

Helping Staff Members Support Social and Emotional Competence: What, When, & How to Teach

Use this chart to help staff members think of ways to teach important social and emotional skills across the age span.

	Infants	Toddlers	Preschool	School-Age
Emotional Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to cries quickly Label infant’s emotions (“It’s so frustrating when a ball is just out of reach!”; “Are you surprised that you rolled over?”) Label your own emotions (“I’m so excited to see you!”) Imitate infant’s facial expressions and comment on the emotions (“What a sad face! What’s wrong?”) Provide low mirrors for infants to explore their own face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read stories and board books about emotions (e.g., “Baby Faces”, “Baby Happy, Baby Sad”) Comfort toddlers during emotional moments and use emotion vocabulary (“I know you’re angry that it’s time to clean up. Let me help you.”) Play music that represents different emotions (upbeat music that sounds “happy” and slower music that sounds “sad”). Encourage children to move their bodies to the music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read books about emotions (e.g., “Sometimes I Feel Silly”; “My Many Colored Days”) Use drawings and photos of faces to teach emotion vocabulary (see samples available from CSEFEL). Encourage empathy (“How do you think he feels when....”) Teach children appropriate ways to handle intense emotions (count to three or use the “Turtle Technique” from 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss emotional events in popular pre-teen books, movies, or TV shows Talk about your own emotions (“My dog is sick today, so I’m feeling worried about her.”) Encourage children to practice emotions through drama (e.g., acting out different characters’ emotions) Teach children appropriate ways to handle intense emotions (exercise, count to 10, take a deep breath)

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			CSEFEL)	
Friendship Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to cries quickly, so infants learn to trust others Help infants begin to notice others (“Can you say Hi to Bryce?” or “Wave bye bye to Dante”) Comment when infants try helping others (“Are you handing the shaker to Mary? What a nice friend.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide multiples of high-interest toys and encourage children to play near each other Set up opportunities for children to play together: pulling a wagon, bouncing a ball Recognize and encourage friendly behaviors (“That was so helpful”; “You two worked together to build a tower”) Notice and comment when toddlers try to help or use caregiving behaviors (“You are giving the dolly a bottle. You’re taking good care of her”; “Thank you for bringing me Devon’s sweater”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create Buddy Activities in which children work together (cooking, creating art, playing a board game, etc.) Read books about friendship skills and behaviors (e.g., “Fox Makes Friends”, “Hands are Not for Hitting”) Teach children how to enter and exit play (Say “Can I play?” or how to give a play idea) Encourage empathy rather than forcing apologies (“Look at his face. That really hurt when you pushed him down. What can you do to help him feel better?”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide plenty of free time for children to play with friends Respond pro-actively if children exclude others from play (“We respect each other here. How can you share the space?”) Support children who are less socially connected. Pair them up with a more social child or a child who share some of their interests. Create a Friendship Wall, Gratitude Wall, or Compliment Wall. Encourage children to write friendly notes to each other or to post about nice things that were done in the program Take steps to prevent

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize and encourage friendly behaviors 	bullying
Problem-Solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model problem-solving in simple routines (“Hmmm...I can’t get that block in the sorter. I’m going to try it a different way.”) Use the word “problem” (“Oh, no. Claire’s got a problem...her sock came off.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach children a few solutions to common problems: Get a Teacher, Say “Please Stop”, Play together Model and role play how to use these solutions Remind children to use solutions (“If he’s upsetting you, say “Please Stop.”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach problem-solving steps using scripted stories and posters (see ones available from CSEFEL) Teach children to brainstorm solutions to problems using the “Solution Kit” (CSEFEL) Create problematic situations and discuss what to do: too few chairs at lunch, a deflated ball on the playground, etc. Recognize and encourage problem-solving (“You solved the problem!”) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remind children of ways to solve problems (Stop and Think) Teach conflict resolution strategies and/or peer mediation techniques Recognize children who solved problems peacefully