



## Social-Emotional Health is the Key to Children's Success in School and Life

Kindergarten is a new and exciting time for you and your child. It's a time of change... new beginnings, new friends, new challenges and exciting discoveries!

If your child's preschool years are coming to an end, your thoughts are probably turning toward kindergarten. But is your child ready to move on to the "big" school? What skills do kindergarten teachers expect their new students to have? To help answer those questions (and ease your mind), we've asked highly regarded kindergarten teachers from around Livingston County to share their insights on helping your child gain the right mix of kindergarten-readiness skills.

The skill sets they are looking for might surprise you. Because of the national focus on improving education and meeting standards, you might think that it's most important for children to enter kindergarten knowing their ABCs, numbers, shapes, and colors so they can keep up with the curriculum. While teachers would love children to come in with some letter and number recognition, they don't want you to drill your kids on academic skills. There are equally, if not more, important social-emotional skills that set the stage for your child's learning. Raising an eager learner is the goal, and it can be achieved easily through play and day-to-day activities.

### What Does Social-Emotional Health Look Like?

It's the child's growing ability to:

- Express feelings in healthy ways
- Develop close relationships with others
- Explore his/her surroundings and learn

These abilities help the child to focus, follow directions, share, solve problems, and care about how other people feel. A child who can do these things has an easier time making it through school.





## Does your child:

### **Independently dress him/herself**

Is demonstrating a growing independence in self care when eating or dressing.  
(ex. Is able to put on coat and zip it.)

### **Independently use the bathroom**

Is demonstrating a growing independence in self care when washing hands and toileting.

### **Work & play cooperatively with peers**

Can often or very often exhibit positive social behaviors when interacting with others.

### **Control impulses and self-regulates**

Is developing an ability to self-regulate and manage strong feelings.

### **Follow classroom rules**

Is able to follow simple rules and routines and manage transitions.

### **Separate easily from caregiver on arrival**

Is able to follow simple rules and routines and manage transitions.  
Relates appropriately to adults other than parents/primary caregiver.

### **Have an awareness of his/her body in relation to others & the consequences of his/her movements & actions**

Is displaying a growing awareness of where his/her body is in relation to others and the consequences of his/her movements and actions.

### **Express curiosity and eagerness for learning**

Is approaching tasks with initiative and curiosity, or is willing and eager to try new things.

### **Focus at teacher directed large group time**

Is displaying a growing capacity to maintain concentration and attention.

### **Transition appropriately from one activity to another**

### **Follow one to two-step verbal directions**

Is developing an ability to follow directions for individual, small and large group activities.

### **Express needs and wants**

Is showing progress in expressing feelings, needs and opinions in a range of situations including conflicts with others.

**Resources:** Head Start Outcomes Framework, Work Sampling for Head Start, Early Screening Inventory-R, Early Childhood Investment Corporation and Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators