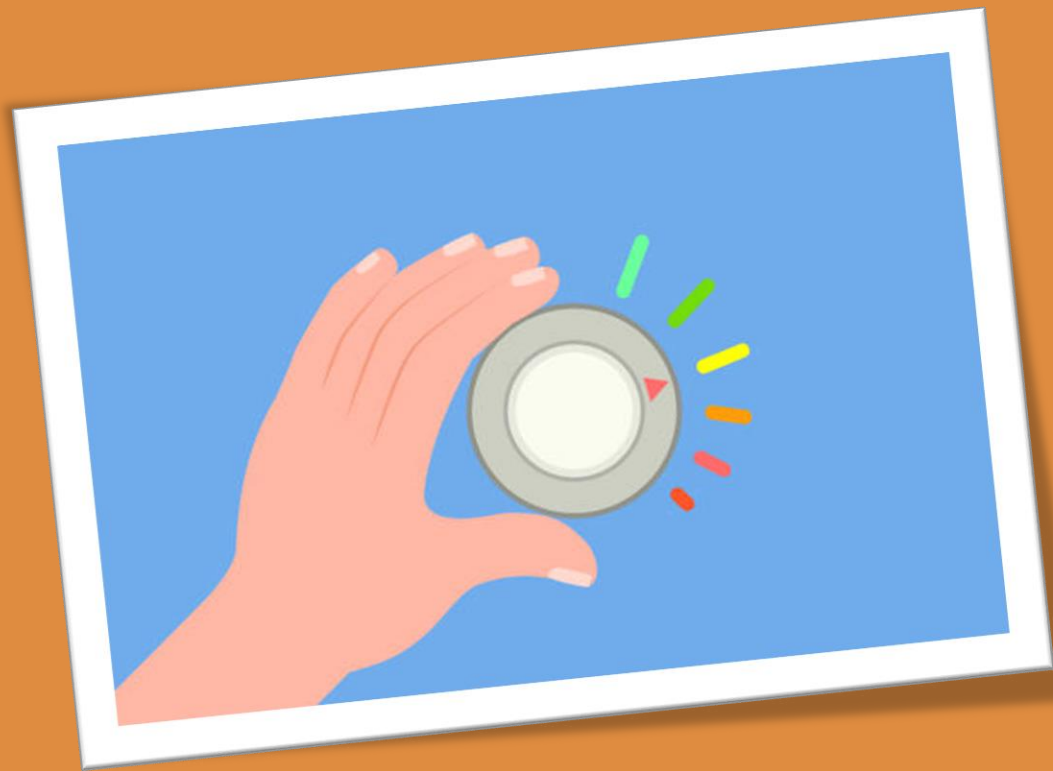


Be Your Program's Thermostat: Your Role in Creating a Positive Environment



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&

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Wonders Early Learning &

Extended Day Program

Welcome!

- In chat, share your name, location, & role
- Optional: Using a *weather metaphor*, tell us how you're doing today (e.g., cloudy with a chance of tantrums, sunny-breezy-happy, windy and feeling unsteady, chilly-moody-don't talk to me, etc.)



Kristen Darling



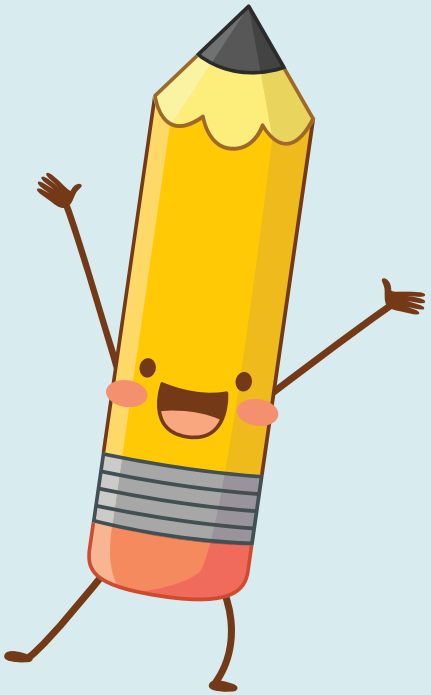
Liza Pringle



Agenda

1. Poll #1 & Objectives
2. Getting on the same page (key terms & examples)
3. Introspection time & Poll #2
4. How to become a thermostat & Poll #3
5. Closing/Recap/Handouts
6. Q&A

Poll #1: Why did you join this session?



