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Doing More With Less:

How Teachers Can Help Families Support Both Cognitive and Social-Emotional Development

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Overview

How do we make the most of family engagement to promote both academic learning and social-emotional development?

- **Research on how cognitive skills and social-emotional development are mutually beneficial**
- **Recommendations for how this can show up in how you support families**

In one word...
What's the biggest barrier
families tell you they face in
supporting learning at home?

A Little Background

What is the motivation for this?

Prior work on family math engagement

- Families are busy!
- Learning happens in everyday routines

Families have concerns beyond academic skills

- How do they support children developing self-regulation?
- How do they help children learn to interact with other children and adults?

The good news: academic skills and social-emotional development can go hand in hand!



Both teachers and families want children to develop strong social, behavioral, and cognitive skills.

“What skills do you think it is most important for children to develop in pre-kindergarten?”

Teachers	Parents
Self-Regulation	Language & Literacy
Interpersonal Skills	Interpersonal Skills
Independence in Classroom	Math
Language & Literacy	Independence in Classroom
Math	Self-Regulation

Why Are Social-Emotional Skills Important for Academic Learning?

Collaborative Learning



Resilience & Persistence



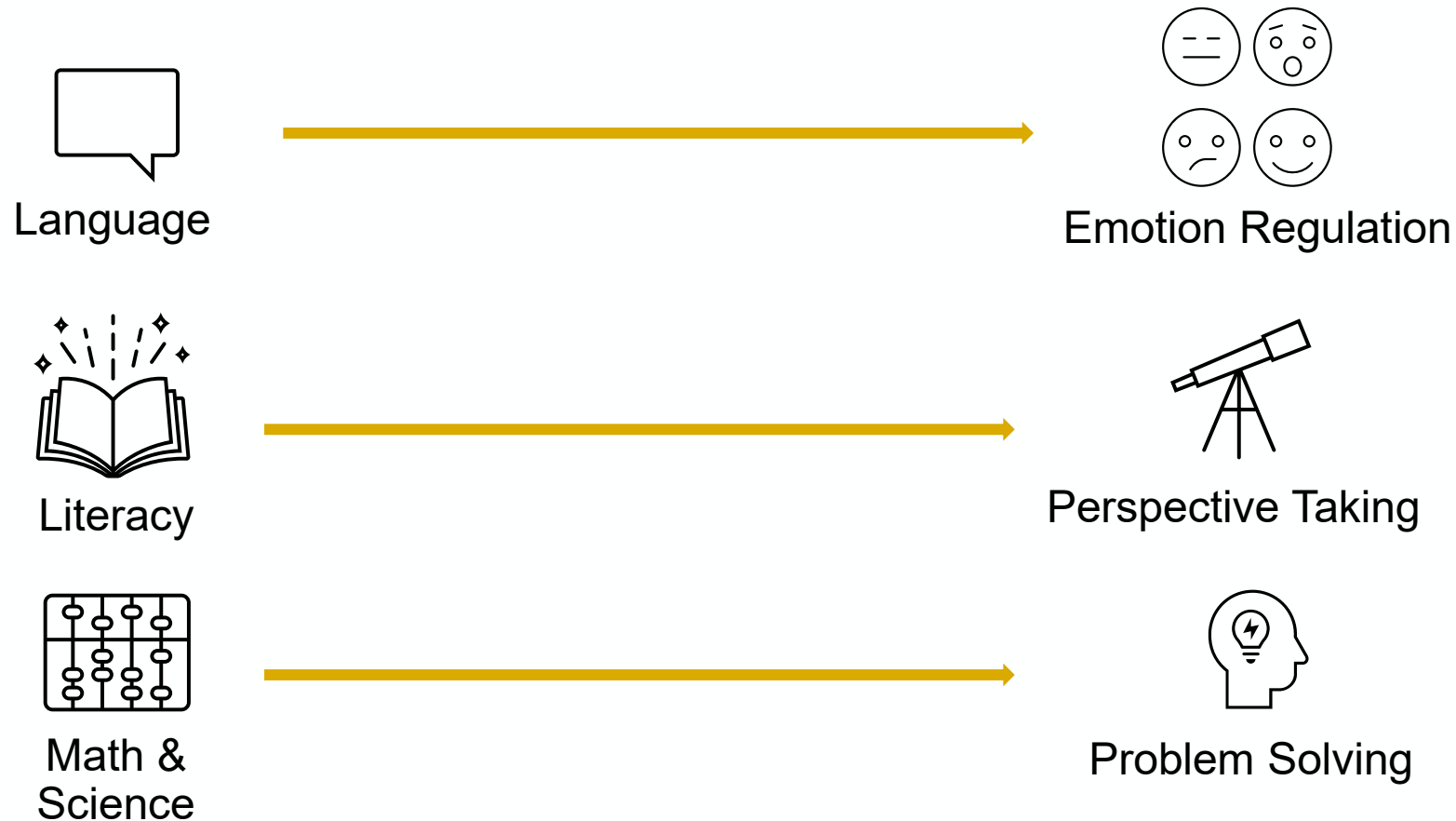
Positive Student-Teacher Relationships



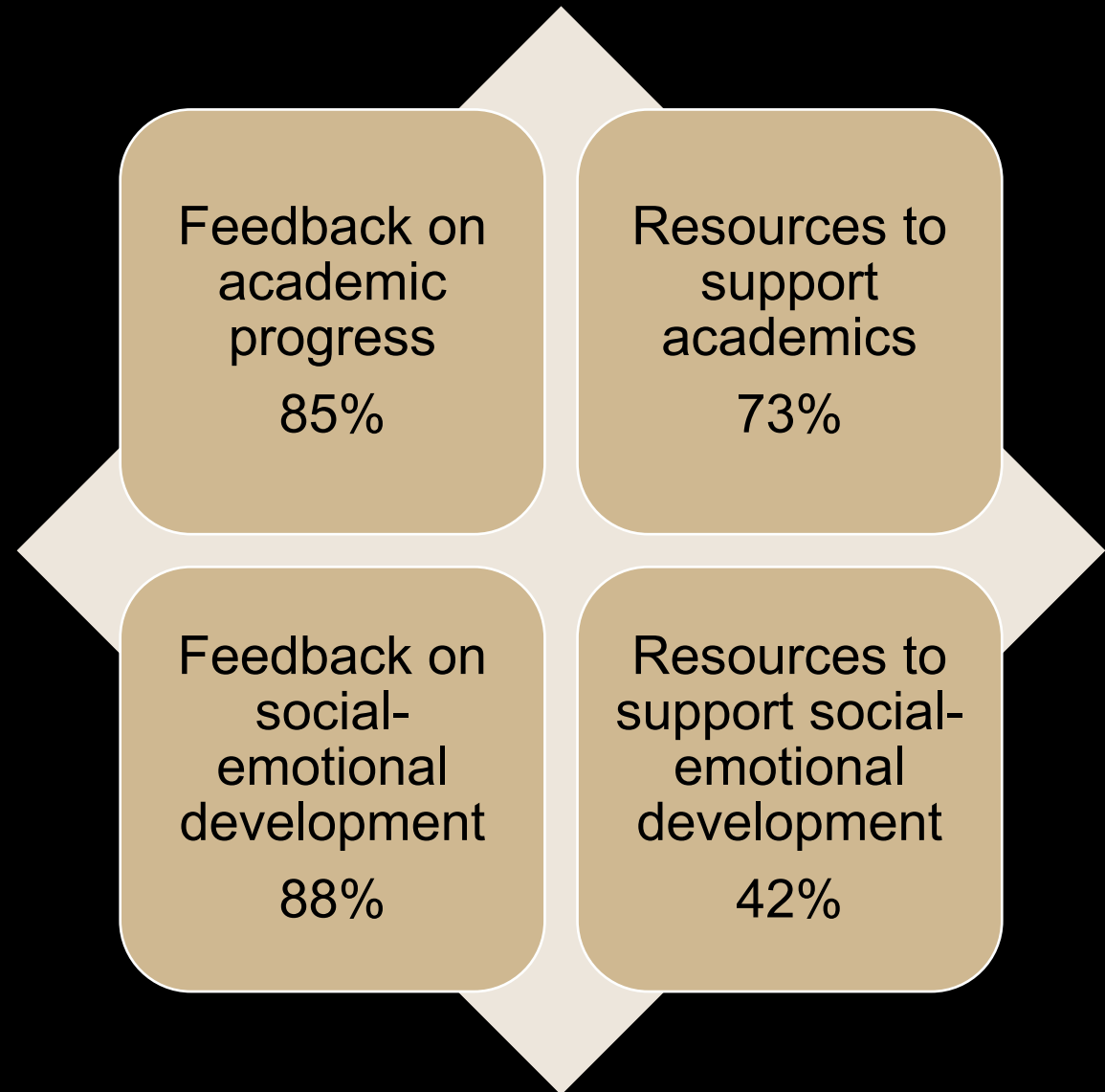
Attention & Engagement



How Do Academic Skills Support Social-Emotional Development?



Parents Look to Teachers for Guidance on Both Social-Emotional and Cognitive-Academic Development



Where Does Learning Take Place In Families?

