

# PARENT & CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT IN THE 2s/3s CLASSROOM

We are asking the parents and caregivers in our program to be present in the classroom with a special kind of care, attention, and focus on their children. We've designed each of our "Elements of the Day" to offer unique opportunities for adults to connect with their children. Sometimes this connection will be very up close and intimate, while other time the connection might be maintained from more of a distance to support the child's autonomy or to encourage the development of new relationships with peers, teachers, and other adults in the classroom. The teachers will indicate what kinds of support are appropriate for each activity.

Here are some of the different roles parents and caregivers can play while supporting their children:

**CONNECTED OBSERVER** In this role, adults stay close and connected to their child, while letting him or her take the lead. Adults only lend assistance when their child requests it, or when it is clearly needed. Adults use this time to "tune in" to their child's interests, feelings and thoughts as they organically unfold. Adults can then initiate dialogue by verbalizing their observations or by asking questions about the child's thoughts or feelings about what they are doing. Parents can also use this time to work towards more non-verbal forms of "attunement."

**PARALLEL PARTNER** In this form of involvement, Adults and children work side by side on their own projects. There are a few different approaches that adults can take while engaged in a parallel experience.

**"Modeling."** Children can learn by observing the example of adults who are engaging in the same activities. When offering techniques for children to model, adults should be mindful of choosing approaches that are within the developmental grasp of young children.

**"Mirroring."** In this approach, the adult simply does whatever their child is doing. At times, the adult may ask the child to provide guidance or give feedback as the mirroring activity unfolds. This approach validates children's creative choices and helps them feel empowered and understood. It can also give children the experience that their actions and thoughts can contribute to the lives of others.

**"Riffing."** This concept is based on kind of interplay that takes place in Jazz music when one musician performs an improvised musical pattern and then others imitate this "riff," but alter it slightly, giving it their own unique twist. Adults can build towards this kind of two-way interplay as they engage in parallel activities.

**COLLABORATIVE PARTNER** In this role, adults collaborate directly with their child on a shared project, game, or idea. This is a chance for adults to enter into a deeply connected place with their children while supporting them in ways that enhance the experience. Here are some techniques that adults can use while collaborating with their children:

**"Scaffolding."** This technique involves adjusting a few of the more difficult variables of an activity to make it easier for a child to reach his or her goal. A Child may have mastery over a number of the steps required, but might not yet understand or be developmentally ready to execute all of them. Adults can help keep an activity flowing by offering their child simple forms of support that help fill in these developmental gaps. This is also an opportunity for adults to help children work through feelings of frustration that can arise when they brush up against the limits of their abilities. The purpose of "scaf-

folding” is to offer the minimum amount of underlying support children need to successfully work through difficult tasks and to help them develop patience and confidence in their abilities.

**“Extending.”** This involves taking an activity “to the next level” by introducing new ways a task can be executed or by helping children practice new skills that may be relevant to a specific project. Adults can also do things like demonstrate properties of a material that a child may not know about, or take a task that has become easy, and inject an element into it that makes it more challenging (and perhaps even more fun!). The purpose of “extending” is to broaden a child’s understanding or skill set with regard to certain activities or problems.

### COMMUNITY MEMBER

There are moments in the day when we look for all of the parent-child connections to link up into a larger collective. In these moments, the challenge for the adults is to help their children extend their “attunement” to everyone involved. These activities give children a chance to have a heightened experience of being members of a community.