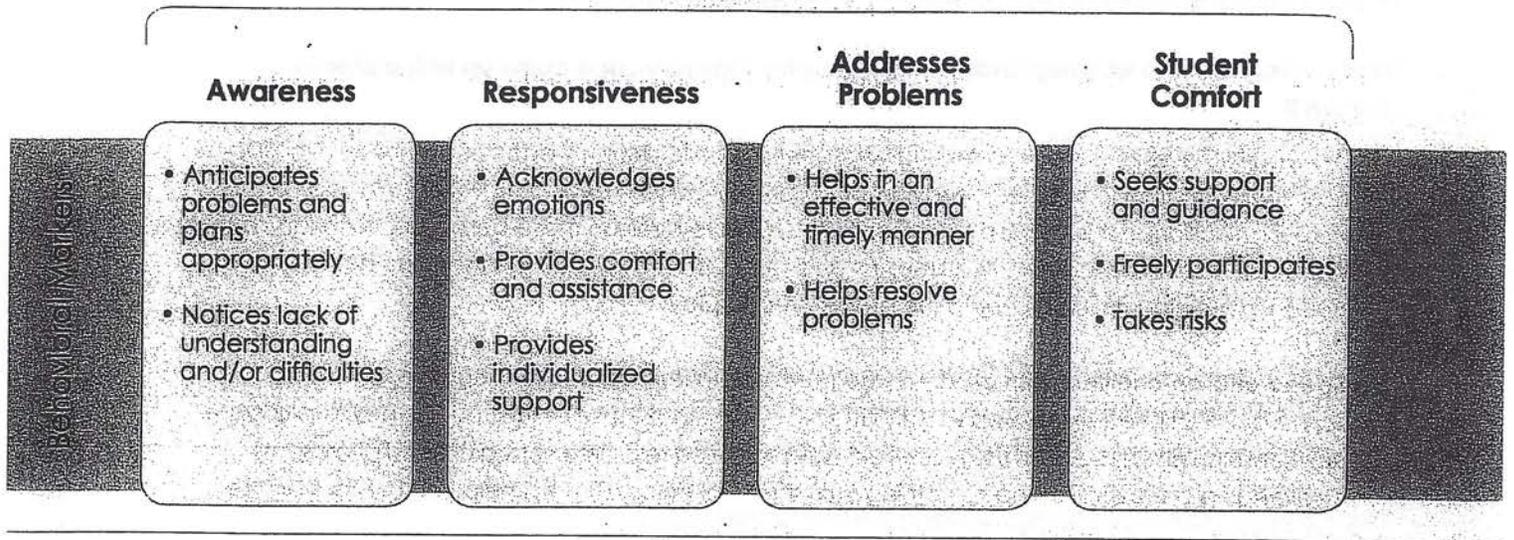


Teacher Sensitivity

Indicators



What is it?

Teachers are sensitive when they consistently, quickly and effectively respond to individual children based on verbal or behavioral cues. Sensitive teachers are aware of each child's academic and emotional abilities and needs, which allows them to anticipate areas of difficulty and provide appropriate levels of support. Teachers who are aware of and respond to each child supportively facilitate the ability of all children in the classroom to explore actively and learn.

Why is it important?

Children in a classroom with sensitive teachers grow to see teachers as a source of support, reassurance, and guidance. Teaching sensitively helps children feel comfortable with sharing their ideas and challenging themselves academically and socially. It also allows children to work well on their own and in groups because they know that if a problem or question arises they can go to the teacher, who will help them resolve their problem effectively.

How can I increase my sensitivity to children's needs?

Understand each child's social and academic functioning and individualize accordingly.

Use formal and informal assessment throughout the year to understand each child's level of social and academic functioning. Use this information to individualize the curriculum and your interactions with each child. As you plan and implement daily activities, anticipate and respond to each child's strengths and needs so that your activities are developmentally and individually appropriate.

Take time to notice how children are doing in the moment.

Actively monitor how children are doing throughout the day. During center times, walk around the room, get down on the children's level, and engage in play with them. During small group lessons, check in with each child to ensure they all understand the activity. During large group lessons, watch for children who appear disengaged or confused. These "in the moment" interactions will keep you consistently aware of children's individual needs so that you can provide timely and appropriate support.

Respond in the moment to children's academic and emotional needs.

Consistently monitor children to be aware of how they are doing in activities. Be aware if work is too difficult (or too easy) for children and respond in a timely manner. For example, if you are working on making patterns with children and you notice a child does not understand, work individually with the child as soon as possible to help him understand the activity and related concepts. If necessary, adapt the activity to meet the child's academic needs.

Tune in to and be responsive to children's non-verbal cues.

Young children don't always express what they are thinking or feeling. Check in with individual children, especially when a child's facial expressions and body language tell you that the child needs academic or emotional support, and be responsive as needed. If a child can't express his thoughts in words, use language to describe what he might be thinking and then provide comfort or assistance.

Make every effort to listen to and respond to children.

Teachers are often overwhelmed with questions and children's requests. Try to take time to respond to all questions or requests. Respond immediately or let the children know you heard them and will respond at a later point – and then make a point to follow up. This lets children know that they are important to you and that you are someone who helps and is responsive to their needs.

Actively encourage children to see you as a source of comfort and support in the classroom.

Although some children rely on the adults in their life for comfort and support, others have had fewer positive experiences with adults and may need explicit teaching and experience in how to rely on adults for emotional and academic support. Making statements to the class or individuals such as, "I can help if you are having a hard time," and regularly providing comfort and assistance to children encourages them to see you as someone they can go to for support.

In challenging moments, try taking your children's perspectives.

Every teacher experiences moments that test his or her patience. By making an active effort to take children's perspectives during these challenging moments, you may find yourself being less reactive and more responsive to children's needs.