

# Caregiver Chronicle

## Your child's social skills in kindergarten are more important than their academics

Parents of young children tend to worry a lot about whether or not their kids are making adequate gains as they launch into their academic careers.

"Can Johnny read the list of 100 high-frequency words?"

"Does Betty know how to count to 500?"

"Is Tom doing quantum physics yet?"

**While early education creates an important foundation for academic skills, many parents would be surprised to know that social skills are actually far more predictive of outcomes into adulthood than early academics.**

For example, a study published in 2015\*\* showed that even while controlling for family demographics and early academic ability, the social skills observed in kindergarten showed significant correlation with well-being at age 25.

That's a lot of staying power!

Regardless of how advanced of a reader they were or how much money their parents made, kindergarteners who demonstrated social competence were more likely to graduate from high school, go to college, get a job, and stay out of jail than those who showed a lower level of social competence.

So while many parents and schools may be feeling the pressure to cut back on play and social interaction in order to get more "hard skill" instruction time in, it's actually those "soft skills" that are most

predictive of long-term success.

**Here are five important social competencies you can foster in your child.**

### 1. How to play well with others

Play is a powerful catalyst for development in the early years. By playing with others, children learn to negotiate, problem solve, take turns, share and experiment. You can help your child build these skills by making time for free play with other children.

While dance class, soccer practice and choreographed play dates may have their own value, children need

plenty of time engaging in unstructured play with other children, where they may be supervised—but not instructed—by the adults around them.

### 2. How to problem-solve

It is tempting to swoop in at the first disgruntled squawk and make everything right again. We confiscate the object of the argument, set timers, or send children to play in different areas. We're good at problem-solving because we get SO MUCH practice as parents! And while some of this may be necessary for survival, our kids need some of that practice too.

So the next time your child has a problem, invite them to take part in that problem-solving process. Ask your child to describe what's going on, brainstorm solutions and try one

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## Challenging Behavior in Early Childhood

Here's a link for your newsletter. Dr. Anne Gearity was the Help Me Grow guest on this recent podcast on Mom Enough.

Challenging Behavior in Early Childhood: Understanding Needs, Feelings and Steps toward Better Regulation and Social Skills

It is not uncommon for a young child to be expelled from child care due to a challenging behavior, especially hurtful behaviors like biting or hitting. And yet it's hard to imagine a young child who doesn't occasionally lash out in frustration or anger and have a hard time calming down and re-engaging in a more positive way. Young children are just learning how to manage emotions, share space and attention with others and handle conflict in reasonable ways. This discussion will help you think about and respond to challenging behavior in ways that are effective in the short-run and supportive of healthy development in the long-run.

<http://momenough.com/2019/03/challenging-behavior-in-early-childhood>



## Join us for our Professional Learning Community in Anoka County!

Don't miss this opportunity for a presentation and discussion with Tina Feigal; author and founder of the Center for the Challenging Child



Tina Feigal, M.S., Ed. is a former school psychologist who offers coaching in Present Moment Parenting. Tina considers herself a purveyor of hope ... even for kids with extreme behaviors! She specializes in placing the healing of behavior directly into the hands of adults who care for the children. Empowerment of parents, teachers, and child care providers is Tina's passion ... she brings out the best in adults, so they can bring out the best in children.

Tina is the Director of Family Engagement at Anu Family Services, Inc., and founder of the Center for the Challenging Child, in St. Paul, MN, where she shares highly successful techniques to transform challenging behavior in children of all ages. Her new book, *Present Moment Parenting: Your Guide to a Peaceful Life with Your Intense Child*, contains chapters on trauma-effective parenting and self-care for parents.

Tuesday, April 9, 2019  
6:30pm-8:30pm  
Blaine Human Service Center  
1201 89th Ave NE, Suite 345  
Blaine MN 55434

**PLEASE RSVP TO:**  
Annette Borman at  
[aborman@accap.org](mailto:aborman@accap.org) or  
763-783-4711

Find out more about the Center for the Challenging Child at <https://www.parentingmojo.com/>

If you need a translator for a Professional Learning Community, please notify us 7 days before the event

How excited was the gardener about spring?

So excited he wet his plants !!





## Are you wondering “What’s Up With develop ?”

Join us for a Learning Community Meeting directed at goal setting and using the EQUIP function in Develop

By January 2020, all grant recipients will need to be submitting their spending and goals through Develop. This includes Building Quality, Parent Aware, and Regional Grants.

Bring your laptop or tablet, and your Develop *Membership (not just an account)* sign in information, and work with us on how to enter your goals into EQUIP.

**Thursday, April 18, 2019**

6:30pm—8:30pm

Peace of Mind Early Education Center  
9025 Tamarack Rd  
Woodbury, MN 55125

There are limited electrical outlets, so please be sure your device is charged!

