SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT in Kindergarten

IN THIS LEARNER'S GUIDE

Creating a Classroom Community

Self-Awareness

Self-Regulation

Social Awareness

Relationship Skills

Kindergartners who get along well with teachers and peers, listen and follow directions, and can stay on task have basic skills essential for academic achievement. Children learn and refine many social and emotional skills they need through interactions with both adults and peers throughout the school day. Children who struggle with relationships or rules benefit from teacher support in learning skills they need to be successful, such as problem solving or working through frustration. Teachers can support children's social and emotional development by creating an inclusive classroom community, promoting children's relationships with teachers and peers, and providing daily opportunities and support for children to engage in small group learning activities. Kindergartners thrive when they see themselves as a valued member of the classroom community and when they are confident that they are genuinely valued and loved by their teachers.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EARLY FOUNDATIONS

The kindergarten year is an important one for young children. This year has the potential to set children on the path to become excited life-long learners who work to their full potential. During this year, children increase their sense of responsibility. They learn how to set and achieve academic goals, even when the work is challenging. They understand the importance of making thoughtful choices for themselves and others, and become responsible community members.

All of these lofty goals require children to have critical social and emotional skills. Children must be able to pay attention and follow directions. They need to work and play cooperatively and safely with others. They have to be able to stop talking when they hear the teacher's signal and to help put away materials after an activity.

Given that children enter kindergarten with such varied backgrounds and experiences, many of them will lack the social and emotional skills they need to be good students and achieve kindergarten goals. Children who don't have these skills may be perceived as a distraction to both the teacher and other children in the group and seem to take away valuable learning time away from the children who are ready to learn. Investing in children's social and emotional skill development early saves vast amounts of time and energy spent dealing with off-task and misbehavior month after month. In fact, research clearly indicates that classrooms with relationship-based social-emotional components learn more and test higher than children in classrooms without such support.

Supporting children's social and emotional development is not an add-on curriculum to an already busy kindergarten program. Instead, most of these strategies are integrated into the typical program day. Supporting social and emotional development may require some re-thinking about routines and procedures already in place. Some strategies may initially require some class time and intentional effort. The pay-off will be children who are excited about learning, can better manage their strong emotions, have an easier time following classroom rules, can get along well with others, and achieve academic goals.

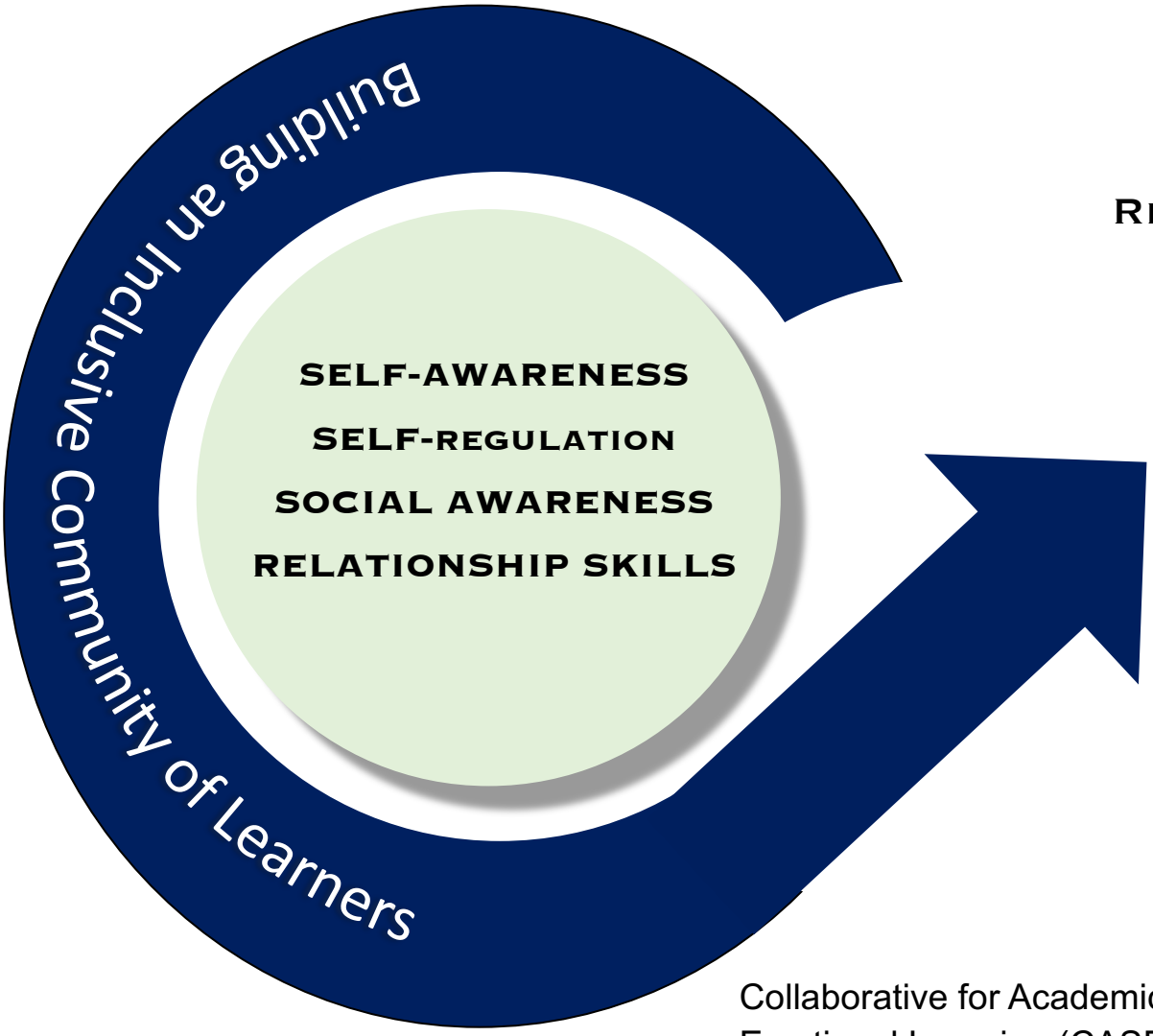
Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

-Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Research in early brain development identifies the interconnectedness between social and emotional development, academic learning and lifelong success. At birth, the brain has the capacity for millions upon millions of potential connections, and with every action and interaction, neural pathways begin to develop. We know that when young children have loving and responsive caregivers who work diligently to meet their physical and emotional needs early on in life, neural connections are formed to become the foundation for lifelong interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, knowledge and understanding. Self-confidence as a learner, the ability to regulate emotions and behavior, and knowing how to have a friend are all facets of healthy social and emotional development.

The research is clear. Children who feel good about themselves, see themselves as an integral part of their classroom group, feel loved by the adults in their world, and who can successfully work and play collaboratively with their peers fare better academically and in life. When children enter kindergarten, they each come with unique skills and abilities in all areas of development, including social and emotional development. It's important to understand that simply because children begin kindergarten does not mean that they have already developed social and emotional skills to learn and play successfully. Skills beget skills, which means that kindergarten teachers must have an in-depth understanding of the continuum of social and emotional development—birth through six years of age, as well as an understanding of evidence-based instructional strategies and approaches that best support children's continued development. Helping children progress across the continuum of development requires shifting the perspective from focusing primarily on classroom/behavior management approaches to intentionally supporting every child's social and emotional growth and development. Using the following chart, teachers are able to identify where children are on the continuum of development, recognizing that as children develop their skills, they become better equipped to manage their emotions, regulate their behaviors, follow directions, and work collaboratively with others. Children need teachers who are intuned to their social and emotional needs and who are willing to create positive opportunities to develop these foundational skills.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning (CASEL)

TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD
OBJECTIVES FOR DEVELOPMENT & LEARNING:
BIRTH THROUGH THIRD GRADE

Social-Emotional Development

1. Regulates own emotions and behaviors
   a. Manages feelings
   b. Follows limits and expectations
   c. Takes care of own needs appropriately
2. Establishes and sustains positive relationships
   a. Forms relationships with adults
   b. Responds to emotional cues
   c. Interacts with peers
   d. Makes friends
3. Participates cooperatively and constructively in group sessions
   a. Balances needs and rights of self and others
   b. Solves social problems

Building an Inclusive Community of Learners

Every classroom, like every community, has its own distinct culture, values, and rules. By building a community in the classroom, teachers can create a common and predictable cultural experience that helps children feel connected to others (Bickart, et al., 1999).

A classroom community is a tangible way to let children know:

- In this community, we share common values, goals, and activities
- Each of us has a part to play so that all of us in the community reach our goals
- This is a place where we care for each other and help every member to be successful
- Sometimes we work together in small or large groups in order to reach our goals
- Each of us will do and be our best
  (Bickart, et al., 1999)

Evidence-Based Research

As we have all observed, there is great individual variation among kindergartners and a wide age range often exists in a kindergarten classroom. The children in your class bring in many different ideas on how to behave, how to work with others, and what school is all about. They may come from many different homes with very different routines and responsibilities. They may have been taught very different ways to handle anger and conflict. Some have lots of experience with other children while others may have very little.

Members of a community share common interests and activities. By creating a community of learners in the classroom, teachers establish common ground among all the children—ways in which the group can function successfully together. The community of learners supports children as they develop the many sophisticated skills they need in order to be successful, such as managing emotions, listening and following directions, staying on task, learning how to both be a leader and a follower, and organizing work materials (Copple et al., 2014; Heroman et al., 2010).

