



Social Emotional Guidance

Introduction

Families, caregivers, and early educators all work together to help children grow and learn. This guidance is intended to be a resource for educators to support and enhance children’s learning and development while using the Foundations, Indiana’s Early Learning Development Framework. While this is not an exhaustive list, this guidance is meant to serve as a suggestion for practice from birth to age five including the transition into kindergarten. It can be used to support a child’s development at different levels of learning and promotes fluid movement between developmental stages. The Foundations are not intended to be a curriculum, but what children should know and be able to do throughout developmental stages. Curricula is content that children should learn and methods to teach the content whereas lesson plans are intended to demonstrate how the content is conveyed to children. This guidance is a resource for educators to use while developing an intentional lesson plan.

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

High quality early experiences help a child become ready for kindergarten and beyond. The Foundations show early educators the developmental progression that typically developing young children should experience as they grow toward kindergarten readiness. In 2014, Indiana’s Early Learning Advisory Committee approved the following definition of kindergarten readiness: “In Indiana, we work together so that every child can develop to his or her fullest potential socially, emotionally, physically, cognitively, and academically. Through growth in all of these domains, the child will become a healthy, capable, competent, and powerful learner.”

Family Engagement

Indiana’s Early Learning Advisory Committee (2016) has approved the following definition for family engagement:

- Families actively supporting their children’s learning and development, and sharing the responsibility with early care and education providers who are committed to engaging with families in meaningful, culturally respectful ways;
- Continuous across a child’s life, beginning in infancy and extending through college and career preparation programs;
- Occurring across the various early care and learning settings where children play and grow.”

Children develop in the context of their environments, which includes family, culture, and community. Family engagement is a strong predictor of children’s development, wellness, educational attainment, and success later in school and life. Early educators can use the Family Engagement sections and the Powerful Practices throughout this guidance for strategies that they can encourage family members to use at home. Children and their families also face a number of complex challenges and situations. Communities are strengthened when there are strong partnerships between organizations. Educators and program administrators are encouraged to refer families to agencies that have the most in depth knowledge to meet their needs.

Special Populations

The Indiana Core Knowledge and Competencies encourage educators to see children as unique individuals within a family and community and to be sensitive to individual developmental needs. This guidance supports special populations including dual language (DLL), exceptional, and high ability learners; however, many of the recommended strategies are appropriate and beneficial to all children. It’s encouraged that educators use a flexible approach when designing curriculum and keep the needs of all children in mind. The use of the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) provides a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone (See Appendix B for additional information). Additionally, with family/parental consent, we encourage educators to engage and collaborate with other professionals in closely related sectors supporting the child and family to further inform and align services. This could include professionals from education, health, and social services (e.g. First Steps/Early intervention, public schools, therapists, and physicians).



Social Emotional Foundation 1: Sense of Self

Early learners develop foundational skills that support self-awareness, confidence, and the identification and expression of emotions.

SE1.1 Demonstrate self awareness and confidence

Self awareness is the ability to recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, values, and behaviors (CASEL 2019). Having secure attachments with adults and educators provides children the opportunity to develop self awareness and confidence. The development of self awareness and confidence leads to the ability to:

- Recognize self as an individual
- Recognize their strengths and the strengths of others
- Show confidence in a range of abilities
- Identify emotions (CASEL 2019)

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

The ability to demonstrate self awareness and confidence leads to success in kindergarten by supporting students to:

- Recognize personal strengths (SEL Competency 2B)
- Demonstrate self-efficacy (SEL Competency 2C)
- Demonstrate self awareness and confidence (SEL Competency 6B)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to:

- Recognize and respect their child's unique interests and cultivate opportunities to explore those interests.
- Acknowledge that a child's resistance to adult guidance is developmentally appropriate.
- Cultivate opportunities to be part of a larger community (e.g. communities of faith, neighborhoods, participating in organized activities, play groups, etc.).

Special Populations¹

Educators can:

- Provide a variety of materials that demonstrate positive images of all abilities and cultures.
- Encourage and support the use of visual supports (e.g. visuals to represent activities, needs, or emotion) in various languages.

¹ With familial consent, we encourage early educators to collaborate with other service providers.

Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners' self awareness and confidence.

SE1.1: Demonstrate self awareness and confidence

Across all developmental stages, educators can:

- Create interactive and supportive environments that reflect the child's image (i.e. physical and emotional environment).
- Encourage and model responsive relationships, being sensitive to children's needs (i.e. providing comfort).
- Provide open-ended experiences that allow the child to demonstrate independence and creativity (e.g. materials are accessible to children and activities are child-led and directed).
- Promote individual range of abilities within the classroom.
- Notice and reinforce children's actions and efforts by providing specific acknowledgement (e.g. "You really worked hard to build that bridge. Great work!").
- Take time to talk to the child and understand their uniqueness and strengths.

Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool
<p>Recognize how infants communicate from birth (e.g. crying, cooing, eye gaze, and nonverbal cues) and respond promptly and consistently to those communication efforts</p> <p>Use infant's name when talking with them (e.g. "Jerome! I'm going to pick you up for your diaper change!")</p> <p>Intentionally display and point out pictures and mirrors at the child's level throughout the environment (e.g. placing mirror above changing table)</p>	<p>Display child and family photos, child artwork, and mirrors at their level and talk about what the child sees (e.g. "Who is that in the mirror? You're right, that is Suzie!")</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to develop independence (e.g. safe climbing structure, drink from a sippy cup) and celebrate their successes</p>	<p>Display child and family photos, child artwork, and mirrors at their level and talk about what the child sees (e.g. "Oh, you are looking at your family. I see you and your Mom!.")</p> <p>Use pronouns when communicating during play (e.g. he/she, mine, ours, etc.)</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to continue to develop independence (e.g. easel painting, increasingly independent handwashing) and show pride in their work</p> <p>Recognize and validate resistance to adult guidance (e.g. child says, "No" and educator responds, "I understand that you don't like to wash your hands; however, we need our hands to be clean for lunch.")</p>	<p>Display and discuss pictures, books, and images throughout the environment that are reflective of diverse groups (e.g. while looking at family photos, pointing out similarities and differences that are important to the children)</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to continue to develop independence (e.g. caring for a classroom plant)</p> <p>Recognize that questioning adult guidance is appropriate (e.g. "It's time for lunch! Let's wash our hands!")</p> <p>Child responds, "Why?". Educator responds, "Washing our hands takes the germs away and keeps us healthy!"</p>	<p>Facilitate conversations and activities regarding diverse groups</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to continue to develop independence (e.g. lead a classroom discussion, caring for personal belongings)</p> <p>Recognize that questioning adult guidance is appropriate (e.g. "It's time for lunch! Let's wash our hands!")</p> <p>Child responds, "Why?". Educator responds, "Washing our hands takes the germs away and keeps us healthy!"</p>



Social Emotional Foundation 1: Sense of Self

Early learners develop foundational skills that support self-awareness, confidence, and the identification and expression of emotions.

SE1.2: Demonstrate identification and expression of emotions

It is understood that the brains of children ages 0-5 develop at a rapid pace. Part of that development is laying the groundwork for emotions that children will experience now and later in life. Educators understanding the needs of young children and their emotions is critical to their overall development. Young children identifying and expressing emotions promotes the ability to:

- Show empathy, resulting in positive social relationships
- Regulate and manage emotions and behaviors in a healthy manner
- Have confidence to achieve tasks

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

Effective identification and expression of emotions supports success in kindergarten by preparing students to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of body awareness and sensations in the body (SEL 1A)
- Identify a wide range of emotions (SEL 2A)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to:

- Have conversations with their child about emotions and appropriate ways of expressing their emotions (e.g. “What does it look like to be angry? When I’m angry, I try to take deep breaths until I feel calm.”).
- Share their own feelings and experiences each day on a consistent basis.
- Use books and storytelling to unpack feelings.

Special Populations²

Educators can:

- Support children in developmentally appropriate ways to respond to particular emotions (e.g. breathing techniques).
- Encourage and support the use of visual supports (e.g. feeling charts or emotion faces).
- Be aware of communication practices of children and functionality of communication devices and tools.

²With familial consent, we encourage early educators to collaborate with other service providers.

Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners identification and expression of emotions:

SE1.2: Demonstrate identification and expression of emotions

Across all developmental stages, educators can:

- Create an environment which supports healthy expression of emotions (e.g. providing a quiet, calming area which can include comfy seating, soft materials, a mirror, books that show emotions, and sensory items).
- Provide visual supports within the environment (e.g. feeling wheel, feelings charts, photos of children expressing various emotions, etc.).
- Acknowledge and respectfully respond to children's emotions and all bids for attention (e.g. child exhibits a challenging behavior to gain the attention of an educator).
- Respect a child's response when they refuse to engage in an activity (e.g. "I see you do not want to paint. You can play somewhere else instead and try again later if you wish.").
- Identify emotions with words and help the child to associate words with their emotions consistently throughout the day.
- Model healthy ways of expressing feelings and emotions in everyday interactions in educator to child, educator to parent, and educator to educator interactions.
- Promote continuity of care by maintaining consistent staffing patterns when possible.

Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool
<p>Recognize how infants communicate from birth (e.g. crying, cooing, eye gaze, and nonverbal cues)</p> <p>Consistently acknowledge and respectfully respond to infant's verbal and nonverbal communication ("I see you are hungry. I am getting your bottle ready. It will take a couple of minutes.")</p> <p>Provide a consistent daily routine based on infant's individual needs</p> <p>Incorporate descriptions of simple emotions into everyday activities (e.g. reading books, singing songs)</p>	<p>Consistently acknowledge and respectfully respond to feelings and emotions (e.g., "You have a frown on your face. Are you sad? How can I help?")</p> <p>Provide consistent strategies to support healthy expression of emotions (e.g. prompt child to say and/or sign "stop" instead of hitting)</p> <p>Incorporate descriptions of simple emotions into everyday activities (e.g. fingerplays, story books)</p> <p>Model use of baby dolls to practice comforting behaviors (e.g. gentle touches and rubbing the baby's back)</p>	<p>Provide consistent strategies to support healthy expression of emotions (e.g. prompt child to say "stop" instead of hitting)</p> <p>Point out how other children are feeling and ask peers how to help comfort the child (e.g. "You are looking at John and he is crying. John is sad his Mommy left. How can we help John feel better?")</p> <p>Comment positively when children show empathy (e.g. "That was very nice of you to give her a hug", "Marcus was sad and you brought him his blanket. Thank you.")</p>	<p>Provide a healthy outlet for expression of emotion through creative arts and play (e.g. dramatic play)</p> <p>Incorporate descriptions of more complex emotions into everyday activities (e.g. social stories, visual cues)</p>	<p>Provide a healthy outlet for expression of emotion through creative arts and play (e.g. dictated stories, journaling)</p> <p>Incorporate descriptions of complex emotions into everyday activities (e.g. role play, individual and group discussion)</p>



Social Emotional Foundation 2: Self Regulation

Early learners develop foundational skills that support executive functions including impulse control, planning skills, and emotional regulation.

SE2.1: Demonstrate self control

Self regulation or self control is the ability to manage a variety of emotional responses when presented with a variety of challenges (negative or positive). Self control has a dramatic impact on every other developmental domain of all human beings. The ability to self-regulate supports the individual's capacity to successfully engage in more challenging endeavors. Educators play a critical role in the development of self regulation in young children. The development of self control leads to the ability to:

- Control impulses
- Organize
- Cooperate with others
- Be self-disciplined
- Be independent
- Manage stress

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

Development of self control supports success in kindergarten by preparing students to:

- Manage transitions and changes (SEL Competency 1B)
- Demonstrate self control (SEL Competency 3A)
- Recognize life stressors and have strategies to manage them (SEL Competency 3B)
- Practice personal responsibility (SEL Competency 3C)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to:

- Establish a routine, family norms, and consistent expectations.
- Give prior warning to young children when there is a change in the routine.
- Model and encourage children to use strategies to de-escalate (e.g. deep breaths, calming music, going for a walk, etc.).

Special Populations³

Educators can:

- Support children in developmentally appropriate ways to respond to particular emotions (e.g. breathing techniques).
- Provide students with tools to assist with following a routine or transitioning without adult support.
- Provide students with social stories related to self control and self-regulation.
- Support children in using a calming area and self-soothing tools and techniques as a strategy in managing their emotions.

³With familial consent, we encourage early educators to collaborate with other service providers.

Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners' development of self control:

SE2.1: Demonstrate self control

Across all developmental stages, educators can:

- Respectfully prepare children in changes in the environment including transitions, staff changes, environmental changes, and routine changes by providing cues and including children in the process.
- Provide children with ample opportunities to make choices in the everyday environment (e.g. free play).
- Provide a calming area and model the use of self-soothing tools and techniques throughout the day (e.g. fidgets, breathing exercises).
- Model and label self-control in everyday interactions between educators, educators and children, educators and parents.
- Encourage and facilitate activities where children take turns and engage in reciprocal interactions.

Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool
<p>Provide consistent routines with respect to infant's needs (e.g. diapering, feeding, drop off and pick up)</p> <p>Provide comfort techniques (e.g. allow infant to use a pacifier or other comfort tools while still maintaining safe sleep practices)</p> <p>Respond to infant's cries to build trust</p>	<p>Establish and maintain a consistent routine, utilizing transition tools like a visual schedule, transition warnings, and familiar songs</p> <p>Provide comfort techniques (e.g. provide a quiet space in the classroom, use comfort objects, like a pacifier or blanket)</p> <p>Provide positive guidance and boundaries (e.g. child grabs snack from neighbor, "This is yours. This is his. Can you give his back, please?")</p>	<p>Establish and maintain a consistent routine, utilizing transition tools like a visual schedule, transition warnings, and familiar songs</p> <p>Provide comfort techniques (e.g. provide a quiet space in the classroom, make comfort items accessible, like a pacifier or blanket) and praise the child for seeking comfort independently</p> <p>Provide positive guidance and boundaries (e.g. child grabs snack from another (e.g. "This is yours. This is his. Can you give his back, please?")</p>	<p>Establish consistent routines with verbal and visual prompts as needed</p> <p>Provide support for emotional health (e.g. sensory play, large motor play, taking on more responsibilities)</p> <p>Utilize games that exercise a child's executive functions (e.g. parachute play, <i>Red Light, Green Light, Freeze Dance</i>, etc.)</p>	<p>Include children in process of planning meaningful experiences</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children to independently transition</p> <p>Provide support for emotional health (e.g. sensory play, large motor play, taking on more responsibilities)</p> <p>Utilize games that exercise and scaffold upon a child's executive functions (e.g. complex dramatic play, games with turn taking, etc.)</p>



Social Emotional Foundation 3: Conflict Resolution

Early learners develop foundational skills that support conflict resolution.

SE3.1: Demonstrate conflict resolution

Conflict is a common and inevitable part of life. **Conflict resolution** is the process in which two or more people negotiate to resolve an issue that arises. How a child approaches and manages conflict early in life will affect the relationships they have later on. Educators play a pivotal role in developing these skills in young children. The development of conflict resolution skills leads to the ability to:

- Negotiate
- Make and strengthen relationships with others
- Participate and collaborate in teams
- Develop emotional intelligence and self awareness
- Apply various lenses in different situations

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

Development of conflict resolution skills supports success in kindergarten by preparing students to:

- Recognize life stressors and have strategies to manage them (SEL Competency 3B)
- Practice personal responsibility (SEL Competency 3C)
- Apply conflict management skills (SEL Competency 4C)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to:

- Model positive conflict resolution strategies with other children and adults (i.e. appropriately solving a conflict with a partner or spouse).
- Read books and stories that demonstrate conflict resolution skills.

Special Populations⁴

Educators can:

- Acknowledge and respond to a child's verbal and non-verbal communication when determining what supports are needed to resolve conflict.
- Provide visual supports in the environment to demonstrate appropriate conflict resolution skills (e.g. CSEFEL Solution Kit).
- Provide information and strategies while modeling the use of communication devices with peers.

⁴With familial consent, we encourage early educators to collaborate with other service providers.

Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners’ development of conflict resolution skills:

SE3.1: Demonstrate conflict resolution

Across all developmental stages, educators can:

- Embed conflict resolution strategies into environment and curriculum (e.g. consistently monitoring children, effectively redirecting, and noticing positive conflict resolution).
- Engage children in books and social stories which talk about conflict resolution.
- Apply knowledge of child development and anticipate typical patterns of social behavior.
- Provide age-appropriate conflict resolution strategies, associating words with actions.
- Give children space and time to independently resolve conflict when safe and appropriate.
- Be an active participant while guiding and supporting children through behaviors which create conflict.
- Recognize and utilize conflict in the environment as a “teachable moment”.
- Model appropriate conflict resolution skills with other educators, families, and children.

Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool
Provide a strong foundation of responsive caregiving (e.g. when an infant is crying because he can't get to a doll the educator says, "I can see you are frustrated. Let me help you reach the doll.")	<p>Provide adequate materials based on the need, interest, and the size of the group, and allow the time and space to practice conflict resolution safely with peers before intervening</p> <p>Model conflict resolution and set safe boundaries (e.g. "You may chew on this teether. Your teeth do not belong on your friend.")</p> <p>Do not expect toddlers to share, but rather help them through the use of "Mine", "My turn", and "me next" when conflict arises</p>	<p>Model conflict resolution and set safe boundaries (e.g. providing choices of how a conflict could be resolved)</p> <p>Guide and support the child's attempts to resolve conflict (e.g. using simple words and phrases such as "My turn", "That's mine", etc.) and praise children when they use these words within play</p>	<p>Model negotiation and perspective taking skills (e.g. using puppets or storyboards to tell a fiction or non-fiction story where two characters disagree)</p> <p>Utilize non-punitive strategies to resolve conflict (e.g. "I can see you both want to build with the blocks. What ideas do you have to solve this?")</p>	<p>Model negotiation and perspective taking skills (e.g. using puppets or storyboards to tell a fiction or non-fiction story where two characters disagree)</p> <p>Utilize non-punitive strategies to resolve conflict (e.g. avoid taking away materials that cause conflict)</p>



Social Emotional Foundation 4: Building Relationships

Early learners develop foundational skills that support social development and engagement with others.

