

Powerful Interactions

How to Connect with Children to Extend Their Learning

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Book Study Facilitator Guide

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Powerful Interactions

Facilitator Guide

The purpose of this guide is to deepen book study participants understanding of the Powerful Interactions model. This will give educators an opportunity to discuss what they are learning, make connections to their practice, and apply it to their context. As they critically reflect on their practice in meaningful and relevant ways, this professional learning experience can be transformative.

Rationale

Research tells us that relationships are foundational in our work with young children. They are indicative of children's learning and development. When relationships are at the heart of what we do we can provide a higher quality of care and will see better outcomes for children. Powerful Interactions is a model that is based on the daily realities of early care educators and will be the catalyst for all educators who want to improve their relationships with young children.

Goals and Objectives

- Improve relationships with children in our classrooms
- Provide learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to young children and are based on their interests and curiosities
- Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice and improve professional communication skills

Timeline and Logistics

The timeline below outlines the course for this book study. As a group, decide on a common day and time to meet. Participants can plan on 1-1.5 hours for the discussion portion of each section. You will notice that each meeting starts the same way the Powerful Interaction model begins, by being present. As we practice being present with educators before each interaction we have with them, we hope to see that paralleled in their practice before their interactions with children.

Meetings	Date and Time	Assigned Reading
1		Discuss pages vi-23 Introductory Section, Step 1 – Be Present
2		Discuss pages 25-48 Step 2 – Connect, first 3 strategies
3		Discuss pages 49-66 Step 2 – Connect, last 4 strategies
4		Discuss pages 67-100 Step 3 – Extending Learning, first 4 strategies
5		Discuss pages 101-133 Step 3 – Extending Learning, last 6 strategies
6		Discuss pages 135-147 Conclusion, Application to Practice

Meeting 1

Introductory Section, Step 1 – Be Present

Discuss pages vi–23

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react. Pausing to be present puts you in a clear and open frame of mind so that you can be intentional...” (p. 13)

Guided Practice: In partners or triads share the people, things, events that are causing you static right now. Write down what your groups responses are. Participants can stay in small groups or come back together as a large group. Compare similarities and differences between responses and discuss different strategies to quiet your static. Refer to page 16.

To be present and quiet static, we shared what was on our minds—what we felt was compromising our learning and interfering with being fully present. We can clear our static by sharing it or writing it down. Acknowledging it alone can help us commit to being in this space. We can commit to being here and be more intentional. This time will be more valuable and will be more likely to improve our teaching and interactions with children.

Getting Started

Introductions

- Take time to get to know everyone in the group. Allow everyone to share out. Some examples of what people could share include:
 - o Name
 - o Background in early childhood—how did they end up here
 - o Age of children they work with
 - o A get to know you question
 - What do you miss about childhood?
 - What is one of your guilty pleasures?
 - Tell us something we would not know about you.
 - Tell us about a hobby or something you spend your time doing outside of work.
 - What have you read/listened to/watched lately that you would recommend?
 - Tell us about someone who has changed your life.

Introduce Goals (found in the introduction of this guide)

Group Expectations

- Have assigned reading done each time you meet
- Complete reflection sections of each section or come prepared with reading notes/thoughts from the reading. *Please note:* We will not have time for everyone to share out everything they loved or learned from each section. You will independently learn or have impactful insights as you read and reflect. Acknowledge that this is *your* learning and experience with the text and allow it to change you and your practice. There will be an *additional* learning experience through the group discussion portion where all participants can learn from each other – thoughts and ideas can be expanded and you can feel empowered to make changes and improve your practice together.
- Other Considerations
 - o In person—have your book and reading notes with you each meeting
 - o Virtual – keep camera on if possible. Participation is expected by unmuting yourself and responding to each other use the chat feature.

From the Reading...

p. vii – Powerful Interactions and relationships

“Young children experience their world as an environment of relationships, and these relationships affect virtually all aspects of their development...”

Small groups/Triads

- As a group come up with a definition of what a powerful interaction is, based on what we read, and keeping the three steps in mind.
- Since relationships are so vital to early childhood environments and young children’s development, discuss how a Powerful Interaction will influence/change your relationships.

Discuss Large Group

- What barriers exist that keep you from having these kinds of interactions?
- What times of day can you anticipate having a powerful interaction that could avoid these barriers?

p. 4-5 – Overview of the three steps

Discuss Large Group

Look at the three pictures of Ms. Pat on these two pages. Notice where her eyes are in each of the steps. The first step is about *you*—pausing before the interaction to quiet static and prepare for the interaction. The second step is about connecting with each other. The last step is about the learning that is happening.

