

# Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards

## Introduction to Social and Emotional Domain



*"I am two-and-one-quarter years old and I have strong feelings. Sometimes, I feel so overwhelmed with frustration that I throw things and strike out at others. Sometimes, I am frightened to try something new and want to hide in my mother's or caregiver's arms. Sometimes, I scream with delight and excitement. Sometimes, I don't want any help from anyone else. I want to do it myself. I'm so lucky that my teacher at my child care center is a calm influence and an understanding guide so I can get through some difficult moments. She talks quietly and kindly to me and describes what I'm feeling. She makes suggestions and helps me in just the right ways so I can be independent, express my emotions more appropriately, and learn to settle myself down. I like my friends and want to play with them."*

The developmentally appropriate expectations of children described in the Social and Emotional domain are firmly based on a foundation of trust and attachment and are essential to a good experience in school and throughout life. As infants establish strong relationships with their primary caregivers, their skills grow and expand to include others in the world around them. When the care and routines of babies are consistent and predictable, they begin to express their needs and wants and learn to comfort themselves. Toddlers are ready to move away from caregivers and explore their world but also check in with caring adults to ensure that they have their support. As verbal skills develop, toddlers express needs, wants, and emotions. Preschoolers show greater independence, self-awareness, and interest in the feelings of others. They are learning ways to engage successfully and positively with their friends.

The expectations that are set out in the Minnesota Early Indicators of Child Progress (EICPs) recognize that in the early years, children are developing social and emotional skills that will guide their behavior, affect their overall mental health, and impact their ability to succeed academically as they move on to later schooling. The indicators in this domain are not aligned with the Minnesota Academic Standards for Kindergarten. Instead, early childhood professionals can turn to other resources for kindergarten expectations. The EICPs provide guidance so that teachers and providers can know appropriate expectations for young learners and understand how best to support children in social and emotional development.

The Social and Emotional Development Domain includes three components:

Component SE 1-3: Self and Emotional Awareness

Component SE 4-5: Self-Management

Component SE 6-8: Social Understanding and Relationships



The sub-components and indicators identified for the ages of birth through kindergarten entry address the specific expectations across the developmental spectrum.

- For infants, indicators focus on the ways that children indicate their needs to their caregivers, respond to stimuli, learn to self-comfort, attend to the emotions of others and copy their actions, and show likes and dislikes.
- The indicators for toddlers include how they are beginning to attempt new challenges, use words to express needs and emotions, to follow simple routines, and to engage in parallel play with other children.
- The indicators for preschoolers focus on how children show confidence and self-direction, identify gender and self as part of a family, community, and culture, ability to make choices, verbal expression of needs and emotions, responses to changing behavioral expectations, and beginning to manage conflicts in social interactions.

Social and emotional skills are highly interrelated with children's development in other domains. In fact, all learning is based on the foundation of children's healthy social and emotional development. Perhaps one of the most important subcomponents in the early years is that of Self-Management, the regulation of both thoughts and feelings. Such management includes the ability to postpone acting on one's first impulse, which might be anger or aggression or not following the teacher's directions. For children to become successful learners in a classroom, they must begin to self-regulate.

"Children who cannot effectively regulate anxiety or discouragement tend to move away from, rather than engage in, challenging learning activities. Conversely, when children regulate uncomfortable emotions, they can relax and focus on learning cognitive skills. Similarly, children experience better emotional regulation when they replace thoughts like "I'm not good at this" with thoughts like "This is difficult, but I can do it if I keep trying." Regulating anxiety and thinking helps children persist in challenging activities, which increases their opportunities to practice the skills required for an activity." (Florez 2011, 47)

The indicators in the ECIPs help teachers and providers, along with children's family members, understand the expectations that are appropriate for the youngest learners. Since social and emotional development is so influential in a child's development in all areas, adults play an important role in shaping a child's future when they support the development of skills in this domain.

