



Six Positive Messages

to guide a year of teaching
and learning



Sometimes, the most profound things in life are also the simplest.

Decades of research on both academic achievement and mental health has proven what early childhood educators already know to be true—that the **positive relationships you build with children and their families will be more powerful and have a more lasting effect than anything else you do as a teacher.**



Teaching and learning are complex processes, to be sure, shaped by myriad external influences. If you were to think of "a child's success at school" as a pie chart, that pie would include a great many pieces.

Learning is easier for children who are physically healthy; often read to; and frequent participants in interesting, age-appropriate experiences that build vocabulary and background knowledge.

On the other hand, it's difficult for children to learn when they are worried, hungry, sleepy, sick, confused, anxious, lonely, or scared.



It can be overwhelming to try to consider all the potential hazards, roadblocks, and diversions on each child's journey of development and learning. It's even more overwhelming to try to forestall all of them along the way, particularly when so many are beyond your control.

But we can definitely know where to start.



Positive Messages Provide the Right Start

Children begin to form attachments with adults at birth. As children grow, so do the number, variety, and quality of those attachments. **The more secure those bonds are, the greater the child's chances for development** of other social–emotional life skills, as well as for building other positive relationships, such as with siblings and peers.

The human brain is prewired to send and receive messages in a variety of ways, including through both words and actions. **Personal attachments with adults are rooted in the soil of the messages that children receive.**



Words, Tone, Body Language, and Expressions

As a teacher, you send messages to children through the words you choose, your tone of voice, your body language, and your facial expressions. When those elements align, your messages are made clear. Children notice and respond. For example, if you say the words that tell a child that you care, when your tone is warm, when your expression is kind, and when your body language is welcoming, your message is unmistakable, and it is both simple and profound.



Positive Messages Throughout the Year

Teaching isn't about making a first impression; it's about making a lasting impression. Those lasting impressions—founded in the relationships you build with children and their families—will be bolstered by consistent reinforcement of positive messages.

The Creative Curriculum has long embraced **six positive messages** in particular. We encourage you to revisit these six messages repeatedly throughout the year and take the time to consider the purpose of each. We believe that your awareness of each message's intent empowers you to become intentional in the ways that you convey them.



Your approach to answering these questions will send many **positive messages** to the children in your class, such as...



This is a good place to be.



You belong here.



This is a place you can trust.



There are places you can be by yourself.

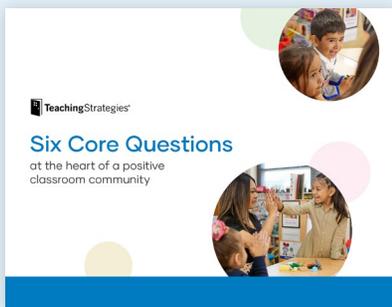


You can do many things on your own here.



This is a safe place to explore.

RELATED CONTENT



Learn more about how to send positive messages in the eBook [Six Core Questions at the Heart of a Classroom Community](#)



POSITIVE MESSAGE

1

This is a good place to be.

The intent of this message is **reassurance** for children that they will enjoy being in your classroom and feel safe there. Your goal is to have them look forward to learning new things and spending time together.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

1

This is a good place to be.



Turn the message into action.

- Ask children to **think, talk, and draw** about things that make them happy.
- Let children know it's okay to **ask questions and share opinions**.
- Reassure children that **they are the most important part of the classroom**. With their permission, display recent, authentic artifacts of their work and play throughout your shared space.





POSITIVE MESSAGE

2

You belong here.

This is a message of **acceptance**. By sending this message, you help children feel accepted for who they are and encourage them to build connections with others. Your messages can help children appreciate different types of people and learn to find similarities that form the foundation of friendships.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

2

You belong here.



Turn the message into action.

