

The Emotional Development of the Preschool Child:

A Quick Reference

Competency 2: To affirm his/her personality

Meaning of the competency

This competency contributes to children's emotional development by building self-esteem. It is manifested in the acquisition of learnings and abilities related to self knowledge. Through a variety of experiences, children learn to see themselves as unique individuals with their own tastes, interests and needs. They acquire self confidence, become more receptive to relating to others, show a desire for knowledge, take pleasure in activity and take part autonomously in learning activities.

Outcomes at the end of preschool

The children have a better appreciation of their strengths and begin to deal with their limits. They know themselves better and they are able to present themselves as individuals and identify what distinguishes them from others. They are able to put forward their ideas and explain them and to act autonomously and responsibly. Preschool Education Program, pg.57

The **emotional development** of the preschool child is somehow different from other developmental aspects.

Emotional development does have a physical and cognitive basis for its expression, but once the basic human abilities are in place, emotions are much more situational in their appearance. Thus, researchers focus on the responses to the stimuli or situation rather than the emotion itself, when we speak of emotional development in preschool children. What most concerns researchers is not the development, but the control of the response. With emotional development, we want the child to learn to make appropriate emotional responses and especially to control negative responses. Many psychologists recognize 8 to 10 basic emotions and their combinations. The emotional responses of preschool children seem to be involved principally with the following seven emotions and one response:

1. distress,
2. fear,
3. surprise,
4. anger,
5. shyness,
6. interest,
7. joy,
8. aggression (response)

In order to help children develop emotionally, the preschool teacher should be concerned with promoting positive emotions and helping the children to control negative emotions. (Beatty, Janice.J. 1994, pg. 85.)

Our goal for the children should be the same as in the other aspects of their development, for them to gain self-control.

Children are developing the appropriate emotional reactions for their age as they learn to:

- allow themselves to be comforted during stressful time (distress)
- eat, sleep, toilet without fuss away from home (fear, anxiety)
- handle sudden changes/startling situations with control (surprise)
- express anger in words rather than actions (anger)
- not withdraw from others excessively (shyness, shame)
- show interest/attention in classroom activities (interest, excitement)
- smile, seems happy much of the time (joy, enjoyment)
- allow aggressive behaviour to be redirected (aggression)

References

Beaty, Janice J. (1994). *Observing Development of the Young Child* (3rd ed). Toronto: Maxwell Macmillan Canada

Beaty, Janice J. (2013). *Observing Development of the Young Child* (8th ed). Toronto: Pearson