



evaluating the quality and effectiveness of programs is the *Classroom Assessment Scoring System* (CLASS), which assesses the social–emotional climate and the instructional climate of preschool or primary-grade classrooms through detailed observations of teachers’ behaviors (Pianta, La Paro, & Hamre, 2008). Research using the CLASS has found that high-quality emotional and instructional classroom climates uniquely predict children’s academic achievement and improve social and emotional outcomes (Perlman et al., 2016). Teachers who provide high-quality emotional support are aware of and respond to children’s individual needs, rarely display intense negative emotion, and engage in positive, respectful interactions with children (Hamre, 2014). This chapter is dedicated to providing information for how teachers can ensure classroom climates that support children’s emotional and social development.

Equally important, if not more so, is that the emotional climate *not* be negative—that there is little or no aggression or hostility among children and teachers (Hamre, 2014). Most of us have observed classrooms or been students in them in which it is obvious which children are the “bad kids.” They may be sitting at a desk by themselves, or their names may be the ones you hear over and over. They may be waving their hands in the air while the teacher continues to ignore them. Young children are very perceptive. They know whether teachers like them and which kids are the favorites (Janson & King, 2010). Imagine figuring out within a few days after school starts that your teacher doesn’t like you very much and facing nine months of being in that person’s control with no choice to stay home or switch to another teacher. Children soon begin to act the way they are perceived and live up to low or negative expectations.

Building a caring community of learners requires effort on the part of teachers and children, but the effort pays off in short- and long-term benefits. In the present, the classroom will be a more harmonious, pleasant environment in which children are more likely to learn successfully. In addition, experiencing a caring community helps achieve three essential, long-term goals for children:

1. To develop positive social skills and emotional self-regulation, which are essential tasks during the first 5 to 8 years of life
2. To prevent future social and behavioral difficulties, which is more efficient, effective, and humane than later remediation
3. To build a foundation of learning for later success in school and in life.

Develop Social Skills and Self-Regulation Think back to your school days when you were really excited to give an answer, and had to sit quietly, raise your hand, and wait before speaking. Remember the playground where you played tag without getting too rough or walked away when someone made you feel mad? That was self-regulation at work. A major developmental accomplishment of the first 5 years of life is the development of self-regulation in all areas of behavior. Self-regulation in its broadest sense represents the ability to willfully plan and, as necessary, control one’s behavior to meet their needs. This process begins early as babies learn to regulate their sleeping, crying, and other behavior patterns, and expands during the preschool years to more complex self-regulation.

Research indicates that between ages 3 and 7, a qualitative shift in self-regulation may take place when children typically progress from reactive behavior to more advanced, cognitive–behavioral forms of self-regulation that likely require the integration of many skills, such as executive functions and language skills (Cole, Armstrong, & Pemberton, 2010). During these years, children develop the ability to control emotions, to learn to delay gratification, and to build relationships with other people—all key factors essential for healthy development (Montroy, Bowles, Skibbe, McClelland, & Morrison, 2016). A core aspect of self-regulation is effortful control (Rueda, 2015).

Effortful control is an individual’s ability to act purposefully, including controlling thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. For children growing up in poverty or in stressful situations, development of effortful control can be compromised (Lengua, 2012). These early disruptions can have long-term and wide-spread effects on a child’s academic, social, and emotional outcomes reaching into adulthood. Early childhood is a key developmental period

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