Think about your natural tendencies as a teacher. What step do you naturally do well and remember to try? What step is not as natural or is easily forgotten during your day? What step do you want to try to incorporate more or focus on doing more?

p. 8-10 – Benefits of changing our practice

Partners

Glance back through the “What’s in it for you?” section on pages 8-10. When looking through the benefits of Powerful Interactions, which one are you most excited about seeing/changing in your space and why?

Wrap-up

Now that we have a better understanding of what a powerful interaction is and what this book will focus on, reflect on your practice. How could your interactions improve? What do you think might need attention? What can you do during this book study to have it influence your practice? Take 2-3 minutes to write down a goal related to this book study. You will need to come back to this at the end of the study so keep it in a place you can easily find it again.

- “By the end of this book study, I will have...”

Next time

Read pages 25-48. Highlight/make notes of the sections that resonate with you. Be intentional about reading. Instead of reading to report or to be able to answer questions in our discussion, treat your assigned reading as the portion of this book study that you are doing independently. Try to find the things that *you* need from each section.

Meeting 2

Step 2 – Connect (First 3 strategies)

Discuss pages 25-48

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react. Pausing to be present puts you in a clear and open frame of mind so that you can be intentional...” (p. 13)

Guided Practice: Give everyone 2-3 minutes to reflect on what is causing them static. Choose one word to describe how you are feeling right now. Everyone will pause and share out to help them prepare to learn together.

From the reading...

 p. 27-29 – Relationships and the importance of connecting

Partners/Triads

Looking through these pages share a quote/thought/experience about the importance of relationships in our learning experiences.

Discuss Large Group

What is something you heard or learned about relationships from your conversations?

Connecting with a child as you begin an interaction acts as a reminder to that child of the relationship you share together. And with that reminder comes the comfortable and reassuring feelings of security, confidence, and competence, which in turn, free the child to take risks, experiment, explore, discover, and stretch their skills and thinking. This link between emotional safety and learning has been identified and described by researchers, who tell us that the quality of teacher-child relationships influences children’s achievement in school (National Research Council 2001). (Powerful Interactions, page 29)

The essence of this step is about deepening and nurturing the relationship between the teacher and the child. To connect, the teacher communicates to the child, “I see you. I am interested in what you are doing. I want to spend some time with you.”

 p. 30-32 – Individualizing connections and respecting a rejection

“We can’t expect that every child will be easy to connect with, but it is our professional responsibility to establish a strong, positive relationship with every child. To turn some of our everyday interactions into Powerful Interactions, we must make an intentional and significant effort to make the adjustments necessary to create strong connections” (Leading For Children, Powerful Interaction Study Guide).

Make a T-Chart. On one side put “Easier to connect with” and the other, “More challenging to connect with.” What children do you naturally connect with or play easily with? What children take more effort or are more challenging for you to spend time with? We can assume that the children on the left are already experiencing a connection with you, but as we read through these 7 strategies, keep those kids on the right hand side of your chart in mind. What strategies will you try to use to connect with these kids? Who

is getting missed during your day because you do not naturally gravitate towards them? How can we establish better relationships with those kids?

Possible extension

Consider the three factors on pages 18-21. Is there a child in your space that would benefit from some adjusting regarding one of these factors? What adjustments could you make to connect? (Share out whole group)

 p. 35-38 – Strategy 1: Slow Down, Stay in the Moment

Discuss Large Group

Why do you think slowing down and staying in the moment is an effective way to connect with a child?

Refer to the T-chart. Are there children who you might connect with by slowing down and staying with them?

 p. 39-44 – Strategy 2: Keep Learning About Children

“Sometimes, a child’s unique blend of personality, energy, learning style, and interests can combine to push your buttons. This makes it hard to get to know and appreciate that child as an individual. Being professional involves putting extra effort into getting to know your ‘button-pushers.’ You may have to work a little harder to pay attention and learn something about them so you can connect” (p. 44)

This a universal strategy for any child you are trying to connect with!

Refer to your t-chart, select a child who you struggle to connect with that you need a strategy for.

Consider these questions:

- What things are interesting or significant that you have already started to notice?
- Do you see an entry point with this child? Be specific.
- How/when can you be curious about what they are doing?

 p. 45-48 – Strategy 3: Listen to Children

Individually Reflect

Reflect on someone who listens well...

- Who do you seek out when you need a listening ear?
- What do you notice about what they do that makes them such great listeners?

Discuss Large Group

- How can we use some of those features of listening in our classrooms?

As you look at the tips on page 47, continue to reflect on your t-chart. Are there things you could try this week with one of the children on your list?

