Guiding Children's Social Development & Learning

8e

THEORY AND SKILLS

Marjorie J. Kostelnik • Anne K. Soderman • Alice Phipps Whiren
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***Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning: Theory and Skills*, Eighth Edition**
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Preface

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We live in a fast-paced social environment in which people can reach hundreds of "friends" with the click of a mouse and keep up with the lives of people all over the world through texting and other social media. Clearly, technology has revolutionized the way we connect with others. Yet, at the heart of it all, people continue to need close human relationships to feel fulfilled. In addition, certain elements of social competence must still be mastered for individuals to achieve ultimate life success. As someone who aspires to work with young children professionally, this is where you can make a difference.

Every day, children in community programs and schools interact with peers and adults, learning valuable social and emotional lessons about themselves and the people around them. What you say and do with children has a tremendous impact on them, and shapes them for good or ill in ways you will never fully know. Even as you teach them, children will teach you new things about child development, family life, social learning, and yourself. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning: Theory and Skills*, eighth edition, will help you make the most of all these learning opportunities.

Teachers and professional caregivers have a primary role in providing emotional support and guidance to the children with whom they work. This includes helping children develop positive feelings about themselves, increasing their ability to interact effectively with others, and teaching them socially acceptable means of behavior. Such learning is facilitated when children view the adult as a source of comfort and encouragement as well as behavioral guidance. How well adults perform these roles is affected by how deeply they understand child development, their ability to establish positive relationships with children, and their grasp of principles related to behavior management. This comprehensive blend of developmental and behavioral knowledge and practice makes a qualitative difference in how aspiring professionals think about children's social development and how they respond to it.

Too often, we have encountered students and practitioners whose interactions with children are wholly intuitive. They rely on "gut level" responses or approach child guidance as a series of tricks to meet short-range objectives, such as getting a child to stop interrupting. They have no purposeful or integrated set of strategies that address long-range goals, such as teaching a child to delay gratification. Other adults have more knowledge about broad principles regarding relationship building and behavior management but have difficulty integrating those principles into a systematic, consistent plan of action. Most distressing to us are adults whose lack of training leads them to conclude that the normal behaviors children exhibit as part of the socialization process somehow are abnormal or malicious. These people also often fail to recognize the impact of their own behavior on children. As a result, when children do not comply with their expectations, they think condemnation, rather than teaching, is appropriate for the situation. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning* has been written to address these shortcomings. We hope to eliminate much of the guesswork and frustration experienced by professionals in the field as well as to improve the conditions under which children are socialized in formal group settings. To accomplish this, we provide a solid foundation of current research on child and adult behavior. We translate that research for real-life use, connect it to skills that are proven to work, and assist students in applying knowledge and practicing skills to effectively support children's social development and learning.

New to This Edition

The eighth edition of *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning* has been extensively updated. Here are the major changes you will see in *every* chapter within this volume:

- More than one-third of the previous references have been replaced with new research-based material dating from 2006 through 2014.
- Examples of state standards are presented to illustrate the concepts being discussed. A variety of states are featured, highlighting early childhood benchmarks nationwide.
- NAEYC standards are emphasized throughout the text. Each chapter designates the standards it covers.
- A detailed correlation chart highlighting the NAEYC coverage is presented on the front and back inside covers of the book.

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- Each chapter incorporates several **Highlight Boxes**. These are short features designed to provide brief summaries of material or examples to further illustrate the material in the text.
- **Digital Downloads** provide information and complete versions of the forms in the textbook for students to download, customize, and use to review key concepts and in the classroom! Look for the Digital Downloads label that identifies these items.
- **TeachSource Videos** feature footage from the classroom to help students relate key chapter content to real-life scenarios. Critical-thinking questions, artifacts, and bonus video help the student reflect on the content in the video.
- Four case studies of children who pose special challenges to adults are available in Appendix B. Case study analyses at the end of each chapter help readers apply what they have learned to a case-related scenario.
- Each chapter ends with a **Reflect on Your Practice feature**. These involve sample checklists students can use to monitor and reflect on their use of particular chapter-related skills in their interactions with children.
- The **Professional Skills Inventory** provided in Appendix C is a comprehensive field-tested classroom observation tool for instructors to use in evaluating student performance in student's practicum sites.

Distinctive Features of this Text

Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning:

- Introduces the Social Support Pyramid in Chapter 1 to describe four phases in guiding children's social behavior. This pyramid appears in each chapter, highlighting how the skills presented in that chapter fit into an overall program of social support and intervention.
- Draws upon research and practice from a variety of fields, linking theory and practice to illuminate research and show readers how it can be translated into practical classroom applications.
- Identifies clear objectives for student learning.
- Offers up-to-date, research-based rationales for skills and methods presented.
- Includes many real-life examples to illustrate key points.
- Offers step-by-step instructions for how to implement skills associated with the content presented in each chapter.
- Describes typical pitfalls associated with learning each skill and how to avoid them.
- Discusses the strong links between social competence and academic success.
- Presents information about children with special needs in all chapters, as well as examples and guidelines on how teachers can adapt the material to their work with children with special needs.
- Presents featured examples about how to work effectively with children whose behavior may present challenges to other children and adults.
- Provides examples of children's art as a way to represent authentic "young voices" in the text.

