

# How Does Social and Emotional Health Affect Readiness for Learning?

Teachers say that social and emotional skills are the foundation for learning. In the early years, many teachers say social and emotional skills are even more important than “the ABC’s and 1, 2, 3’s.”

Children do well in school if they can:

- Get along with others
- Make friends
- Share and take turns
- Care about how other people feel
- Communicate feelings
- Calm themselves when upset
- Ask for what they need

Children with the skills above are better able to:

- Pay attention to the teacher
- Follow simple instructions
- Stay in their seats
- Stick with the task at hand
- Try new things
- Solve problems

Children who can follow directions and finish tasks get better grades. They are eager to learn and adjust to school more easily. They like school because they feel confident and secure. Confident and secure children have better self-esteem and can do things on their own. They are able to have healthy relationships later in life and bounce back from life’s disappointments.

Children who are not as socially and emotionally skilled may have trouble making friends and adjusting to school. If it is hard for them to express themselves, they may withdraw from others or ‘take their feelings out on others’ by biting, hitting, screaming, using unkind words or bullying. As a result, their classmates may avoid or tease them. If they cannot follow directions and stick with tasks, school becomes a struggle. They do not feel good about school or themselves, making it even harder for them to learn.