



RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PRESENCE OF TECHNOLOGY: *FOR EDUCATORS*

Many educators may be wondering how to navigate the many demands of using technology in their classroom. Fred Rogers reminds us that “it is through relationships that we learn best, and grow best.” Educators can build relationships in the presence of technology by exploring what it means for them to find balance, flexibility, and empathy. Here are some ideas to consider as you incorporate technology in your classroom.

Balance

There are many tools available to educators within a learning setting. Just as educators balance different teaching methods within a lesson, educators can use technology in the same intentional ways. Weaving technology resources into current teaching practices may help educators use technology to add value and meaning, not just for the sake of using technology. Educators may benefit from engaging with children’s caregivers about the types of technology that will be used and how families can support their children’s technology use.

Flexibility

There is no one right way to use technology in the classroom and no perfect technology tool. Sometimes we are required to use certain technologies in our classroom, and other times we find technologies on our own. Experimenting with different kinds of programs and tools can help educators find what works best for them and their children. Even our favorite technologies don’t always work as we expect. Just as educators adjust their lessons in the moment to meet children’s needs, educators often have to adjust how they use technology, too.

“No matter how helpful computers are as tools in the classroom (and of course, they can be very helpful tools), they don’t begin to compare in significance to the relationship between the teacher and the child that is human and mutual.”

- Fred Rogers

Empathy

It can be difficult to incorporate new technology tools, routines, and expectations into the classroom. This can bring up many feelings for educators, children, and their families. You can be honest with families and children about your own technology questions, and invite them to share their questions with you; this can help to build relationships between educators and families. Allow yourself the time and patience to learn something new, just as you do for your students. It is also important to give grace to children and their caregivers as they navigate using technology.

Building relationships in the presence of technology can happen during small moments. Here are some questions to reflect on your everyday interactions with your classroom community when using technology.

Connection: Even while using technology, educators can interact with children, families, and colleagues with mutually positive or appropriate emotions. When thinking about human connection in the presence of technology...

- How can educators use technology to enhance their connection with colleagues, children, and the families they serve?
- What can educators do to learn how their students and their families feel about incorporating technology when they are learning?
- How can educators ensure that children are present and engaged when technology is being used?

Reciprocity: When engaging with technology, children and grown-ups take on many different roles in their interactions. As those roles shift between leading and following, the reciprocity that exists can build partnerships between people, both with and without the use of technology. When considering reciprocity in the presence of technology...

- How can technology facilitate two-directional serve and return exchanges, where all people have the opportunity to serve and all people have the opportunity to return?
- In what ways can technology engagement provide opportunities for children and grown-ups to exchange roles, form partnerships, and shift control in a joint activity?
- How can children take the lead in technology engagement and how can they actively follow the lead of others in using technology?

Inclusion: One of the primary goals of an educator is to ensure that all children and their families are invited and involved in the classroom community, even those that are least likely or able to engage. When thinking about how technology can engage our students as well as their families...

- How might you use technology to make families feel more welcome in your space? For example, can you use translation apps for families who speak a different language?
- Can you use technology to meet the different needs of children?
- How do your families access technology? How can you consider this when planning lessons and activities?

Opportunity to Grow: There are many ways to use technology to help your children learn. When thinking about the best way for children to grow with technology...

- How can you support children to stretch beyond their comfort zones in content knowledge, social and emotional learning, or other developmental areas in the presence of technology?
- How can you use technology in new ways to meet developmental milestones? For example, how could technology support fine-motor development or collaborating with a team?
- What are realistic expectations for each child when using technology?