Presentation

Together, the chapters in this book comprise a thorough picture of children's social development and the classroom practices professionals use to enhance children's social development and learning. We have included traditional areas of study such as self-esteem, aggression, decision-making, rules, and consequences. We also have addressed more current topics such as infant and toddler communication, self-regulation, resilience, friendship, prosocial behavior, bullying prevention, and positive behavior support. Considered individually, each chapter offers an in-depth literature review backed by research findings from many fields (psychology, physiology, education, medicine, sociology, family consumer sciences, interior design). The sequence of chapters also has been thoughtfully planned so that each serves as a foundation for the next—simple concepts and/or skills precede more complex ones; chapters that focus on relationship enhancement come before those that discuss behavior management. We have made liberal use of real-life examples to illustrate concepts and related skills. This is to assist students in making the connection between what they read and "flesh-and-blood" children.

Our scope of study encompasses the social development of children from birth to 12 years of age, with particular emphasis on children birth to age 8. We have targeted this period of childhood because it is during the formative years that the foundation for all socialization takes place. Furthermore, the skills taught have been specially designed to take into account the cognitive structures and social abilities particular to children of this age. Because children live and develop within the context of a family, a community, a nation, and a world, they are constantly influenced by, and in turn affect, the people and events around them. Thus, our perspective is an ecological one in which children are viewed as dynamic, ever-changing beings in an equally dynamic, ever-changing milieu. Additionally,

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it has been our experience that students learn professional behavior best when they are given clear, succinct directions for how to carry out a procedure. Defining a procedure, offering examples, and giving a rationale for its use are necessary, but not sufficient. Thus, our approach to skill training is to point out to the student research-based strategies related to chapter content. We then break those strategies down into a series of discrete, observable skills that students can implement. We have been direct in articulating the specific steps involved. This forthrightness should not be taken to mean that there is no room for students to use the skills creatively. We anticipate that students will internalize and modify skills according to their own needs, personality, interaction style, and circumstance after they have learned them.

In addition, we recognize that an important component of using skills correctly is determining which alternatives from the entire available array are best suited to a given situation. Hence, knowing when to use a particular skill and when to refrain from using it is as important as knowing how to use it. For this reason, we discuss these issues throughout each chapter, both in the body of the text and in the pitfalls section at the end. We also have incorporated specific guidelines for how the skills can be adapted for use with children of varying ages and differing ability levels.

Supplementary Materials

In addition to the textbook, we have designed an *online resource* to help students master the skills presented in the textbook and an *instructor's manual* for the teacher.

Student CourseMate

Cengage Learning's Education CourseMate brings course concepts to life with interactive learning, study, and exam preparation tools that support the printed textbook. Visit the Education CourseMate for this textbook to access the eBook, Digital Downloads, TeachSource Videos, and quizzes. Go to CengageBrain.com to log in, register, or purchase access.

Instructor CourseMate

CourseMate includes the eBook, quizzes, Digital Downloads, TeachSource Videos, flashcards, and more—as well as EngagementTracker, a first-of-its-kind tool that monitors student engagement in the course. The accompanying instructor website, available through *login.cengage.com*, offers access to password-protected resources such as PowerPoint® lecture slides and the online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank. CourseMate can be bundled with the student text. Contact your Cengage sales representative for information on getting access to CourseMate.

Online Instructor's Manual with Test Bank

An online Instructor's Manual accompanies this book. It contains information to assist the instructor in designing the course, including sample syllabi, discussion questions, teaching and learning activities, field experiences, learning objectives, and additional online resources.

In addition, we have included a series of rehearsal exercises, which are role-play activities to be carried out in class. They acquaint students with how to use particular skills prior to implementing them with children and clarify basic concepts as they emerge during discussion or interaction. Finally, the Instructor's Manual contains a criterion-referenced observational tool, the PSI (Professional Skills Inventory). This is a unique feature of our instructional package. This instrument has been validated with hundreds of students and can be used by instructors and/or practitioners to evaluate the degree to which students demonstrate the skills taught. It includes the actual instrument that appears in Appendix C, as well as a coding manual to provide more specific examples of behaviors associated with each of the 10 observational categories identified on the Professional Skills Inventory Rating form. For assessment support, the accompanying updated Test Bank includes true/false, multiple-choice, matching, short-answer, and essay questions for each chapter.

