

# 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



# 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)