- a. You have a general interest/liked the description
- b. You are actively working on your teaching style and how it influences your work
- c. You supervise/train/support others and want to share this kind of information with them
- d. Let's be honest: Just trying to earn PD hours/credits 😊
- e. Something else (feel free to share in comments)

Objectives

At the end of this session we hope you will...

1. Understand your personal influence in your classroom/program
2. Learn how to 'take the temperature' and respond effectively
3. Bring more empathy to the children and adults you work with
4. Be ready to have productive conversations about this topic with other adults you work with

So what are we talking about today?

- Your role in creating a learning environment where both children and staff will thrive

Key terms

- Classroom/program climate
- Management approach
- Self- and co-regulation
- Mirroring
- Thermostat & thermometer



Classroom/program Climate



- The overall social, emotional, cognitive, and physical environment within a learning space
- This includes the attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions of children, staff, or others in the space that shape the learning experience

Management approach

- A relational approach to classroom management centers on building strong, supportive, and trusting relationships between adults and children
- The same is true for working with colleagues and parents
- Structural factors like your schedule, room arrangement, lighting, etc. also matter a lot



Self- and co-regulation



- **Self-regulation** is the independent ability to manage your own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- **Co-regulation** is the process of another person helping you to be calm and stay in control (i.e., regulated) with support, guidance, and modeling

Mirroring

- Mirror neurons are cells in our brain that respond to what we see others doing, whether it's learning to make faces, use language, or comfort someone who's hurt.
- Mirror neurons are also working when we recreate those actions ourselves.

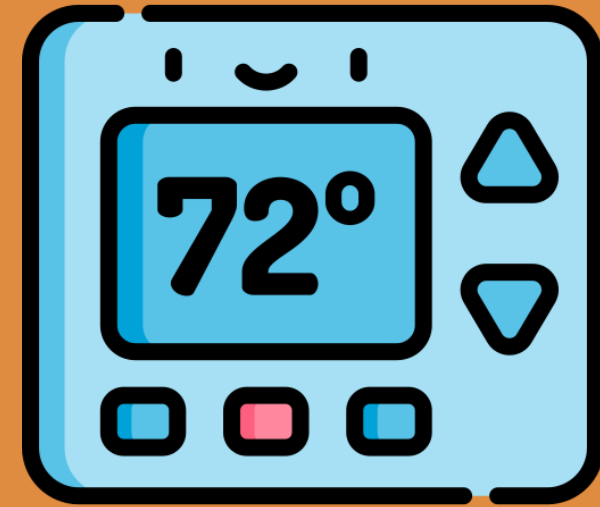


Thermometer vs. Thermostat

- A **thermometer** shows what the temperature is (i.e., how hot or cold it feels)



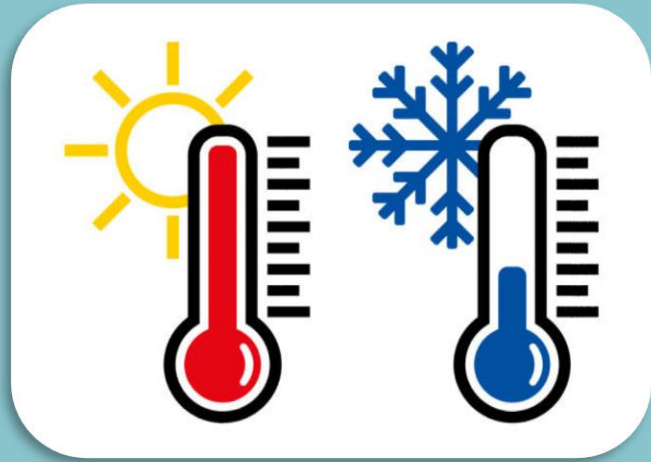
- A **thermostat** determines what the temperature should be and works to achieve it





**Be a
thermostat,
not
a thermometer
-Dr. Martin Luther King**

Hot vs. Cold



For this presentation (but not always in real life)...

- ‘Hot’ means a space that is full of conflict, chaos, and noise
- ‘Cold’ refers to a space that is too quiet, feels unwelcoming, and kids and adults just aren’t connecting

The goal is a temperature that is ‘just right’ (which may be different for each person)

Thermostat-Thermometer Example #1

[TEACHER TALKING QUIETLY TO A CHILD]

“Ayla, I know you are having a bad day because you have been pushing your friends and fighting over the toys and you’re just not listening.

