



## EMOTIONAL LITERACY

### Construct Progression

#### DOMAIN: SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**CLAIM:** Students communicate about and use strategies to regulate responses to their own emotions.

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### Background Information

In this progression and related materials, the term *emotion experience* refers to both the internal and the external experience or expression of an emotion. For some skills, teachers may need to probe about why a child made a particular statement about an experienced emotion. There is no “right” answer as long as the child can produce a relevant justification for their answer. For example, a child explaining that he felt happy because, *it was raining and he likes to splash in puddles*, is relevant, whereas a child explaining that he felt happy because, *it’s a happy thing to feel happy*, is not a relevant answer.

Skills on the latter part of the construct progression require being able to use the social context for understanding emotions. Each social context in which an event and consequential emotional experience occurs includes a set of expectations, such as formal rules (e.g., school policy or classroom constitution), social norms (e.g., don’t cut in line), and other local expectations, cultures, or traditions that may provide additional information that one might use to interpret or predict emotions in others. To be considered using the “social context”, the expectations should be familiar to both the teacher and the child. Social norms regarding the expression and interpretation of emotion may vary based on individual’s cultural background. Teachers should consider these differences when determining a child’s learning status. Additionally, for several skills on the progression, the child will need to articulate his or her reasoning. Finally, the skills on the latter part of the construct progression also require the child to *justify* his or her interpretations and predictions about others’ emotions in order for the skill to be observable.

Children learn about emotions and related social skills through a variety of mechanisms. In some schools and/or classes, instruction about emotion is intentional and explicit, either through a specific program or an approach that has prescribed teaching practices and strategies (e.g., morning meetings, positive language, classroom organization); in others, emotion learning happens more implicitly as part of children’s growing internalization of school and classroom norms and management. The terminology used to reference emotion education will differ depending on the approach, but common terms include *social-emotional learning* and *character education*. Promotion of social-emotional development does not necessarily need to occur within a given framework, and it is often embedded in other instructional activities. For example, children learn about emotions through adult and peer modeling of appropriate behavior, through dialogue about emotions and how to solve social-emotional problems, by encouraging and guiding through perspective-taking, and by offering alternative ways in which a child can think or act in a situation. There are many more ways in which teachers can teach and children can learn about emotions.

### Rationale

Being emotionally literate is related to both social and academic success. Children who understand and can communicate about emotions tend to be accepted by peers, have better relationships with peers, and have better social skills than children who struggle with understanding emotion (Arsenio, Cooperman, & Lover, 2000; Boyatzis & Satyaprasad, 1994; Fine, Izard, Mostow, Trentacosta, & Ackerman, 2003; Mostow, Izard, Fine, & Trentacosta, 2002). In contrast, children that have difficulty recognizing emotions in others tend to have more difficulty establishing and maintaining friendships (Denham et al., 1990; Miller et al., 2005; Nowicki & Mitchell, 1998). Emotional literacy has also been linked to academic success, such as language and literacy, general academic knowledge, and mathematics, both concurrently and predictively (e.g., Denham et al., 2012; Izard et al., 2001). Emotional literacy is also tied to other emotional competencies that are known to impact academic and social functioning, namely emotion regulation. Emotional literacy can impact the ability to regulate emotion and behavior by allowing children to make their internal experiences conscious, to think about the causes and consequences of their emotions and related behavior, and select more effective regulatory responses (Denham & Burton, 2003; Liew, Eisenberg, & Reiser, 2004).

**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

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Understanding	Skills	Performance Descriptors	Example
Children understand that emotions may be experienced in their bodies and expressed in their behaviors.	A. Child expresses verbally or behaviorally a range of emotions	The child demonstrates this skill by expressing a range of emotions over time.	<p><i>A teacher observes Claire laughing with another student.</i></p> <p><i>A teacher observes Claire frowning at her artwork during center time. Claire says, "I don't like art anymore," in an angry tone.</i></p>
	B. Child shows an awareness of own emotion through verbal or behavioral expression	<p>The child demonstrates this skill by doing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reacting to his or her own expression of emotion (e.g., grabbing stomach while laughing, wiping away tears, or rubbing one's hand if s/he hit the table in anger)</li> <li>• Mimicking what an appropriate expression of emotion might look like (e.g., saying "Waah" and pretending to cry when disappointed or sad); or</li> <li>• Acknowledging his or her verbal and/or behavioral expression of emotion without identifying a specific emotion (e.g., jumping up and down in excitement and then looking at the teacher with an "expecting to be scolded" look).</li> </ul>	<p><i>While the class is researching reptiles on the computer, Holly sees a picture of a snake, runs to the back of the room and hides under the teacher's desk. The teacher overhears Holly tell her classmate that she saw a snake and her heart was beating fast.</i></p> <p><i>Kaylee is watching a documentary on the rain forest with her class. When Kaylee sees a tarantula on the screen, she quickly covers her eyes, she screams and says, "I can't look!" and scoots closer to her friend.</i></p>
Children understand that emotions may be recognized in themselves and others.	C. Identifies emotions in self	<p>The child demonstrates this skill by doing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicating the emotion that s/he is experiencing (observed by the teacher);</li> <li>• Indicating a previously experienced emotion (not observed by the teacher); or</li> <li>• Creating something and indicating that it represents one's own emotion (e.g.,</li> </ul>	<p><i>Without prompting, Quincy tells his teacher, "I am so happy today!"</i></p> <p><i>When the teacher asks Asher how he is feeling about an upcoming chorus concert, Asher goes to the feeling cards and selects a scared face to represent that he feels scared.</i></p> <p><i>When Erika enters the classroom, she puts her</i></p>