A Classroom Community:

- Is essential for students' well-being
- Is critical for students' academic success
- Teaches respect and responsibility
- Promotes resilience
- Fosters social and emotional competence
- Impacts how children work together
- Influences how children feel about school
- Determines how relationships are nourished

STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

Personally Welcome Every Child, Everyday

Make it a point to welcome every child by name at the start of the class day. The more personal you can make this experience, the better. Coming down to children's level, making eye contact, smiling and genuinely greeting each child by name conveys the message that they are an important member of the community. This helps children who may have difficulty transitioning to school feel a sense of safety and connection. Both are critical for academic learning to occur.

Imagine the experience of seeing someone important to you that you haven't seen in a while. The exchange in those first few moments, when genuine and heartfelt, feels good and helps set the tone for the day.

Good morning Sarai. It's so good to see you today.

If time permits:

You were so interested in illustrating your book yesterday. You will definitely have time to begin working on that today.

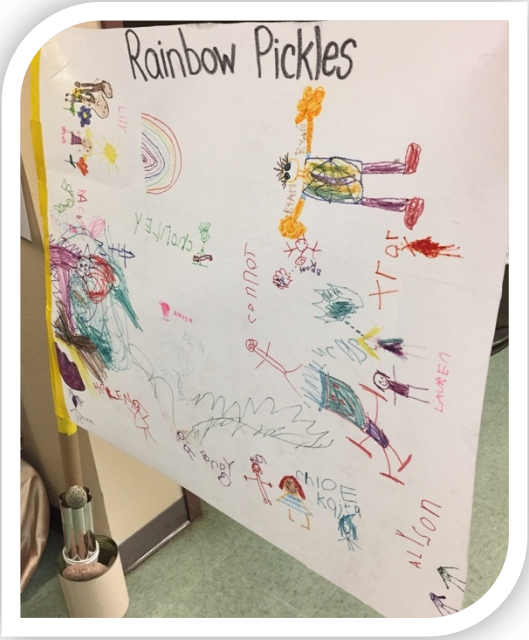
Friends and Friends Photo Display

Create a visual display of the classroom community by posting photos of the children, their families, teachers (including special educators who the children engage with), bus drivers, principals, and anyone else who is important in the lives of children in the classroom.

Visual Display of the Classroom Community

Create a visual display of the classroom community by posting photos of the children in a display that's grouped together and be sure to include your picture as well. The intent is to show that every person is an important member of the classroom community.

Have the Children Name Their Classroom Community & Create a Classroom Flag with the New Name



Help children identify themselves as members of the classroom community by having the children name their class. Ensure the process of selecting a name aligns with the developmental understanding of five- and six-year-olds by helping them come to a consensus rather than voting for a classroom name.

Once a community name has been determined by the children, provide materials for them to create a classroom flag. Generally, a piece of fabric, Sharpies or fabric markers and a pole such as a PVC pipe, tube or a large branch will work well. This flag represents the classroom community and should include every child's name and drawing. It is important that the flag represents children's artistry—their work and their creativity.

When addressing the whole group, use the classroom community name: *Rainbow Pickles, let's get ready for lunch.* By using the class name, you will be cuing the children that it is time to follow the group norms instead of their individual desires.

Classroom Rules

Most teachers have classroom rules as a classroom management strategy. When supporting children's social and emotional development, however, it helps to have rules that support the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Classrooms are like microcosms of the community children live in so rules are most meaningful when they help children learn how to be at school and in the world. Far too often, rules are a set of expectations that children must adhere to or else a consequence is dished out.

When classroom rules support children's intrapersonal and interpersonal skills, known as social and emotional development, it helps them learn how to be in the classroom **and** in the world.

Guiding Principles of Behavior:

1. We take care of ourselves.
2. We take care of each other.
3. We take care of our things.

These Guiding Principles of Behavior are classroom rules that apply not only to the classroom but throughout their educational career (Bilmes, 2007). These are life rules, but these rules are broad—a bit too broad for young children to understand without help. The way we can help children understand what "we take care of each other" means, for example, is to take and post photos of children living these guiding principles. Taking photos of children engaging collaboratively in an activity, such as a child tying another child's shoe, children working

through conflict resolution, or a child comforting someone who scraped her knee, are all great ways to help children understand what it means to take care of the members in our classroom community.

Posting Guiding Principles of Behavior at children's level and intentionally adding photos throughout the year contributes to a deeper understanding of what it takes to create a true community of learners. The following are examples of behaviors for each of the principles.

We Take Care of Ourselves	We Take Care of Each Other	We Take Care of Our Things
Washing hands after blowing nose	Working together	Putting blocks away according to the pictures
Using the Safe Place when needed	Taking turns	Putting caps back on markers
Washing hands before a meal	Working through conflict	Putting books back on shelf—forward facing, right side up
Washing hands after a meal	Expressing empathy/Helping someone who is sad	Wiping the tables after an activity
Tying our shoes (with help initially)	Being helpful to others	Stomping our shoes before coming in
Asking for help	Inviting someone to play/do an activity	Flushing the toilets after every use
Wearing a jacket when it's cold outside	Asking, "How can I be helpful to you?"	Putting all socio-dramatic food and dishes in labeled bins
Wearing sunscreen		Picking up candy wrappers left on the playground
Taking deep breaths when feeling frustrated		
Saying what you feel and need		

Classroom Jobs for Every Child

Classroom jobs are common practice, although most only have a few classroom jobs. When creating a classroom community, it's important that every child has a meaningful job that contributes to the classroom community. Jobs should be rotated about every two weeks so children can successfully learn the responsibility of their job. Each time jobs are rotated, have the child who previously did the task train the new child. This can be an empowering experience for all children and encourages the experience of being both a leader and a follower.

The job chart should include a labeled photo for every job. It is best to use photos of children to identify who is doing which job. Hanging the job chart at children's eye level makes it accessible to them and conveys the message that everyone is a contributing member of the classroom.

Examples of Classroom Jobs

- Librarian
- Accident Attendant
- Block Area Monitor
- Food Service Coordinator
- Conflict Negotiator
- Audio Visual Technician
- Wish You Well Recorder
- Kindness Keeper
- Greeter
- Disc Jockey

Incorporate Rituals Throughout the Day

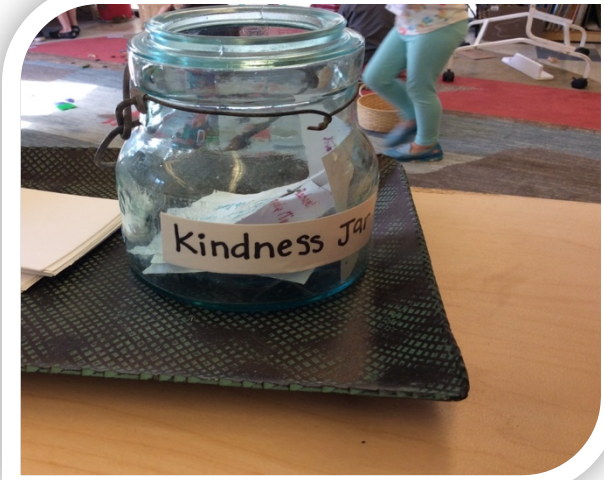
Rituals, different than routines, connect the hearts of the members of the classroom community, and should include the teacher. Rituals help define community values. Examples of rituals are listed below, although more in-depth descriptions for these rituals may be in other sections of this guide as rituals support the development of both emotional and social skills.

Welcome Ritual
Greet every child by name, at their level, with warm and loving enthusiasm

Welcome Song
Sing a consistent song that opens the morning meeting, preferably one that includes their names

Absent Child Ritual
Sing the "We Wish You Well" song that acknowledges children who are absent that day

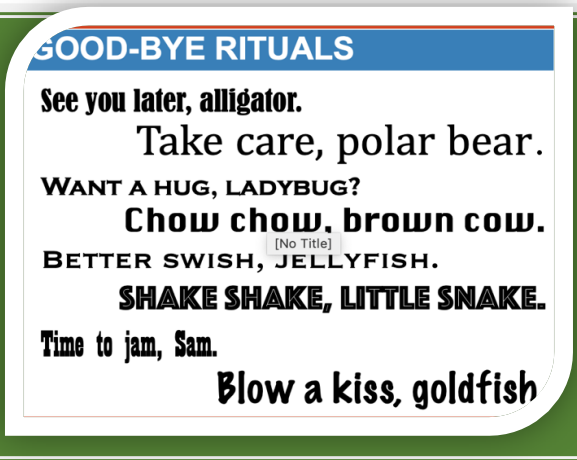
Absent Child Card
A written card for the absent child conveying the message, "We missed you!", written by a child and left in his/her cubby for their return



Kindness Notes
Consistently finding opportunities to write thank you cards/letters to school personnel, parents, volunteers or classroom school guests to model gratitude

Rituals for Connection
Rituals that connect children can be found on Conscious Discipline's website, www.lovingguidance.com

Good-bye Ritual
At the end of the day, playfully say "good-bye" to each and every child



"We Wish You Well" (Farmer in the Dell tune)
Dr. Becky Bailey, *Conscious Discipline*

We wish you well,

We wish you well,

All through the day today,

We wish you well.

Signal for Coming Together

Teach children your signal for getting the attention of the classroom community. Signals may include raising your hand, ringing a soft chime, or singing a chant. Take time to practice learning the signal: ***Let's see how this signal works. When I give the signal, you will stop what you are doing, look at me and listen quietly.***

Use the signal many times the first few days you introduce it. Each time you practice, offer encouragement: ***You're getting better and better at this. Let's see if we can get it even better next time*** (Bicket, et al., 1999).

Avoid calling out specific children and avoid using strategies like, "I'm waiting for… to look at me." When building community, it's important to avoid strategies that isolate a child/children as these strategies divide rather than unite.

Class Meetings

Following a predictable routine for class meetings helps orient children to where they are and what is expected. This consistency also helps children feel safe, as long as you are creating a positive group experience.