"When teachers deliberately teach self-regulation [and other social and emotional skills] as part of everyday experiences, they help children become actively engaged learners, laying the foundation for years of future success in school and life." (Florez 2011, 51)

*Resource:*

*Florez, Ida Rose. 2011. "Developing Young Children's Self-Regulation through Everyday Experiences." Young Children: 66 (4). 47-51.*

## Domain: Social and Emotional Development

### Component S1-3: Self and Emotional Awareness

| Subcomponent  | 0-1 year  | 1-2 years  | 2-3 years   | 3-4 years   | 4-5 years, K Readiness   |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>SE 1 Confidence:</b><br/>Child demonstrates confidence “I am capable, I can experiment, I can make mistakes, and I can move on”</p>             | <p><b>S1.1</b> Independently prompts caregiver to meet basic needs</p> <p><b>S1.2</b> Uses voice or body to show likes and dislikes</p> | <p><b>S1.3</b> Independently attempts new challenges or activities that may or may not be successful</p> <p><b>S1.4</b> Checks with and accepts support from adult or caregiver when necessary</p> | <p><b>S1.5</b> Demonstrates or describes personal skills, likes, or dislikes</p> <p><b>S1.6</b> Seeks help from adult to meet needs or solve problems</p> <p><b>S1.7</b> Seeks out available social-emotional resources such as adults, peers or things for support</p> | <p><b>S1.8</b> Demonstrates confidence in a range of abilities and expresses pride in accomplishments</p> <p><b>S1.9</b> Consistently and effectively uses social/emotional resources such as adults, peers or things for support</p> | <p><b>S1.10</b> Demonstrates increasing confidence and inclination to express opinions and ideas</p> <p><b>S1.11</b> Engages in increasingly independent and self-directed activities</p> <p><b>S1.12</b> Tolerates constructive criticism and manages setbacks, seeking adult support when needed</p> |
| <p><b>S2 Self-Awareness:</b><br/>Child demonstrates understanding and appreciation of uniqueness in own family, community, culture, and the world</p> | <p><b>S2.1</b> Explores the world and environment around self and how things work</p>   | <p><b>S2.2</b> Demonstrates awareness of self as separate from others</p>  | <p><b>S2.3</b> Identifies self as part of the family, culture, community, or group</p> <p><b>S2.4</b> Describes or labels self as a boy or girl</p>   | <p><b>S2.5</b> Demonstrates knowledge of family celebrations, traditions, and expectations</p>  | <p><b>S2.6</b> Shows increasingly accurate understanding of own strengths, preferences, limitations, and personal qualities</p>  |

### Component S1-3: Self and Emotional Awareness

| Subcomponent  | 0-1 year  | 1-2 years   | 2-3 years  | 3-4 years   | 4-5 years,<br>K Readiness  |
|---|---|---|--|---|--|
|   |   |   |  |   | <b>S2.7</b> Demonstrates growing interest in and awareness of similarities and differences between self and others   |
| <b>S3 Emotions:</b><br>Child demonstrates understanding of own emotions, others' emotions, and awareness of emotions becoming reactions and behaviors | <b>S3.1</b> Expresses emotions through facial expressions, sounds, and gestures<br><br><b>S3.2</b> Notices and responds to emotions displayed by others | <b>S3.3</b> Expresses feelings, needs, and wants with nonverbal communication, vocalizations, and a few words<br><br><b>S3.4</b> Associates emotions with words and expressions | <b>S3.5</b> Recognizes and describes own emotions<br><br><b>S3.6</b> Shows some understanding of others' emotional expressions | <b>S3.7</b> Uses words to express emotions<br><br><b>S3.8</b> Recognizes and responds to others' emotional expression | <b>S3.9</b> Demonstrates or describes increasing understanding of cause and effect around own emotional reactions<br><br><b>S3.10</b> Exhibits growing ability to understand and anticipate others' emotional reactions to situations or behaviors |

