



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2023

Social and emotional development encompasses young children’s evolving capacity to form close and positive adult and peer relationships; to actively explore and act on the environment in the process of learning about the world around them; and express a full range of emotions in socially and culturally appropriate ways. These skills, developed in early childhood, are essential for lifelong learning and positive adaptation. A child’s temperament (traits that are biologically based and that remain consistent over time) plays a significant role in development and should be carefully considered when applying social and emotional standards. Healthy social and emotional development benefits from consistent, positive interactions with educators, parents/primary caregivers, and other familiar adults who appreciate each child’s individual temperament. This appreciation is key to promoting positive self-esteem, confidence, and trust in relationships. The components within this domain address children’s relationships with others—adults and other children—their personal identity and self-confidence, and their ability to regulate their emotions and behavior.

All children, including multilingual learners and children with disabilities may demonstrate alternate ways of meeting social and emotional goals; for example, children with visual impairments and/or children from other cultures may vary in direct eye contact and demonstrate their interest in and need for human contact in other ways, such as through acute listening and touch. Children with disabilities may initiate play through use of subtle cues, at a different pace or with a different degree of accomplishment. In general, the presence of a disability may cause a child to demonstrate alternate ways of meeting social and emotional goals. The goals for all children are the same, even though the path and the pace toward realizing the goals may be different. When observing how children respond in relationships, teachers must consider appropriate adaptations and modifications, as necessary. Principles of universal design for learning (UDL) offer the least restrictive and most inclusive approach to developing environments and curricula that best support the social and emotional development as well as the cultural and experiential backgrounds of all children.

**Remember:** Healthy social and emotional development is aligned with cross-domain learning and development. Children’s development of a Self-Awareness and Competence, for example, is strongly linked to their learning in Social Studies (e.g., Civics & Government, History). Their development of emotional recognition and regulation contributes to their development of cognitive skills (e.g., Attention and Inhibitory Control) and their abilities to persist at learning activities in language, literacy, mathematics, and science. Successful experiences in the content areas also positively contribute to children’s social/emotional development. While this domain represents general expectations for social and emotional development, each child will reach the individual standards at their own pace and in their own way.



- SE 1: Relationships with Others
- SE 2: Self-Awareness and Competence
- SE 3: Emotional Recognition and Regulation



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 1: Relationships with Others

**Standard 1.a:** Children develop trust in and engage positively with adults who are familiar and consistently present in children's lives.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



0-9m

- › Socialize with preferred adults by reciprocally smiling, laughing, or vocalizing
- › “Converse” with familiar adults by imitating or making faces at adults who make faces at them
- › Relax when picked up and held by a familiar adult
- › Search for an adult caregiver who might be out of sight
- › Engage in turn-taking interactions, such as peek-a-boo
- › Repeat actions that elicit social responses from others



9-18m

- › Imitate adult behavior by repeating and practicing through play (e.g., sweeping with a toy broom, “talking” on a cell phone)
- › Use gestures, signs, body language, and/or vocalizations to seek out help from a preferred adult
- › Participate in back-and-forth games with adults
- › Seek comfort from a preferred adult when tired or hungry (coregulation)
- › Expand their exploration of their environment in the presence of trusted adults, and regularly check in (visually or physically) with these adults when experiencing stress or uncertainty
- › From time to time look to familiar adult for reassurance when a stranger is present



18-24m

- › Imitate by continuing to repeat actions they have seen long after they have seen them
- › Initiate play and interactions with familiar adults (e.g., pretending to drive a car or bake a cake)
- › Interact with adults to meet needs and wants, communicating through gestures, signs, facial expressions, and/or simple words
- › Continue to seek out the primary adults in their life as their secure base (using simple words as well as regular visual or physical contact) while playing or exploring the environment and when uncertain (coregulation)
- › Look to and seek approval non-verbally when engaging in a difficult task



24-36m

- › Seek adult assistance when challenged
- › Demonstrate affection for familiar adults
- › Seek comfort from an adult after falling down or getting hurt (coregulation)
- › Interact with adults to solve problems or communicate about experiences or ideas
- › Seeks adult attention when exploring or trying a new skill



36-48m

- › Seek approval from adults
- › Separate from trusted adults with minimal distress when in familiar settings or with familiar and trusted adults
- › Engage in back-and-forth conversations with trusted adults
- › Express joy with trusted adult when demonstrating an achievement or mastery in play (e.g., excitement over building a tall block tower; walking across the balance beam with limited assistance)



48-60m

- › Maintain well-being and emotional composure when separated from parents or primary caretakers when in familiar settings or with familiar and trusted adults
- › Have a close relationship with a consistent non-parental caregiver, showing interest in the adult's feelings, preferences, and well-being and sharing their experiences (coregulation)
- › Participate in longer and more reciprocal interactions (when interacting with familiar adults in role play, games, or structured activities) and take greater initiative in social interaction (including turn-taking)



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 1: Relationships with Others

**Standard 1.b:** Children engage in positive relationships and interactions with other children.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



**0-9m**

- › Babble and smile to show their interest in other children
- › Intently watch other babies and children, especially their faces
- › Track the activity of other children and notice/move toward others when hearing sounds of excitement
- › Reach out to touch other children's hair, face, etc.



