Let's Get Ready for TK Family Workshop

Welcome to the TK Adventure

We’re so glad you are here! We can’t wait to welcome your child to TK!

Today we will share what TK is all about and how you can support your child’s transition into school.

It’s going to be a wonderful year full of learning, growing, and fun!

What is Transitional Kindergarten?

- TK is the first year of a two year kindergarten program.
- Encourages independence through play-based learning.
- Focuses on social emotional growth, motor skill development, and early academic content exposure, not mastery.
- Preschool and Transitional Kindergarten Learning Foundations

How We Learn

TK uses a hands-on, play-based approach to learning. We focus on:

- Social-emotional development
  - Building relationships, managing emotions, and developing confidence through play, routines, and classroom community.
- Language and early literacy
  - Developing vocabulary, listening skills, and a love for books through stories, songs, and conversations.
- Early math and number sense
  - Exploring patterns, counting, shapes, and basic problem solving through play and hands on activities.
- Fine and gross motor skills
  - Strengthening hand muscles for writing and big body movements for coordination, balance, and control.
- Creativity and Curiosity
  - Encouraging exploration, imagination, and questions through open-ended play, art, and discovery.

What to Bring to School

Please send your little learner with:

- A large bag or backpack
- A healthy snack and lunch (or use cafeteria option)
- Jacket or layers for weathers
- Reusable water bottle
- Change of clothes in a ziplock bag
- Label everything!

Building Ind



Getting Your Child Ready for TK



Building Independence & Confidence at Home

- TK is a year of growth, practice, and discovery
- We are excited to partner with you!
- Every child starts at a different place, and that’s okay!

Supporting Your Little Learner at Home

You can support your child by:

- Talking positively about school
- Creating consistent morning and bedtime routines
- Reading together daily
- Practicing self-help skills at home
- Talk with your child throughout the day





Why Independence Matters

Independence helps children:

- Build confidence and self-esteem
- Feel capable and successful
- Transition more smoothly through routines
- Supports responsibility and self-regulation
- Encourages problem-solving and perseverance



Daily Routines Build Success

Simple routines make a big difference.

At home:



- Consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- Predictable morning routine
- Children help pack their own backpack
- Allow extra time so they can do things independently

Everyday Self-Help Skills

- Pack and unpack backpack
- Zip backpack and jacket
- Put on and take off jacket
- Wear shoes they can manage independently
- Open lunch containers and snacks
- Wash hands with soap
- Use tissues and cough into elbow
- Clean up after themselves



Bathroom Readiness

We support children as they build bathroom independence at their own pace

Children are learning to:

- Recognize when they need to go
- Walk to the bathroom safely
- Pull pants up and down independently
- Wipe themselves
- Flush and wash hands



Accidents are normal. Pack extra clothes in labeled ziplock bag in backpack daily.

Emotional Independence Skills

TK also builds emotional independence:

- Separating from caregivers
- Managing small frustrations
- Using words to express feelings
- Waiting and taking turns
- Trying again instead of giving up
- Asking for help



How Families Can Support at Home

You are your child’s first teacher.

Helpful strategies:



- Praise effort, not just success
- Let children try before helping
- Expect things to be slow or messy
- Build consistent routines
- Celebrate progress, not perfection
- Meet children where they are and help them grow from there

Helping Your Child Build Fine Motor Skills



FINE MOTOR CRISIS?

- Students are coming to school with underdeveloped fine motor skills.
- Many incoming TK students have difficulty holding crayons and scissors.
- You can help!



WHAT ARE FINE MOTOR SKILLS?

- small movements we make with the muscles in our **fingers, hands, and wrists**.
- part of each child's physical development
- essential in preparing your learner for the next steps in their education



The pincer grip is a fine motor skill.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

Strong hand, finger and wrist muscles directly impact your child's confidence and success in the classroom and beyond:

- writing and drawing
- using scissors and glue sticks
- cognitive and literacy growth
- opening food packages and water bottles
- buttoning and snapping pants
- zipping pants, backpacks, and jackets



The pincer grip reduces hand fatigue when drawing and writing.

FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES IN THE TK CLASSROOM

In the classroom, TK students work on fine motor activities throughout our day.