### PLEASE NOTE:

You **MUST** have a Develop *membership (not just an account)*, and have registered your organization account, in order to access the EQUIP function. If you need assistance with this, please contact Doreen Jackson ASAP at [djackson@accap.org](mailto:djackson@accap.org) or 763-783-4891.

**PLEASE RSVP TO ANNETTE BORMAN at [aborman@accap.org](mailto:aborman@accap.org) or 763-783-4711**



Attend an Information Session to learn more about how you can start **YOUR** path to a Parent Aware Star Rating

★ **Thursday, May 9, 2019**

6:30-8:00pm

Blaine Human Service Center\*

★ **Thursday, June 6, 2019**

1:30-3:00pm

Blaine Human Service Center\*

★ **Thursday, June 6, 2019**

6:30-8:00pm

Blaine Human Service Center\*

★ **Thursday, May 9, 2019**

6:30-8:00pm

Peace of Mind Early Education Center  
9025 Tamarack Rd  
Woodbury MN 55125

★ **Thursday, June 6, 2019**

1:30-3:00pm

Woodbury City Hall  
8301 Valley Creek Rd  
Woodbury MN 55125

★ **Thursday, June 6, 2019**

6:30-8:00pm

Cottage Grove City Hall  
12800 Ravine Pkwy S  
Cottage Grove MN 55016

Join Parent Aware to get free coaching and technical assistance, and up to \$3500 in quality improvement grants!

**Please RSVP to Annette Borman**

\*Blaine Human Service Center  
1201 89th Ave NE, Suite 345  
Blaine MN 55434

## Your child's social skills in kindergarten - continued

out. You're still an active player, supporting your child through the process, but rather than doing all the solving yourself, let your child own the problem by asking, "What do you think you could do about that?"

Teaching a child to be a problem solver also means that we teach them how to fail and try again, which is another critical "soft skill."

When we ask children how their solution is working out, we give them an opportunity to evaluate their experience and make improvements when necessary. We're teaching them that mistakes help us learn and move forward.

### 3. How to label and recognize feelings

Children who are perceptive to the emotions around them are also better able to get along well with others. You can foster this skill by calling attention to emotional cues and naming emotions. You can do this not only at home ("I'm looking at your brother's face right now, and I don't think he's having fun." "You looked so happy when you won, your smile was like a laser beam!") but by also talking about the emotions in stories. ("How do you think he felt when that happened?")

Storybooks are FULL of conflict and emotion—it's often what drives the plot. These conversations about observed emotions are often easier because your child isn't tied up in the turbulent emotions themselves. From this comfortable vantage point, they're able to be more thoughtful about the emotions on the page and then apply their understanding in real life.

Another thing to keep in mind is that research has shown that excessive screen use may interfere with a child's ability to recognize emotions in others. So make sure that your kids get plenty of time playing and interacting face to face with humans, rather than with pixels and lights on a screen.

### 4. How to be helpful

Being helpful to others requires children to look beyond themselves and recognize the needs of others. By noticing and complimenting your child when you notice helpful behaviors, you encourage them to continue.

Give your child simple opportunities to help within your family—putting away groceries, getting the baby's diaper ready, or helping a sibling get dressed—then be generous with your gratitude afterward.

Point out the helpers around you and show gratitude together to instill a value of service. This may

be as simple as thanking the bagger at the grocery store or [visiting] the fire station. It can also take a fanciful twist. For my own superhero-obsessed boys, I found that equating heroes to helpers made them feel like Batman just by helping with simple tasks around our home.

### 5. How to control their impulses

Impulse control is a part of the executive functions directed by the prefrontal cortex of the brain. This area doesn't completely develop until well into early adulthood, but some of the most rapid development happens in the early childhood years. That's why children need opportunities to practice this growing skill.

That may look like the infamous marshmallow study, where a child must delay gratification and wait before consuming a treat, but it can also look like play time! Movement games that require a child to stop and go like Red Light/Green Light, Dance and Freeze, and Simon Says give kids practice quickly shifting gears and controlling their impulses to move.

Pretend play is also a great way to build these skills. By taking on a new character and an imaginative storyline, children have to plan before acting, take turns and make rules to follow. They also practice thinking outside of their own perspective and act as they think another would, rather than simply following their own impulses.

Our fast-paced society may give you the impression that your child needs to learn more academic skills—and sooner than ever before. However, the reality is that the "soft" social skills they gain in early childhood—through the slow, simple processes of playing and interacting, engaging with their families, and paying attention to the world around them—will serve them much better and for much longer.

\*\* <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2015.302630>

This and other stories can be found at <https://www.mother.ly/child/>

Does February  
like March?

No, but April May!