- **Have children share photos and drawings** of their families and themselves doing things they enjoy. Incorporate the materials children create into class discussions and ask them to talk about the people and activities in the pictures.
- **Play variations of the game "Just Like Mine!"** Select one child and point out something about him: "Juan's shirt has stripes." The other children wearing shirts with stripes can respond by saying, "Just like mine!"
- It can be difficult to join a community once it's established. Invite families to help you set up a Welcome Committee to **support children and families who enter your class mid-year.**





POSITIVE MESSAGE

3

This is a place you can trust.

This message is about **reliability**. Young children crave consistency, routine, and structure. Once children build trust in their environment, teachers, and classmates, they feel safe to unleash their creativity and big ideas. While your class schedule will depend on the length of your day and may be impacted by program requirements, the fundamentals of building a consistent, reliable routine are the same.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

3

This is a place
you can trust.



Turn the message into action.

- Offer a consistent schedule that includes both active, **high-energy activities** and **quiet, focused experiences** throughout the day.
- Provide large blocks of **uninterrupted time for play**, both indoors and outdoors.
- Make sure children are part of the process of **creating rules for your classroom community**. Ask them to share their ideas for being kind to each other; taking care of their toys and other belongings; and making sure everyone has a chance to learn, grow, and play.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

3

This is a place
you can trust.



Turn the message into action.

- **Group rules into “Little Rules” and “Big Rules.”** For example, “Big Rules” focus on just a few key, overarching ideas: being kind, being safe, and taking care of each other and classroom materials. “Little Rules,” such as determining how you wash hands after each game or stand apart when waiting in line, reinforce those “Big Rules.”
- Research confirms that regular attendance matters for both short- and long-term success at school. When a child is unexpectedly absent, **rely on a personal and supportive approach** to let their family know they were missed.





POSITIVE MESSAGE

4

There are places you can be by yourself.

The intent of this message is **respect** for children as individuals. Some children need more alone time than others. Let them know that this is okay and that you respect their needs.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

4

There are
places you can
be by yourself.



Turn the message into action.

- Provide a designated area in your classroom, such as a nook for reading or relaxing, where children can be alone if they choose.
- While some children's natural temperament will mean they are more likely than others to seek time alone, all children benefit from built-in breaks to rest and relax from the busyness of school.





POSITIVE MESSAGE

5

You can do many things on your own here.

This is a message about nurturing **independence**. During the early childhood years, children are learning that they are unique individuals with their own interests and agency. By sending this message and providing developmentally appropriate challenges, you're building children's confidence in their ability to achieve their goals.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

5

You can do
many things on
your own here.



Turn the message into action.

- Create a balance between **teacher-led and child-initiated** experiences.
- Provide many opportunities for children to safely work out their thoughts, ideas, emotions, and developmental needs through **unstructured, imaginative play**.
- Provide many opportunities to **practice low-risk decision-making**, such as by offering choice time when children can select from different activities.
- Create a system of classroom jobs for children to help **care for your shared space**. Throughout the year, invite children to suggest new jobs they believe could help maintain the classroom.





POSITIVE MESSAGE

6

This is a safe place to explore.

This is a message of **confidence**. To do their personal best, children need the freedom to try new things without fear. They should feel that it's quite acceptable—even expected and encouraged—to make mistakes as they learn.



POSITIVE MESSAGE

6

This is a safe place to explore.



Turn the message into action.

- Let children know it's okay to feel sad or scared at school and that adults are there to help them.
- Together, read books that have rich social–emotional themes. Help children identify the problem in the story, empathize with the characters, and sort out their own feelings.
- Whenever children return from an extended or unexpected school closing, such as after a planned break or following a few days of inclement weather, take time to revisit rules and procedures to remind children of their shared rights and responsibilities in the classroom community.



Learn more about Teaching Strategies

Teaching Strategies helps you ensure that each and every child receives a strong foundation for success in school and in life. The Creative Curriculum is the only curriculum that integrates every aspect of a high-quality early education program and ties those aspects to research-based, developmentally appropriate objectives for learning.



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