

# Social-Emotional Health is the *Key* to Children's Success in School and Life!

What's the most important thing YOU can do to help a young child (birth to 5 years) get ready for school?

## It's to promote the child's social-emotional health.

What is social-emotional health? It's the child's growing ability to:

- express feelings in healthy ways (without hurting self or others)
- develop close relationships with others
- explore his surroundings and learn

These abilities help the child to focus, follow directions, share, solve problems, and care about how other people feel. A child who can do these things has an easier time making it through school.

## What Does Social-Emotional Health Look Like?

### *In infants...*

- Cries, coos and smiles
- Looks at faces
- Seeks comfort
- Shows excitement
- Enjoys songs and simple games

### *In toddlers ...*

- Shows shyness in unfamiliar places
- Smiles and laughs
- Begins to show feelings for others
- Expresses many feelings such as, sad, happy, frightened and angry

### *In preschoolers...*

- Listens to gentle reminders
- Accepts changes in daily routines (such as going from story time to bedtime)
- Tries new things
- Enjoys imaginary play
- Expresses feelings
- Shows an interest in others



## What are Some Signs that a Child Might Need Help with Social-Emotional Development?

Many children struggle to develop social-emotional skills. These children often have challenging behaviors. For example, they may have extreme tantrums. Or, they may bite a lot. These behaviors challenge us adults, because we aren't sure how to handle them and they upset us. These behaviors can get in the way of a child's learning. The sooner we find out what's causing a challenging behavior, the easier it is to help the child. The signs below mean that a child may need help:

### **Infant:**

Resists holding  
Is difficult to comfort  
Has sleeping or eating problems  
Rarely seeks or makes eye contact  
Shows a loss of words

### **Toddler or Preschooler:**

Shows little preference for any one person  
Shows no fear of strangers  
Lacks interest in other people or playthings  
Has extreme and frequent tantrums  
Often appears sad



For more information and resources please visit [www.GreatStartLivingston.org](http://www.GreatStartLivingston.org)

# Social and Emotional Milestones for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers

Within the context of one's family, community and cultural background, social and emotional health is the child's developing capacity to: experience and regulate **emotions**, form **secure relationships** and **explore** and **learn**.

The chart below lists some of the social and emotional behaviors that you may see developing in infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Developmental Age Range	Emotions	Relationships	Explore and Learn
<b>Young Infant (0-6 months)</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cries when upset</li> <li>• Can usually be comforted by a familiar adult</li> <li>• Smiles and reacts with pleasure to social play with a familiar adult</li> <li>• Shows excitement (i.e waving arms, legs, cooing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smiles at and back to familiar adult(s)</li> <li>• Anticipates being held or fed and moves body to participate</li> <li>• Prefers parent or caregivers face and voice</li> <li>• Responds to own name</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observes own hands</li> <li>• Reaches for and grasps things</li> <li>• Clasps hands together</li> <li>• Enjoys simple games like patty cake and peek-a-boo</li> </ul>
<b>Infant (8-18 months)</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accepts comfort from a familiar adult</li> <li>• Cries when upset</li> <li>• Shows excitement (i.e waving arms, legs, cooing)</li> <li>• May comfort self by sucking thumb or holding a special toy or blanket</li> <li>• Laughs out loud</li> <li>• Smiles</li> <li>• Reacts to changes in daily routine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engages in eye contact</li> <li>• Smiles at and back to others</li> <li>• Stretches arms up to be held</li> <li>• Likes to look at and be near to familiar caregiver(s)</li> <li>• Show preference for parent or caregivers face and voice</li> <li>• Shows preference for being held by familiar adults</li> <li>• May be unsure of unfamiliar people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys simple games like patty cake and peek-a-boo</li> <li>• Reaches for and grasps playthings</li> <li>• Smiles or plays with self in mirror</li> <li>• Imitates others actions</li> <li>• Enjoys looking at picture books with a caregiver</li> </ul>
<b>Toddler (18-36 months)</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May show increased fearfulness</li> <li>• Aware of own feelings and those of others</li> <li>• Shows pride in accomplishments</li> <li>• Communicates feelings more often</li> <li>• May protest and say, "No." more often</li> <li>• Laughs out loud</li> <li>• Smiles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explores but checks in with familiar caregiver</li> <li>• Makes needs known to a familiar caregiver</li> <li>• Respond to his/her name</li> <li>• Shows affection for familiar adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps looking for a toy hidden from view</li> <li>• Show interest in other people and playthings</li> <li>• Plays alongside peers</li> <li>• May initiate some play with peers</li> <li>• Engages in make believe play</li> <li>• May enjoy repetition (i.e. rereading a familiar story)</li> </ul>
<b>Preschooler (37-60 months)</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusts to new situations</li> <li>• Separates from familiar caregiver more easily</li> <li>• Expresses feelings using words or gestures ("I am mad.")</li> <li>• Recognizes feelings of others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoys playing with other children</li> <li>• Demonstrates a sense of humor</li> <li>• May have a "best" friend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiates activities based on own needs and wants</li> <li>• Evaluates accomplishments, "I built a big tower!")</li> <li>• Enjoys books and games</li> <li>• Interested in rules and fairness</li> </ul>

\*\*\*Milestone categories coincide with the accepted SE definition- milestones were adapted from several resources to include: CCEP milestones grid, CSEFEL Developmental Continuum SE indicators, MDCH SE Development in Young Children Guide and Baby Stages and Preschool Stages Wheels (MIAIMH)