If you don’t try to get along better it’s gonna be a long hard day.”

Thermostat-Thermometer Example #2

[SHOUTING OVER NOISY CLASSROOM]

“Okay children, it is TOO LOUD in here.

You are NOT listening and I need to hear
QUIET VOICES!”

Thermostat-Thermometer Example #3

[GREETING CHILDREN AS THEY RETURN FROM PLAYGROUND]

“My oh my look at all that energy and excitement from playing outside. [CLAPS HANDS & CHANTS]

1-2-3-4, quietly come in the door; 5-6-7-8 in the classroom don't be late! 9-10-11-12, take good care of friends and selves; 13-14-15-there!, take a breath and find your chair

[ACCOMPANIES CHILDREN TO THE DESIRED SPACE;
MODELS MOVEMENTS & BREATHING; WAITS FOR TRANSITION
TO CONCLUDE BEFORE DIVING INTO NEXT ACTIVITY]

Introspection time: How do we personally influence Classroom or program Climate?

1. Relational factors



2. Structural factors



Relational factors



For example...

- Ability to make healthy connections
- How you interact (e.g., tone of voice, volume, body language)
- Expectations you set for yourself and children
- How much self-confidence you have
- Baggage/stress you carry from outside of school

Structural factors

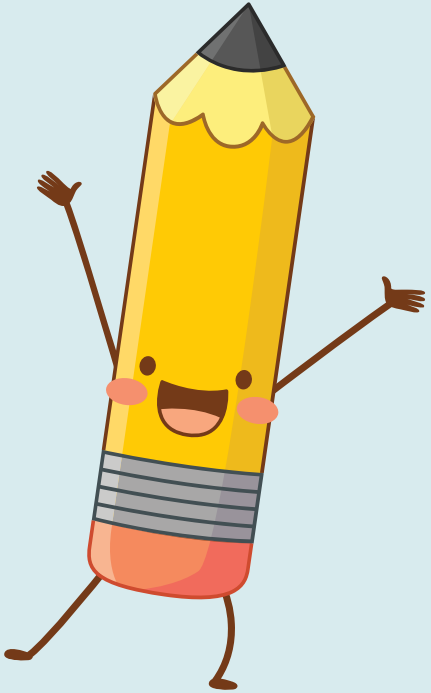
For example...

- Routines/schedules
- Room arrangement/lighting
- Group size/ratio
- Activity choices
- The literal climate (e.g., room temperature, weather)
- Distractions/disruptions (such as construction in or near your classroom-program, visitors, fire drills, etc.)

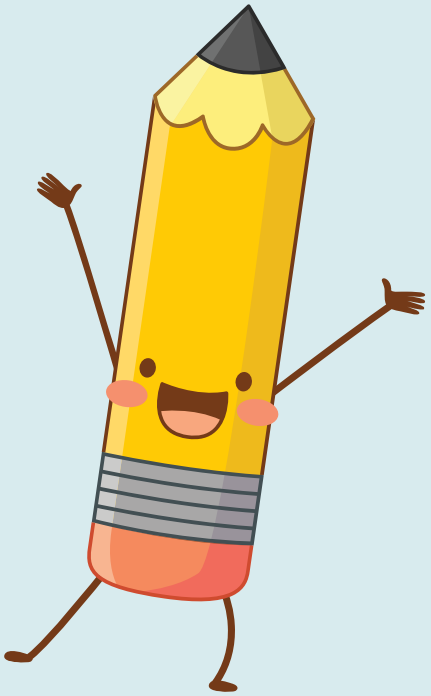


Poll #2.1

What's hardest for you relationally?



- a. Making connections with kids/people
- b. Managing how you interact with kids/people (e.g., body language, tone of voice, volume, etc.)
- c. Setting realistic expectations for kids/self/co-workers
- d. Feeling confident about your abilities
- e. Leaving stress/'baggage' outside of work



Poll #2.2

What's hardest for you structurally?

- a. Setting up effective routines/schedules
- b. Effective room arrangement & comfort features
- c. The size of your class/group
- d. Offering engaging, productive learning activities
- e. Literal climate/temperature/air quality, etc.
- f. Dealing with distractions and/or disruptions

Pause and reflect

- Just for yourself (not in chat) write (on physical paper or digitally) **something that captures your style or classroom approach.**
- Possible sentence starters:
 - I would describe my classroom management style as...
 - When I'm working with children, my tone tends to be...
 - Words that reflect the "temperature" in my classroom on most days include...

