Milestones of Social Emotional Development

Use the following charts as resources for yourself and staff members regarding social emotional development.

**Social Emotional Development for Infants**

| By 2 months, babies: | • Begin to smile at people  
| | • Can briefly calm himself (may bring hands to mouth and suck on fingers)  
| | • Try to look at parent  
| | • Coo, make gurgling sounds  
| | • Pay attention to faces  
| | • Begin to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn’t change  

| By 4 months, babies: | • Smile spontaneously, especially at people  
| | • Like to play with people and might cry when playing stops  
| | • Copy some movements and facial expressions, like smiling  
| | • Begin to babble  
| | • Babble with expressions and copy sounds he hears  
| | • Cry in different ways to show hunger, pain, or being tired  
| | • Let you know if she is happy or sad  
| | • Respond to affection  
| | • Watch faces closely  
| | • Recognize familiar people and things at a distance  

| By 6 months, babies: | • Know familiar faces and begin to know if someone is a stranger  
| | • Like to play with others, especially parents  
| | • Respond to other people’s emotions and often seem happy  
| | • Like to look at self in a mirror  
| | • Respond to sounds by making sounds  
| | • Respond to own name  
| | • Make sounds to show joy and displeasure  
| | • Show curiosity and try to get things that are out of reach  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 9 months, babies</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• May be afraid of strangers</td>
<td>• May be clinging with familiar adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have favorite toys</td>
<td>• Understand “no”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Play peek-a-boo</td>
<td>• Copy sounds and gestures of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understood “no”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Copy sounds and gestures of others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>By 1 year, babies:</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Are shy or nervous with strangers</td>
<td>• Cry when mom or dad leave</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have favorite things and people</td>
<td>• Show fear in some situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hand a book when he wants to hear a story</td>
<td>• Repeat sounds or actions to get attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Put out arm or leg to help with dressing</td>
<td>• Play games such as “peek-a-boo” and “pat-a-cake”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Repeat sounds or actions to get attention</td>
<td>• Respond to simple spoken requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Use simple gestures, like shaking head “no” or waving “bye bye”</td>
<td>• Make sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speaking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Say “mama” and “dada” and exclamations like “uh-oh!”</td>
<td>• Try to say words you say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Try to say words you say</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Emotional Development for Toddlers


| By 18 months, toddlers: | • Like to hand things to others to play  
| | • May have temper tantrums  
| | • May be afraid of strangers  
| | • Show affection to familiar people  
| | • Play simple pretend, such as feeding a doll  
| | • May cling to caregivers in new situations  
| | • Point to show others something interesting  
| | • Explore alone but with parent close by  
| | • Say several single words  
| | • Say and shake head “no”  
| | • Point to show someone what he wants |
| By 2 years, toddlers: | • Copy others, especially adults and older children  
| | • Get excited when with other children  
| | • Show more and more independence  
| | • Show defiant behavior (doing what he has been told not to do)  
| | • Play mainly beside other children, but is beginning to include other children like in chase games  
| | • Know names of familiar people  
| | • Play simple make-believe games |
### Social Emotional Development for Preschoolers


| By 3 years, preschoolers: | • Copy adults and friends  
| | • Show affection for friends without prompting  
| | • Take turns in games  
| | • Show concern for crying friend  
| | • Understand the idea of “mine” and “his” or “hers”  
| | • Show a wide range of emotions  
| | • Separate easily from mom and dad  
| | • May get upset with major changes in routine  
| | • Dress and undress self  
| | • Name a friend  
| | • Carry on a conversation using 2-3 sentences  
| | • Play make-believe with dolls, animals, and people |
| By 4 years, preschoolers: | • Enjoy doing new things  
| | • Play “mom” and “dad”  
| | • Is more creative with make-believe play  
| | • Would rather play with other children than by himself  
| | • Cooperate with other children  
| | • Often can’t tell what’s real and what’s make-believe  
| | • Talk about what she likes and what she is interested in  
| | • Understand the idea of “same” and “different”  
| | • Play board or card games |
| By 5 years, preschoolers: | • Want to please friends  
| | • Want to be like friends  
| | • More likely to agree with rules  
| | • Like to sing, dance, and act  
| | • Show concern and sympathy for others  
| | • Are aware of gender  
| | • Can tell what’s real and what’s make-believe  
| | • Show more independence (for example, may visit a next-door neighbor by himself but adult supervision is still required)  
| | • Is sometimes demanding and sometimes very cooperative |
## Social-Emotional Development for School-Age Children


| Between the ages of 5 and 7, school-agers: | • Develop greater empathy  
• Establish and maintain positive relationships and friendships  
• Start developing a sense of morality  
• Control impulsive behavior  
• Identify and manage emotions  
• Form a positive self-concept and self-esteem (identity formation has begun)  
• Become resilient  
• Begin to function more independently (from looking after person possessions to making decision without needing constant support).  
• Form opinions about moral values — right and wrong  
• Be able to express an opinion and negotiate  
• Develop greater empathy  
• Begin understanding different viewpoints  
• Start making more sense of who I am (Who am I like? Who likes me?)  
• Develop a sense of family history (identity)  
• Grapple with questions about death  
• Accept that parents are not all powerful |
| Between the ages of 8 and 9, school-agers: | • Fit in and be accepted by peers (preoccupied with comparisons — do I fit in?)  
• Have a best friend  
• Strengthen cooperative skills  
• Adjust to a sexually developing body and handle the agonies of feeling awkward and self-conscious (What will I look like? Do I look normal?)  
• Continue refining a sense of self (fluid and constantly changing)  
• Work out values and beliefs — often passionately adopt an ethical stance  
• Establish independence and individuality (intensely private, wanting alone time, displays of noncompliance at school and home) |
| Between the ages of 10 and 11, school-agers: | • Behave appropriately in a variety of social situations  
• Refine communication skills  
• Resolve interpersonal conflicts — understand the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive responses |
- Become more independent and responsible for actions
- Value and respect rules and authority
- Know how to act appropriately and safely in online social world
- Manage emotional changes accompanying puberty (torn between needing the security of the familiar and craving the unknown)
- Develop more positive self esteem and resilience by building strengths and accepting limitations
- Acknowledge “who I am” through an optimistic lens

By the age of 12 and beyond, school-agers:

- Adjust to a bigger social world with greater expectations and demands
- Overcome the awkward and clumsy stage
- Find acceptance within a peer group
- Becoming more self-assured and able to say “No!”
- Move further away from family and closer to friends for support
- Handle issues and growing concerns about sexuality and relationships
- Manage confusing and unexpected feelings, such as anger and rebellion
- Move toward self-acceptance