- We scoop, pour, and fill containers with water, sand, and dried beans*
- We pinch, squeeze, and poke playdough, kinetic sand, and clay
- We grasp and hold blocks, legos, toy food, and magnetic letters and numbers*
- We make art and crafts with shaving cream, paint, and sponges*
- We sing songs and fingerplays that focus on fine motor muscles.









Finger Play Songs

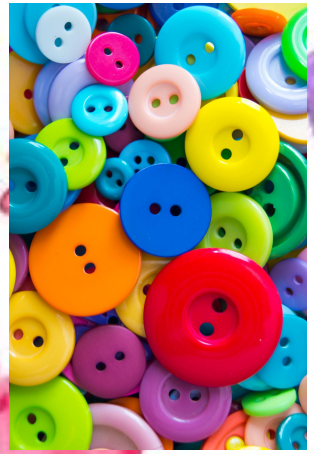




PRACTICING FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Children can practice fine motor skills with items you have around the house, or are easily found at the dollar store, such as:

- beads
- pipe cleaners
- playdough
- clothespins
- craft sticks
- pompoms
- buttons









FINE MOTOR ACTIVITIES AT HOME

Encourage your child to use their hands and fingers:

- play **outdoors** (climb, hang, dig)*
- use tweezers, tongs, and **chopsticks***
- **tear paper** to glue onto art projects*
- dip **Q-tips** into paint for dot painting
- **poke holes** in cardboard with push pins or golf tees
- thread various sizes of **beads or pasta** onto string, pipe cleaners, or yarn
- use hand **fidgets** (pop-its, pop tubes, stress balls)
- **build** with legos or blocks
- play with beanbags, **scarves**, and small balls
- **pour liquid** into a cup or bowl







BUGS AND WORMS

Move bead “bugs” and pipe cleaner “worms” to a cup or bowl using a clothespin or spoon.

- Focus on one color at a time.*
- Roll a die and get only that many.*
- Move them to an ice cube tray or egg carton instead of a bowl.
- Decorate the clothespin like a bird or alligator*









PIPE CLEANER BRACELETS AND CATERPILLARS

String beads or cut straws onto a pipe cleaner.

- Make a pattern: ab, aab, abc, etc.
- Rainbow order

To make a bracelet, loop the pipe cleaner and wrap the ends around each other.*

To make a caterpillar, bend the ends and tuck them into the beads.*





PLAYDOUGH PLAY

- squeeze playdough between your fingers
- roll playdough to create meatballs, breadsticks, and other “food”*
- cut playdough with a craft stick
- form monsters by sticking pipe cleaners, beads, craft sticks, etc. into playdough*
- hide beads or marbles in playdough
- use playdough “joints” to produce craft stick structures*







PUSHING ACTIVITIES

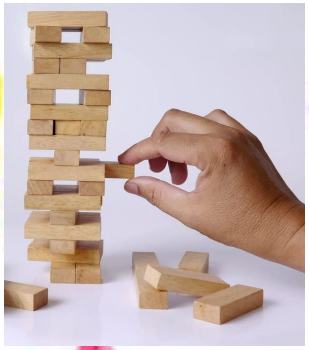
- Recycle to-go drink cups and containers with plastic lids (e.g. yogurt)
- Cut a hole or slot in the lid
- Kids can push items through the slot:
  - cut-up straws
  - beads
  - coins
  - pompoms
  - buttons
- Bigger holes are easier, smaller or narrow slots are more challenging.





GAMES THAT ENCOURAGE FINE MOTOR SKILLS

- Jenga*
- Connect Four
- Sneaky, Snacky Squirrel*
- Hi Ho Cherry-o
- Noodle Knockout!
- Cootie
- Ants in the Pants
- Don’t Break the Ice*









REMEMBER:

Keep it playful and fun!

Encourage independence!

Practice every day!

Make it a family activity!







Social-Emotional Learning and Self Regulation in TK





What is SEL?