PowerPoint Lecture Slides

These vibrant Microsoft® PowerPoint lecture slides for each chapter assist you with your lecture by providing concept coverage using images, figures, and tables directly from the textbook!

To the Student

This book will give you a foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for guiding children's social development and learning in professional practice. We hope it contributes to your enthusiasm about the field and to your confidence in working with children and their families. Although what you read here is not everything you will ever need to know, it will give you a secure base from which to develop your own professional style. You will have the advantage of learning, in one course, information and strategies that otherwise might take many years to discover.

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Finally, you are reading a book authored by people with extensive practical experience in working with children, engaging in research, and teaching this content to learners much like yourselves. As a result, we are well aware of the issues related to children's social development that are important to students, and we have focused on those. We also have anticipated some of the questions you might ask and some of the difficulties you might encounter in working with this material. Consequently, we have made a conscious effort to discuss these in relevant places throughout the book.

Hints for Using the Materials

1. Read each chapter carefully. Plan to read them more than once. Use the first reading to gain a broad grasp of the subject matter; then, read a second time, paying particular attention to the sequence of development presented. Identify major concepts regarding adult behavior, and focus on the actual procedures related to each skill.
2. Make notes in the margin and highlight points you want to remember.
3. Go beyond simply memorizing terminology. Concentrate on how you might recognize the concepts you are studying in real children's behavior and how you might apply this knowledge in your interactions with children.
4. Ask questions. Share with classmates and the instructor your experiences in using the material. Participate fully in class discussions and role-play exercises.
5. Try out what you are learning with children. If you are in a field placement, are volunteering, or are employed in a program, take full advantage of that opportunity. Do not hesitate to practice your skills simply because they are new to you and you are not sure how well you will perform them. Persist in spite of your awkwardness or mistakes, and make note of what you might do to improve. Focus on your successes and your increasing skill, not just on things that don't go perfectly.

Acknowledgements and Thanks

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Finally, over the years, we have worked with many students whose enthusiasm and excitement have invigorated us. Simultaneously, we have been privileged to know hundreds of children during their formative years. From them, we have gained insight and the motivation to pursue this project. We dedicate this book to them.

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1 Making a Difference in Children's Lives

OBJECTIVES

On completion of this chapter, you should be able to:

- **Define social competence, and explain how it affects children's lives.**
- **Describe how child development influences social competence.**
- **Explain the role of learning in achieving social competence.**
- **Identify the contexts in which children develop socially.**
- **Talk about your professional role in supporting children's social competence.**
- **Discuss how developmentally appropriate practices support the development of social competence.**

NAEYC STANDARDS naeyc

1. Promoting Child Development and Learning
2. Building Family and Community Relationships
3. Using Developmentally Effective Approaches to Connect with Children and Families
4. Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum
5. Becoming a Professional

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Think about the aspects of everyday living that are most important to you—family life, time with friends, school, work, and play. They all involve human relationships. People are social beings. From the moment we are born, we spend a lifetime actively engaged with others. Through social interactions, we gain companionship, stimulation, and a sense of belonging. We obtain knowledge of who we are and how the world works. We develop personal and interpersonal skills and become familiar with the expectations and values of the society in which we live. Lessons learned during the early years about how to act and interact with others set the foundation for our success as adults. This is such a crucial facet of the human experience that much of children's attention during childhood centers on how to effectively navigate the social environment.

The social environment is complicated. Think about meeting someone for the first time. What do you do? How do you greet this person? You are probably thinking, "It depends," and you are correct. There is a lot to know and many things you must be able to do to function successfully in society. To interact effectively, you need to know a variety of scripts and what physical actions others will interpret as friendly. You have to make judgments about what is polite or impolite based on how well you know a person, his or her role, your role, the time, the place, and the culture in which you are operating. Based on all this, you will form an idea of how to best greet the person you have just met. Likewise, you will adopt a very different manner to greet someone at a football game than you might use at a funeral. Although such variations make common sense to adults, children are new to the world, and many of the social understandings and behaviors we take for granted are things children are just learning.

Imagine you are working with children in a child-care setting or elementary classroom. You observe the following behaviors among three 6-year-olds in your group: Dennis, Rosalie, and Sarah Jo.

Dennis is an active child. He has strong reactions to the people and things around him. He is imaginative, with many ideas for how to play. In an effort to translate his ideas into action, Dennis spends a lot of time telling the other children what to do and what to say. When peers suggest alternate play themes or strategies, Dennis tends to resist their ideas and yell to make things go his way. When other children ask if they can play with something he is using, Dennis often answers, "No." If they persist, it is not unusual for him to push or hit to keep things for himself.