Welcome Meeting/Morning Meeting

Beginning the school day with a welcome meeting helps children transition from wherever they are coming from (e.g. home or a child care program) to the classroom community. Intentionally spending time to positively welcome children as a whole group, not only helps set the tone for the day, but helps children reconnect as a community of learners. This is a time for teachers to share the plan for the day, reflect on prior learnings, and to provide a forum for children to share their reflections, thoughts, ideas and stories.

Collective Problem Solving

Class meetings are also a great forum to discuss classroom happenings or challenges. The key to this experience is to create a positive climate, particularly when there are challenges. Developing the understanding that challenges can be resolved respectfully, is a significant life skill.

One of our classroom rules is that we take care of our things. We have a problem that I'd like to discuss.

Closing Meeting

Having a meeting at the end of the day helps prepare children for the transition. The opportunity to reflect upon the day's events offers insight about their curiosities, discoveries, and learnings. As children leave for the day, a formal good-bye ritual to each child offers closure for the day and extends love to each and every child. This is not the time to give negative feedback about a child's behavior. It's important to end the day on a positive note.

Who is Here Today?

Absent Child Ritual & Absent Child Card/We Missed You Card

Help the children notice who is not present each day.
As each person is an asset to the community it's important
to notice when one of the community members is not there.
This conveys the significance of being part of the learning community.
Let's see who is here today. We have 22 children here today. Who's missing? Amanda, Raul, Gianna, and Tisa are not here. Let's wish them well.

Wishing them well by singing a song, creating a "we missed you" card or using a visual representation of their absence models for children what it means to be an inclusive community. A visual representation also helps you to remember to intentionally welcome the child back on his/her return.

We missed you yesterday, Tisa. We put a "We Missed You!" card in your cubby.

The "Wish You Well" Song (Bailey, 2001) is a wonderful way to send well wishes to an absent child (see pg. 10 of this guide).

Making Connections to the Community

Assist children in developing empathy and concern beyond the walls of the school. Make cards for the elderly or children in the hospital. Other ideas include helping with cleanup and recycling, or collecting food, clothing, or books for children in need (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010).

Coming Together as a Classroom Community of Learners

When setting the stage for children to meet as an inclusive community of learners, it is important to consider how children are seated during these times. When children are seated in rows facing the teacher, it can be perceived that the dialogue is really between a child and the teacher. When children are seated in a circle, it is conveyed that all members of the community are ready to listen and share, to hear and be heard. It gives them the opportunity to make eye contact with the speaker and to practice gaining awareness of social cues like listening intently to the ideas of others, reading body language, and using language to convey their ideas concisely. Sitting in a circle says, "Everyone's ideas, thoughts and perspectives are valid, so let's listen carefully to one another."

Kindergarten is, for many children, the beginning of their educational career. How they perceive themselves as a learner and as a member of a community begins during this very formidable time in their lives.

Transition Times (from one activity to another inside and outside the classroom)

Some children find transitions difficult because they lack a clear sense of direction. Transitions are particularly challenging for children who are still in the process of developing self-regulation skills. Quick transition meetings help these times move more smoothly. Use these brief meetings to have children share what they have been working on, to let children know what will be happening next, or to assign cleanup tasks. When a transition is about to occur, it's best to approach children individually, to inform them of next steps rather than announcing it to the whole group. This is particularly true for children who have difficulty during these times.

Giving clear guidelines—stating the expectation positively helps children understand what to do (i.e. "Gather your work and put it in your baskets"). It's not helpful to tell children what not to do (i.e. "Don't leave that mess.") or to remind them of times when they may not have been successful. Kindergartners are still developing their understanding of their role and responsibilities as a member of an inclusive community of learners.

The best way to learn is by consistently offering clear expectations in a kind and loving way.

We will be going outside soon. Once you put your materials away, your next task will be to….

First put the journals back on the shelf, then you can…

Rainbow Pickles keep our classroom organized so the blocks need to be put back on this shelf using the silhouettes/pictures.

On-Going, Personal & Meaningful Discussions

"It is important to conduct discussions so that children can talk to one another rather than simply to you" (Bickart et al., 1999). Have frequent discussions with several children about something the children have worked on that day, provide situations that encourage them to problem solve or create meaningful opportunities for them to be a part of planning an event, party or celebration. Using language to connect children's ideas is an intentional practice.

Did you hear Micah's idea? He thinks we should move this shelf closer to the Publishing Area.
Lauren, now it's your turn to share your idea.
Let's listen intently to what Lauren thinks we should do….
Now we have two ideas to consider.
Which solution do you think will work best for everyone?

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS/STATEMENTS THAT ENCOURAGE MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE

Connect to prior conversations:
I remember when you shared that you…

I'm interested in knowing more…

Share more.

So, what you're saying is…

How did you figure that out?

What will you do next?

What might be most helpful to you right now?

Sometimes figuring things out can feel challenging. I know you can do this.

I'm noticing how much you like….

Have you ever done this before? Tell me about that.

Tell me about your (picture/work/creation).

I'm interested in knowing what you love to do.

SELF-AWARENESS

LEARNING OPTIMIST

UNDERSTAND EMOTIONS

Self-Awareness

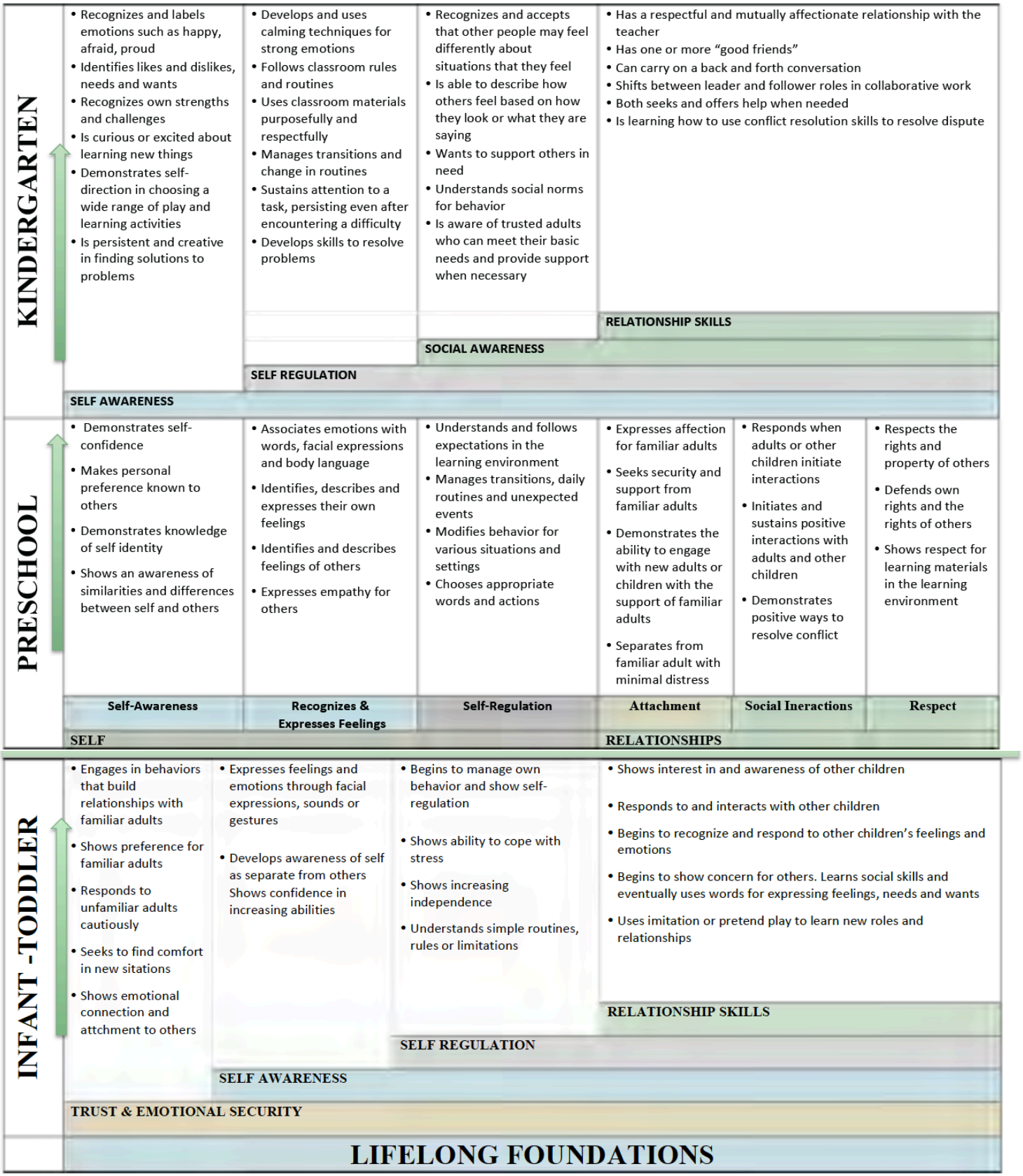
A child's growing understanding of their emotions and the development of a positive self-image

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

Becoming aware of emotions is the first step toward regulating emotions. Children who can't identify that they are feeling irritated, angry or frustrated can't put a thinking moment between feeling and action. They may hit, throw things, or tantrum when feelings overwhelm them. Only when children become consciously aware of their emotions can they begin to manage those emotions in a safe and appropriate way.

Children come to kindergarten expressing and managing their feelings in many different ways. Temperament, experiences, culture, and families all play into how children experience emotions. For example, some children are taught to avoid expressions of emotion, while others are encouraged to express their feelings openly (Heroman et al., 2010). Five-year-olds have the ability to learn to recognize and express emotions appropriately and share information about themselves with others.