**9-18m**

- › Engage in positive interactions with other children while supervised
- › Imitate and respond to other children's actions and behaviors
- › Play alone or engage in parallel play (e.g., play next to but not directly involved in another child's play)
- › Recognize and respond differently to younger children



**18-24m**

- › Demonstrate interest or concern for a peer who is hurt, fallen, or in distress
- › Recognize the idea of possessions (e.g., acting as though they own something) and demonstrate an understanding of "mine" and "not mine"
- › Predominately use parallel play (next to others) while trying out associative play (sharing toys or commenting on the play of others)



**24-36m**

- › Watch and copy other children's play activities
- › Seek assistance from an adult caregiver in resolving conflicts with other children
- › Understand how to take turns during play with other children, with adult guidance and assistance
- › Participate in associative play with other children (e.g., engaging in separate play activities while occasionally sharing toys or commenting on another child's play)



**36-48m**

- › Share and take turns using materials
- › Suggest solutions to conflicts, with adult guidance and assistance
- › Initiate play and conversations with other children
- › Participate in pretend play with other children
- › Express how another child or storybook character might feel
- › Notice and show concern for peers' feelings
- › Comfort peers when they are hurt or upset, with adult guidance and assistance



**48-60m**

- › Make decisions with other children, with adult guidance and assistance
- › Demonstrate consideration for and cooperation with other children
- › Prefer to play with one or two special friends
- › Suggest solutions to conflicts
- › Demonstrate an ability to compromise when working or playing in a group
- › Sustain interactions with friends for increasing periods of time
- › Successfully enter into play when a group of children are already involved
- › Can identify the causes of other children's emotions (e.g., "they are sad because . . .")



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 2: Self-Awareness and Competence

**Standard 2.a:** Children develop an awareness of themselves as an individual with thoughts, feelings, and perspectives that may differ from others.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



**0-9m**

- › Explore their own hands and feet
- › Demonstrate a recognition of themselves in a mirror
- › Respond to their own name



**9-18m**

- › Explore various play materials and show preferences for specific books, toys, or food
- › Demonstrate displeasure when unable to exert influence on events
- › Indicate their dislike by saying “no” or through some other method (e.g., shaking their head or turning their head/body away)
- › Make simple choices



**18-24m**

- › Recognize some body parts (e.g., pointing to eyes, ears, or nose when asked)
- › Refer to themselves by name
- › Use “me” and “mine” in reference to themselves and to objects
- › Express preferences for certain toys or objects
- › Enjoy playing alone for short periods of time
- › Try to do some things without help



**24-36m**

- › Become aware of and asserts ownership (e.g., “This is mine”; and “that is yours.”)
- › Demonstrate preferences and choices for people, toys, or activities
- › Recognize a picture of themselves (e.g., by pointing or saying “me”)
- › Describe some personal characteristics (e.g., hair color)
- › Provide their first and last names when asked



**36-48m**

- › Differentiate themselves from others based on characteristics they use to describe themselves, such as “shy” or “smart.”
- › Differentiate themselves from others in terms of specific abilities (e.g., “I am a fast runner,” or “I am a good climber.”)
- › Describes physical attributes among peers and adults
- › Has a clear sense of people, self, and those who are different



**48-60m**

- › Describe own and others’ personal characteristics (e.g., “My hair is red; your hair is black.”)
- › Understand that other people have different physical characteristics as well as different thoughts, beliefs, ideas, and feelings.
- › Demonstrate an awareness of their own likes and preferences



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 2: Self-Awareness and Competence

**Standard 2.b:** Children develop the confidence to complete an action successfully or independently.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



**0-9m**

- › Demonstrate interest in objects or people
- › Accept new toys or objects with interest
- › Reach for objects of interest
- › Focus on objects and people of interest for longer periods of time



**9-18m**

- › Show pleasure at their own actions
- › Show attachment to or preference for specific toys
- › Ask for similar activities to be repeated over and over
- › Attempt to perform self-care activities independently of adult help
- › Recognize their ability to influence their surroundings (e.g., standing on a table or feeding chair to indicate hunger to an adult)