Rosalie is a quiet child who seldom misbehaves. Typically, she wanders from one activity to the next without talking to the other children. Rosalie responds when spoken to but rarely initiates social interactions with peers or adults. She cannot name anyone in the group who is her friend, and no other children identify her as a favorite playmate. Although children do not actively reject her, they have come to ignore her and seldom include her in their activities. Most days, Rosalie is a solitary figure in the room.

Sarah Jo is keenly interested in the other children and often invites them to interact with her. Frequently, she is willing to try games or play in ways proposed by peers, yet she also expresses ideas of her own. Sarah Jo shares easily and can usually figure out how to keep the play going. Although she has her ups and downs, she is generally cheerful. Other children seek her out as a playmate and notice when Sarah Jo is absent from the group.

As you can see, each of these children is exhibiting a variety of social behaviors. Unfortunately, Dennis and Rosalie are displaying interaction patterns that are not serving them well. In fact, if they maintain these patterns over time, their prospects for life success will be weakened (Goleman, 2011). On the other hand, Sarah Jo has skills that predict a positive future.

As an early childhood professional, you could help Dennis and Rosalie develop better ways of getting along with others. You could also support Sarah Jo in expanding her skills. In doing these things, you would be contributing to each child's social competence. To promote social competence, you must first know what it is and what behaviors characterize socially competent children.

Social Competence Defined naeyc

Social competence includes the knowledge and skills children need to achieve their goals and to effectively interact with others (Davidson, Welsh, & Bierman, 2006; Rose-Krasnor & Denham, 2009). Consider the social, emotional, language, and cognitive skills the children are displaying in the following classroom interaction:

Claude and Alex are both building in the block area. When Alex takes a block from the shelf, Claude protests, "I need all the long blocks for my airport! Give it to me!" He yanks the block from Alex, who yells, "I need it for my bridge!" The boys each begin to tug on the block. After a few seconds, Claude suggests, "Hey, let's make your bridge go to the airport. All the people have to go on the bridge if they want to go to the airport!" Alex replies, "Yeah! That's a good idea! A big bridge for all the cars to drive on!" The boys begin to work together to create a road connecting the airport and bridge.

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Think about the skills Alex and Claude demonstrated as they solved their problem in the block area. They used cognitive skills in recognizing a mutual problem, language skills in expressing their individual needs, and social skills when they developed a strategy for working together. By inhibiting an initial impulse to fight over the blocks, Alex and Claude exhibited emotional self-regulation and an awareness of how the other might feel. As you can see, a variety of knowledge and skills are evident in this simple interaction.

Many behaviors are associated with social competence. Typical categories include the following:

- Social values
- Personal identity
- Emotional intelligence
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-regulation
- Planning, organizing, and decision making
- Cultural competence

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Early childhood professionals should observe the behavior of the children they are working with to evaluate the social skills they are exhibiting. What social behaviors are these children exhibiting?

As you can tell by examining Figure 1-1, social competence integrates a broad range of values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills involving both self and others.

In the United States and in many societies throughout the world, people tend to view children as more socially competent when they are responsible rather than irresponsible; friendly, not hostile; cooperative instead of oppositional; purposeful rather than aimless; and self-controlled, not impulsive (Hastings et al., 2006; Denham, Bassett, & Wyatt, 2008). Based on this perspective, Keisha, who notices that Gary is unhappy and attempts to comfort him, is more socially competent than Ralph, who walks by unaware of Gary's distress. Dinah, who often blurts out whatever comes to mind the instant it occurs to her, is less socially competent than if she were able to wait without interrupting. When Dante uses verbal reasoning to persuade his friends to give him a turn with a Wii game, he is demonstrating more social competence than a classmate who whines or relies on physical force to make his point. The profile of a socially competent child presented in Highlight 1-1 will give you a sense of how social competence translates into child attributes and behaviors (McClellan & Katz, 2001).

Note that the words *usually*, *frequently*, and *sometimes* best describe socially competent children's behavior. Children will not always be in a positive mood, nor will they always experience success in asserting their rights appropriately. "Any child may occasionally have some social difficulty … for most children, these events are short-lived and constitute opportunities to learn and to practice new skills" (Hastings et al., 2006, p. 4). Children who take advantage of these opportunities (rather than becoming hostile or giving up) become increasingly successful in their social interactions and in achieving their personal goals effectively.

Individual Variations in Social Competence

Consider the following personal attributes:

- Kindness
- Honesty
- Shyness
- Generosity
- Friendliness
- Assertiveness

Which of these do you associate with social competence?

