

Social Skills

at Gretchen's House

We believe children gain confidence when they have opportunities to try new things and experience success *and* failure in a supportive, inclusive environment. They learn independence when they have opportunities to practice self-help skills every day. And they develop empathy when they observe caring adults interacting with others and encouraging children to consider different perspectives.

At our centers, you will find:

- ▶ Classrooms arranged to help children keep track of their own belongings and find things they need.
- ▶ Teachers modeling respectful tone of voice, “I messages,” and conflict resolution strategies.
- ▶ Visual cues including photos, symbols, signs, and equipment layout that encourage appropriate use of space and materials.
- ▶ Family style dining at meals and snacks.
- ▶ Children participating in activity planning, set-up, and clean-up.
- ▶ Role playing and class meetings that address behavioral issues.



Key Social Skills in Early Childhood

- ▶ **Emotional regulation:** Children learn to delay gratification and express their frustrations and needs using verbal, rather than physical, communication.
- ▶ **Self-help & independence:** Children who take care of their belongings and perform basic hygiene tasks feel competent and empowered.
- ▶ **Empathy:** As children develop cognitive reasoning and observation skills *and* become emotionally more peer-focused, they begin to be able to consider another person's point of view and needs and demonstrate courteous behavior.
- ▶ **Teamwork:** Children in group care learn to share space and materials, compromise on contentious issues, solve problems cooperatively, and play an important role in group successes and quality of life.
- ▶ **Planning:** Children plan, implement, and reflect on projects. As they grow, they begin to demonstrate initiative and foresight.

Our bottom line: children who work and play in a supportive social environment will become cooperative, self-reliant, and respectful learners.

Our Social Skills Curriculum

We strive to meet children's individual developmental needs as we guide them through successful social interactions with others and help them gain confidence and self-reliance. Many of our interest center activities and daily routines incorporate social skill components.



Infants:

- ▶ Use adults as a safe “base” from which they can venture out to explore.
- ▶ Mimic peers and adults.
- ▶ “Converse” with adults and peers by babbling and cooing.
- ▶ Pre-verbal infants use baby signs to communicate.
- ▶ Form trusting relationships with their caregivers.

Toddlers:

- ▶ Set up and clean up their spot at meals; feed themselves.
- ▶ Practice taking turns during circle time songs and fingerplays.
- ▶ Use simple words such as “stop” and “help” to communicate their needs.
- ▶ Use transitional objects and rituals to move between activities and settings.
- ▶ Seek out trusted adults for support and companionship.

Preschoolers:

- ▶ Follow simple two- and three step directions.
- ▶ Use “I messages” to communicate their needs and wishes.
- ▶ Work cooperatively on math, science, and art projects with their peers.
- ▶ Perform regular classroom chores such as feeding animals, preparing activities, and clean-up.
- ▶ Talk through problems at class meetings and one-on-one with adult support.
- ▶ Collaborate to determine classroom rules for appropriate behavior.
- ▶ Use *if, then* reasoning to solve simple problems.
- ▶ Use social stories to develop a variety of conflict resolution strategies.

Kindergarten & 4K

- ▶ Use calendars and graphs to chart progress toward long-term goals.
- ▶ Plan projects that extend over several days or weeks and require cooperation.
- ▶ Prepare and serve snacks to their peers.
- ▶ Hold class meetings to discuss behavior and group dynamics.
- ▶ Incorporate self-assessment items into developmental portfolios.
- ▶ Visit and “assist” in younger classrooms as reading buddies or special guests.
- ▶ Use increasingly complex language to describe their feelings.
- ▶ Use simple lists to help them remember tasks.
- ▶ Demonstrate increased competence maintaining emotional control in challenging situations.