## Component S4-5: Self-Management

| Subcomponent   | 0-1 year   | 1-2 years  | 2-3 years   | 3-4 years  | 4-5 years, K Readiness  |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <p><b>S4 Managing thinking:</b><br/>Child manages attention and thoughts</p> | <p><b>S4.1</b> Briefly pays attention to environmental stimuli</p> <p><b>S4.2</b> Indicates a choice with physical or vocal response</p> | <p><b>S4.3</b> Focuses attention on preferred items and experiences</p> <p><b>S4.4</b> Expresses thoughts by responding to simple choices and limits verbally or nonverbally,</p> <p><b>S4.5</b> Anticipates and follows simple routines</p> | <p><b>S4.6</b> Frequently pays attention to both familiar and new objects and experiences</p> <p><b>S4.7</b> Chooses from a variety of options within the environment</p> <p><b>S4.8</b> Responds to soothing or redirection when playing or learning does not go as expected</p> | <p><b>S4.9</b> Attends for longer periods and persists through a broad range of adult-directed and child-initiated activities</p> <p><b>S4.10</b> Makes self-directed choices from a greater variety of options</p> <p><b>S4.11</b> Increasing ability to remember and follow simple two-step directions</p> | <p><b>S4.12</b> Sustains attention and persistence with a task of interest for at least 5 minutes</p> <p><b>S4.13</b> Talks through simple tasks and conflicts, seeking adult support as needed</p> |

**Component S4-5: Self-Management**

| Subcomponent  | 0-1 year  | 1-2 years   | 2-3 years   | 3-4 years   | 4-5 years, K Readiness  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>S5 Managing emotions and behaviors:</b><br/>Child manages emotions, impulses, and behaviors with assistance from others and independently</p> | <p><b>S5.1</b> Uses simple behaviors, objects, or movements to comfort and calm self with caregiver assistance</p> <p><b>S5.2</b> Communicates needs or wants to adults using simple gestures, sign language, or sounds</p> <p><b>S5.3</b> Uses sounds, sign language, or gestures to gain adult help to alleviate discomfort or distress</p> <p><b>S5.4</b> Responds to adult efforts to calm or soothe</p> <p><b>S5.5</b> Uses behaviors, objects, or movements to comfort self</p> | <p><b>S5.6</b> Expands use of sign language, gestures, and a few words or phrases to communicate needs, wants, preferences, and discomforts to adults</p> <p><b>S5.7</b> Actively seeks adult help using sounds, gestures, or some words when feeling strong emotions, either positive or negative</p> <p><b>S5.8</b> Anticipates and actively avoids or ignores situations that cause discomfort</p> | <p><b>S5.11</b> Uses a wide variety of self-comforting behaviors</p> <p><b>S5.12</b> Communicates specific needs, wants, and discomfort to adults</p> <p><b>S5.13</b> Anticipates the need for comfort and tries to prepare self for changes in routine</p> | <p><b>S5.16</b> Consistently calms self when feeling strong emotions or discomfort with only occasional adult guidance and assistance</p> <p><b>S5.17</b> Independently expresses feelings, needs, opinions, and desires in appropriate ways</p> <p><b>S5.18</b> Follows expectations established to manage feelings and behaviors with necessary reminders or assistance</p> | <p><b>5.21</b> Increasingly expresses feelings, needs, opinions and desires verbally</p> <p><b>5.22</b> Shows increasing understanding of changing expectations for behavior and emotional expression in different settings (e.g., home, school, grocery store)</p> |

## Component S4-5: Self-Management

| Subcomponent | 0-1 year | 1-2 years   | 2-3 years   | 3-4 years  | 4-5 years,<br>K Readiness  |
|--------------|----------|---|---|--|--|
|              |          | <p><b>S5.9</b> Follows simple routines, expectations, and boundaries to help manage own emotions and behavior</p> <p><b>S5.10</b> Tolerates brief delays in getting needs met</p> | <p><b>S5.14</b> Follows simple expectations to manage emotions and behaviors, but may require reminders or assistance, particularly during more intense feelings or circumstances</p> <p><b>S5.15</b> Waits briefly to obtain something desired</p> | <p><b>S5.19</b> Demonstrates the ability to delay gratification for longer periods of time</p> <p><b>S5.20</b> Demonstrates understanding of rules, roles, jobs, and relationships in families and the community</p> | <p><b>5.23</b> Shows increasing ability to manage challenging feelings and behaviors, with necessary reminders or assistance</p> <p><b>5.24</b> Shows increasing ability to stop and think before acting</p> |