During the kindergarten year, children become increasingly self-aware. They are able to describe themselves by their physical characteristics, by their possessions, and by what they know how to do (Bickart et al, 1999; Copple et al., 2014; Dichtemiller et al., 2001). A positive self-concept is another part of self-awareness. When children have a positive self-concept, they are willing to work through challenges to solve problems and complete tasks. When children see themselves as incapable or failures, they shy away from challenges and often say things like, "I can't do it." A good self-concept is a necessary disposition for academic success (Bickart, et al., 1999).



Arizona Infant Toddler Guidelines, Arizona Early Learning Standards
Kindergarten: Collaborative for Academic, Social & Emotional Learning

SELF-AWARENESS:
UNDERSTANDING WHO I AM

- What am I feeling? How can I let somebody know?
- What do I like?
- What do I dislike?
- What am I good at?
- What am I still learning?
- I can do anything.
- I am persistent.
- I can solve problems.

I'M LEARNING HOW TO...

Most children this age are what we call "learning optimists." They can make choices among familiar activities, participate in new experiences, and are willing to take some risks. They feel they can accomplish anything they set their mind to, even when the goal is far above their current abilities. They approach new tasks and situations enthusiastically and will work hard to be successful (Dichtelmiller et al., 2001; Harter as cited in Copple et al., 2009).

A kindergartner with well-developed self-awareness:

- Recognizes and labels emotions such as happy, afraid, proud
- Identifies likes and dislikes, needs and wants
- Recognizes own strengths and challenges
- Is curious or excited about learning new things
- Demonstrates self-direction in choosing a wide range of play and learning activities
- Is consistent and creative in finding solutions to problems

Children who need additional support in developing self-awareness might:

- Use behaviors instead of words to express emotions—example: destroys own work instead of saying, "I'm frustrated."
- Have difficulty responding to the question, "Why are your crying?"
- Say things like, "I'm stupid." or "I can't do anything right."
- Complain that work is too hard
- Wander around the classroom instead of engaging in an activity
- Give up easily when frustrated by a task

The most basic of all human needs is to understand and be understood. The best way to understand people is to listen to them. -Ralph Nichols

Strategies to Support Children's Development of Self-Awareness

Listen to and validate children's expressed feelings and interests

Listening to children with interest, compassion, and understanding increases emotional literacy and models empathy toward others. When a child is emotionally distraught, it is especially important to respond with compassion.

Some possible responses might be:

Wow. You have a lot to say about what you made. The smile on your face tells me that you're feeling proud of what you made.

You look like you might be feeling frustrated about that.

You're talking so FAST. It sounds like you're feeling excited about the field trip.

Sometimes teachers feel that by making these statements, they may be condoning behavior or somehow encouraging children to continue to cry or behave inappropriately. Stating how children might be feeling, in a loving and empathetic tone of voice, helps children begin to develop an awareness of how to identify and label what they're feeling. Often, children need to be heard and by taking a moment to acknowledge how they are feeling helps strengthen child-teacher relationships. It's also one of the best ways to model empathy and show that we care for everyone in our community.

Introduce and Use New Vocabulary Pertaining to Feelings

Work with children to build a rich emotional vocabulary to help them become even more aware of what they and others are feeling. When children have the words for their feelings, it makes it easier to communicate how they feel to others with words rather than with behaviors such as hitting, running away, or destroying things. Some words you might start with are:

*I'm feeling **frustrated** right now.*
Happy, irritated, frustrated, annoyed, sad, afraid, overwhelmed, anxious, envious, joyful, concerned

Discuss how characters in a story or book are feeling

As you share books with children, find opportunities to ask how individual characters might feel. Have a discussion about why they think the character feels that way. What are the clues that help them come to

this conclusion (i.e. facial expressions, body language, etc.)? Maybe the hint is something that's happening in the story. Weave sophisticated emotion words into the conversation.

For example:
Yes, he does look happy. I think he might be excited about finding the frog. What do you think?

She does look very sleepy. Do you think she's exhausted because she had to run all the way home from the park?

Make a class book about "feeling" vocabulary

1. Take and print a digital photo of each child in the classroom where each child is modeling a different emotion (i.e. joyful, delighted, frustrated, annoyed, enthusiastic, ecstatic, afraid).

2. Compile the photos with the emotion word caption in a homemade book. Captions might say something like "I am feeling worried." Adding a mirror for them to look at their expressions may create a richer language experience.

3. Read the book often to the children as they are learning to identify emotions and leave the book in the library area for children to explore by themselves.

Encourage children to use a variety of ways to express feelings such as drawing, writing, or dancing

Have children write, draw or dictate about how they feel if there is a disappointment, an upcoming celebration, or a classroom loss (i.e. child is moving away, class pet dies, teacher is going on maternity leave, etc.).
Put the pages together as a class-made book. Read the book aloud during group time and leave the book in the library area for children to revisit.

Turn on upbeat music and have children do a happy dance or slow tempo music to do big and slow movements as if moving through water as a quick brain break throughout the day.

Ask children to create a drawing or painting about what "happy" looks like. Create a display of the results with a title card "Happy looks like…"

Children's names are an important part of their identity and connection to their families. Make sure tofind out how each child prefers to be referred to in your classroom.

Many children are not addressed by their given name. For example, Elizabeth may be called Liz, Lizzy, Beth or even something totally different such as Janey, her middle name. Invite the children to create name labels for their cubbies, journals, etc.

Provide wall space for children to post their work. Create a designated space for each child to display his or her own work to remind children of their accomplishments. When a child wants to post a new piece, they can take down the first and replace it with the new one. Allow children to take care of this task without adult assistance by keeping tape handy for them to use (Bilmes, 2012).

Treat mistakes as part of the learning process
Few of us are willing to take risks if we know we will be criticized or shamed for making a mistake.
When teachers view mistakes as part of the learning process, children learn that the classroom is a safe place to take risks. Think of reframing language from saying, "No, that's not right" to statements such as:

That's part of the answer…look here and tell me what you see.

That's a good try…would you like to try again or would you like to choose someone to help you?

Show me how you got that answer and we can figure out together what you missed

You're learning how to figure this out. You'll get there…what will you do next? (Bickart, et al., 1999)

The messages children hear from significant adults become their self-talk. It becomes what children think about themselves. When teachers give children messages that they are growing and learning, and that mistakes and challenges are part of the process, children develop positive beliefs about who they are and what they can do. On the other hand, when children hear repeated negative messages, they begin to see themselves as incapable. This can seriously interfere with learning and academic progress (Burband & Dweck as cited in Copple et al., 2014).

Help children reframe negative self-talk

The words children say to themselves are part of what builds their view of reality. When a child is using self-talk that erodes their self-esteem, help them recognize and name the underlying feelings. For example, sometimes children will say, "I can't do it" or "I'm not smart enough" or "I'm just dumb." This is an opportunity to help the child reframe this negative self-talk, "You aren't dumb at all. I think you might be feeling frustrated right now. Let's figure out how you can get unstuck." (Bilmes, 2012). It's important to remember that body language and tone speak volumes and teachers can either create an experience that is caring and supportive, dismissive, or even demeaning based on how it's said.

Provide, encourage and support opportunities for autonomy and self-direction (learning areas, learning stations, classroom job chart). Provide a variety of interest areas and large blocks of time when children can freely move from one area to another. This creates opportunities for teachers to engage in Tier 2 interventions with smaller groups while others are highly engaged in interest areas where they can be exploring, practicing skills, moving, and talking as they learn (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010).

When children have a well-developed sense of self-awareness, they can begin to be reflective and think about their actions and behaviors, be open to learning from their mistakes and become an enthusiastic learner. Self-awareness opens the door for children to begin to manage their strong emotions and to listen to and understand the feelings of others.

Self-awareness opens the door for children to begin to manage their strong emotions and to listen to and understand the feelings of others.

SELF-REGULATION

DEVELOPING ABILITY TO CONTROL ONE'S IMPULSES AND TO STOP DOING SOMETHING IF NEEDED

DEVELOPING ABILITY TO DO SOMETHING EVEN IF ONE DOESN'T WANT TO

Self-Regulation

Child's developing ability to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors

Self-regulation refers to a child's developing ability to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. Self-regulation has two sides:

First, it involves the ability to control one's impulses and to stop doing something if needed. For example, a child can resist his immediate desire to call out the answer when the teacher asks another child a question.

Second, self-regulation involves the ability to do something even if one doesn't want to because it has to be done, such as waiting a turn or raising one's hand.

Self-regulation is a sophisticated skill that helps both children and adults put a moment of thought between emotion and action. It results in mindful, intentional, and thoughtful behaviors. Children and adults who have self-regulation skills can delay gratification and control their emotions enough to think ahead to the possible consequences of their actions or to think about alternative actions that would be more appropriate (Bodrova and Leong, 2008).

Kindergartners are better able than younger children to self-regulate. In kindergarten, we expect children to manage their emotions and behavior appropriately at least most of the time. We expect them to be able to wait and take turns using materials without being aggressive. While we understand their disappointment when things don't go exactly the way they want, we want them to move on without emotional outbursts.

SELF-REGULATION:

I CAN REGULATE WHAT I'M FEELING AND DOING

How do I manage and express my feelings appropriately?

How do I manage my behavior?

How can I do what the teacher wants when I want to do something else?

How do I solve problems with my friends?

