builds children's capacity for resilience, emotional regulation and healthy coping by ensuring their core needs are supported.

Identity:

- Strengthens children's sense of belonging, self-worth and visibility through warm, attuned interactions.

Connectedness:

- Promotes respectful relationships, inclusion and community connectedness within the learning environment.

Active Learning:

- Encourages playful interactions, conversation, curiosity and emotionally safe exploration.

Communication:

- Enhances educators' ability to scaffold language, encourage expression and build rich conversational exchanges.

KEY LINKS – VIC

School Readiness Funding Menu

Please note this workshop is not on the SRF menu. It can however be utilised under flexible funding provisions. For more information on flexible funding go to the Victorian Department of Education website here:



For more information on the Phoenix Support SRF offerings, including those on the menu as well as flexible funding options, head to our website here:



Alignment with the SRF Priority Areas for use under Flexible Funding Options

Communication (language, literacy and numeracy)

- Increases high-quality verbal interactions, sustained shared thinking and relational conversation, building the foundations for language development.

Wellbeing (social, emotional and executive function)

- Supports children's emotional development and co-regulation skills through connection-focused communication.
- Helps educators respond to dysregulation with attuned, needs-based strategies rather than behaviourist interventions.

Access, Inclusion and Participation.

- Promotes relational, needs-based and trauma-informed approaches that honour children's individual experiences and contexts.
- Reduces barriers to engagement for children experiencing vulnerability by strengthening safety, predictability and connection.

Alignment with the VEYLDF

Practice Principles

- Respectful Relationships and Responsive Engagement - Deeply aligned with connection-filling practice, co-regulation, serve-and-return interactions and attuned emotional support.
- High Expectations for Every Child - Reframes behaviour as an expression of unmet needs, promoting equitable, strengths-based responses rather than compliance-based expectations.

Learning Outcomes

- Outcome 2 – Children are connected with and contribute to their world - Strengthens empathy, cooperation, participation and community connection through relational and inclusive practice.
- Outcome 3 – Children have a strong sense of wellbeing - Deepens educator understanding of stress, regulation and emotional safety, supporting children's mental health and resilience.
- Outcome 5 – Children are effective communicators - Sustained shared thinking, rich conversation, relational language and responsive interactions support expressive and receptive communication skills.