**Component S6-8: Social Understanding and Relationships**

| Subcomponent  | 0-1 year  | 1-2 years  | 2-3 years   | 3-4 years   | 4-5 years, K Readiness   |
|---|---|--|---|---|--|
| <p><b>S6 Social responsiveness:</b><br/>Child notices and responds to others and their emotions</p>   | <p><b>S6.1</b> Shows interest or reacts to others' emotions</p> <p><b>S6.2</b> Responds to others' emotional tone and actions</p> | <p><b>S6.3</b> Imitates others' emotions and expressions</p> <p><b>S6.4</b> Shows some individual response to others' emotional tone</p>   | <p><b>S6.5</b> Identifies others' basic emotional cues</p> <p><b>S6.6</b> Shows concern for others through efforts to help or comfort</p>                             | <p><b>S6.7</b> Shows understanding, empathy, and compassion for others through words or gestures</p> <p><b>S6.8</b> Labels others' emotions</p> | <p><b>S6.9</b> Appropriately labels increasingly complex emotions in others (e.g., pride, embarrassment, jealousy)</p> <p><b>S6.10</b> Responds appropriately to others' emotions</p> <p><b>S6.11</b> Shows increasing understanding and appreciation of the perspectives of peers</p> |
| <p><b>S7 Building relationships:</b><br/>Child establishes and sustains relationships with others</p> | <p><b>S7.1</b> Shows a preference for a trusted adult</p> <p><b>S7.2</b> Notices or responds to others</p>                        | <p><b>S7.3</b> Shows preferences for one or more adults or children</p> <p><b>S7.4</b> Shows some awareness or caution with unfamiliar adults</p> <p><b>S7.5</b> Uses trusted adult(s) as a base from which to explore</p> | <p><b>S7.6</b> Seeks out familiar adults and children for conversation and play</p> <p><b>S7.7</b> Manages routine separations with decreasing amount of distress</p> | <p><b>S7.8</b> Shares information and participates in activities with adults and peers</p>  | <p><b>S7.9</b> Builds friendships through play, learning activities and conversation with peers</p> <p><b>S7.10</b> Uses trusted adults for support in diverse settings (e.g., classroom, outside) when in need of assistance.</p>   |



## Component S6-8: Social Understanding and Relationships

| Subcomponent   | 0-1 year  | 1-2 years   | 2-3 years  | 3-4 years  | 4-5 years,<br>K Readiness  |
|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>S8 Social skills:</b><br/>Child responds to and interact with others in a meaningful way</p> | <p><b>S8.1</b> Notices others and chooses similar materials or copies actions</p> | <p><b>S8.2</b> Play with others in a parallel manner</p> <p><b>S8.3</b> Recognizes similarities and differences between self and others</p> | <p><b>S8.4</b> Enters play groups using various strategies</p> <p><b>S8.5</b> Seeks a preferred playmate</p> <p><b>S8.6</b> Shows flexibility in roles during play</p> | <p><b>S8.7</b> Initiates, joins, and sustains cooperative play and conversations with others</p> <p><b>S8.8</b> Shows concern, respect, care, and appreciation for others and the environment</p> <p><b>S8.9</b> Actively helps solve problems with others</p> <p><b>S8.10</b> Takes turns</p> | <p><b>S8.11</b> Shows increasing ability to initiate and engage in positive interactions with peers and adults</p> <p><b>S8.12</b> Solves problems with others most of the time, appropriately using support of adults and peers as needed</p> |