

Building Relationships Through Social and Emotional Experiences

Early Social & Emotional experiences shape children's lives in many ways. During these early experiences, children observe and try out different ways of interacting, rehearsing the types of relationships they will form with family members, teachers, classmates, friends, and (later colleagues). Social exchanges also provide opportunities to gain knowledge and skills in other areas of development (e.g., conversations develop language; playing catch with a friend enhances physical skills). When these experiences are positive and supportive, children become engaged and motivated learners. Social & emotional learning is a significant component of school readiness. In fact, it is largely through social interactions that children increase their overall competence.

~ *The Highscope Curriculum: Essentials of Active Learning in Preschool, 2nd Edition (Epstein, A.S., 2016)*

Factors that Affect Social & Emotional Development

A preschool child's developing capacity for relationships is affected by **Three Characteristics**:

★ A Desire for Friendship

- Children are social beings.
- From late toddlerhood through preschool, they expand their desire for relationships with adults to include other children.

★ A Struggle to Resolve "Me" versus "We."

- Sometimes children's individual needs or wants ("me") conflict with their desire to be part of the group ("we").
- Understanding adults help them resolve this competition between individual and social desires.

★ Their Growing Social Competence

- As young children experience the consequences of their actions, they can better choose between positive and negative social interactions.
- Language gives them a powerful tool to resolve conflicts in non aggressive ways and further develop their social competence.
- While still largely self-centered, preschoolers become increasingly aware of the needs and feelings of others.

Milestones in Social & Emotional Development

★ TODDLERS

- Identify & gain control of their feelings
- Test their skills & begin to see themselves as capable
- Increasingly differentiate themselves from others & venture into the world of social interaction

★ PRESCHOOLERS

- Develop understanding of their own & others' feelings
- See themselves as doers, based on their ability to achieve self-initiated goals
- Widen their social network, developing preferences & forming friendships & associating with new communications at home & school