How to become a thermostat that sets the temperature 'just right'

1. Observe, notice what's happening (i.e., 'read the room'), and 'take the temperature'
2. Be curious and take perspective
3. Be reflective and vulnerable
4. Make changes, try new things, and 'set the thermostat'



Step 1: Observe, read the room, 'take the temperature'



Factors to consider...

- Day of the week (e.g., Monday!)
- Vacation proximity (or absence/return of an individual child)
- Literal climate/temperature/weather
- Noise/energy levels
- Current events
- Kids' temperaments or individual needs
- Your situation & stressors
- Your self-esteem & confidence

Step 2: Be curious and take perspective (part a)

2a. Diagnose each situation

- Describe the problem neutrally (with no judgement)
- Get clear on what the child/person needs
- Acknowledge how this affects you and how you feel
- Identify options to address the problem or meet the need



Step 2: Be curious and take perspective (part b)

2b. Stay positive!

- We are all learners, we all make mistakes
- We must model what we want to see more of (use those mirror neurons!)
- Every action has an impact, and we are in charge of our choices



Step 3: Be vulnerable



3a. Ask yourself: What role did I play in how things are right now? (i.e., did I set the thermostat too high, too low, or just right?)

3b. Ask others for feedback

3c. Name what is hard for you and your goal

Prompts:

- I wish I could be more...
- The children I work with really respond well to....
- I know I'll do a better job when I remember to...

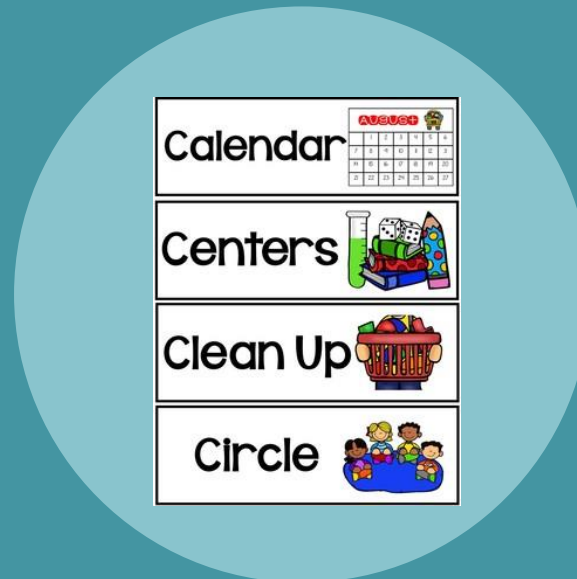
Co-teaching dynamic

- Most people working in early childhood have a co-teacher
- You and your teaching partner may have different styles or tolerance for things
- Don't be afraid to talk about this with the people you work with
- Figure out whether any differences are okay or if you need to agree on a consistent response in the classroom
- The key is open communication



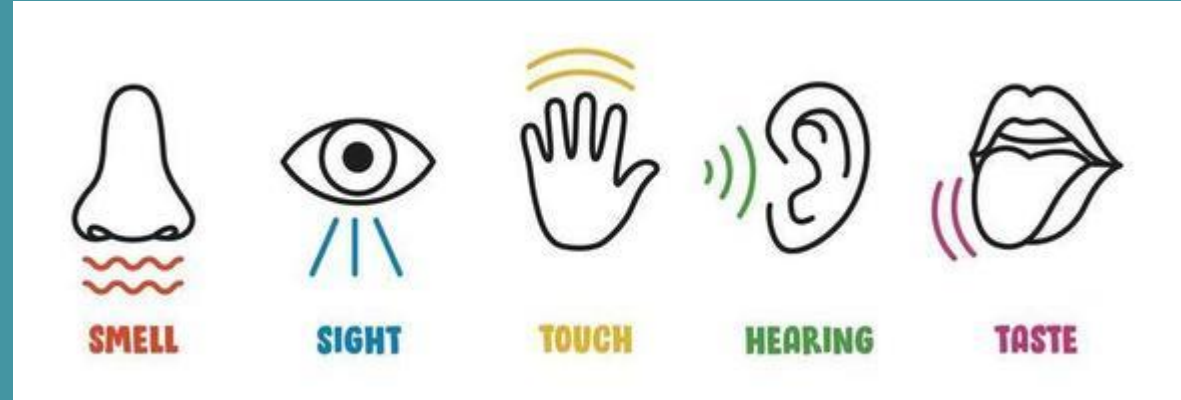
Step 4: Make changes

- Revisit core classroom activities & routines
- Adjust the schedule or pacing of the day
- Pay attention to your language and tone of voice
- Make sure your expectations of kids are reasonable
- Know your own sensory profile and use sensory resets



