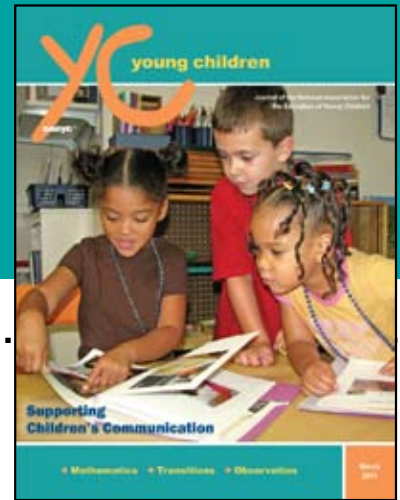


NEXT

An NAEYC
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Resource

young children

Derry Koralek, Editor in Chief • Amy Shillady, Senior Editor



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Using NEXT for Young Children

NEXT for Young Children suggests ways to build on the content of selected articles from *Young Children*, the award-winning, peer-reviewed professional journal published bimonthly by NAEYC. The training outlines for these articles can be used in a variety of ways: teacher educators can use them in their classes; staff development specialists can use them to design workshops; and center directors and school principals can use them to plan staff meetings or training sessions. Early childhood education students and practitioners may also wish to use them alone or with colleagues or peers.

Each training outline includes the following features:

1. **Key Messages**—important content points.
2. **Glossary**—definitions of key terms.
3. **Self-study**—questions to build on the content of the article and reflect on current practices.
4. **Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers**—discussion prompts related to personal experiences, current practices, and connections between research and practice.
5. **Action steps**—opportunities to apply and document application of new knowledge and skills.
6. **Continue learning**—suggested resources for increasing knowledge and skills.

In addition, each outline indicates the NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards that are most closely related to the content (see the box on the right at the top of each outline).

A few notes

- All page numbers refer to *Young Children*, Volume 66, Number 2, unless otherwise noted.
- No permission is needed to make copies of NAEYC-copyrighted *Young Children* articles and *NEXT for Young Children* as long as they bear a credit line and are distributed at no cost.
- In group sessions, facilitators can ask participants to do activities in pairs, small groups, or as classroom teams, depending on the setting. Volunteers can record and disseminate the ideas generated in the sessions.
- Visit NAEYC's website for additional professional development materials at www.naeyc.org.

NEXT for Young Children contents

[Young Girls Discovering Their Voice with Literacy and Readers Theater](#) ([click to view](#))

by Debby Zambo • Study guide by Amy Shillady

[Guidance Matters: Children Who Have Serious Conflicts—Part 1: Reactive Aggression](#) ([click to view](#))

by Dan Gartrell • Study guide by Dan Gartrell

This article describes the impact of gender stereotypes on young girls' development, such as relational aggression—a covert form of bullying. Early childhood educators can use literacy-based activities, such as Readers Theater, to expand girls' views of gender roles, helping them develop more positive self-concepts and better relationships with peers.

The content of this article is most closely related to NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs 1 and 4, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards 1, 2, and 3.

Key Messages

- ➔ Young girls are easily influenced by the media's portrayal of adolescent girls and women, and they may begin to judge themselves and others by unattainable standards of beauty, which can lead to relational aggression.
- ➔ Readers Theater expands young girls' views of gender roles by allowing them to hear and speak like strong female characters in books—those who reflect traits such as honesty, respect, tolerance, and courage.
- ➔ Role-playing allows young girls to explore alternative selves, tune in to their feelings, and find their voice, which leads to self-esteem and reduces relational aggression.

Glossary

Gender stereotypes—oversimplified ideas about ways males and females are “supposed” to behave, appear, and dress, and the different roles they play in family and society

Readers Theater—an activity in which children perform by taking turns reading lines from scripts with expression, supporting their literacy and social-emotional development

Relational aggression—a covert form of bullying and ostracizing, using behaviors such as name calling, spreading rumors, and excluding peers from activities

Self-study

Respond to the following questions in the space provided.

In your view

1. Write down three new things you learned about gender from reading this article. If possible, compare your choices with those of others who have read it.

2. What research findings cited by the author did you find most interesting? Why were they of particular interest to you?

3. How does the content of this article relate to the curriculum, Common Core State Standards, state and local early learning standards, or other requirements applicable to your setting?

Reflect and revisit your practice

1. Which ideas in this article affirm your work with or on behalf of young children and families?

2. What ideas and research findings in this article raise questions about your practice? What new approaches might you try to help both girls and boys learn healthy gender roles?

3. What kinds of supports do you and your colleagues need to try out these new ideas (such as assistance from a colleague and/or additional resources for your setting)?

Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers

Discuss the following questions with at least one colleague/peer. Record the key points of your discussion in the space provided.

Consider current practice

1. What is your view on the importance of physical appearance? What helped shape this view? How do you think it impacts your self-esteem and views on gender roles?

