

What is Social-Emotional Learning?

Top Q&As from Dr. Lauren's Webinar

1. What is social-emotional learning and why is it important?

Put simply, social-emotional learning is the process of learning social and emotional skills that teach young children how to be kind to themselves and others. It also helps young children learn to

- Identify emotions in themselves and others.
- Express emotions to others.
- Interact with different people in different situations.

Social-emotional learning leads to better academics, better relationships and better social behaviors. In short, children learn skills that are essential to success in every facet of school, and more broadly, life. For young children, these skills are just as important as learning reading and math.

2. How has the pandemic impacted social-emotional development in children?

The pandemic has affected all our social and emotional wellbeing and has created disruption in families across the country. After two years of a pandemic, our social world is entirely new for many young children. Many are having first-time social experiences, such as attending birthday parties or even going to the grocery store, at later ages than older children. Additionally, more children are experiencing heightened degrees of social anxiety. Reacclimating can be unsettling and uneasy.

However, young children are highly resilient. They are beginning to reacclimate to the world around them, and this is so important because children need to have social interactions and engage with other children and adults. Social-emotional learning can advance children's success after an extremely challenging time brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic because it teaches them how to understand and address their emotions and interact with others.



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3. Is it important for young children to feel frustration? What is the best way to help them manage the frustration during and after the fact?

It is important that we give children the time, space and permission to experience emotions and attempt to navigate through the emotion. If children are overwhelmed, it may help to talk to them about what you are noticing and how to work through the feeling, such as: "I saw that your block tower fell down again. When things happen that we do not mean to happen, it can be very frustrating. We might want to yell out or stomp our feet or make our hands into tight fists. After a few breaths, it helps me to count to 10 slowly and try again. Do you want to try that with me?"

If a child is in the midst of a tantrum or is completely overwhelmed with the frustration, it may help to wait near the child until they have regained some composure. Some children want hugs to help calm down and others just need to know their trusted adult is nearby. Do not scold children for feeling overwhelmed, as this will only exacerbate the situation. Instead, give your child some time to calm and then talk through the experience with your child providing a label for the feeling — frustration — and providing suggestions on how to express the emotion.

4. What are some techniques to help bring out the kindness in our children?

Children learn best by modeling. In other words, we must model for children those behaviors and values we wish to instill in them. Regardless of the age of your child, think of small ways to show kindness to others and how to involve your child in the gesture. This could be something simple, such as holding a door for a stranger or picking up a piece of trash off the sidewalk. Tell your child what you are doing and how it is being kind to others. When appropriate, prompt your child to also show gestures of kindness, from saying "thank you" to making a get-well card for friends or donating old toys to a charity. Use the word kindness frequently, and as your child gets older, ask them how they would like to show kindness to others.



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5. How does The Goddard School® promote social-emotional learning within its educational program?

Social-emotional learning is the cornerstone of The Goddard School's educational philosophy, with a balance between academic preparation and developing these crucial life skills. Goddard believes in learning through play, which teaches children how to interact with others, make friends, make decisions, ask for help, manage emotions and manage everyday conflict through natural experiences.

[Life Lesson Library](#) is Goddard's curated collection of children's literature that teachers read to children with prompted questions and activities to help children become very aware of what's happening in the books, what's happening between characters and the corresponding social effects. Teachers then send information home to families so they can read the same book that their children read in school; continue the lessons at home; and begin to instill family history, traditions and cultures through the stories.

6. What are some resources to help parents and caregivers learn more about just social-emotional learning and advocating for it in their children's experiences?

To further support parents of young children, The Goddard School has a wealth of resources and content available. We recently introduced a parenting community — [Parenting with Goddard](#) — featuring tips on a variety of topics including health and safety, mental health and educational activities parents can do with their children at home. There's also a [video series](#) where experts in early childhood development discuss timely topics like helping children cope with separation anxiety and using stories to support children's learning. There's an upcoming webinar focused on gratitude and giving back that will take place on Tuesday, November 15. Moving forward, we will continuously release new and updated content across a variety of media to ensure we're meeting your needs.

Additionally, Dr. Lauren recently published a book with tips on how to have difficult conversations with young children. [Big Conversations with Little Children](#) addresses a wide range of topics, from the death of a loved one to terrorist events to natural disasters and offers guidance for teachers and parents to have big, unwanted or unexpected conversations with young children.