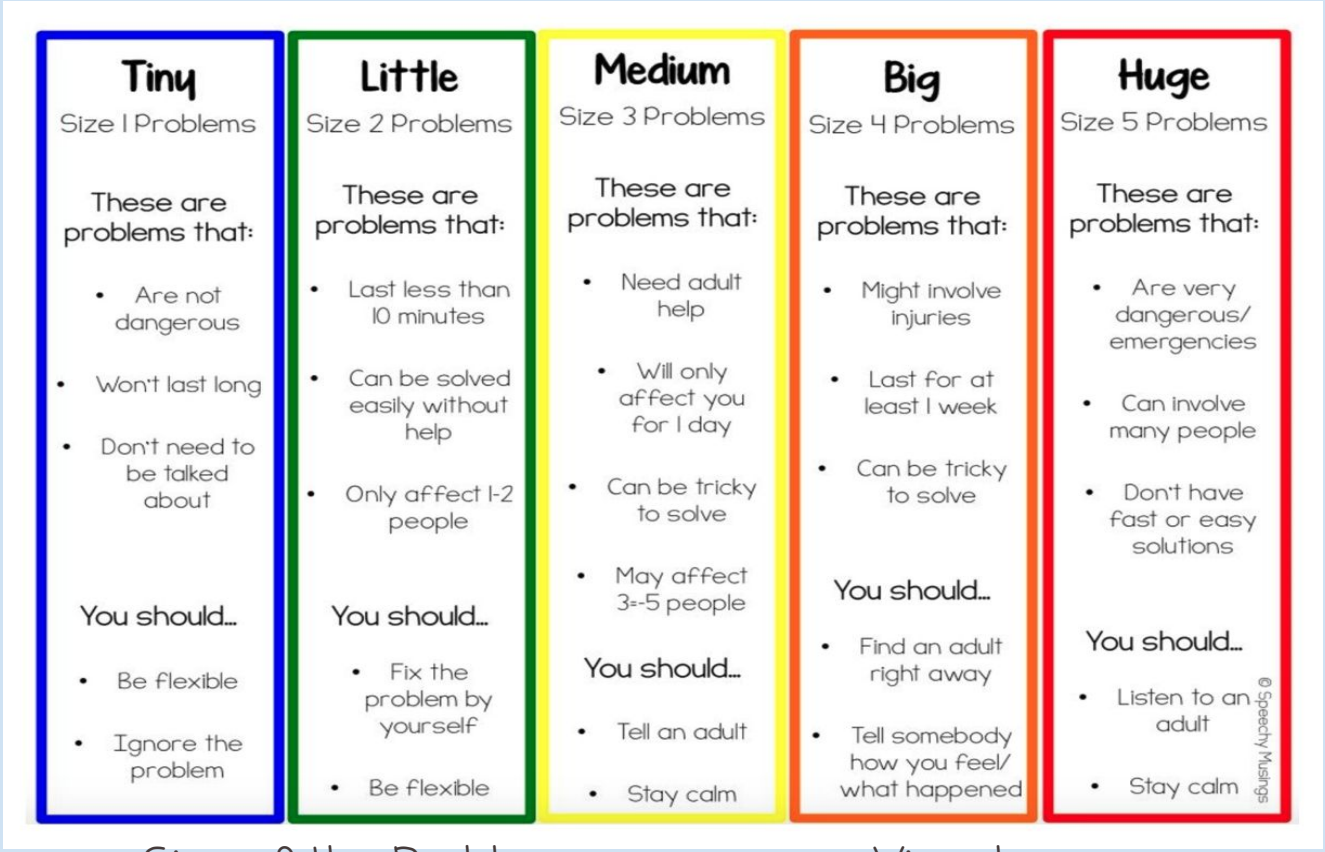
Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is how children learn about feelings, relationships, and solving problems peacefully.



What is Self Regulation?

- **Self-regulation** means being able to manage big emotions and body reactions (e.g., calming down after frustration)
- SEL is like teaching your child to use an ‘inner toolbox’—so when they’re upset, they don’t throw a toy, but instead take a deep breath or ask for help.

Size of the Problem Reference Sheet



Tiny

Size 1 Problems

These are problems that:

- Are not dangerous
- Won't last long
- Don't need to be talked about

You should...

- Be flexible
- Ignore the problem

Little

Size 2 Problems

These are problems that:

- Last less than 10 minutes
- Can be solved easily without help
- Only affect 1-2 people

You should...