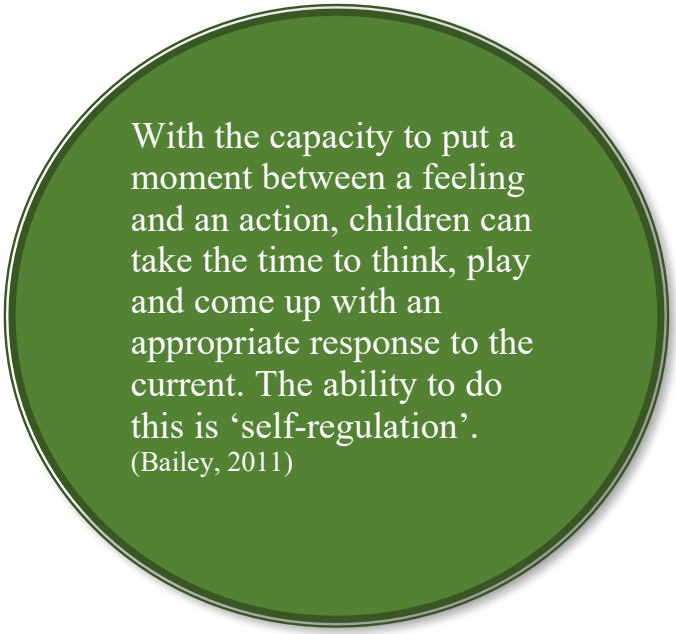
It's important to understand kindergartners are just beginning to be able to use rules and strategies to guide their behavior instead of just reacting to emotions (Copple et al, 2014). This is a skill that will continue to develop with intentional support and guidance from a connected adult.

Five-year-olds thrive on order and routines. They are comfortable when they know the routines and can plan their activities around the daily schedule (Dichtelmiller et al. 2001). As a part of learning classroom rules, you may observe children becoming "rule enforcers" (i.e. "*The teacher said you need to raise your hand if you want to talk, Lativa.")* and tattling (i.e. "*Mrs. Rodrigues, those kids aren't waiting for their turn*"). Tattling and behaviors that are perceived as "bossy" are typical and expected at this stage of self-regulation (Dichtelmiller et al., 2001). It's all part of learning expectations of behavior and impulse control.

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

While we strive to provide predictability and order, change and inconsistency are also a part of life and we expect children in kindergarten to cope with typical daily challenges and changes in the routine. It's important to keep in mind that kindergartners are beginning to develop skills to adjust to changes and learn that different situations call for different behaviors (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Dichtelmiller et al., 2001).

"One of the major challenges of school for five-year-olds is learning how to care for classroom materials. With some reminders, a child learns how to use materials thoughtfully (so the materials continue to be available for others and how to put things away so that others can easily find them" (Dichtelmiller et al., 2001).



It is interesting to note, however, that while children are learning to be more responsible, they may regress as the year progresses, by acting out, complaining, or even having tantrums. It is best to respond to this developmental phase with clear, simple, consistent expectations (Copple et al., 2014).

Development of self-regulation, and the resulting increase in executive function, can predict higher achievement in early literacy, language, and math skills (McClellan et al., 2006). Executive function skills such as attention, memory and persistence are necessary components of the learning process. Self-regulation is the foundation that underlies these executive skills in the higher centers of the brain (Bailey, 2011; Bodrova & Leong, 2008; McClelland et al., 2006). Children build these skills through engagement in meaningful social interactions and enjoyable activities that draw on self-regulatory skills at increasingly demanding levels.

Through creative play, games, and schoolwork, children practice integrating their attention, working memory, and self-control to support planning, flexible problem-solving and engagement (The Center on the Developing Child, n.d.).

"Teachers rate 'difficulty following directions' as their number one concern about children because they say that m ore than half of the children they teach have difficulty in this area of self-regulation" (Copple, et al., 2014).

Children enter kindergarten with varying levels of self-regulation skills. Some are quite good at delaying gratification and thinking about consequences of their actions, while others struggle (Copple, et al., 2014). In particular, children with highly emotional temperaments have greater difficulty regulating their feelings, and they will require extra adult support in developing self-regulation skills (Kochanska & Knaack as cited regulation skills (Kochanska & Knack as cited in Copple, et al. 2014).

In a very structured classroom where children are monitored and directed by adults, children may appear to have a high level of self-regulation when in fact they are 'teacher managed.' In order to develop true self-regulation, children need many opportunities to:

1. Follow adult rules, such as raising their hand to answer a question.
2. Set their own rules and monitor others, as they may do when they have to share materials or when they are playing a game.
3. Apply rules to themselves, such as finishing a journal page before moving on to another activity (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

A kindergartner with well-developed self-regulation:

- Develops and uses calming techniques for strong emotions
- Follows classroom rules and routines
- Uses classroom materials purposefully and respectfully
- Manages transitions and change in routines
- Sustains attention to a task, persisting even after encountering a difficulty
- Develops skills to resolve conflict

Children who need additional support in developing self-awareness might:

- Use behaviors instead of words to express emotions—example: destroys own work instead of saying, "I'm frustrated."
- Have difficulty responding to the question, "Why are your crying?"
- Say things like, "I'm stupid" or "I can't do anything right."
- Complain that work is too hard.
- Wander around the classroom instead of engaging in an activity.
- Give up easily when frustrated by a task.

Ultimately, the goal is to shift children away from relying on adult regulation, so it is important for the teacher to gradually reduce the amount of control and support and allow the child to begin to take over (The Center on the Developing Child, n.d.). Kindergarten classrooms present an important opportunity to authentically influence the development of self-regulation in children.

Strategies to Support Children's Development of Self-Regulation

Self-regulation should be taught to all the children in your classroom, not only children with obvious behavior concerns. All children benefit from practice in acting with purpose instead of acting on impulse (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

Teach children techniques to manage strong emotions

STAR-Stop, Take a deep breath, And Relax

This is a deep, belly breathing technique described by Bailey (2011). Stop, Take a deep belly breath, And (holding the breath for a moment), Relax (exhale slowly from your belly). A great way to teach belly breathing is to have children lie down with an object like a stuffed animal on their belly. As they inhale breath into their bellies, the stuffed animal will rise.

Coach children to replace the word “am” with the word “feel” when describing emotions. I feel angry rather than I am angry. “That simple act of consciously separating me as an individual from the intense emotion I am feeling is essential for emotional regulation” (Bailey, 2011).

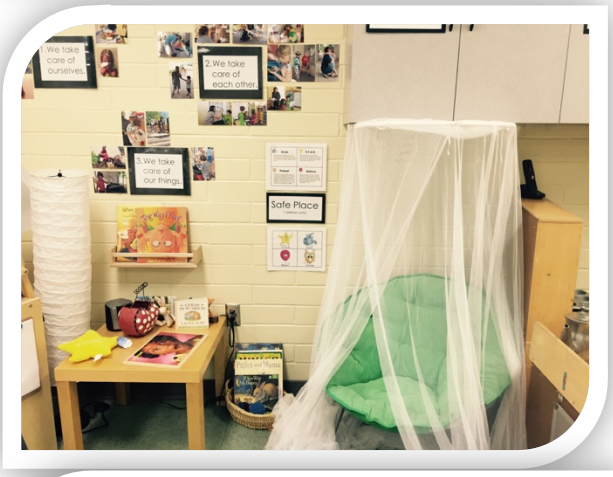
INSTEAD OF	**USE THIS**
I am so sad.	*I’m feeling sad right now.*

Create a One-Person-Spot AKA Safe Place in the Classroom

Many children (and adults) find that moving off to be alone for a few minutes helps them calm down and regain control.

Think of creating a small area in a corner of the room to which a child can retreat when they feel the need. Furnish this area with a small assortment of items that can help children self-soothe. A few suggestions to consider are:

- A comfortable place to sit such as a beanbag chair, cushions or pillows
- A stuffed star-shaped pillow or a squishy star as a reminder to use S.T.A.R. breathing technique
- Squishy balls, sensory bottles, sensory toys
- A small audio player (MP3, iPod, nature sounds machine, or an old cell phone) with headphones and a variety of slow, relaxing music
- A box with a variety of markers and pencils along with drawing/writing paper
- A poster with photos of breathing strategies
- Several comforting and familiar books
- A photo display or a photo album of our classroom community



This safe place is not a place for time-out. It is a place where a child can go to retreat whenever they feel the need.

Some days/circumstances may feel overwhelming for children. There may be moments where children benefit from taking time to be alone. This space is offered as a form of support rather than threat or punishment. It is a defined space available for one child at a time, any time they need it. Having this space for children to use, as they need it, alerts the teacher to provide emotional support as they continue to develop their ability to not only recognize what they are feeling, but what to do with what they’re feeling.

Because this is a new process for most children, initially they might need to be reminded that the safe place is available. It’s important to reiterate, it is not a place where children are sent but rather are invited:

Remember, our safe place is available to you whenever you might be feeling sad, frustrated or even afraid.

> *Taking three big belly breaths can help our hearts and bodies feel better. The safe place is a place where you can go to if you need to be alone to do that.*
>
> *Come, let's take a moment in our safe place*. Teacher takes a few deep breaths to model the process of shifting to a calm state. *What would be most helpful to you right now—a hug, a smile, a song?*
>
> *Sometimes it's helpful if we take a break. The safe place is always there, if you need it.*

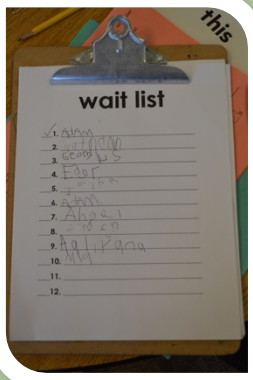
Create a Large Motor Spot

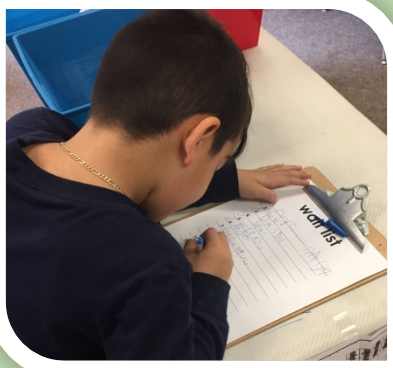
Many children find that large-motor activities help them regain control. A small 2-foot square area is enough for a child to jump up and down, run in place, or bounce on a hop ball. Some teachers have found it useful to define this spot with a hula hoop.