If you were to compare your answers with those of other readers, you would find many choices in common but probably not all because definitions of social competence are fairly similar worldwide and incorporate most

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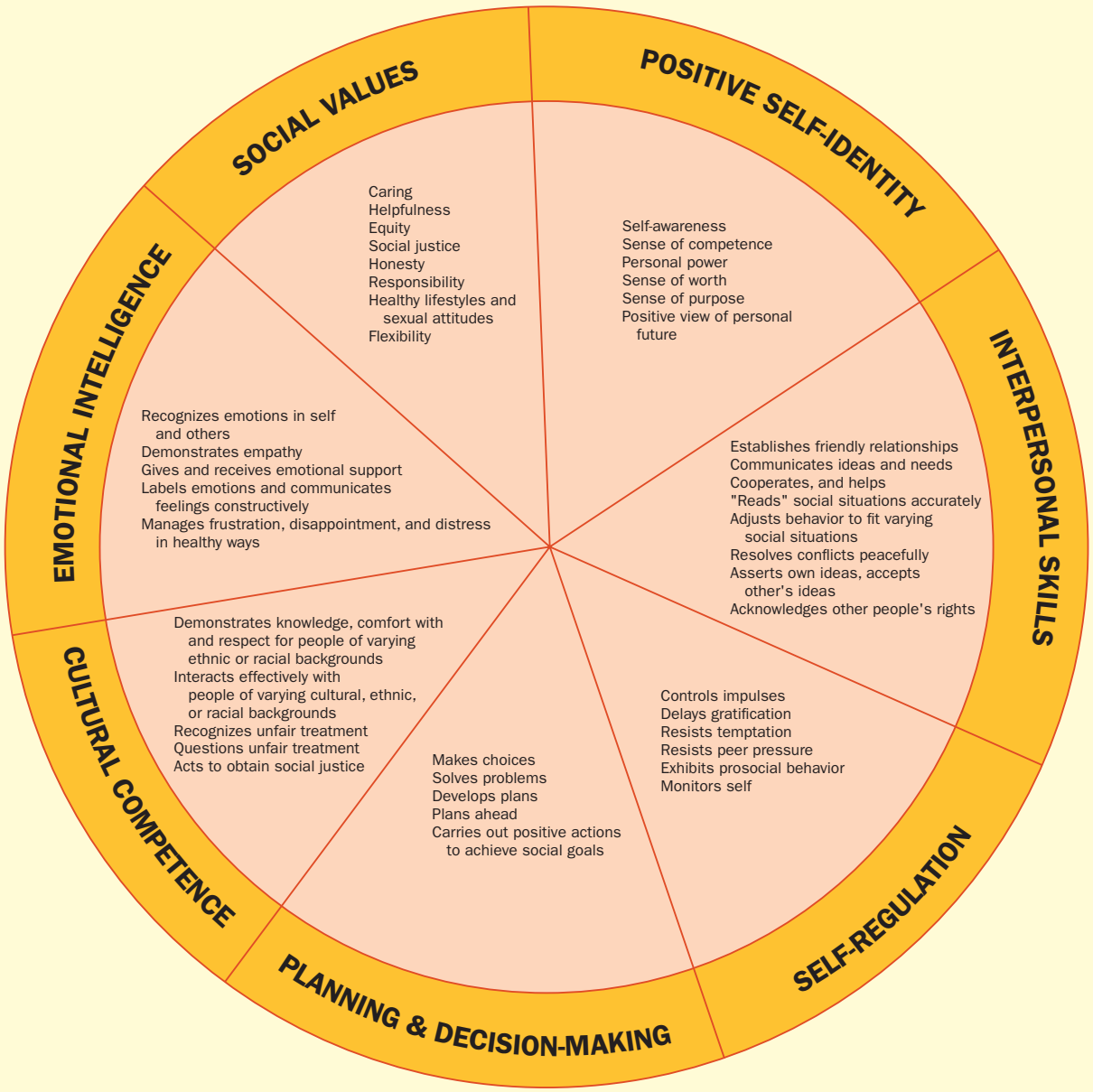

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Figure 1-1 The Elements of Social Competence.

of the categories identified in Figure 1-1 (van Hamond & Haccou, 2006). However, some behaviors defined as socially competent in one culture are not defined that same way in others. For instance, people in Canada, China, Sweden, and the United States describe qualities such as friendly, kind, helpful, generous, and good problem solvers as socially competent (Ladd, 2005). However, although each country identified several qualities in common, there were also differences. For example, people in China identified "shy" as being socially competent while "not shy" was listed as competent by the other countries. To further complicate things, the same social value may be demonstrated through different behaviors in different groups. For instance, although many societies value respect, the combination of words and actions considered respectful in one family or culture may not match what is viewed as respectful in another (e.g., in some households, it is respectful to take your shoes off before entering the main living area; in other households, this is not expected).