SE4.1: Demonstrate relationship skills

Relationship skills refers to the ability to create and maintain positive and healthy relationships with individuals and groups. Adults and educators play an important role in creating secure relationships with each child as a method of fostering children's relationship building skills. The development of relationship skills leads to the ability to:

- Establish and maintain positive relationships with diverse individuals and groups (CASEL 2019)
- Show empathy
- Communicate with others effectively
- Engage in teamwork

Looking Ahead to Kindergarten

Development of relationship skills supports success in kindergarten by preparing students to:

- Demonstrate communication skills (SEL Competency 4A)
- Understand teamwork and works with others (SEL Competency 4B)
- Treat others fairly and respectfully, is able to see multiple perspectives, and is open-minded (SEL Competency 5A)
- Demonstrate care and concern for others (SEL Competency 5B)
- Accept constructive feedback (SEL Competency 7C)

Family Engagement

Encourage families to:

- Talk to their child about their friendships and what it means to be a friend.
- Model appropriate relationships with other adults, and families.

Special Populations⁵

Educators can:

- Provide levels of affection responsive to individual abilities, needs, and preferences.
- Ensure the environment and materials that support and encourage relationship building are accessible to all.
- Provide resources to assist with social interaction (e.g. communication devices or Picture Exchange Communication Systems cards, social stories, etc.).

⁵With familial consent, we encourage early educators to collaborate with other service providers.

Powerful Practices

Examples of ways adults can support young learners’ development of relationship skills:

SE4.1: Demonstrate relationship skills

Across all developmental stages, educators can:

- Create a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment for all children that supports relationships built on strengths and shared interests.
- Provide a consistent staffing pattern.
- Provide ample opportunities for free play and sufficient, open-ended materials to support the development of relationships and interactions between children and educators.
- Model positive relations including showing care and concern for others (e.g. educator to other staff, educator to parent, educator to child).
- Model active listening skills (e.g. pausing to respond, body language, and facial expressions).
- Demonstrate appropriate levels of affection while respecting individual preferences and cultural norms (e.g. “Would you like a hug?” and respecting the child’s response).

Infant	Younger Toddler	Older Toddler	Younger Preschool	Older Preschool
<p>Provide a strong foundation of responsive caregiving (e.g. when a stranger enters, provide comfort or engage back and forth with infant during play and diapering)</p> <p>Communicate intentions (e.g. “I’m going to wipe your nose. Here it comes!”)</p> <p>Create an environment that supports social interactions between infants (i.e. limit the use of “baby containers” or equipment that restricts an infant’s movement such as bouncy seats, swings, etc.)</p> <p>Create a safe and supportive environment that allows infants to observe others (e.g. supervised floor time)</p>	<p>Establish individualized and respectful routines for pick up and drop off (e.g. providing a child transitional comfort objects and engaging with families during transitions)</p> <p>Engage in social interactions with child (e.g. meal time)</p> <p>Respectfully accept the child’s refusal of help</p> <p>Support solitary play and begin to encourage parallel play (e.g. “Johnny is playing in the water table. Jessica, would you like to play in the water table too?”)</p> <p>Provide a “secure base” for a child to explore (e.g. giving offering a nod, smile or encouragement when a child looks back for comfort during exploration)</p>	<p>Establish individualized and respectful routines for pick up and drop off (e.g. providing a child transitional comfort objects and engaging with families during transitions)</p> <p>Respond to a request for assistance when a child is having difficulty</p> <p>Model friendship skills</p> <p>Support parallel play and encourage associative play (e.g. “Johnny is building a castle. Jessica, would you like to build your own castle, too?”)</p>	<p>Help children recognize body language (e.g. use mirror to see own face, use books to identify facial expressions, songs)</p> <p>Model compromises (e.g. “It looks like you’d both like to go down the slide. How could you both get a turn safely?”)</p> <p>Support associative and encourage cooperative play (e.g. “I see that you’re both wanting to build castles. How could we work together to build a big castle?”)</p>	<p>Help children recognize body language (e.g. use mirror to see own face, use books to identify facial expressions, songs)</p> <p>Notice and reinforce attempts to compromise (e.g. “You both wanted to play with that, but you let Cori go first!”)</p> <p>Independently initiate resolution strategies with peers and seek adult support when necessary</p> <p>Support sustained cooperative play (e.g. several children open a restaurant together in the dramatic play center)</p>

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For additional resources, please see the Early Learning Foundations Guidance Online Tool at www.doe.in.gov/earlylearning.