

Research on Feelings

Many areas of research on child development confirm the importance of three aspects of social/emotional development:

- Trust, including **safety**
- Autonomy, also defined as **social awareness**
- Initiative, which research relates to **confidence**

It is difficult to separate social development from emotional growth. Perceptions and feelings are influenced by social experiences. The use of group sizes and configurations within the classroom setting can encourage positive social and emotional growth.

Below are some examples of activities for different size groups and different group arrangements that promote social engagement:

The Errand – social learning for one

Social growth can occur when a teacher asks a child to perform a task. Emotionally, the child might feel important and needed. Remember, when using errands, the child's success is the most important factor. Choose an errand, provide support, ensure success, provide specific praise.

- For a child who is hesitant to join in play, choose an errand that will place a child in the proximity of a group but that does not require him to join the group immediately.
- For a child who is easily distracted and has difficulty completing tasks, choose an errand which has multiple parts but provide reminders or visuals for each step.

Getting to Know Other Children – social learning for a group

This type of teaching should be part of the class social routine.

- Example: The teacher works with a small group for a period and then requests of one child in that group "Please go ask Jimmy to come and join this group." This type of planned interaction helps children get to know each other.
- Encourage children to help each other. Ask a child to show a classmate how to do something. Encourage children to ask a classmate for help.

Partner Activities – social learning for two

- *Sharing a Job* - At the beginning of the year, the teacher might need to select partners for children. As the year progresses, invite the children to choose their own partners. Start off by calling two children to do a task or errand together, such as getting snacks. When they finish the "job" invite them to go and play with a specific toy for a few minutes or invite them to read a book together with another adult.
- "Buddy Reading" – Pair children at the listening center or library center to take turns choosing a book to read together or have read to them.
- *"Partner Play"* – During movement activities, pair children to take turns pulling each other to a certain location in the wagon, create a movement pattern in which they alternate motions, take turns putting on blocks to build a tower.

Teamwork – social learning for a group

- Ask several students to work together to carry water to fill the water table or to water outside plants.
- Set up the environment so that some jobs need to be done and invite several children to come and help with a specific task. Be aware of how groupings of children impact each child.

Rule for Teachers – “Never do anything that a child could do.” It is important to give children the chance to contribute, to help their group, to be needed.

Prompts – Increase social awareness with prompts that refer to what peers are doing.

- “Look, it’s time for playground. Everyone’s lining up, go join them”. This type of prompt done quietly and individually with a child is more effective than calling to a child from across the room. Pointing out what peers are doing also increases the child’s social awareness.
- “Look, Tim is having trouble seeing the book. Please move over a little so he can see.”

As children learn to interact in social situations they need guidance and encouragement. When planning for social development, keep your routines and social groupings in mind so that they can be used to enhance and facilitate social and emotional growth.