Next time

Read pages 49-66. Check-in—how has the reading at home been going? Are assignments too long? Do you have enough time? How do you feel like your independently learning is going?

Look back to your T-chart. Think of the children you will make a special effort to connect with this week.

Meeting 3

Step 2 – Connect (Last 4 strategies)

Discuss pages 49-66

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react.

Guided Practice: Using their phone/scratch paper/messages, allow participants 1-2 minutes to clear their static. Make a quick list of what is on their mind, send a quick text message, make a list...

Our time together becomes more intentional and valuable after we clear the static and focus on why we are here and the learning we will do together.

From the reading...

*Keep in mind, because of time you may have to prioritize which strategies to discuss depending on participation and discussions.

p.49-52 – Strategy 4: Personalize Your Interactions

Individually

Think of a person you enjoy spending time with or is easy to be around. Reflect and write down why you think your interactions with this person are positive. Another route might be to think of the interactions you dread or do not respond well to and identify what it teaches you about your preferences.

For example: I do not prefer when someone talks to me in a high-pitched tone. It feels fake or like I am cute or naive. If someone personalized an interaction for me, it would be most successful if they were real and respectful.

Discuss Large Group

Were there any surprises or things you noticed about the types of interactions you prefer? Do you have an example of a child in your space that you must adjust to, based on what they prefer?

Just as real as our responses are to how people interact with us, children are having responses to the way we interact with them. As educators we must be the ones to adjust how we approach interactions with children.

Possible Extension

Refer to the “How’s It Going” section on p. 52. Are there children in your space that you already personalize interactions for? Who are they? What do you do (naturally/intentionally) that they respond well to? How do you know they ‘respond well’? What tells you that you are getting it right?

p. 53-56 – Strategy 5: Show Respect

This strategy is a little different than the others. Most strategies are something you can change in your practice to be more effective but showing respect for children is a change in your disposition. Instead of thinking, “oh now would be a good time to show respect,” this is something that should be a part of who we are as teachers, and be evident in the words we use, the environments and opportunities we provide, and in the way children are represented in our spaces.

In order for this strategy to be a way to connect with children, it will need to be evident in everything we do as educators, instead of being something to try out in hopes of having a positive experience with a child. Children will demand more of us and will know if we truly respect them or not because it is conveyed in all we say and do. Respect is a word we often use, but do not take time to define. It can have different meanings for different people, and it is important that we take time to define what respect is and what it looks like.

Discuss Large Group

- What is respect? What does it look like in our work with children?
- Why is it important that respect is a part of who we are versus a strategy we incorporate in our practice?

p. 57-62 – Strategy 6: Guide Children’s Behavior

Discuss Large group

Make a list of main ideas and key words/phrases about what this strategy is about for you.

“Guiding children’s behavior is about...”

Examples:

- Being there for children in their tough moments
- Maintain a routine/environment that feels safe and predictable
- Conveying to the child that you are on their team

Why do you think this is a strategy to connect? How would this build your relationship with children?

p. 63-66 – Strategy 7: Keep Trust Growing

Small Group

Decide on 3 words or small phrases that describe/summarize this section. Share out to the whole group.

Have educators update their t-chart. What additional strategies did we discuss that could be fitting for a child you want to be more intentional about connecting with?

Next time

Read pages 67-100.



IMPORTANT: For next time, all participants need to bring an image (printed/on their phone/computer/tablet) to display/share with the group. The photo needs to be of a child in your care, engaged with a material or activity. Remember details surround the moment. What were you (the educator) doing? What were other children doing? What time of day was it? What was that child’s mood or day like?

Meeting 4

Step 3 – Extending Learning (First 4 strategies)

Discuss pages 67-100

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react.

Guided Practice: Reflect on a strategy you use to clear static and choose one your strategies to clear their static. Share what strategy you used.

Now that we have been practicing “being present,” how is this going in your classrooms/spaces? What are you noticing about how it impacts your interactions/routine?

From the reading...

 p. 69-72 – Extending Learning

Small Group Discussion

Keeping step 3 in mind, why is a Powerful Interaction the ideal setup for learning?

- You prepare/plan (step 1) what natural learning could occur in each opportunity
- It is responsive to what they are doing and it is meaningful because it is something they are interested and invested in learning, you are just joining them
- It is focused on the child—the learning is better scaffolded to meet children where they are—not a teacher planning a lesson for 15 children to all do. This is individually appropriate.
- You are not interrupting their “work”

 p. 74 – Ms. Isabel, Deval, and Jacquie

Partners

Read the story of Ms. Isabel (or refresh your memory) and discuss the following questions.

