Early Years Evidence Store

Supporting Personal, Social and Emotional Development (PSED) in the Early Years

Education Endowment Foundation

Evidence consistently shows that when educators apply PSED approaches they can improve children's outcomes.

There is a growing body of evidence to support individual PSED approaches, however not all are equally well evidenced yet.

It's recommended that educators combine approaches, as the evidence is most reliable when different approaches are applied together.

Effective approach to support PSED	What is it?	Evidence summary of the approach	Put the approach into action
01 **Teaching Awareness of Emotions and Feelings**	**This approach involves the educator supporting the child to notice and connect their reactions, feelings and emotions and label them correctly.**	So far, research has shown that this approach can be effective with children as young as two years old, though it may be beneficial even for younger children. The approach may be particularly beneficial for those experiencing more stress or less support at home.	• Label emotions and feelings • Discuss emotions and feelings • Explain emotions and feelings • Scaffold children's reflections
02 **Teaching and Modelling Managing Emotions and Feelings**	**This approach involves the child and educator working together to manage emotions in ways that minimise any negative impact on others.**	Proactively and explicitly teaching children strategies for managing their emotions is an effective approach for improving their PSED outcomes, particularly for children from lower-income households. Educators modelling how to use the strategies, and having conversations with children about them, are an important part of children applying them successfully.	• Scaffold children's reflections • Model managing emotions • Provide techniques to manage strong feelings • Remind children when to employ the techniques • Scaffold opportunities to manage strong feelings
03 **Teaching and Modelling Social Communication**	**This approach involves teaching children to notice body language and spoken words in order to understand how to listen and respond in socially appropriate ways.**	Often this approach has been researched alongside other approaches, meaning there is only some evidence it can improve children's PSED outcomes. Showing children good examples of social communication (e.g. eye contact, pointing, waving) and following this with conversations, can help them to understand and follow the rules of social communication.	• Model non-verbal communication, body positioning and gestures • Promote waiting, joint attention and engagement • Provide opportunities to consider appropriate non-verbal communication • Demonstrate rules of communication • Remind children of the rules of social communication

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04 **Teaching Relationship Skills**	**This approach involves children experiencing positive relationships and teaching children to understand features of good relationships.**	Some evidence shows children can build relationships and improve relationship skills when positive interactions are modelled by educators and other children. Most research has studied this approach in combination with others. Involving parents in your setting's approach to building relationship skills could enhance outcomes.	• Reflect on the impact of words and actions on others • Provide opportunities to develop connections and relationships with others • Explore unique qualities, preferences, similarities and differences • Scaffold when and how to ask for help • Explain the importance and advantages of working cooperatively with others
05 **Teaching How to Sustain Positive Relationships**	**This approach involves teaching a child to adapt, be assertive or change their behaviour to promote effective collaboration in different situations.**	Teaching children how to sustain positive relationships can have an impact on their social skills and understanding of emotions. Educators can support by ensuring children have opportunities to reach a shared goal and solve problems together, both with their peers and with adults. Oral language skills are an important part of sustaining relationships. Educators can introduce useful vocabulary or scaffolding scripts to support children.	• Scaffold children's ability to express themselves and their needs, including in times of conflict • Provide strategies to minimise and resolve conflict • Provide opportunities for decision making • Provide opportunities for collaboration • Develop a sense of belonging, care, and responsibility • Model valuing children's rights/agency in sharing when words or actions have impacted them

Teaching self-care and teaching self-regulation are also ways educators support children's PSED. Check back soon for updates on these approaches.

Explore the Early Years Evidence Store to find out more about PSED and other themes, including communication and language, and early maths.

Scan the QR code for detailed examples and videos of the approaches in action.