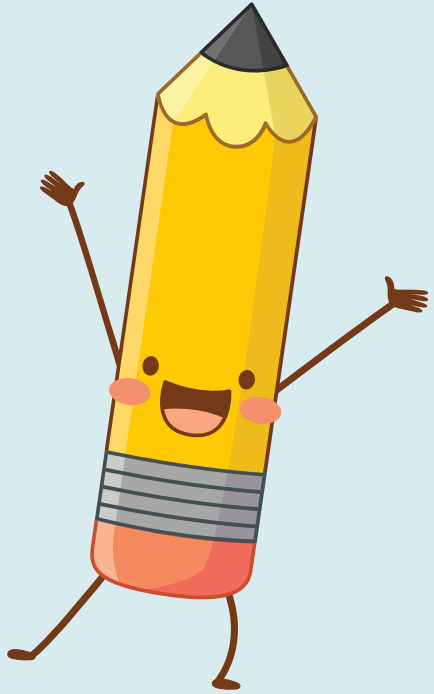
A sensory what?

Sensory reset!



Sensory resets to use with children

- Smell: Cinnamon in playdough, cooking food, flowers
- Sight: Fish tank, sun catchers, happy pictures/posters, lights
- Touch: Water play, cornstarch and water, feely blankets, sand play
- Hearing/Sound: Calming songs, wind chimes, white noise
- Taste: Warm or cool drink, snacks & meals



Poll #3: Which of the tips for 'being the thermostat' describe what you think you need to work on?

- a. Be observant-read the room- 'take the temperature'
- b. Be curious and take perspective
- c. Be vulnerable/do self-reflection
- d. Make shifts that will improve your management approach

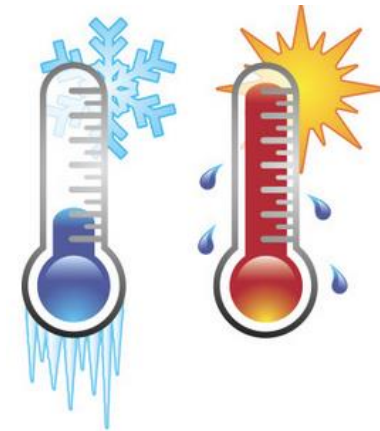
Make a promise to yourself

Write down one shift you will make in the next 2 weeks

- Change core classroom activities or routines
- Adjust the schedule/pacing of the day
- Revisit your expectations of kids
- Incorporate sensory resets
- Work on your language/the way you talk with children
- Talk with your colleagues/ask for feedback
- Look for opportunities for self-care or ask for help if you need it!

Recap

- Being a thermostat is both a mindset and a skill
- It requires self-reflection, practice, & support
- You may need to change how you interact with children as well as things like the schedule or room arrangement
- Your preferred 'temperature' setting may be different from day to day or different from your co-workers
- Children will mirror what you put forth



Final Thought...



“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or dehumanized.”

— **Haim Ginott**

Handouts

1. Slides
2. Presentation summary
3. Conversation starters
4. Practical suggestions



*Be a thermostat
not a thermometer*

-martin luther king, jr

a thermostat sets the temperature,
a thermometer reflects the temperature



Questions?

(from the Q&A box)

Thank you!