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		drawing a picture of person with a happy face and saying, "I am happy.")	<i>name tag on the "How am I feeling today?" chart under the picture of "Happy." During morning circle time, Erika talks tells the class that her mom told her this morning that her cat is no longer sick, and she is really happy.</i>
	D. Identifies emotions in others	<p>The child demonstrates this skill by doing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicating the emotion that another person is experiencing (observed by the teacher);</li> <li>• Indicating a previously experienced emotion of another person (not observed by the teacher); or</li> <li>• Creating something and indicating that it represents another person's emotion (e.g., drawing a picture of another person with a happy face and saying, "she is happy.")</li> </ul>	<p><i>Magee is reading a book to Arturo during a paired reading assignment. The instructions are to describe the hare in the story after he loses the race. She says, "Look at how sad the rabbit is!"</i></p> <p><i>When Nicholas sees his friend, Michael dancing around after being named line leader, the teacher hears him say to another friend, "Michael looks so funny doing that." When the teacher asks him why his friend looks like that, he says that Michael is "happy." When asked why, he lifts his shoulders in question until the teacher can walk him through the events in which Michael was named line leader.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher is reading a book about a pumpkin who rolled out of the pumpkin patch and into the vegetable garden, where he is the only one of his kind. The teacher asks Zane to tell her how the pumpkin is feeling. Zane says that he thinks the pumpkin is sad. The teacher says, "Why does the pumpkin feel sad?" Zane says, "Because he looks sad." The teacher responds, "What happened in the story that made him sad?" Zane says, "He rolled away."</i></p>
Children understand that emotions have causes and effects and that	E. Indicates a response to an event can include one or more emotions, including conflicting emotions, within themselves or another	<p>The child demonstrates the skill by doing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicating s/he or another person are experiencing one or more emotions in response to an event (Observed by the</li> </ul>	<i>The teacher overhears Krista telling a classmate about her weekend. Krista told her classmate that while watching a movie, she was happy because her mom let her watch the movie, but scared because the clown turned out to be a bad guy.</i>

**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

**Construct:** Emotional Literacy

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people may feel and respond differently to events in similar contexts.	person.	<p>teacher);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicating and describing a scenario in which they or another person experienced one or more emotions in response to an event (Not observed by the teacher); or</li> <li>• Creating something (e.g., picture, creating a story) and describing that it represents themselves or another person experiencing one or more emotions in response to an event.</li> </ul>	<p><i>While Zeke was gluing his Sphinx together for a social studies project, Amber walked by and accidentally knocked over Zeke’s sphinx. Zeke says he is mad because he has to start over and sad that he’ll have to miss recess to finish his project in time.</i></p> <p><i>The teacher is reading a book about a pumpkin who rolled out of the pumpkin patch and into the vegetable garden, where he is the only one of his kind. The teacher asks Esmee to tell her how the pumpkin feels and why. Esmee responds by saying, “The pumpkin is sad because he rolled out of the pumpkin patch and misses his friends.</i></p>
	F. Indicates the same event can cause different people to experience different emotions.	<p>The child demonstrates the skill by doing any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicating that two people are experiencing different emotions in response to the same event (Observed by the teacher).</li> <li>• Indicating and describing a scenario in which two people experienced different emotions in response to the same event (Not observed by the teacher); or</li> <li>• Creating something (e.g., picture, creating a story) and describing that it represents at least two people or groups experiencing different emotions in response to the same event.</li> </ul>	<p><i>The teacher overhears Franklin telling a classmate about his weekend. Franklin told his classmate that he and his sister jumped off the high dive for the first time, and he was really excited, but his sister was really scared.</i></p> <p><i>Sam says to his teacher, “Michael is happy because he is the line leader, but that makes Violet mad.”</i></p> <p><i>The teacher is reading a book about a pumpkin who rolled out of the pumpkin patch and into the vegetable garden, where he is the only one of his kind. The teacher asks Olivia to relate her experiences to what is happening to the pumpkin in the story. Olivia says that she would be happy to be the only pumpkin because being one of a kind is a good thing. She then says, but not everyone would be happy, some kids would be lonely and feel sad that there was no one else like them.</i></p>