Such variations contribute to distinct definitions of social competence across and within cultures. Yet, regardless of which behaviors equate with social competence in a given group, all children eventually develop behavior patterns that can be described as more or less socially competent within the society in

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HIGHLIGHT 1-1

Observable Behaviors of Socially Competent Children

Individual Attributes

The child

1. is usually in a positive mood
2. is not excessively dependent on the teacher
3. usually comes to the program willingly
4. usually copes with rebuffs adequately
5. shows the capacity to empathize
6. has positive relationships with one or two peers; shows the capacity to really care about them and misses them if they are absent
7. displays a capacity for humor
8. does not seem to be acutely lonely

Social Skills

The child usually

1. approaches others positively
2. expresses wishes and preferences clearly; gives reasons for actions and positions
3. asserts own rights and needs appropriately
4. is not easily intimidated by bullies
5. expresses frustration and anger effectively and without escalating disagreements or harming others
6. gains access to ongoing groups at play and work
7. enters ongoing discussions; makes relevant contributions to ongoing activities
8. takes turns fairly easily
9. shows interest in others; exchanges information with and requests information from others appropriately
10. negotiates and compromises with others appropriately
11. does not draw inappropriate attention to self or disrupt the play or work of others
12. accepts and enjoys peers and adults of ethnic groups other than his or her own
13. interacts nonverbally with other children using smiles, waves, nods, and so on

Peer Relationships

The child is

1. usually accepted rather than neglected or rejected by other children
2. sometimes invited by other children to join them in play, friendship, and work
3. named by other children as someone they are friends with or like to play and work with

Source: Reprinted with permission from *Assessing Young Children's Social Competence*, by D. McClellan and L. Katz, 2001, ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Champaign, IL. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED450953).

which they live. These behavior patterns will have a powerful influence on their lives.

The Benefits of Being Socially Competent

> *. . . the single best childhood predictor of adult adaptation is not IQ nor school grades, but rather the adequacy with which a child gets along with others.*
>
> *Children who are generally disliked, who are aggressive and disruptive, who are unable to sustain close relationships with others . . . are seriously "at risk."*
>
> —Willard Hartup (early childhood researcher)

Social competence is not a luxury. It makes a tremendous difference in how children feel about themselves and in how others perceive them. Research tells us that socially competent children are happier than their less competent peers. They are more successful in their interactions with others, more popular, and more satisfied with life. In addition, children's social relations have been linked to academic achievement, with positive social skills being associated with greater success in school (Epstein, 2009). See Highlight Box 1-2.

As a result of these favorable outcomes, socially competent children tend to see themselves as worthwhile human beings who can make a difference in the world. Other people perceive them as desirable companions and competent members of society. The same cannot be said for children whose social competence is poor. Youngsters unable to function successfully in the social world often experience distress and loneliness, even in the early years. They frequently are rejected by peers, suffer low self-esteem, and do more poorly in

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Socially competent children are more successful in their interactions with others.

HIGHLIGHT 1-2

Learning Is a Social Process

Academic success in the early school years is based on social and emotional skills. Young children can't learn to read, do their sums, or solve a science problem if they have difficulty getting along with others and controlling their emotions, if they are impulsive, and if they have no idea about how to consider options, carry out a plan, or get help.

Students who demonstrate strong social and emotional skills also tend to exhibit the following:

- Greater academic motivation
- More positive attitudes toward school
- Fewer absences
- More classroom participation
- Higher math achievement
- Higher language arts achievement
- Higher social studies achievement
- Higher grades
- Fewer suspensions
- Less tendency to drop out in high school

Source: Zins, J., Bloodworth, M., Weissberg, R., & Walberg, H. (2004). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. In J. Zins, R. Weissberg, M. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp. 1–22). New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University; Ladd, G. W. (2008). Social competence and peer relations: Significance for young children and their service providers. *Early Childhood Services,* 2(3), 129–148.

school (Miles & Stipek, 2006). To make matters worse, socially incompetent children are at risk of continuing these problematic behavior patterns as they mature (Ladd, 2008).

Whether children eventually become more or less socially competent is influenced by many factors, including child development, childhood learning, and the contexts in which children function. You will need to know more about all of these things to support children in their journey toward social competence.

What Early Childhood Professionals Need to Know about Children's Development and Social Competence naeyc

Katie and Sandra, two 5-year-olds, are rocking their dolls in the housekeeping area.

Katie:	We're friends, right?
Sandra:	Yeah. You have a baby, and I have a baby boy.
Katie:	These babies can't be friends. They don't talk or nothin'.
Sandra:	Babies can't play games or save swings.
Katie:	Not yet!
Sandra:	Not like us!
Katie:	Yeah!

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Katie and Sandra are pleased to be friends and are proud of the social abilities they possess at 5 years of age that "their babies" have not yet developed. As children mature, developmental changes gradually occur that increase their social capacities. Such changes are governed by certain developmental principles that help us recognize commonalities among children and characteristics typical within age ranges (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). These five principles remind us that children's social development is complex, requiring the support of knowledgeable adults who appreciate the unique qualities of the children they serve.