- Identify each step of this Powerful Interaction. What did Ms. Isabel do or say in each step?
- What connection strategy did you she use?
- What content did she link to the opportunity/interaction? How did Ms. Isabel impact this situation?

Since we just finished discussing the seven strategies for connect, diving into ten more strategies about extending learning can feel overwhelming. It is a lot of strategies to remember! For this next set of strategies please expect teachers to be doing most of the talking. Participants will bring a photo of student engaged in a learning opportunity in their space. We will discuss appropriate strategies for extending learning in that specific scenario. They will be *trying out* the strategies, not just talking *about* the strategies.

The discussion around these ten strategies is not as structured as the rest of this book study. As you gauge group and individual understanding of each strategy please feel free to slow down and discuss a specific strategy in depth by asking additional questions or having focused dialog if needed.

p. 76-77 – Strategies for Extending Learning

Groups of 4/5

Find the photo you brought of a child in your care, engaged with a material or activity. Take turns sharing your photo and discussing the following in teams of four or five:

1. Share the photo and any details you can remember surround this experience.
 - What were *you* doing during this time, or what were you in the process of doing?
 - How were you feeling? What was causing you static?
 - What were other children doing?
 - What time of day was it?
 - What is this child like?
 - Describe the child's mood or what their day was like.
2. In your teams discuss taking Step 1 in this scenario. Things to think about:
 - Could he/she quiet her static?
 - Will he/she need to make any adjustments to fit with the child's mood/temperament?
 - Is this a good time to have a powerful interaction? How do you know?
3. Next discuss as a group what potential learning could happen here? Does this moment lend itself to a math related concept? Would it be an appropriate time to introduce some new vocabulary?
 - *Refer to Wyoming Early Learning Guidelines or Early Learning Foundations for additional ideas of what learning should be happening in your spaces.
4. Using pages 76 -77 refer to the first four extending learning strategies. Individually decide on an extending learning strategy you could potentially use in the picture that has been described. Using knowledge from the reading and referring to the "Tips" section in each strategy, write down exactly what you would say to the child in the photo.
5. Each team member will share the strategy they chose to use in the scenario described and why they chose it. Share your quote modeling the strategy you chose and related to the learning opportunity shared in the photo.

Repeat these 5 steps for each team members photo.

Next time

Read pages 101-133. The next meeting will be like this meeting. You will need to bring another photo to display/share with the group of a child in your care, engaged with a material or activity. Again, try to remember details about the moment. What were you (the educator) doing? What were other children doing? What time of day was it? What was that child's mood or day like?

Meeting 5

Step 3 – Extending Learning (Last 6 strategies)

Discuss pages 101-133

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react.

Guided Practice: Give everyone 2 minutes to reflect on their day and prepare to share a pit (low point of the day) and a peak (high point of the day). Share out whole group.

From the reading...

 p. 76-77 – Strategies for Extending Learning

Reminder: The discussion around these ten strategies is not as structured as the rest of this book study. Continue to gauge group and individual understanding of each strategy and please feel free to slow down and discuss a specific strategy in depth by asking additional questions or having focused dialog if needed.

Groups of six would be ideal, but depending on time and the number of participants, you can alter group sizing. For the entire meeting everyone will be sharing photos and practicing the last six Extending Learning strategies.

Groups

Find the photo of a child in your care, engaged with a material or activity. Take turns sharing photos and discussing the following in teams of four or five:

1. Share the photo and any details you can remember surround this experience.
 - What were *you* doing during this time, or what were you in the process of doing?
 - How were you feeling? What was causing you static?
 - What were other children doing?
 - What time of day was it?
 - What is this child like?
 - Describe the child’s mood or what their day was like.
2. In your teams discuss taking Step 1 in this scenario. Things to think about:
 - Could he/she quiet her static?
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3. Next discuss as a group what potential learning could happen here? Does this moment lend itself to a math related concept? Would it be an appropriate time to introduce some new vocabulary?
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4. Using pages 76 -77 refer to the first four extending learning strategies. Individually decide on an extending learning strategy you could potentially use in the picture that has been described.

Using knowledge from the reading and referring to the “Tips” section in each strategy, write down exactly what you would say to the child in the photo.

5. Each team member will share the strategy they chose to use in the scenario described and why they chose it. Share your quote modeling the strategy you chose and related to the learning opportunity shared in the photo.

Repeat these 5 steps for each team members photo.

Next time

Read pages 135-147.