- Fix the problem by yourself
- Be flexible

Medium

Size 3 Problems

These are problems that:

- Need adult help
- Will only affect you for 1 day
- Can be tricky to solve
- May affect 3=-5 people

You should...

- Tell an adult
- Stay calm

Big

Size 4 Problems

These are problems that:

- Might involve injuries
- Last for at least 1 week
- Can be tricky to solve

You should...

- Find an adult right away
- Tell somebody how you feel/ what happened

Huge

Size 5 Problems

These are problems that:

- Are very dangerous/ emergencies
- Can involve many people
- Don't have fast or easy solutions

You should...

- Listen to an adult
- Stay calm

© Speechy Musings

Size of the Problem Visual

Why This Matters in TK!

1. Supports Brain Development
TK is a key age when children's brains are growing in areas that control emotions and behavior.

2. Prepares Children to Learn
Self-regulation helps kids focus, follow directions, and stay engaged in learning activities.

3. Builds Social Skills
SEL teaches children how to share, take turns, and resolve conflicts with peers.

4. Grows Emotional Vocabulary
Children learn to name and express their feelings in age-appropriate ways.

5. Leads to Long- Term Success
Strong SEL skills in early years of development is linked to better academic success and life outcomes later on.

6. Creates a Safe & Supportive Environment
When SEL is part of the daily routine, students feel secure, valued, and ready to participate.

The 5 Core SEL Competencies

SEL Competency	In the Classroom	At Home
1. Self-Awareness	Students recognize and name their emotions (“I’m feeling sad.”).	Ask your child: “How is your feeling today?” during dinner or bedtime.
2. Self-Management	Students take deep breaths to calm down or wait their turn in line.	Practice dragon breaths: “Let’s take 3 deep breaths together when we feel upset.”
3. Social Awareness	Students show empathy: “He’s sad because his toy broke.”	Read books with characters showing emotions. Ask: “How do you think they feel?”
4. Relationship Skills	Children use words to ask for help or include a classmate in play.	Role-play sharing and conflict resolution: “What can you say if someone grabs your toy?”
5. Responsible Decision-Making	Choosing kind actions like helping clean up or apologizing after a mistake.	Offer simple choices: “Do you want to clean up the blocks or books first?”

How Do We Practice This in the Classroom?

Name Feelings Daily – “I see you're feeling frustrated.”

Model Calm-Down Tools – Deep breaths, counting to 5, calm corner.

Use Storytime – Books with emotions and social problem-solving.

Role-Play Scenarios – Practice sharing, taking turns, asking for help.

Classroom Jobs & Choices – Build responsibility and decision-making.

Sing Feelings Songs – Music helps label and manage emotions.

Praise Positive Behavior – “You waited so patiently—great self-control!”



Ways You Can Practice This at Home

Talk About Feelings – “How are you feeling right now?”

Create a Calm-Down Space – A cozy spot with pillows, books, or calming toys.

Use Calming Tools Together – Deep breaths, counting, stretching.

Read Books About Emotions – Pause to ask, “What is the character feeling?”

Give Simple Choices – Builds decision-making and independence.

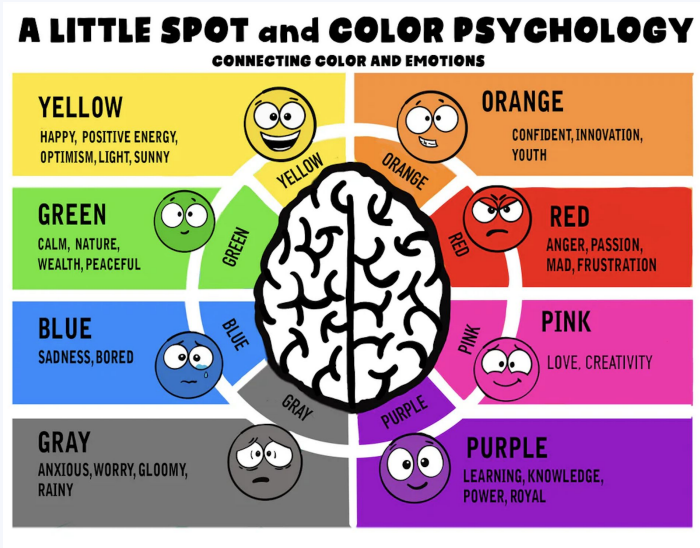
Model Your Own Emotions – “I feel frustrated, so I’m taking a breath.”