Use Visual and Tangible Reminders of Expectations
Kindergarten children benefit greatly with the use of visual and tangible cues as they learn self-regulation strategies (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

Create and post a picture schedule of the daily routine.
Refer to the schedule often as children learn how the schedule works.

Teach and post steps for common routines
Illustrate the steps with photos of hand washing or getting ready to go home with photos of children in the class.





Create a visual signal to cue children to quiet down and listen for directions.
Develop tangible tools to help children decide who goes first or has the next turn, such as rolling dice or creating a waiting list.

Create opportunities for children to practice and apply rules
"Make play and games important parts of the curriculum…kindergartners learn self-regulation (and the ability to follow rules) best through activities in which children (and not adults) set, negotiate and follow rules.
Instead of getting rid of blocks and dress-up clothes, kindergarten teachers need to primarily focus on improving the quality of make-believe play, ensuring that children have numerous opportunities to engage in acting out complex pretend scenarios—practicing self-regulation" (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

Teach children how to set limits with others

Coach and teach children to set limits when they have been intruded upon by telling the offender what they don't like and behavior they would like instead. A useful script to teach children is

"It is not okay for you to _____. Please_____."

For example, "It is not okay for you to push me away. Please ask me to move next time."
Make sure the child ends the limit setting by telling the offender what they would like to see happen next time instead of just saying "I don't like it" or "That's not okay" (Bailey, 2011).

It's important to help children learn the actual language for setting limits. Simply stating, "Use your words" or "Talk to him about it" doesn't help children develop assertive language when setting limits. Be sure to give them the actual words to say, in first person.

"A growing body of research indicates that children are not ready to start kindergarten or first grade with the skills they need to be successful. This has nothing to do with letters, numbers, days of the week or colors; it is because they lack the critical ability to self-regulate" (Bailey, 2011).

Self-regulation predicts school achievement in reading and mathematics better than IQ scores
(Blair & Razza, 2007)

Avoid problems of impulsive behaviors

> "Five-year-olds can attend to open-ended tasks they have chosen for reasonably long periods of time (20-30 minutes). However, it is more difficult for them to concentrate on tasks they have not selected or activities that require skills beyond their current abilities…Limit whole group activities" (Dichtelmiller et al., 2001).

> "Eliminate times that children have nothing to do but wait; make the time more productive with songs, poems, and rhyming games" (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010).

> Engage children in physical activity for short bursts throughout the day (Perry, n.d.).

For many children, school becomes the first and only place where they can learn to regulate themselves. In the early years, self-regulation skills deserves the same, if not more, attention as the instruction in academic subjects (Bodrova & Leong, 2008).

Class meeting problem solving
Teach children to think of alternative ways to remedy situations with a class problem solving process.

1. What is the problem?
2. What would we like to have happen?
3. What can we do? What suggestion will we try?
4. Try out the solution.
5. Evaluate how well it worked.

Celebrate success or start the process over to try another solution (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010).

Self-regulation is the foundation for executive functioning

(Bailey, 2011; Bodrova & Leong, 2008; McClelland et al., 2006; The Center on the Developing Child, n.d.)

SOCIAL-AWARENESS

Social-awareness

Child's developing ability to empathize, the understanding of social norms for behavior, and the identification of adults who can meet their needs and help when things go wrong (CASEL, n.d.)

During the kindergarten year, children develop a greater understanding and awareness of others' minds and emotions. They become increasingly skilled at figuring out what triggers emotions in others and are becoming more skilled at soothing those in distress (Copple et al., 2014). The ability to empathize, predict and understand the emotions of other people is essential for children to successfully form relationships with others (Heroman et al., 2010).

Empathy is also one of the critical factors in the control of aggressive behavior. Children who can accurately interpret emotional signals are more likely to respond appropriately to others and less likely to become angry or aggressive. They are also less likely to strike out physically or verbally because observing pain and distress in others triggers their own distress (Feshbach as cited in Committee for Children, 1997; Heroman et al., 2010).

"Functioning as a member of a group requires an understanding of the feelings and rights of others and the ability to balance personal needs and desires with those of other people" (Heroman, et al., 2010). Balancing the needs of self and others is at the core of social and ethical norms of behavior. As children develop empathy for others, they also begin to understand the reasons behind rules for behaviors such as hitting and name-calling.

Children are dependent on trusted adults to provide for their basic physiological needs such as food and medical care as well as their physical and psychological safety. Social awareness for kindergartners includes knowing which adults at home, at school and in the community at large they can turn to in order to get these needs met. When children don't know how their basic needs will be met, they may have greater difficulty learning and relating positively to others (Bickart et al., 1999).

SOCIAL-AWARENESS

How do I know what others are thinking and feeling?

How am I supposed to behave?

Who can give me help when I need it?

Strategies to Support Social Awareness

About 3% of kindergartners are verbally and physically aggressive and have trouble understanding the perspective of others. They need teacher support to learn how to understand the perspective of others (various authors as cited in Copple et al., 2014).

A kindergartner with well-developed social awareness:

- Recognizes and accepts that other people may feel differently about situations than they feel
- Is able to describe how others feel based on how they look or what they are saying
- Wants to support others in need
- Understands social norms for behavior
- Is aware of trusted adults who can meet their basic needs and provide support when necessary

Children who need additional support in developing social awareness might:

- Say to a child who does not want to touch the worm "Only babies are scared of worms."
- Taunt a child who spilled paint, saying "Ha, ha. You're gonna get in trouble."
- "You're gonna get in trouble." instead of offering help to clean up.
- Push a classmate away to get access to the drinking fountain
- Get hurt during recess but not know who to go to for help

Model respect and sensitivity when responding to children's emotions

Children learn empathy in some of the same ways they learn most behaviors—through observation and imitation. As you empathize with children and model respect for the feelings of others, you are also planting the seed for the child's development of his own empathy for others.

For example:

It seems to me that you might be feeling frustrated. Is there something I can do to help?

Are you feeling disappointed because you didn't get a turn today?

Would you like to talk to me about why you are feeling irritated?

Franny's mother is in the hospital and Franny thinks she's feeling lonely. Who has some ideas of how we can help her feel better?

Help children identify with others

Help children empathize with children other than their closest friends by highlighting similarities among all the children in the class. Integrate comments about commonalities throughout the program day.

Marcio, I saw you with your mom on the bus this morning when I was driving to school. Michael, you ride the bus in the morning, too, don't you?

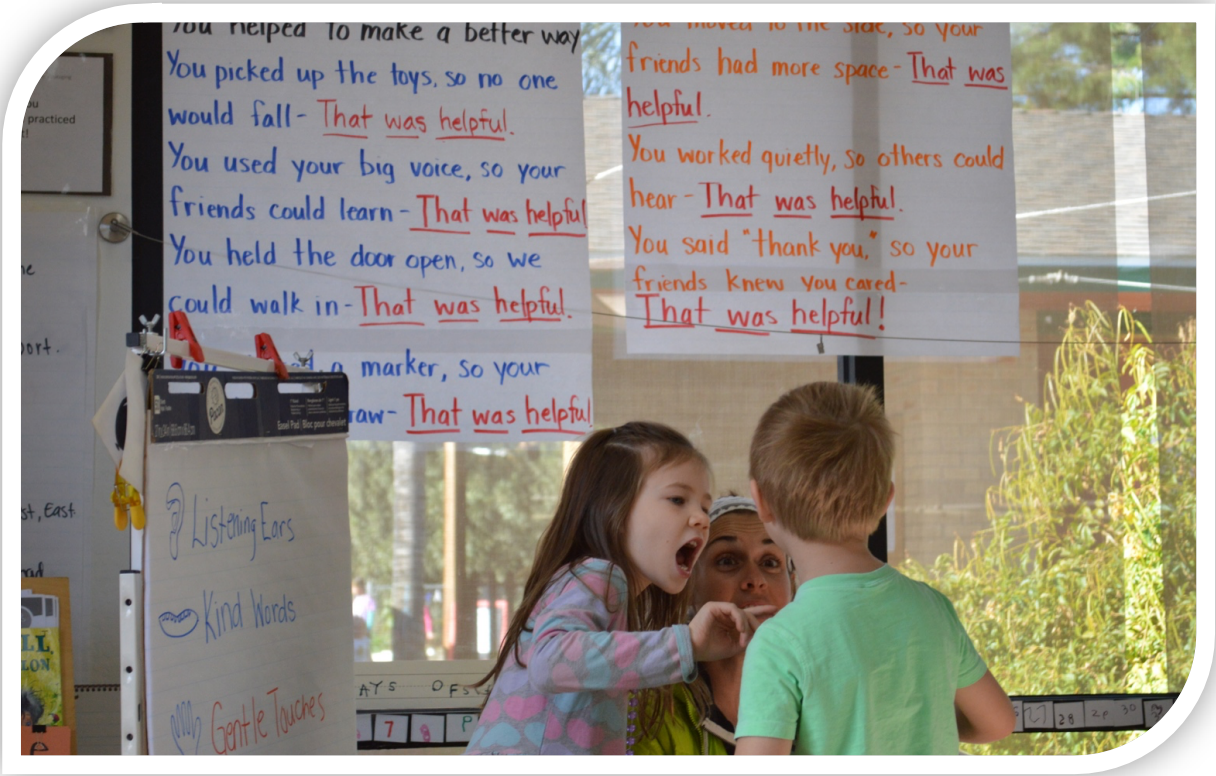
Yesterday, Muriel and I noticed the big billowy clouds before our rainstorm. This morning Katjia mentioned that she and her grandma were also looking at the big clouds yesterday. Did anyone else notice the clouds?

Look at that! The two of you have the exact same book bags!