Meeting 6

Conclusion, Application to Practice

Discuss pages 135-147

Be Present

“pausing for just a moment to quiet your static and prepare... With a quieter mind you can think. You can focus. You can decide how to respond with intention rather than simply react.

Guided Practice: On a piece of scratch paper have everyone draw a line with the word low on one end, and the word high on the other end. Have them reflect on their static and put an X somewhere on the line to mark how much static they have.

Optional: Share with a partner about where they put their mark and why. If their static is high maybe suggest writing a list or sharing what is causing static.

From the reading...

 p. 135-137 – Ms. Pat

Ms. Pat is very intentional at putting Powerful Interactions into practice by setting goals and reflecting on them at the end of the day.

Partners

Discuss how you plan on putting Powerful Interactions into practice. Will you report/share with someone how it is going? Will you journal or make a list like Ms. Pat? Maybe you prefer to keep a check list of the children and track how often you are having a Powerful Interaction with each one. If you have already started using Powerful Interactions in your classroom, how is it going? What challenges are there? What is going well? What adjustments will you need to make?

*Refer to page 145 for additional ideas.

 p. 139 – Noticing changes

Large group

Has there been anyone who has already started to incorporate Powerful Interactions into practice? What are you noticing about children’s learning and engagement. How has this model made you a more effective teacher? For those who have not started yet, what do you anticipate seeing?

 p. 140-141 – Self care

“One of the cardinal principles of the science of early childhood development is that if we want to create the best environment for learning and healthy development for young children, we have to make sure that the adults who care for them are having their needs met as well. People often use the example of the airplane: *Parents put on your own mask on before you put your child’s mask on*. That’s not: *you’re more important than your child*. It’s a way of saying you can’t take care of your child if your basic needs aren’t met.” (Jack P. Shonkoff, M.D., Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University)

Large Group

What reactions do you have to this quote? Do you think it is true, why or why not? What needs do they have that are not being met?

As educators there seem to be plenty of times we arrive at the end of our day feeling exhausted and drained. If we don't have the energy or capacity we need to have Powerful Interactions, they will not happen. It is important to identify what gives you energy during your day.

Individually

Reflect on what drains your energy during the day. What gives you energy during the day? Fill out the boxes on page 141 or add/refine your list if you have already completed it. Share with a partner.

Reflection and Feedback

A feature of high-quality professional learning is giving opportunity for reflection and feedback.

Find the goal you made during Meeting 1.

- "By the end of this book study I will have..."

Individual Reflection

- How did it go? Do you feel like you met this goal?
- What other accomplishments or things did you improve on because of this book study?
- How did this book study transform your practice in the classroom?
- Where do you want to go next? What else do you want to learn about?

Group Reflection

- Share with us something you learned that has been helpful or transformative for you.
- Post the goals of this book study or have them printed for each participant
 - o Improve relationships with children in our classrooms
 - o Provide learning opportunities that are meaningful and relevant to young children and are based off their interests and curiosities
 - o Engage in continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice and improve professional communication skills

Take time discussing each goal and if they feel like goals were met. What content was specifically linked to those goals?

Individual Feedback

Take time to give/share feedback about the book study. You could send an email to a group leader, respond to some questions on scratch paper and turn it in, fill out an evaluation, or discuss as a group.

- What went well for you?
- What was challenging about this book study?
- Are there things that could be improved?
- What did you like about this process?
- How was your practice impacted?

Group Feedback

Discuss what it was like to participate in a collaborative professional learning experience.

- Did you enjoy learning together?
- How is it different than typical professional development?
- What are your thoughts on the Powerful Interactions book? How was the rigor of the book?
 - o Did you like this book?
 - o What are the strengths of this text?
 - o What is missing for you? Are there gaps this book does not address?

Follow-up

Decide how you will move forward and respond to feedback and reflections. Where do you want to go next in your professional learning? If you want to keep practicing the Powerful Interactions model, who is a potential collaborative partner to discuss and share experiences and learning with? What other topics or ideas feel exciting or relevant? Who can help connect you to resources or colleagues to explore your professional learning interests?

Facilitator Reflection

If you were the lead facilitator of this book study it is also important to take time and reflect on your practice, and how you felt the study went.

Text

What does this book do well?

Were there times you felt that the text was lacking? Provide specific examples.

Would you use this again, why?

Study

Reflect on the participation of the group. How were they responding to you? To their peers? To the text?

How was discussion? Was there anyone dominating the conversation or talking more than others?

Anything you would change about the study?

Facilitating

What did you do well as a facilitator? How do you know?

What do you want to be better at? Why do you feel it is something to be changed?

How will you improve? What resources/people could you connect with/to?