



Social Emotional Learning and the Pyramid Model at Margaret's House

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Social-emotional development refers to how children learn to express their feelings, develop relationships, and practice social skills.

Labeling, identifying, and managing emotions are essential skills for adults in order to enjoy meaningful and successful participation in life experiences, both in their professional and personal lives. Emotions affect who we are and they impact our attention, memory, and learning; our ability to form relationships; and our physical and mental health. They also influence our behaviors, actions, and interactions with others. For adults, **Emotional Intelligence** is a term used to describe the ability to understand our own emotions and use them to guide our thinking and actions. Developing emotional intelligence allows us to manage our emotions effectively and positively influence our relationships with others and our overall quality of life.

The foundation of Emotional Intelligence is the **Social Emotional Learning** done in the first 5 years of life – that time when we all first learn how to communicate and form relationships with those around us. Children begin developing social-emotional skills at birth, it begins with their first experiences interacting with other people. Research indicates that children are born ready to connect with other people in their environment; when that is nurtured and guided in a healthy positive way, essential skills develop.

Consider the impact social emotional development has on various areas of development:

- **Learning to read** involves **regulating emotions** and activity levels and requires the child to sit and attend to a task
- **Learning to walk, swim, run, or ride a bike** involves regulating activity level, **attending to adult directions**, focusing on muscle control, and **controlling impulses**.
- **Learning to communicate** involves using **socially appropriate strategies for interaction**.
- **Learning self-help skills** involves **following directions, controlling emotions** to complete challenging tasks, and knowing when and how to ask for help.
- **Being successful in school** involves **understanding classroom behavioral expectations** and participating in large- and small-group activities with peers.

Success in school is strongly linked to early positive social-emotional development, thus, it is critical to foster social-emotional learning during the early childhood years.

What are the five core components of Social Emotional Learning?

- Self-Awareness (emotional literacy)
 - We see this when a preschooler can identify their own emotions, perhaps saying, “I am sad because I don’t want to share my toy.”
- Social Awareness
 - When a preschooler expresses sympathy for a friend feeling sad, helps a friend rebuild a block tower, or offers to help a peer who is upset, they are demonstrating social awareness skills.
- Self-Management (behavioral regulation)
 - Preschoolers show this when they wait their turn, accept that play time is ending and join in clean up, and when they follow routines with simple supports or reminders.
- Relationship Skills (friendship skills)
 - This includes clear communication, active listening, cooperation, conflict resolution, and obtaining help when needed. Preschoolers show these skills when they use their words rather than actions to express strong feelings, and seek support from adults when a challenging conflict begins.
- Responsible Decision-Making Skills (problem-solving skills)
 - Making constructive choices about their own behavior and how they handle social interactions based on potential consequences, are skills in this area. We see this when preschoolers wait for their turn to use a swing, offer to share their paints, or work together to reach a goal.

Pyramid Model Implementation

During the preschool years, children learn to take turns, share toys and materials, play near each other, talk with peers, and talk about their feelings and the feelings of others. They also begin to follow classroom and home routines independently. Children learn these social skills from watching others interact and through conversations with adults and peers.

When Kindergarten teachers were asked what skills they needed children to have before entering their Kindergarten classroom, they didn’t mention academics because these teachers knew they could teach all the academics right in their Kindergarten classroom. Instead, they requested that children arrive with strong social emotional skills. Kindergarten teachers found that in order for children to grasp the academics, they first needed to have a strong foundation of social emotional skills, and those skills were best learned before that first year of a child’s academic career.

These skills are what children need first to be successful in school, and then to be successful in life and in their professional work life:

Get along with others
Be a good team member
Be flexible
Be responsible

Be kind
Be a good friend
Be respectful to self, others and property
Adapt to change

The Pyramid Model Framework provides guidance to Early Childhood Educators to promote these essential social emotional skills. The framework is based on over a decade of data evaluation, and it has shown to be supportive of sound practices that develop social emotional skills in children. This

model assists in designing classrooms that support engagement in learning and helps build positive relationships among children, family, and staff. Within the framework, classroom staff are supported to work together to ensure all children understand the behavioral expectations, all children receive instruction in social skills, and staff collaborate with families and providers if individual support is obtained for those children who continue to struggle.

At Margaret's House we are proud to be focused on social emotional learning and proud to be teaming up with the Child Care Council on becoming a Pyramid Implementation Center. We have found resources to support us as we address challenging behaviors in the classroom, training to support teacher's understanding of child development and growth, and systems to support forward growth in many areas. As we implement the Pyramid Model in our center, we find new opportunities to support the children we care for so deeply for as they navigate those all-important first five years.

Books about Social Emotional Learning

Here are some books we have found to support social emotional health:



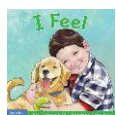
My First Feelings, Baby Einstein, by PI Kids



Kindness Makes us Strong, by Sophie Beer



We are Better Together, by Eileen Spinelli



I Feel, by Cheri J. Meiners. There are many books in this series



The A,B,C's of Kindness, by Samantha Berger



Have You Filled a Bucket Today, by Carol McCloud