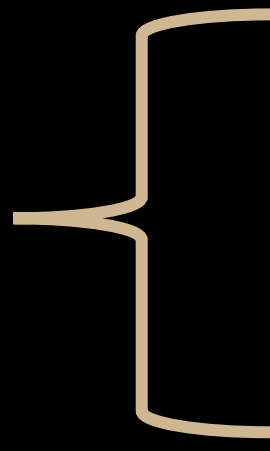


Interactive Activity: How Can We Reframe Routines As Learning Opportunities?

Choose a family routine or activity.

Identify academic learning opportunities and social-emotional opportunities.

As a group, pick your favorite of each to share back!

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- Bedtime routines
 - Shopping and running errands
 - Playing games or sports
 - Traveling by car, bus, train, or plane
 - Cleaning up and doing chores

Key Strategies for Families to Support Cognitive Development During Routines

- Using narrating and expanding language
- Asking open-ended questions
- Engaging in math and science exploration

Narrating and Expanding Language

- Describing what is happening
 - At the grocery store: “The scale helps us see how much the potatoes weigh.”
 - On the bus: “There are three more stops until our stop.”
- Elaborating on what child says
 - At bedtime: “You’re right- those are your warmest pajamas. Those are a good choice since it’s getting colder.”
 - During snacks: “Yes, you still have two carrots left. Look- we have the same amount!”
- *Supporting children’s language will help them express their needs and experiences more easily*

Asking Open-Ended Questions

How would the conversation go if a parent asked...

- During book reading:
 - “What color is that elephant?”
 - “What do you see in this picture?”
- While at the playground:
 - “How many steps are on that slide?”
 - “Which slide do you think is the fastest?
How do you know?”
- *Open-ended questions send the message that children have valuable ideas and perspectives*

Everyday Math and Science Exploration

- Using everyday materials for math and science thinking
 - Sorting laundry
 - Counting and comparing grocery items
 - Measuring while cooking
 - Leaves, sticks, rocks while playing outside
 - Cups and containers during bathtime
- *Making connections between learning and everyday life helps with problem solving and motivation to learn*
- *Developing creative ways to explore and play*

Key Strategies to Support Social-Emotional Development

- Emotion coaching language
- Modeling managing frustration and navigating challenges
- Use shared activities to develop strong relationships and sense of routine/stability

Emotion Coaching Language

- Naming feelings
 - “It sounds like you feel nervous about going back to school after a long weekend away. What are you feeling worried about?”
 - “I am feeling sad that we didn’t get to go to the zoo today because it rained. It’s disappointing when you don’t get to do something you were excited about, isn’t it?”
- *Complex, abstract vocabulary- helps children understand experiences, and later on will be important in school for things like collaborating with others, reading comprehension*

Modeling Managing Frustration and Navigating Challenges

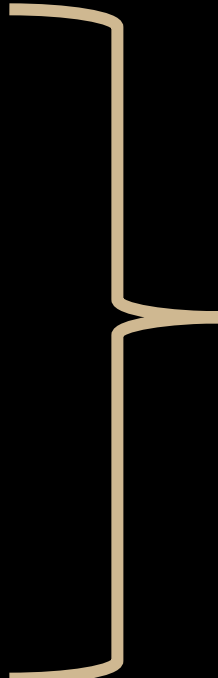
- Narrating times that we make mistakes or things are hard
 - “Oh, I noticed I made a mistake here in figuring out how much money this would cost. That happens sometimes. But that’s why it’s a good idea to double-check.”
 - “We planted all those lettuce seeds a couple weeks ago and it looks like something ate all the leaves! Do you want to try again? I wonder if we could do something to keep animals out of the garden this time.”
 - “You and your sister broke your toy car? Why do you think that happened? How can we keep more toys from breaking?”
- *Models tackling challenges by navigating the emotions and developing a deeper cognitive understanding and problem-solving skills.*

Developing Relationships and Routines

- Remembering that time spent together isn't just about supporting children's learning; it is also about quality time with family members
 - Parents get to learn more about their children- their passions, their strengths
 - Children develop relationships with parents, and see them as caregivers who are there to support them and who believe in them
- *Having a positive relationship allows for smoother repair when there are hard moments. Supports children's confidence in themselves and trust in others around them.*

Interactive Activity: Let's Co-Design A Tip Sheet for Families!

- Narrating and Expanding Language
- Asking Open-Ended Questions
- Using Everyday Materials for Math and Science
- Emotion Coaching Language
- Modeling Dealing With Frustration and Challenges
- Developing Relationships and Routines



Pick one strategy and create a 1-sentence explanation for a family newsletter

Questions?

Reflection Questions:

What is one strategy will you share with families this week?

What parts of social-emotional development do families seem to have the greatest concerns about? How do you think this approach could address these concerns?

These were tips focused on supporting family engagement, but how might this also expand your practices in the classroom?



THANK YOU

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