Beginning-Middle-End stories

Guide children's understanding of the movement from feelings, to actions, to consequences by helping them break down stories into three steps: (1) the feelings that started it all, (2) how somebody noticed that feeling, and (3) how that person was helpful or friendly. You can use picture books such as *The Kissing Hand* or create relevant stories that might be meaningful to the children in your classroom. For example, create a story about Logan, a child who couldn't find a partner to play checkers with.

1. **Feeling: Ask the children how they think Logan felt.**
2. **Action: Follow up with what they might do to help Logan.**
3. **Consequence: Have them speculate on how Logan might feel in response to their help.** (adapted from Bilmes, 2012)



Help children notice the impact of their behaviors on others

The intent of these experiences is to help children begin to notice how their behaviors influence others. **It is not a way to place blame or to indicate that he/she made a child feel bad.** Examples of the language that places blame include, "When you pushed her, you hurt her feelings." or, "You made her sad when you took her markers." **These statements do not actually help children become reflective of their behaviors**. It also takes away the responsibility of how a person chooses to feel. How someone responds (feeling and/or behavior) is in their control, as no one can make someone feel a certain way. Help children develop this understanding by carefully choosing language that helps children become aware of how their behavior may influence others as well as understanding that they have control over how they feel in all situations.

"I am feeling frustrated that you took my seat" conveys the feeling of frustration as a chosen response to a situation, as opposed to "You made me so mad" which implies that there isn't a choice and that the responsibility of feelings rests with the aggressor.

Help children learn to take responsibility for how they feel by choosing language that conveys what they feel without blame.

Additional examples are:

I noticed that you gave Jose one of your pencils when he couldn't find his. Did you see him smile? He looked thankful.

When you grabbed the book that Olivia was reaching for, she walked away with her head down. It looks like she could have felt disappointed that she didn't get that book.
Look at Ben. Notice his face. His arms are crossed and his head is hanging down. He's sitting by himself. You called him "stupid". How do you think he might be feeling?

Pets and plants

Caring for classroom pets can be a useful stepping stone for children who are struggling to care for each other. Help children notice how the pet is feeling and whether it needs food or water. If animals won't work for your classroom, think of having children plant seeds and take care of the seedlings. Again, prompt them to check in on their plants and to water them if they are thirsty.

Helpful or hurtful

An introduction to social norms for young children often centers on whether the child's behavior choice is helpful or hurtful. Help children develop some understanding of social norms by giving them feedback on whether their behaviors are helpful or hurtful to others.

You helped Juanita put on her coat. That was a helpful thing to do."

Depending on the developmental levels of each child, you might be able to have them evaluate whether their action was helpful or hurtful. If the action was hurtful, work with the child to think of an alternative that would have been helpful.

"Let's think of what might have been helpful to Leticia when she fell off the steps."

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

A child's ability to form and maintain healthy relationships with both adults and peers, and the ability to work and play collaboratively with diverse groups of children

EVIDENCE-BASED RESEARCH

Children's interactions with others are crucial to their learning. Children who interact well with others are most likely to have positive short- and long-term outcomes. On the other hand, research has shown that when children have trouble forming relationships, it may lead to:

- later problems with emotional and mental health
- lower school achievement
- higher dropout rates
- peer rejection
- delinquency

(Heroman et al., 2010)

"Research has demonstrated the link between social competence and positive intellectual outcomes as well as the link between antisocial conduct and poor academic performance. Programs that have a focus on social skills have been shown to have improved outcomes related to drop out and attendance, grade retention, and special education referrals. They also have improved grades, test scores, and reading, math, and writing skills" (Zins et al. as cited in Smith, nd).

RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Does my teacher like me?

Who is my friend?

What do I need to work and play well with other children?

1

Relationships with adults

Kindergarten is an important setting for the development of positive relationships with adults outside the family (Pianta as cited by Heroman et al., 2010). Kindergartners need to feel valued, needed, and loved by The teacher. At this age, they crave the teacher's approval and affection. They need to know they can look to the teacher for their basic needs and for playful interactions (Copple et al., 2011). When children know that teachers care, honor, and respect them individually, they are more likely to try to please as well as look to teachers as role models (Jacobs & Crowley, 2010).

Social-emotional development flourishes when children have close, supportive, and trusting relationships with adults. Children that have the benefit of warm and supportive teachers demonstrate greater prosocial behavior, empathy, self-regulation, and social competence (Copple et al. 2014). When adults are responsive, when they express pleasure about children's accomplishments and discoveries, and when they create an environment in which children can participate actively in daily routines and experiences, children know that adults consider them to be important, interesting, and competent (Heroman et al., 2010).

Children need these safe, supportive, and nurturing relationships not only to support their own social development, but also for their academic success (Heroman et al., 2010). In a study by Hamre & Pianta "Teacher ratings of children's social skills at kindergarten were a significant predictor of reading and math scores 6 years later." (2005), first grade children with a history of behavior and academic problems were placed in classrooms with teachers who provided supportive and nurturing teacher-child relationships. These children improved in both behavior and academics by the end of the year. A control group of children with the same history were placed in classrooms where teachers did not emphasize nurturing and emotional support. Children in this group showed lower achievement and more conflict with teachers (Hamre & Pianta, 2005).

Relationships with peers

Most kindergartners can engage in solitary, parallel, and cooperative play. Although most children play alone from time to time, some children who play alone do so out of fear of rejection, immaturity, or impulsivity and may need some additional support in developing play skills and forming relationships (Copple et al., 2014).

Typically, children in kindergarten seek friends who are similar to themselves. By age 6, children play with same-sex peers 11 times more than they play with other-sex peers (Copple et al., 2014). Studies have shown, however, that children in

ethnically diverse school will often form friendships with peers of other ethnicities (Quillian & Campbell as cited in Copple et al. 2014).

Peer relationships have the potential to provide students with a sense of social relatedness and belongingness, which in turn can motivate positive engagement in social and academic activities (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

When children's relationships are full of conflict and aggression, they are less likely to have lasting friendships and more likely to dislike school and do poorly academically (McClelland et al., 2006). "Students who perceive low levels of social support are likely to experience psychological distress and…disengage from classroom learning and social interactions" (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

Supporting the development of positive peer relationships in the classroom can help promote students' working toward classroom goals (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). When kindergartners feel that their classmates are supportive and care about them, they tend to be more engaged in classroom life, work hard to learn, are better classroom citizens, earn higher grades and achieve higher scores on standardized tests than kindergartners who do not sense such support from their peers (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

Most kindergarten children are very focused on interacting with their peers and are able to make friends, cooperate, and generally get along well. However, some kindergarten children struggle making social connections. They may be overly shy, aggressive, or generally unable to manage their emotions and behavior in socially acceptable ways. Kindergartners who are rejected by their peers are likely to have long-term problems including difficulties in friendships later in childhood and even adulthood, and academic difficulties in school (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Kindergartners with healthy friendships are motivated to exhibit socially appropriate behaviors and are more likely to become psychologically healthy and competent adolescents and young adults (Copple et al., 2014; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

A Kindergartner with well-developed relationship skills:

- Has a respectful and mutually affectionate relationship with the teacher
- Has one or more "good friends"
- Can carry on a back and forth conversation
- Shifts between leader and follower roles in collaborative work
- Both seeks and offers help when needed
- Is learning how to use conflict resolution skills to resolve disputes

Children who need additional support in developing relationship skills:

- Avoid and ignore the teacher
- Complain that they have no friends
- Have trouble carrying on a conversation with other children
- Have trouble working on a project with other children
- Disappear during clean-up time
- Hurt others when there is a conflict

When children collaborate with each other, it promotes academic achievement and provides opportunities to develop social problem-solving skills (Vygotsky as cited in Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). "Collaborative problem solving also has been related to high levels of engagement, use of advanced strategic thinking skills, and specific academic gains" (Wentzel & Watkins, 2002).

Strategies to Support Children's Development of Relationship Skills

Relationships are the context that supports children's internalization of the rules and values in their world.

Teachers serve as models of relationship skills as children experience and observe how teachers interact with others. Teachers also support children's development by calling attention to prosocial statements made by children and by giving explicit instructions about helping, sharing, listening, and resolving conflicts peacefully.

Friendships are very important to kindergartners, however children this age are still in the process of developing the skills needed to make and maintain those relationships (Bickart et al. 1999). With guidance and opportunity, kindergartners grow in their ability to be successful in creating and sustaining relationships with others (Bodrova & Leong, 2008). Supporting children's development of relationship skills facilitates more complex interactions with fewer conflicts (Copple et al., 2014).

Model relationship skills in personal interactions with each child

The way you interact with the children in your room models your expectations of how they will interact with you and with each other.

- Greet each student personally every day
- Get to know the personal lives of each child. Include personal information in your conversation with each child. For example, "Is your nana still visiting or did she go back home yet?"
- Listen respectfully and with interest to children's stories, asking questions where appropriate.
- Promptly respond to students' requests for assistance
- Speak with children individually as often as possible, rather than calling across the room
- Include laughter and playfulness in your personal interactions with children daily

Teach relationship skills using classroom rituals (adapted from Bailey, 2011)

Greeting ritual

Greet each child personally every day with a personal comment such as "Good morning. I'm glad you're here today."

