

We are so glad your child is in our class. Our whole class is doing some important new work, and we want you to know all about it. It's about social emotional development. It's pretty exciting. Here is some good information to start with. We will be sending home more information, and we bet you will also hear about it from your child.

What is social emotional development?

We want your child to be as ready as possible for kindergarten. Of course we all want our children to know letters and numbers. And we also want our children to know how to learn and how to get along with others which is called social emotional development. It's how children manage their feelings, how they make and keep friends, and how they solve problems with others in a positive way.

Why is social emotional development important?

Children with strong social and emotional skills know how to:

- Focus and pay attention;
- Follow directions;
- Solve problems;
- Care about other people's feelings; and
- Calm down when they feel strong emotions.

All of these skills help children be successful in school. For years and years, kindergarten teachers have told us that these are the most important skills for children to have.

How do children learn social and emotional skills?

Your child learns a lot of social emotional skills from you! You have probably noticed how much your child loves attention from you. It helps your child feel a close connection with you. When parents/caregivers and children are close, children want to be like their parents/caregivers. You have probably seen your child watch you and then try to do what you do. Your child watches how you show feelings and manage them.

If you take a few deep breaths to calm yourself down when you are upset, your child will do the same thing. You really are your child's most important teacher.

Your child also learns about social and emotional development in our class. We are using a program called Second Step to help your child learn social emotional skills.

What is Second Step?

Second Step is a set of lessons and activities that help your child learn social emotional skills one at a time. We do Second Step lessons every day with puppets, songs, posters, books, and other materials children love. Children learn new social emotional skills and practice them all through the day. They learn to focus and pay attention. They learn to pay attention to their own feelings and the feelings of others. They learn to calm themselves down when they are upset. They learn to stand up for themselves, and they learn how to be good friends. They learn how to play fair, and they learn how to solve problems with their own thinking.

These are all skills that kindergarten teachers want your child to have. They are also skills we want your child to have. We hope these are skills you want for your child, too.

Second Step Strategies for Families/Caregivers

Children will be more successful in learning positive social emotional skills when teachers and parents/caregivers use the same words and strategies. Here are some of the Second Step strategies your child is learning in our class. You can use them at home too. Your child already knows them, and will probably be glad to teach them to you!

The Second Step Listening Rules

The Listening Rules help your child learn at school and at home. Children say the rules one at a time out loud while doing the action at the same time. These are especially powerful because the children are telling themselves what to do; doing the action helps them remember the rules. The Listening Rules can be used any time when you need your child to follow through with a task, calm down, or follow the rules.

CHILDREN SAY THIS:

Eyes watching.

action: *Point to the corners of your eyes.*

Ears listening.

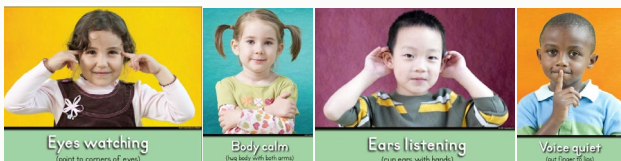
action: *Cup your ears with your hands.*

Voice quiet.

action: *Put your finger on your lips.*

Body calm.

action: *Hug your body with both arms.*



Focusing attention helps your child learn at school and home. At school your child is learning how to focus his or her attention by making an “attent-o-scope.” Attent-o-scopes help shut things out that can take your child’s attention away while learning or when being asked to follow through with a task.

TO MAKE AND USE AN ATTENT-O-SCOPE, CHILDREN DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Circle their hands around their eyes
- Use their eyes, ears, and brain to stay focused
- Take away their hands but pretend they are still there

For example, you can say, “I need you to put your coat on. Please focus your attention by putting your attent-o-scope on.”

Managing Emotions

In our class your child is learning how to calm down when he or she feels a strong feeling in their body. He or she is learning how to manage strong emotions in a safe and positive way. We do this by practicing how to calm down and take belly breaths. When your child calms down this is an excellent opportunity to discuss why they are upset.

Here’s how you can use this same activity at home. When your child is feeling a strong emotion, remind them to do the following Calm-Down Steps:

- Put your hands on your tummy and say “Stop.”
- Name your feeling: for example, “I am angry.”
- Take some belly breaths. Breathe in slowly through your nose and then out slowly through your mouth.

Children are usually excited to share what they’ve learned through the Second Step program – you can ask your child to show you any of the above strategies and rules.

Here’s how you can get more information. We will be sending home messages each week. They are called Home links. These will tell you about the new skills your child is learning and will give you more suggestions for practice at home.

You can also get more information on the Second Step website. Go to www.secondstep.org and click on “create account” at top.

Enter Activation Key: SSPE FAMI LY68

