




## Social-Emotional Checklist for Child Care Programs


As you look for child care don't forget about a very important area of child development: learning social and emotional skills (or how to get along with others and how to understand and express feelings in an appropriate way). Social and emotional skills are the foundation of all learning in the early years and teachers who focus on helping children develop these skills are truly getting them ready for school!

The checklist below will help you view a classroom through a social-emotional lens. Spend some time in the classroom and ask yourself if you would enjoy spending your days there...how does it feel to you? Look around the physical space, notice how the day flows and observe the teacher interacting with children.

<b>Spend some time noticing how the classroom feels. Close your eyes for a few minutes and just listen. Do you notice these things?</b>	
The classroom is a pleasant place with sounds of laughter and happy voices...teachers and children	
Teachers and children smile frequently at each other	
Teachers speak to children on the child's level and look them in the eyes	
Teachers' tone of voice is playful, affectionate and positive	
Children show interest and enthusiasm about activities	
Teachers respond to children's feelings	
Children seem to understand the schedule and routines of the day. They know what happens next and what is expected of them. ( <i>*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i> )	
Children move between activities smoothly and without chaos ( <i>*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i> )	
Children are not wandering around the room seeming lost and unhappy, but are engaged in activities and/or with teachers	
Teachers seem to have a positive relationship with each other	

<b>Focus on the interactions of the teachers and children in the classroom. Do you notice these things?</b>	
Teachers are warm and nurturing	
Teachers display affection toward the children through hugs, smiles, gentle touch, etc.	
Teachers help children recognize and respond to the feelings of others	
Teachers encourage good listening and communication skills	
Teachers anticipate problems and steps in to help when needed	
Teachers help children learn problem-solving skills ( <i>*young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i> )	

Interactions, continued...	
Teachers help children learn ways to calm and control themselves	
Teachers encourage children to share and take turns ( <i>* young toddlers are just beginning to learn this</i> )	
Teachers encourage and nurture special friendships that develop between children	
Teachers respect and support a child's need for a security object (pacifier, blanket, special doll) which helps children calm themselves and feel safe and secure away from home	
Teachers encourage individuality and allow children to be creative in their play	
Teachers encourage children, once they begin to use language, to talk about their feelings	
Teachers teach child the names for emotions they are feeling	
Teachers encourage exploration and show interest in children's discoveries	
Teachers engage in pretend play with the children	
Teachers' talk to children is mainly positive, not negative (encouragement and recognition of accomplishments instead of corrections and directions) <i>Take a moment and listen to the next four things the teacher says...at least 3 should be positive and encouraging!</i>	

Look around the classroom. Can you observe these things?	
Overall the physical environment is pleasant and soothing, not over-stimulating	
Enough space for children to play (with pathways between play spaces)	
Child-sized furnishings designed to encourage children to be independent	
Enough toys, books, materials for the number of children in the room	
Toy storage that is neatly arranged and labeled	
Materials that promote children playing together such as dramatic play props, dolls, puppets, or group art projects	
Places for children to be alone or with a special friend	
Space for each child's special possessions	
Children's art work and other creations are displayed	
Family photos or other connections to the children's homes	
The environment provide visual clues to guide the children (picture schedules, picture rules, etc)	

**Before you leave the program, ask the teacher about the things that you didn't observe during your visit from the lists above.**



**Additional questions to ask:**

1. How do you help a new child come into your classroom?
  - *Ask if they will work with you to make their caregiving routines (feeding, diapering/toileting, napping, etc.) at the center like your routines at home, as much as possible.*
  
2. How do you teach social and emotional skills to the children?
  - *Find out what they do to actively teach these skills.*
  
3. What do you do when a child misbehaves?
  - *The answer should include positive, respectful approaches to helping children learn to manage their own behavior...not punishment.*
  
4. How much time each day do children spend in uninterrupted free play?
  - *Children need at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted play each day where they choose their own activities.*
  
5. Are parents welcome to visit at any time?
  - *Look for a program that encourages your participation and sees you as a partner.*
  
6. What are your classroom rules?
  - *Look for a program with 3 or 4 positively-stated rules to guide the child's behavior and let them know what they should do.*
  
7. How long have you worked with young children? How long have you worked in this program? What do you like about working with children?
  - *When children lose their caregivers they lose an important relationship so try to find a teacher who is committed to and enjoys her work.*
  
8. How do you promote school readiness?
  - *Look for a program that understands that teaching social-emotional skills is the most effective way to help children prepare for school.*