

Nurturing Your Child's Sense of Self and Belonging

As the family of a four-to-five-year-old child, you may wonder:

“How do I help my child have a sense of pride in who they are?”

“How can I help my child feel connected to their family and community?”

Developing a sense of identity and a strong connection to family, school, and community lays the foundation for children to feel connected, interested, and involved in early learning settings and later in school.



From four years old to kindergarten entry, children learn to:

Describe and celebrate who they are as an individual

Understand their role in their family and community

Identify people and places in their families and communities

Become familiar with different practices and cultures

Ways Families Support Children's Sense of Self and Belonging

Families' everyday interactions, routines, and experiences are opportunities to strengthen children's sense of self and connections to their family and community. In building connections with others, your child also has opportunities to learn about others' identities and backgrounds. For example, your child might meet peers who speak a home language that is the same as theirs or different from their own.

Remember, each family has their own way of supporting children's sense of identity and connection to their family's traditions and values and those of the wider community. There might be clothing, ceremonies, or activities that are especially important to your family. For example, you might attend a powwow or wear a sari for a family wedding. You might also cook family recipes together like tamales, fry bread, or holiday cookies.

As you think about your child, ask yourself:

- How do I already talk to my child about who they are? In what ways can I support my child's understanding of our family values and traditions?
- How can I support my child to share something about themselves, our family, culture, or language at school?
- How can I support my child to use technology to connect with family members who live outside our local community?



ACTIVITY IDEAS for Families

During family time, share photos with your child that show the members of your family and your favorite activities and memories together. The photos can be on a phone, tablet, or computer or in a frame or a picture album. Talk with your child about who is in the photos, where they are, and why that person is special to them. Share the names for family members in your home language(s). Record a video message together to share your thoughts or memories with a family member. Your child might also enjoy drawing a picture of themselves and their family.

When helping your child clean up, learn from your child about things they are proud of and want to share with others. For example, your child might share a favorite toy, outfit, song, or household item that has special meaning. Connect with your child's teacher about opportunities for you and your child to share during pre-kindergarten, like performing a "show and tell" or contributing materials to the learning environment that remind your child of their family and community.

On a walk, explore the community with your child. You can also bring a notebook, a phone, or a camera for taking pictures. Point out where your home is and where neighbors live. You can also point out the "landmarks" in your community — such as the parks, stores, or areas where people get together — or take your child to a community event. Discuss the similarities and differences between the places in your community. Ask your child what they notice about the buildings, the nature, or the languages they hear.

When reading, talk with your child about the variety of ways individuals live, play, and learn. Share books or stories that show people's abilities, cultures, traditions, and languages. Ask your child's teacher to share books that your child can take home or check out from the library. As you share the story, discuss what your child notices about the character and what is similar to and different from your own family.

Learn More About Children's Sense of Self and Belonging

Explore more about your child's development using the [Nevada Pre-Kindergarten Standards](#). Below is a summary of key knowledge and skills from the standards that relate to children's development of identity and social connections.

Social Emotional

Children are developing personal interests and learning about what makes them similar to and different from others.

Social Studies

Children express and communicate about who they are as individuals and in relation to groups, communities, and places.

Technology

Children discover and use different types of technology and tools to communicate and gather or share information.



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