

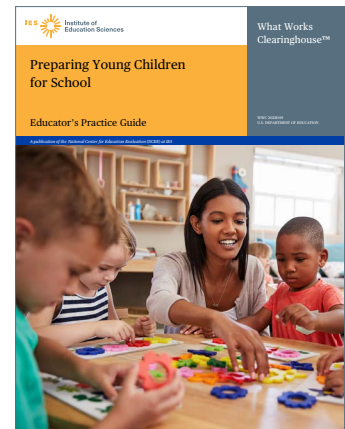
Recommendation 1: Regularly provide intentional, engaging instruction and practice focused on social-emotional skills



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Developing social-emotional skills is critical for school readiness for all children. For example, when children enter kindergarten, they will be expected to ask for help, take turns, be kind, and interact with others in a positive way. Instruction in social-emotional skills will help children learn how to share, cooperate, and maintain positive relationships with friends; identify and regulate emotions; and deal with problematic social situations. By focusing on social-emotional skills in preschool, children will be better prepared for the kindergarten setting which has higher expectations and more formal curriculum.

The recommendation from the What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guide *Preparing Young Children for School* presents steps for systematically strengthening children's social-emotional skills. The steps describe selecting a social-emotional curriculum and regularly using lessons from the curriculum in an engaging way. The steps also provide guidance on how to provide frequent opportunities for children to practice social-emotional learning with adult support at school and at home.



How to carry out the recommendation

1. **Follow a curriculum that promotes incremental social-emotional learning.** Determine whether the existing curriculum or curriculum supplement covers social-emotional learning systematically. The curriculum should have a scope and sequence and address instruction in social-emotional skills in an incremental manner. If the curriculum in place is theme-based and does not sequentially build social-emotional skills, then consider supplementing that curriculum with an evidence-based program that systematically teaches these skills.
2. **Intentionally devote time to teaching social-emotional skills in an engaging way.** Just as time is set aside for intentional instruction on literacy and mathematics, set aside 10-20 minutes to teach social-emotional skills 1-2 times per week. Then offer time throughout the week to practice the skills.
3. **Plan staged activities for children to practice social-emotional skills.** Social-emotional learning takes place through repeated exposure and practice. Prepare staged activities that will provide structured opportunities for children to practice what they are learning, rather than waiting for learning opportunities that naturally occur during play time.
4. **Take advantage of naturally occurring situations to reinforce and review social-emotional skills.** The preschool day offers many opportunities to practice skills when children are emotional or interacting with others, such as snack time, waiting to use the bathroom, free play, or transitioning from one activity to another. Use these opportunities to review, practice, and reinforce the target skills.
5. **Inform parents, caregivers, and guardians about the social-emotional skills children are learning so skills can be practiced and reinforced at home.** Send a brief note or email to parents, caregivers, and guardians informing them of the social-emotional skill that children are learning. Provide guidance in the note on what parents, caregivers, and guardians could do and say to help their children develop their social-emotional skills. When possible, translate letters into the primary language spoken by the parents, caregivers, and guardians. The panel encourages teachers to consider differences in how families socialize their children and think about the social-emotional skills children are learning at school.