

# Identifying and Building Strengths

**A** renewed emphasis on strengths-based approaches to early childhood research and practice requires educators to think more deeply about the social and cultural contexts of development and learning (NAEYC 2022). From this perspective, teachers' starting point in nurturing social and emotional development is to focus on children's distinctive abilities rather than on what may be perceived as their deficits. How might educators' practices make the most of children's assets? How can children's identities be affirmed through everyday relationships, language, and interactions?

**The three articles in this part provide teachers with insights and examples of practice that reflect a strengths-based approach to social and emotional development.**

In "Promoting Young Children's Social and Emotional Health," **Jeannie Ho** and **Suzanne Funk** describe the foundational importance of social and emotional health and identify specific ways teachers can establish trusting relationships as well as teach, model, and reinforce positive behaviors. With these strategies as priorities, early childhood education settings can be places where happy, engaged children become socially and emotionally healthy.

**Vicki S. Collet** continues this part's focus on children's strengths in "I Can Do That! Fostering Resilience in Young Children." The author describes characteristics of resilience, suggests learning experiences and interactions that will help each child grow in resilience, and identifies characteristics of resilient classrooms.

Children come to school with distinctive experiences and perspectives. In his article, "What About the Children? Teachers Cultivating and Nurturing the Voice and Agency of Young Children," **Brian L. Wright** helps teachers to honor these dimensions of diversity and support the development of each child's individuality and humanity by highlighting activities that help all children know that their actions can make a difference.

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## REFERENCE

NAEYC. 2022. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: NAEYC.