**18-24m**

- › Alternate between doing things independently and wanting help or comfort
- › Repeat activities and words and songs over and over
- › Participate in solitary pretend play (e.g., wearing hats, talking on a phone)
- › Help with simple tasks (e.g., picking up toys)



**24-36m**

- › Demonstrate joy in their own accomplishments (e.g., throwing away a napkin, flushing a toilet)
- › Initiate new activities and explore new materials
- › Demonstrate interest and pride in handling personal care routines (e.g., removing coat) with minimal assistance



**36-48m**

- › Choose materials and activities
- › Participate in new experiences with confidence and independence (e.g., selecting more challenging puzzles)



**48-60m**

- › Resist help and demonstrate a sense of competence (e.g., insisting on dressing themselves, pouring their own juice, etc.)
- › Stay with a task until it is completed
- › Move between independence and dependence in a way that meets their needs for both and that is appropriate for the circumstances



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 3: Emotional Recognition and Regulation

Standard 3.a: Children develop the ability to identify, express, and manage their emotions

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



0-9m

- › Demonstrate the ability to self-soothe (calm down) through behaviors such as babbling, thumb/fist sucking, or rocking
- › Calm down when talked to, held, or rocked by a preferred caregiver
- › Express a range of emotions (e.g., joy, excitement, or sadness) through facial expressions, gestures, signs, and/or sound



9-18m

- › Self-soothe when offered a special toy or blanket in combination with caregiver nurturance
- › Look to a trusted adult for comfort when upset or stressed
- › Demonstrate joy, pleasure, and excitement in learning to do new things



18-24m

- › Accept a security toy or blanket to self-soothe
- › Demonstrate familiarity with routines
- › Demonstrate strong emotions, such as anger, through actions (e.g., falling down on the floor and kicking their legs—throwing a “tantrum”) and calm down with caregiver assistance
- › Express emotions (e.g., happiness, sadness, or anger) through singing and pretend play (in addition to “tantrums”)



24-36m

- › Calm themselves down after a temper tantrum in a reasonable amount of time with caregiver assistance
- › Comfort themselves by seeking out a special toy, object, or caregiver
- › Use words to express their emotions



36-48m

- › Are increasingly able to regulate their impulses in certain situations (e.g., waiting their turn for a favored toy)
- › Can express emotions using words, signs, or other communication methods
- › Take pride in their accomplishments
- › Continue to use physical ways of expressing themselves when their feelings are intense (e.g., throwing things, pounding)



48-60m

- › React appropriately to strong emotions most of the time
- › Persist at a difficult task with decreasing amounts of frustration
- › Can name emotions using words, signs, or other communication methods



# SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## Component 3: Emotional Recognition and Regulation

**Standard 3.b:** Children develop the ability to manage impulses and express emotions appropriately even in challenging situations.

By the following age ranges, children typically, for example:



**0-9m**

- › Exhibit the ability to wait for a desired object or person



**9-18m**

- › Amuse themselves for a short period of time
- › Respond to verbal requests to alter their behavior, sometimes continuing with the behavior and sometimes accepting the redirection
- › Say “no” to express their unwillingness (or sign “no” if they have been taught to sign)



**18-24m**

- › Respond to redirection most of the time
- › Once redirected, change focus to the new object, person, or play
- › Participate in routines with adult guidance



**24-36m**

- › Follow simple rules most of the time
- › Control impulses (e.g., walking around—rather than through—a puddle when directed)
- › Adapt their behavior to the environment (e.g., shifting from an “outside voice” to an “inside voice”)
- › Adjust to changes in daily routines with preparation and adult assistance



**36-48m**

- › Usually follow rules and expectations in familiar settings
- › Adjust to changes in routines and activities
- › Ask or wait for adult permission before doing something they are unsure about
- › Use materials with purpose, safety, and respect
- › Can delay having desires met (e.g., agreeing to the use of a timer to indicate their turn for a computer)
- › Stop an engaging activity to transition to another less desirable activity with adult guidance and support



**48-60m**

- › With adult assistance, demonstrate control over actions, words, and emotions in response to a situation
- › Follow rules and apply them to new situations and environments (e.g., putting their coat in a cubby at school but hanging it on a peg at home)
- › Participate in group activities for increasing amounts of time
- › Consistently demonstrate the ability to stop an engaging activity to transition to another less desirable activity



The task of emotion regulation is not simply a matter of learning to suppress emotions. It is more broadly one of deploying emotions effectively in relationships, while playing and learning, and in a wide range of settings.

- Neurons to Neighborhoods