All Development Is Interrelated

All threads of development (social, emotional, cognitive, language, and physical) interweave and exist simultaneously. No aspect of development is more important than another, nor can any single thread exist independent of the rest. The truth of this principle is illustrated as children try to make friends. Their ability to establish relations with peers is dependent on a whole host of developmental skills and understandings.

- **Social:** Negotiating the rules of a game; waiting to take a turn; working out who will go first
- **Emotional:** Having confidence to approach another child; responding with enthusiasm when invited to play by a peer; expressing empathy toward another child
- **Cognitive:** Remembering another child's name; developing alternate strategies for how to solve conflicts that arise; knowing which scripts fit which social situations
- **Language:** Using words to greet another child or to describe how a game could be played; responding with appropriate comments to questions from a potential friend
- **Physical:** Making room for a new player; having the motor skills necessary to play a video game or a game of chase with a potential friend

Recognizing that all development is interrelated will enable you to better appreciate the many social behaviors children are striving to master. It will also help you identify opportunities to guide children's social development and learning throughout the day. Such chances come up as children play in the pretend grocery store, discuss rules for building with blocks, proceed through the steps in a science experiment, or work out a math problem in a group. These opportunities may occur indoors, outside, at the lunch table, in the gym, on the bus, during a field trip, or at a home visit. Social development is happening all the time and everywhere children are found.

Social Development Occurs in an Orderly Sequence

Try putting these developmental milestones related to self-awareness in the order in which they tend to appear during childhood:

- Children define themselves by comparing themselves to others. (I ride bikes better than Susan. I am shorter than Marc.)
- Children define themselves based on their personality traits. (I am honest. I am fun to be with.)
- Children define themselves based on what they look like. (I am a boy. I have brown eyes.)

What did you decide? In their proper order, social benchmarks such as these illustrate the principle of developmental sequence.

Social development proceeds in a stepwise fashion and is relatively predictable. Scientists worldwide have identified typical sequences of behavior or understanding related to various aspects of social development and social competence (Berk, 2013). For instance, children develop their concept of self over several years.

Preschoolers tend to focus primarily on physical traits. As they grow older, children gradually incorporate comparisons into their definition of self. By age 8 or 9, children become more conscious of the internal characteristics that comprise their personality. Although children spend differing amounts of time on each step and sometimes skip steps altogether, self-awareness seems to progress in roughly the same order for everyone.

There are developmental sequences for many aspects of social competence—self-regulation, empathy, prosocial behavior, moral understanding, ideas about friendship, and so forth. As you learn these sequences, you will gain insights into what comes first, second, and third in social maturation. Such knowledge will help you determine reasonable expectations for individual children and decide what new understandings or behaviors might logically expand children's current levels of functioning. For example, knowing that 3- and 4-year-olds focus on the physical traits that characterize who they are, you might plan classroom activities such as self-portraits or body tracings to enhance their self-awareness. On the other hand, you might ask early elementary-aged children, whose physical sense of self is more established, to tell or write stories focused on

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the personal qualities they value in themselves, such as honesty or being a good friend.

Rates of Development Vary Among Children

Darlene is 4 years old; so is Emma. Darlene could use whole phrases to describe her feelings by age 2. She has numerous strategies for getting what she wants, including taking turns and making plans for the order in which children will get to use a favored toy. Emma only began using multiword sentences around age 3. Her approaches to getting something she wants include asking a child who has it if she can have it next or getting the teacher to help her find another one like it. Darlene and Emma are alike in many ways, but they are different from one another as well. Both children are developing in a typical manner.

As illustrated by Darlene and Emma, all children develop according to their own timetable. No two children are exactly alike. Although the principle of orderly sequences still applies, the pace at which individuals go through the various sequences differs.

This explains why Darlene could express her feelings in words by age 2, and Emma accomplished the same skill several months later. Both children are exhibiting typical development, but the timing is different.

Based on the principle of varying rates, you can presume children of the same age will exhibit a wide range of social abilities. Some will be in the early developmental phases of a particular skill, and others will be farther along in the sequence. These variations are not a question of bad or good, worse or better, but simply typical differences in children's social development. Understanding this will help you to be more patient with children and more realistic in what you expect of them.

There Are Optimal Periods of Social Development

There are certain moments in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.

—Graham Greene (novelist)

Certain times in people's lives provide critical foundations for future development (Brophy-Herb, Schiffman, & Fitzgerald, 2007). During these periods, children are developmentally primed to acquire new understandings and skills. Conversely, if children are denied the kinds of experiences that will enhance development during this time, it may be harder for them to acquire certain skills or abilities later on. This is the principle of optimal periods of development.