Celebrate Effort to Stay Calm – “You used your words! That was awesome!”



Naming Feelings

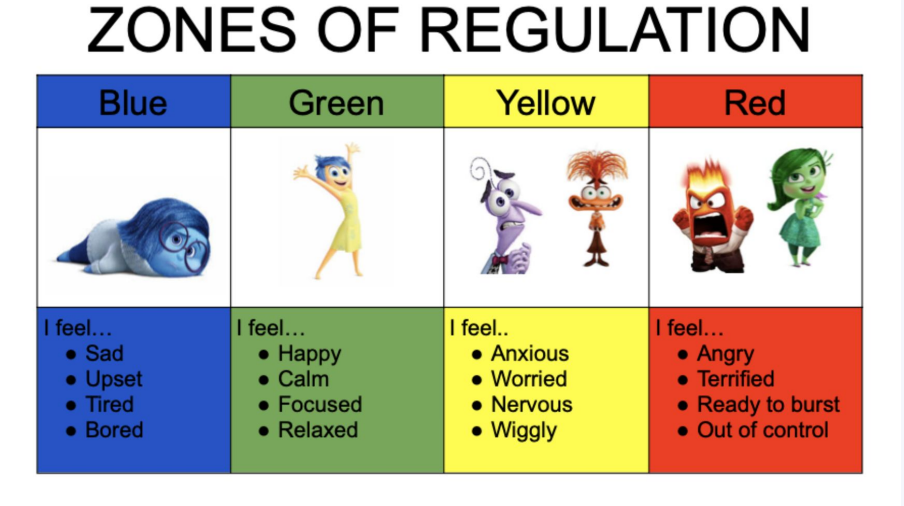
- Naming feelings is the **first step in self-regulation** — you can't manage what you can't name.
- Helps children **recognize and understand emotions**, building self-awareness.
- Visuals like **feelings charts** or **emoji faces** make emotions easier to identify and talk about.
- Visual cues support calming tools:
  "You picked the angry face — let's take deep breaths."
- Builds empathy and improves **social problem-solving** with peers.



Zones of Regulation

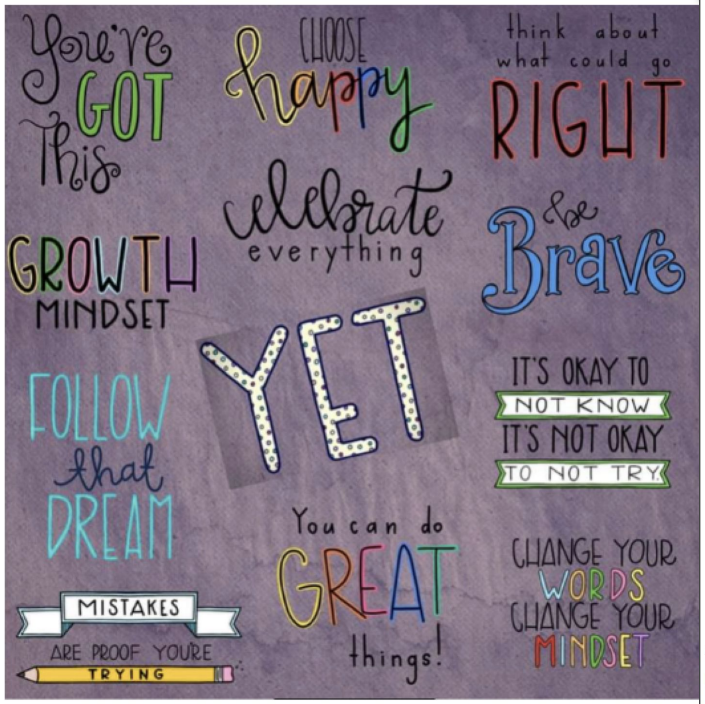
The **Zones of Regulation** is a simple framework that helps children:

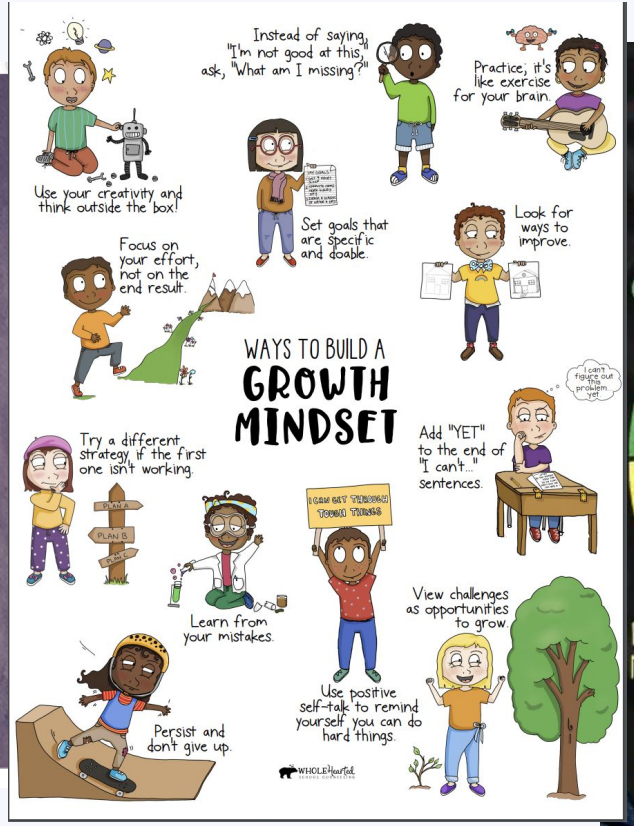
- **Identify how they're feeling**
- **Understand how emotions affect behavior**
- **Learn tools to manage their emotions and actions**



Each **zone is color-coded**, making it easy for young children (especially TK students) to recognize and talk about their feelings.

Growth Mindset

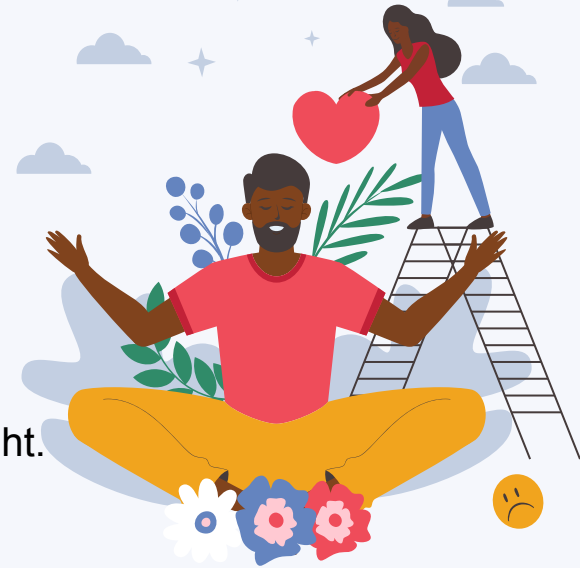






Model Self-Regulation

- **Name Your Feelings Out Loud**
  "I’m feeling frustrated, so I’m going to take a deep breath."
- **Pause Before Reacting**
  Take a moment to breathe, count, or step away.
- **Use "I" Statements**
  "I feel tired, so I need a quiet moment."
- **Apologize & Repair**
  "It's okay to make mistakes—show them how to make it right.
- **Create a Calm-Down Routine Together**
  Use breathing, stretching, or quiet time to self-soothe.
- **Your calm becomes their calm.**
  Model the behavior you want your child to learn.



How to Create a Calm-Down Corner at Home

- Have a designated space that's comfortable to go to (pillows, blankets, a chair, etc.)
- Include some type of sensory tool (a squishy, playdough, their favorite toy, a pop-it)
- Provide a Zones of Regulation chart or other positive visual cues to help them recognize and talk about their feelings
- Include emotion cards for identifying and expressing feelings
- Keep a calming book available to read
- Change the environment by going outside—physical movement helps children self-regulate.
- Listen to calming music
- Play a calming video



Breakout Sessions for Q & A

- Bagby
- Fammatre
- Farnham



THANK YOU!!