2. What were your earliest lessons about gender roles? How has your thinking about these roles stayed the same or changed over time? How does your current view influence your interactions with children and families?

3. If you serve young children, how do you typically respond to bullying and/or relational aggression? What has worked well? What challenges do you still face? How do you think the children you serve would respond to the strategies the author presents?

Connect research and practice

1. What does research say about how media role models affect young children's development? What negative impacts can they have on children? What positive impacts can they have?

2. What does research say about ways Readers Theater can support children’s literacy skills?

3. What research findings support the use of Readers Theater to help promote healthy social-emotional development and reduce relational aggression among children?

Action steps

Try out these ideas over the next 2 to 4 weeks. Document and discuss your experiences with others.

Document and implement

- 1. Observe and record.** At the end of each day, reflect on children’s interactions and write about them in a journal. Or, videotape children at different times of the day. Review the footage alone, or with a colleague or mentor, while taking notes. Pay attention to cliques of boys and/or girls, to children who are excluded from play, and to teasing and other forms of relational aggression. Plan strategies to address any problems you identify and to support all children’s self-esteem development.
- 2. Reflect, plan, and implement.** Think about your observations and how they illustrate different children’s notions of gender and the roles that they can and cannot play. Use the information to create an original script or adapt an existing script for Readers Theater that builds on children’s interests and provides examples of positive role models. (Specific instructions are included on page 32 of the article.) Assign roles based on your observations. For example, consider assigning major roles to children who do not speak up for themselves and are typically excluded. Help build a community of respect, responsibility, and interdependence by carefully observing and responding to children’s interactions during practice performances. Apply additional strategies described in the article or others of your choosing.
- 3. Invite families.** Prepare and distribute invitations for families to come and watch Readers Theater performances. In the invitation, describe how the children have prepared and how the activity has benefited the classroom community. Hold multiple performances at different times during the day to accommodate parents’ different schedules and/or videotape the performance and upload it to the program’s website for those who cannot attend.

Discuss experiences and outcomes

Summarize your experiences and outcomes in the space provided, and then discuss them with at least one colleague/peer.

1. What did you do that was successful?

2. What challenges did you face? How did you address the challenges?

3. Have you noticed changes in your program as a result of the new strategies? Did anything surprise you?

4. How can you build on your progress?

Continue learning

Consult these resources to further build knowledge and skills related to the content of this article.

Derman-Sparks, L., & J. Olsen Edwards. 2010. Chapter 7: Learning about Gender Identity and Families. In *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.

Levin, D.E. 2009. "Dealing with the Impact of Today's Sexualized Childhood on Young Children." *Teaching Young Children* 3(1): 8–10.

Levin, D.E., & J. Kilbourne. 2008. *So Sexy So Soon: The New Sexualized Childhood and What Parents Can Do to Protect Their Kids*. New York: Ballantine Books. www.osexysosoon.com.

Putnam, J., J.A. Myers-Walls, & D. Love. n.d. "Gender Development." www.ces.purdue.edu/providerparent/Child%20Growth-Development/GenderDEV.htm.

Sprung, B., M. Froschl, & B. Hinitz. 2005. *The Anti-Bullying and Teasing Book for Preschool Classrooms*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.

Zambo, D. 2011. "Using Picture Books to Help Boys and Girls Develop Literacy and Socio-Emotional Skills." In *Perspectives on Gender in Early Childhood*, T. Jacobson, ed., pp. 127–54. St Paul, MN: Redleaf.

(Look for the second article and study guide of this two-part series in the July issues of *Young Children* and *NEXT for Young Children*.)

Young children’s ability to manage their impulses depends on brain development and experience. Children under chronic stress are at risk for displaying reactive aggression—that is, acting out against others because of a perceived need for self-protection. However, teachers can have lasting positive effects on children’s social-emotional development by building relationships with them and moving beyond punitive discipline to specific guidance techniques.

Key Messages

- ➔ Young children’s reactive aggression is typically due to chronic stress, and it is not a “character defect.”
- ➔ Punishing children for reactive aggression keeps their stress levels high and makes it harder for them to learn how to manage their emotions—exacerbating conflict behaviors. Instead, teachers can decrease children’s stress by helping them feel accepted and supported, which increases their ability to learn social-emotional skills.
- ➔ To guide children who show reactive aggression, teachers can work to understand reasons for children’s behavior, build relationships with those children, and help children manage their reactions (for example, by teaching them ways to cope with strong emotions).

Self-study

Respond to the following questions in the space provided.

In your view

1. Write down three new things that you learned from reading this article. If possible, compare your choices with those of others who have read it.

2. What research findings cited by the author did you find most interesting? Why were they of particular interest to you?

The content of this article is most closely related to NAEYC Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation Programs 1, 2, and 4, and NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards 1, 3, and 7.