- **Say the Class Pledge** at the start of each day
- **Absent class member ritual**
  Develop a ritual, such as a song, a well -wish message or written notes to recognize absentees each day
- **Welcome new member ritual**
  Create a welcoming ceremony for new children, such as adding their name, picture, and/or handprint to the class

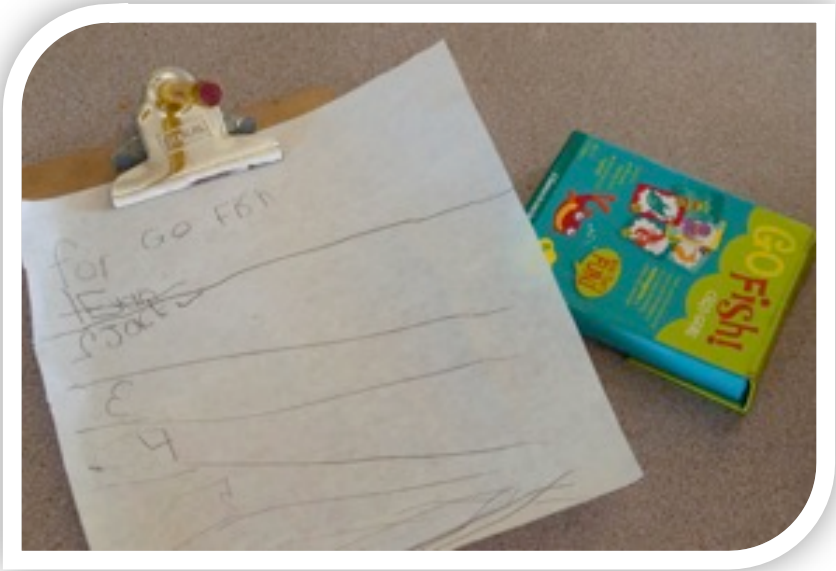
flag, preparing the cubby space, adding child's name to the birthday list, etc.

- **Connect new children with "mentors**" who help them learn classroom routines, rules, and expectations.
- **Ritual to acknowledge those who have moved away**
  Create a book with a goodbye drawing and/or message from each child. Have the children create a frame with a picture of all the children be creative, take a picture and then a goofy picture
- **End of day ritual**
  An important ritual is a personal goodbye from you to each student as they leave. A hug, high five, or simply an endearing smile with words like, "You have a good evening. I look forward to our time together tomorrow." This is not the time to remind the child of behavior issues or concerns. End on a good note, so the child can trust that school is truly a safe place he can practice and learn new skills—including social and emotional development skills. Another strategy is singing a specific good-bye song at the end of the day and/or as children leave. Including names of all children conveys the significance of each and every person's contribution to the classroom community.

Help children learn how take turns, listen and speak, and share space

- Waiting lists help children develop an internal organizational vision of how turn taking works. Think of a clipboard and marker, pocket charts with name cards, or names on clothespins.
- A talking stick (rain stick, fancy wand, small tree branch, painted PVC pipe, or even a squishy ball, stuffed animal, etc.) help children learn conversational skills of alternating listening and speaking. During some group meetings, explain that the stick will be passed around and that each person will have a turn to speak. The child holding the prop is the speaker, and the rest of the children are the listeners.
- As children are learning to negotiate space, provide visual cues such as individual carpet squares, masking tape or trays to define individual work spaces.

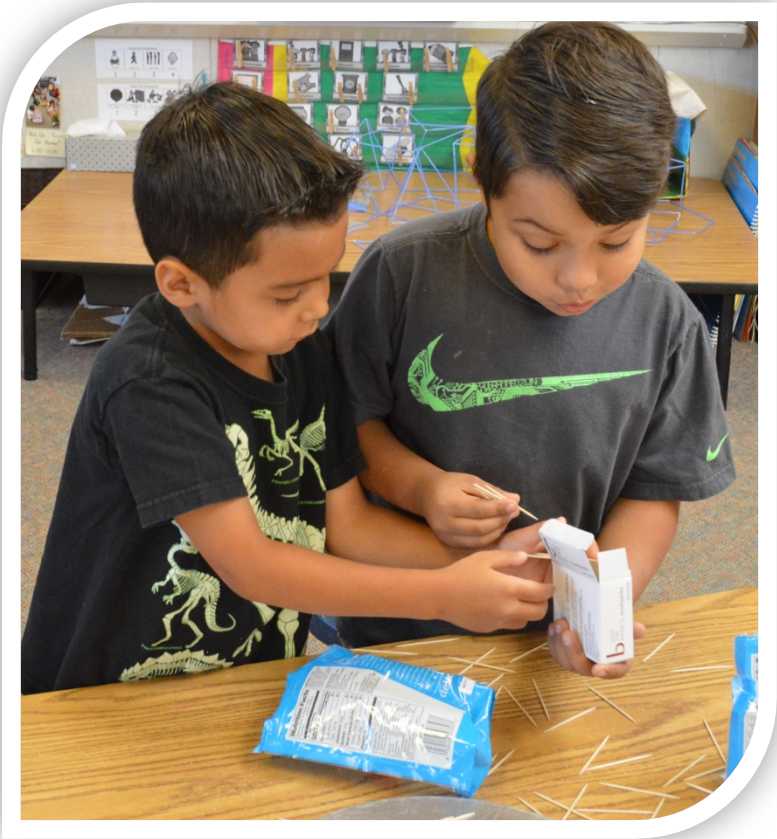
The way people express opinions, discuss ideas and feelings, and take turns in conversations differ from one culture to another and often from one family to another. Children from some cultural backgrounds look others straight in the eye during conversations while other children are taught to avoid eye contact" (Herroman et al., 2010).



Create regular opportunities for children to work in pairs (adapted from Bickart et al., 1999)

Activities such as these help children get to know others in the class who they might not have chosen to work with on their own (Bickart, et al., 1999).

- Partner jobs such as wiping down tables, setting out food/supplies for breakfast, organizing materials and books, pushing in all the chairs at the end of the day
- Partner games such as checkers, card games, or floor puzzles; tasks for children to do together such as building a block structure where two children fit safely inside
- Partner activities that contribute to a classroom project such as drawing illustrations for one section of a book, interviewing one another for a birthday book, painting one-stroke-at-a time, taking turns to create a collaborative art piece, STEM activities or problems to solve where they have to work collaboratively to solve a problem/find a solution
- Partner reading activities such as looking at books together or retelling the story to each other
- Partner activities such as interviewing each other on topics like favorite foods, pets, or what they like to do on the weekends



Learning-related social and emotional skills have a unique effect on children's reading and math scores between kindergarten and sixth grade and predict growth in reading and math between kindergarten and second grade… Children with poor learning-related skills perform lower than their higher-rated peers on measures of reading and mathematics between kindergarten and sixth grade, with the gap widening between kindergarten and second grade (McClelland et al., 2006).



Teach children steps for conflict resolution

The conflict resolution process is similar to the group problem solving process described earlier. Through the steps of conflict resolution, each person has a chance to have their needs heard by the other person. Once there is an understanding of each person's needs and wants, it is easier to come up with solutions that will work for everyone.

Conflict resolution in kindergarten can be broken down into six steps:

1. **Regain composure:** This is the opportunity to model deep breathing as a way to calm down before beginning to help children through this process. S.T.A.R. is a good technique to use.

2. **Protect the item/space: Hold onto the item or protect the space that might be the reason for the conflict** (i.e. swing, ball, space at a table, etc.) This allows the child to let go of the anxiety around what will happen to the object/space. Being in a reactive state can prevent the child from being able to think critically and problem solve.

   I will keep the ball safe until we solve the problem.

3. **Facilitate needs/wants**: **Help each child express what they want or need.**
   Josh, we're going to listen intently to Janeesa. You will get a turn in a minute. Tell us what you want, Janeesa.

   Make sure to give all children involved the opportunity to state their needs/wants. **DO NOT interfere**. Rather, act as a facilitator, ensuring that everyone is able to express themselves effectively.

4. **Summarize the problem:** Give an overview of the needs/wants of the children without any additional commentary. Simply state the problem.

   It seems that both Janeesa and Josh want to use the textured ball.

5. **Brainstorm and implement a solution that will work for all children involved.**
   Let's think of ideas to solve this problem. What are your ideas Janeesa? You would like a turn first and then you want to give it to Josh when you're done. Does that solution work for you, Josh?

   Janeesa, Josh isn't okay with that solution. Josh, what's your idea for solving this problem?

Continue this process until all children involved in the conflict agree upon the proposed solution. Do not give up. Your persistence and commitment helps children gain trust in the conflict resolution process. Remember, it must be a win-win situation—not a vote and not a decision made by the teacher.

6. **Follow through:** Check back to see if the solution worked and make sure there was follow through with the agreed upon resolution.

In teaching conflict resolution, it is essential that the teacher sends a message that conflicts can be resolved; no one is all right or all wrong. The focus of conflict resolution is what will happen next, not placing blame. A conflict is resolved only when the solution works for everyone (Bilmes, 2012).

The strong connection between early relationships and later behavior and learning makes it especially important for teachers to support children's relationships with others during the kindergarten year (Heroman et al., 2010).

This guide accompanies *The Significance of Social & Emotional Development in Kindergarten* training module and is to be used as a supplemental resource for teachers as they learn to implement strategies that support children's social and emotional development.

This training module and guide was written by Dr. Isela Garcia of Alesi Group and Jenna Bilmes, author of *Beyond Behavior Management.*

Special Thanks to:

Jenna Bilmes, Consultant & Author of *Beyond Behavior Management: The Six Life Skills Children Need,* for her contributions to the development of the training module and guide

The Family School for opening their kindergarten classroom to us to capture initial photos of a developmentally appropriate kindergarten classroom

Kristine Hopkins of Martin Luther King Jr. School, Roosevelt School District for being our first pilot kindergarten classroom

Jennifer Conley and Trisha Lucas of Desert Sun Child Development Center for their willingness to redesign their kindergarten program and allow us to capture good practices in action

Donna Bateman of Copper Canyon Elementary School, Pendergast School District for transforming her teaching approaches, leading her kindergarten team to do the same and allowing us to take photos of the process

The trailblazing kindergarten teachers who work tirelessly to intentionally support children's social and emotional development in their classrooms!