Between the ages of birth and 12 years, children are eager, motivated social learners. They want to connect—to become socially engaged. Concurrently, negative behavior patterns are not so entrenched that they cannot be changed. This makes childhood an ideal time for enhancing many essential attitudes and behaviors related to social competence. Some of these include the following:

- Trust
- Self-awareness and self-esteem
- Interpersonal communication skills
- Prosocial attitudes and behaviors
- Friendship dispositions and skills
- Problem-solving strategies
- Coping skills
- Executive function (decision making, organizing, planning ahead)
- Self-regulation

If the preceding developmental tasks are ignored, it is harder for children to become socially adept as adolescents or adults. The principle of optimal periods compels us to focus on children's social development beginning when they are babies and well into the second decade of life.

Social Development Has Cumulative and Delayed Effects

An experience that has a minimal effect on a child's development if it occurs once in a while may have a positive or harmful influence if it happens repeatedly over a long period of time (Katz & Chard, 2000). This is the principle of cumulative effects. For instance, being the target of occasional criticism is not likely to cause permanent damage to children's self-esteem; however, youngsters who are subjected to steady fault finding are likely to develop lasting feelings of inferiority and pessimism (Seligman, 2007). On the other hand, reasoning with a child only once will not have a lasting impact on that child. However, adults who make a habit of reasoning with children will gradually see those children become better able to reason for themselves.

In addition to these accumulated impacts, developmental outcomes may be delayed. Some early experiences influence children's functioning in ways that only appear much later in life. For instance, children's development of self-regulation takes years to accomplish. Adults may even begin to wonder if their early efforts at reasoning with children will ever yield positive results. However, research shows that when adults consistently

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explain their point of view while also considering the child's perspective, children eventually become better able to monitor their behavior without constant supervision (Shaffer & Kipp, 2013). These strategies must be used for a long time before children can reason on their own.

Knowing the principle of cumulative and delayed effects will help you consider the long-range implications of your efforts to guide children's social development and behavior. As a result, there will be times when you reject a quick solution because it could undermine your long-term goals. For instance, even though it is faster to simply tell children "No," when they disobey, if you want children to develop self-regulation, you will take the time to talk to them about their actions. In doing so, both the cumulative and delayed effects of reasoning support children's eventual development of social competence.

As you can see, development plays a significant role in the extent to which children gain social competence. Understanding developmental principles will influence your interpretations of child behavior as well as your professional practices. Childhood learning is another factor to consider.

Learning and Social Competence

Cooperation, generosity, loyalty, and honesty are not inborn. They must be passed on to the child by older people, whether they are parents, other adults, or older youngsters.

—Urie Bronfenbrenner (human ecologist)

Some of the social learning we pass on to children includes saying, "Excuse me" when they bump into someone, crossing streets at the corner, and deriving pleasure from sharing with another child. We communicate such lessons through our words and our deeds. How well children learn these lessons is governed by several principles of learning that impact social competence.

Children Are Active Social Learners

Consider the following Chinese proverb:

I hear, and I forget,
I see, and I remember,
I do, and I understand.

This saying captures a central truth about childhood learning: Children are doers. They do not wait passively for others to load them up with information. Children have active bodies and minds, which they use to make sense of social experiences in whatever they do. They accomplish this by observing, acting on objects, and interacting with other people (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). As a result of their experiences, children form ideas about how the social world works. (For instance, Cory might think, "If I say 'Please,' Mohammed will give me the scissors right now.") Sometimes children's ideas are confirmed (Mohammed says, "Okay"). Sometimes children encounter evidence that is contrary to what they believe (Mohammed says "No" because he still needs the scissors). By observing, experimenting, and reflecting on what happens, children gradually make adjustments in their thinking (Cory decides, "I will have to wait for the scissors, but I'll get them next"). Through hundreds of experiences like these, children construct ideas about codes of behavior to follow and strategies to use (Piaget, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978).

Because children are active learners, they need many opportunities to experience the social world firsthand. For instance, children become more skillful at sharing when they practice sharing with others in their daily encounters, rather than simply hearing or talking about sharing. Figuring out how to divide the crackers at snack time, how two people can use the computer together, or how to fit an extra person into a game are tangible problems children can solve on their own or with support from you. Such natural opportunities for social learning become teachable moments, in which children are motivated to learn new strategies. A typical teachable moment occurs when Celia wants to jump rope with a group of children already jumping. Her teacher uses this chance to help Celia figure out words she might use to approach the other children. On-the-spot mini-lessons like these are powerful. Children have immediate opportunities to practice relevant new skills as well as get feedback on the strategies they use. As you guide children's social development and behavior, you will need to look for these teachable moments and take advantage of the learning opportunities they offer.

Children Have Multiple Ways of Learning about the Social World

Although all children are active learners, they perceive, act on, and process social information in many ways. Consider the following examples:

Gary has a real feel for music and uses that medium as a way to express his feelings. When a problem comes up, he likes to figure it out on his own.

Samantha has a way with words. It's easy for her to communicate needs and feelings to others verbally. In problem situations, she prefers strategizing with a friend.

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