**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

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Children understand that the interpretation of others' emotional expression and experience requires knowledge of the social context and of others' intentions.	G. Indicates knowledge of how the social context relates to his/her own and others' emotion experience.	<p>A child demonstrates the ability to indicate knowledge of how the social context, including social norms, relates to his/her own and others' emotion expression and experience by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using information observed in the social context;</li> <li>• Making inferences about others' internal experiences based on observations;</li> <li>• Making inferences about others' internal experiences based on what is expected (based on specific context/social norms and prior knowledge of the people involved); and</li> <li>• Forming an interpretation based on prior knowledge, including personal experience.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Kelly's class attended a presentation of Jack and the Beanstalk in the multi-purpose room. Kelly notices that her friend, Nathan, is jumping and squealing in anticipation of the event. As they found their seats, Kelly turned to Nathan, advising "You will need to keep quiet and still during the performance." Nathan says, "But why, I'm so excited to watch!" Kelly says, "Because it's rude to talk during a performance, and everyone around us is starting to get mad. When it's over you can make noise when we are clapping" Nathan says, "Okay, I'll be happy on the inside while the play is going on." The friends enjoyed the performance, and they both clapped wildly at the end.</i></p> <p><i>After reading Green Eggs and Ham to the class, the teacher points out that Samantha's friend felt different than Samantha about her food. He asks his students if they can remember a time when they had an emotional response to an event that was very different from a friend or family member. A student recalls, "I heard everyone cheering when we won a pizza party from the cookie sale. They must have been happy, but I was disappointed because I'm allergic to dairy."</i></p>
	H. Interprets the emotional experience of others using the social context (e.g., provides justification that includes social information and inferences about others' intentions).	<p>A child demonstrates the ability to independently justify an interpretation by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using information observed in the social context;</li> <li>• Making inferences about others' internal experiences based on observations;</li> <li>• Forming an interpretation based on prior knowledge, including personal</li> </ul>	<p><i>Stephen walks into the classroom and sees that his friend is having a hard time staying in his seat and is talking more loudly than normal. He also notices that his friend is wearing a birthday pin. Stephen says to his teacher, "My friend looks really excited." The teacher asks, "Why do you think he is excited?" Stephen replies, "Because it's his birthday, I saw his birthday pin."</i></p>

**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

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		<p>experience; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide evidence or a rationale to support an interpretation.</li> </ul>	<p><i>During gym, the class is picking teams to play soccer. Codie notices that Jaden looks mad when he was not picked on the team that his friends were on. She says to her friend, "I know he likes this game, but he always gets mad when his friends are on the other team."</i></p> <p><i>Students watch the Cat in the Hat movie in which he and his friends entertain a brother and sister one rainy afternoon, creating havoc in the house. They view The Cat in the Hat video up to the point where the fish sees the children's mother returning home. The teacher pauses the video as the expressions change on the faces of the characters in reaction to the fish's announcement. The teacher says, "How do you think the kids feel now that they know their mother is coming home?" One student says, "My mom got really mad at me when I didn't clean my room, so I think they are afraid of getting in trouble because of the mess."</i></p>
	<p>I. Predicts the emotional experience of others using the social context (e.g., provides justification that includes social information and inferences about others' intentions).</p>	<p>A child demonstrates the ability to independently justify a prediction by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using information observed in the social context</li> <li>• Making inferences about others' internal experiences based on what is expected (based on specific context/social norms and prior knowledge of the people involved);</li> <li>• Forming an interpretation based on prior knowledge, including personal experience; and</li> <li>• Providing evidence or a rationale to support an interpretation</li> </ul>	<p><i>Maddy tells the teacher, "Ellen is going to the computer station and Danielle is already there. Danielle might get angry." The teacher asks, "Why do you think Danielle will get mad?" Maddy replies, "Because she doesn't like to let other people take turns with the computer. She got mad at me last week when I tried to get on the computer."</i></p> <p><i>Students watch the Cat in the Hat movie in which he and his friends entertain a brother and sister one rainy afternoon, creating havoc in the house. They view The Cat in the Hat video up to the point where the fish sees the children's mother returning home. The teacher first asks Bree to indicate how the</i></p>

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			<i>children feel knowing the mother is coming home. After Bree points to a scared face on a picture card, she then asks, "How do you think the children will feel after their mother sees the mess?" Bree points to a sad face. The teacher asks how she knows the children will be sad. Bree types, "they will be in trouble and will lose their toys."</i>

**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

**Construct:** Emotional Literacy

## Resources

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**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

**Construct:** Emotional Literacy

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**Domain:** Social-Emotional Development

**Construct:** Emotional Literacy

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