RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

WHAT ARE RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

Relationship skills refer to our ability to create and sustain healthy relationships with others.

Communication skills refer to our ability to use written, spoken and non-verbal language (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, etc.), to express thoughts or feelings, entertain, persuade or inform.

WHAT DO RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS LOOK LIKE?

Children with strong relationship and communication skills will:

- Engage in meaningful relationships with others.
- Use strong written, spoken, and non-verbal language to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Be able to persuade others in effective ways (e.g., writing letters to express their feelings, asking for time to speak with someone, etc.).
- Collaborate well with others and be able to exercise teamwork to complete a common goal.
- Demonstrate cultural competence and awareness (e.g., acting with empathy when engaging with those who share different backgrounds and experiences; befriending people from diverse cultural backgrounds, embracing their differences; and engaging in shared cultural learning and experiences with one another through language, food, customs, etc.).

HOW CAN PARENTS FOSTER RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS?

Parents can...

- **Model being** in respectful, reciprocal relationships with others, in which each party treats the other with kindness and respect.
- **Embrace and strategically point out** differences between and among themselves, their families, and others.
- **Read aloud to children** while uplifting “tier 2” or higher-level vocabulary (e.g., “In this story it seems like Sarah has a problem! She really has a big dilemma!”).
- **Narrate your day** to your child, while engaging in “serve and return” conversational turn taking with open-ended questions embedded. For example:
  - Parent: “We have so much to do today! I need to go to the grocery store, pick up the dry cleaning, take you to dance practice, and make dinner! What do you think we should do first?”
  - Child: “I don’t know … maybe we should do the dry cleaning first.”
  - Parent: “Ok, sounds good. Why do you think we should do dry cleaning first as opposed to grocery shopping?”
  - Child: “Well, I was just thinking that the groceries may get hot in the car if we do the grocery shopping first.”
  - Parent: “Ahhh, I see! Good thinking!”