Glossary

Contact talk—quality time a teacher spends with a child, helping both parties learn about each other and build mutual trust

Guidance talk—a quiet conversation between a teacher and child once both have calmed after a conflict. The teacher helps the child understand what happened, how the other person involved in the conflict felt, how the child can make the other person feel better, and better ways to behave in the future

Reactive aggression—behavior that inflicts physical or psychological harm on others, which can be a result of the aggressor’s chronic stress

Technician reaction—an automatic response to a situation in which a teacher uses a traditional approach without reflecting on the usefulness of that approach

3. How does the content of this article relate to the curriculum, Common Core State Standards, state and local early learning standards, or other requirements applicable to your setting?

Reflect and revisit your practice

1. Which ideas in this article affirm your work with or on behalf of young children and families?

2. What ideas and research findings in this article raise questions about your practice? What new approaches might you try?

3. What kinds of supports do you and your colleagues need to try out these new ideas (such as assistance from a colleague and/or additional resources for your setting)?

Discuss with one or more colleagues/peers

Discuss the following questions with at least one colleague/peer. Record the key points of your discussion in the space provided.

Consider current practice

1. When was the last time you were under a lot of pressure in your personal or professional life? How did that stress affect your work with children and families? What are some strategies you used to manage those feelings?

2. When was the last time you experienced a conflict at work? How did you react? What aspects of your reaction escalated or helped resolve the conflict?

3. Why is it helpful to get to know the children and/or adults you serve? How can that knowledge help you prevent conflicts? How can you apply that knowledge to respond effectively when conflicts do occur?

4. If you currently work with children who engage in frequent conflicts with other children, how can you apply the strategies the author presents? If you don't work with such children, how do you think these strategies could enhance your communication with others in your life, including children and/or colleagues?

Connect research and practice

1. How does current brain research help explain the causes and behaviors that are part of children’s reactive aggression? What role does executive functioning play in children’s behavior?

2. What does research say about the effects of punishing children who demonstrate reactive aggression?

3. What does the research say about post-traumatic stress reactions in young children?

Action steps

Try out these ideas over the next 2 to 4 weeks. Document and discuss your experiences with others.

Document and implement

1. **Observe and record.** Create a three-column Guidance Log labeled (1) Conflict, (2) My Response to the Conflict, and (3) My Response Outside the Conflict. Every day for two weeks, describe a conflict in the first column, including who was involved and the events leading up to it. In the My Response to the Conflict column, record how you reacted, identifying whether you responded as a technician or as a guidance professional. In the third column, describe the actions you took after the conflict, such as talking individually with children. In all three columns, separate objective observations from your professional reflections.

2. **Reflect and discuss.** After the two weeks, read your entire log. Note whether certain children are involved in frequent conflicts, and consider the effects of your responses. Discuss your observations with a colleague or mentor, including what you have learned about the children and how you typically respond to conflicts. Ask the colleague/mentor to share their successful strategies for dealing with conflicts in the classroom and provide feedback about your observations. Use all of this information to identify what you are doing well and ways you could improve your responses to children’s conflicts.

3. Implement guidance strategies. If you don't already, start engaging in *guidance talks* with children involved in conflicts once everyone has calmed down. Help the child understand what happened, how the other person involved in the conflict felt, how the child can make the other person feel better, and better ways to behave in the future. Focus on helping children identify their feelings and learn to use appropriate coping strategies for dealing with strong emotions. Remember to maintain positive relationships with children even during conflicts.

In addition, engage in daily, private *contact talks* with children who are involved in frequent conflicts. Use this time to build a better understanding of children's feelings and perceptions and to build trust between you and the child.

4. Involve families. Schedule one-on-one meetings with families of children who are involved in regular conflicts. At the beginning of the meeting, share positive feedback about the child and ask about activities the family enjoys doing together. Then relay your observations and concerns, and ask them to share their observations. Inquire about challenges the family may be experiencing. At the end of the meeting, emphasize your partnership with the family and provide follow-up resources and support as needed. Record objective observations and professional reflections about each meeting for future reference.

Discuss experiences and outcomes

Summarize your experiences and outcomes in the space provided, and then discuss them with at least one colleague/peer.

1. What did you do that was successful?

2. What challenges did you face? How did you address the challenges?

3. Have you noticed changes in your program as a result of the new strategies? Did anything surprise you?

4. How can you build on your progress?

Continue learning

Consult these resources to further build knowledge and skills related to the content of this article.

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning. n.d. “Resources: Practical Strategies for Teachers/Caregivers.” <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html>.

Flicker, E.S., & J. Andron Hoffman. 2006. *Guiding Children’s Behavior: Developmental Discipline in the Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gartrell, D. 2010. *A Guidance Approach for the Encouraging Classroom*. 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

Gartrell, D. 2005–2008. Guidance Matters. www.naeyc.org/yc/columns/guidance.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. 2005. *Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain: Working Paper No. 3*. www.developingchild.harvard.edu. (Use the search to find the resource.)

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