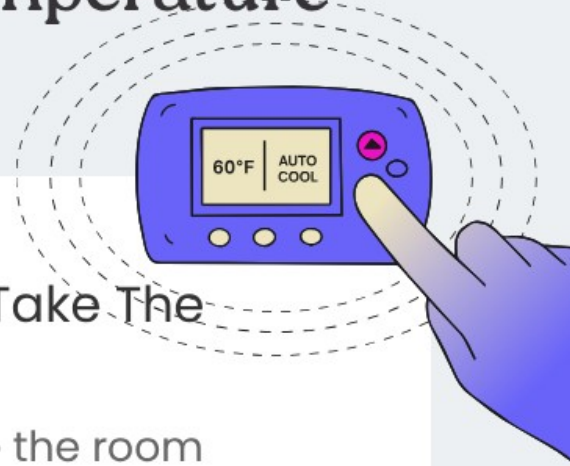
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Be The Thermostat

How You Can Set The Temperature “Just Right”



Observe, Read The Room & Take The Temperature

- Consider structural factors like the room arrangement
- Consider relational factors like tone of voice



Be Curious & Take Other Perspectives

- Diagnose each situation without judgment
- Ask yourself how this affects you
- Stay positive



Be Reflective & Vulnerable

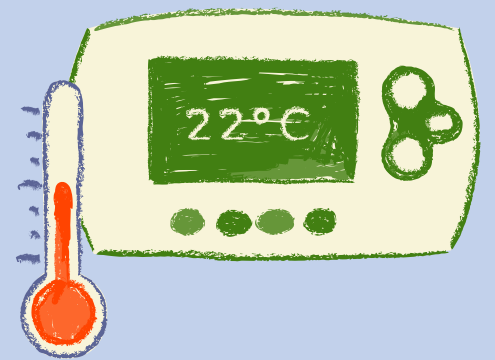
- Ask others for feedback
- Name what is hard for you & choose a goal



Make Changes, Try New Things, Set The Thermostat

- Revisit core routines & activities
- Adjust your day's pace & schedule
- Consider sensory profiles & resets

BE THE THERMOSTAT: TRUSTED TIPS FROM TEACHERS



Using The Senses

Blow bubbles, hold vibrating teethers, swirl & watch oil & water bottles, spin egg beaters in the water table, read by flashlight, play classical music, peel pieces of colored tape off a table, bake banana bread



Engaging Emotions

Give out high fives, create a compliment tree, empower with classroom jobs, display a feelings choice board, arrange a cozy corner, fill a little tent with stuffed animals, create 'All About Me' books with family photos



Incorporating Movement

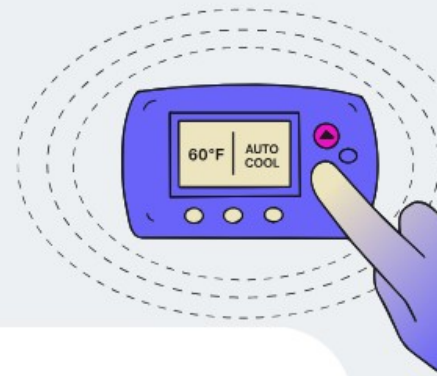
Dance to silly songs, create a push place on a wall, slither like snakes & wiggle like worms, swing and sway rhythmically, march to a slow & steady drum beat, pose like animals, balance stuffies on your tummy & do some belly breathing



Communicating with Care

Center yourself first with deep, even breaths or cool sips of water, know your colleagues' love languages, surprise your colleague by bringing in a little treat, leave behind positive notes at the end of the day, have code words to signal if you're getting stressed

Be The Thermostat: Conversation Starters



- ✦ What's your favorite part of our day? Least favorite?
- ✦ How does the pace of our daily schedule feel to you? Are there any parts of the day that feel too loud? Too quiet?
- ✦ What do you like best about our working relationship? What's one thing you'd like to change about our working relationship?
- ✦ How would you describe your teaching style? How similar would you say our styles are?
- ✦ Does it seem like we have similar expectations for the children? How much of the time does it seem like we're on the same page?
- ✦ How do you think our body language or tone of voice affect the children in our classroom?
- ✦ In your down time, what relaxes you? Are there any sounds, songs or smells that calm you? Are there any sounds, songs or smells that make you feel uncomfortable? Are any of the things you like potentially helpful (and allowable) in our classroom?
- ✦ If you had a magic wand and could change one thing about our class, what would you change?
- ✦ When stressed or feeling blue, what helps you feel better? (Ex. music, exercise, space, quiet, etc.)
- ✦ How would you describe our classroom "climate" (i.e., tone, mood, vibe)?
- ✦ How confident do you feel about classroom management and setting the tone for our day? What are your strengths? Where do you sometimes struggle? How can we help each other?
- ✦ What drives you nuts about some kids / our room / our program? Why does that bother you? Do I ever do those kinds of things?