

VIRGINIA
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST
NETWORK

"Achieving Excellence in Early Care"
www.va-itsnetwork.org



Back-to-School: Infant & Toddler Edition

As a new school year begins, we are reminded that learning happens in everyday moments from warm morning greetings to comforting daily good-byes. Classrooms will be filled with meaningful experiences that encourage children to learn through play, build trusting relationships, and explore the world from a young child's perspective. Communicating regularly with families through notes, conversations, or classroom apps strengthen home-school connection.

For infants and toddlers, early experiences and relationships play a critical role in brain development and help establish a strong foundation. Positive teacher-child interactions help children build confidence, strengthen communication skills, and develop secure relationships that support lifelong learning. Through the lens of Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®), teachers can focus on creating warm, engaging, and supportive interactions that help every child feel connected and ready to learn.

Building Warm Relationships: Activities & Strategies Using CLASS

- Greet each child warmly by name during arrival and departure (Relational Climate)
- Provide comforting and responsive care during routines such as feeding, diapering, and naptime (Teacher Sensitivity)

- Maintain predictable daily routines to help children feel safe and secure (Behavior Guidance)
- Get down on the child's level during conversations and play (Facilitation of Learning and Development and Relational Climate)
- Use positive facial expressions, eye contact, and encouraging language (Relational Climate)
- Read books together and engage children during story time by asking open ended questions (Facilitation of Learning and Development and Quality of Feedback)
- Offer opportunities for children to explore alongside peers and use questions, comments, and encouragement to extend their thinking and learning during play (Facilitation of Learning and Development)
- Encourage children to express feelings through words, gestures, or visuals (Teacher Sensitivity and Language Modeling)
- Share the child's interest in family photos that are displayed (Relational Climate)
- Support a child in using a cozy space for comfort or quiet (Teacher Sensitivity)
- Communicate regularly with families through notes, conversations, or classroom apps (Relational Climate)
- Join in the child's activities using the child's primary language and incorporate family traditions and culture into activities for the children (Regard for Child Perspectives and Relational Climate)
- Engage in one-on-one interactions during play and routines (Teacher Sensitivity and Facilitation of Learning and Development)
- Follow children's interests to create meaningful and engaging experiences (Regard for Child Perspectives and Facilitation of Learning and Development)

Reference:

[For Understanding and Using CLASS](#)

Resource Spotlight



STREAMin³ has mapped out a year of professional learning!

Two Ways to Learn. One Topic Each Month.

It is easier than ever to connect with STREAMin³ professional development in the way that works best for you!

 **2nd Tuesday:** *STREAMin³ On the Go Podcast*

[STREAMin³ PD Registration](#)

Upcoming Professional Development Opportunity

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Annual Conference



Sign Up Today!

The [NAEYC Annual Conference](#) is one of the largest early childhood education gatherings globally. It covers a vast array of topics, from public policy to classroom assessment, and features leading experts in child development.

Registration for 2026 Annual Conference is now open!

- **Location:** Washington, D. C.
- **Date:** December 5-8, 2026

Did you know...

VA ITSN offers coaching support for new infant and toddler teachers working in VQB5 participating center-based and home-based child care to help build confidence, strengthen classroom practices, and support positive relationships with young children and families. Through individualized guidance, reflective conversations, and practical strategies, coaches partner with teachers to support growth and success in early childhood settings.

NEW INFANT AND TODDLER TEACHERS



Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network provides support to new teachers who have 12 months or less experience working with infants or toddlers and who have limited experience with the Infant or Toddler CLASS® assessment tool. The support is designed to help teachers build foundational knowledge and strengthen their instructional practices in infant and toddler care, with a focus on improving interactions and classroom quality aligned with CLASS domains.

Free

VQB5 Sites Only

Statewide

[Helping New Teachers Grow, Succeed, and Shine](#)

VIRGINIA
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST
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Child Development Resources

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