Consider Kinds of Power

Elizabeth Jones and Eve Trook (1983) have described three kinds of power. The differences they have identified can help you reflect on and negotiate how you use your power with your staff.

**Power on:** Adults in authority use power to prevent or stop others from their pursuits and interests.

This kind of power is often used to keep others “in their place.” As others feel powerless and unable to act on their own, there can be negative impact on their feelings of self-worth. The appropriate use of this kind of power is when actions will result in others hurting themselves, hurting others or damaging the business in some way.

**Power for:** Adults in authority use power in behalf of others through coaching/mentoring and training.

This kind of power can be a very engaging role. The adult in authority does not jump in to prevent or solve problems, but rather, uses their skills and knowledge to coach others toward their own understandings and competence. Decisions are continually being made about when to step in and offer support, and when to allow others to figure things out for themselves.

**Power with:** Adults in authority use power side-by-side with others in daily tasks of work, rather than teaching or intervening with behavior or activities.

Working right along with others can be a fun, empowering experience for everyone. You share power in your relationship through the exchange of materials land ideas. Working with others in this way can help staff learn skills for sharing power when working with children.