



to learn effortful control. During this time, parents, families, educators and school settings can play central roles in promoting the development of effortful control and self-regulation.

Children’s ability to regulate their emotional responses is associated with successful learning and social relationships (Durlak, Weissberg, Dynmicki, Taylor & Shellinger, 2011). Children who regulate their emotions can work collaboratively, play with others, seek help, and offer help to others. Children who have difficulty regulating their emotions exhibit more frustration in school and often have trouble focusing their attention, completing tasks and working with other children (Blair & Raver, 2015). Because learning to regulate one’s emotions involves acquiring a complex set of skills, children need support from adults to be successful.

Other important goals of the early years are the development of self-concept and self-esteem. **Self-concept**, which forms rapidly during the preschool years, refers to children’s stable perceptions about themselves despite variations in their behavior. Children’s **self-esteem**, or perception of their own worth, is also in its formative stages during these years, and can be fragile. Similarly, children gradually acquire a sense of **efficacy**, a belief in their own abilities to accomplish what they set out to do. Positive self-concept, self-esteem, and feelings of efficacy don’t develop by people telling children how special and talented they are, but rather as children take initiative and master challenges with a lot of adult encouragement (Galinsky, 2010).

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efficacy Children’s belief in their own ability to accomplish what they set out to do.

Prevent Social and Behavioral Difficulties Teachers today report a larger percentage of children who exhibit extremely challenging behaviors, such as excessive aggression, anger, and hostility (Kaiser & Rasminsky, 2017). These children take up most of the teacher’s attention, yet fail to improve. In worst case scenarios, some children may be expelled from child care or preschool, experiencing failure before their educational experiences have even begun (Gilliam, 2016; Vinh, Strain, Davidon, & Smith, 2016). During the last few decades, since federal laws began requiring child care programs and schools to fully include children with disabilities and special needs, the number of children with challenging behaviors may have increased. Some disabilities such as attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or autism may adversely affect children’s social behavior (Gregg, 2017; Stadnick, Nicole, Chlebowski, & Brookman-Frazee, 2017). To successfully teach in these increasingly complex classrooms, teachers must have knowledge of effective, research-based, early intervention strategies before they encounter these difficult situations. Children who exhibit persistent challenging behaviors are those most in need of good teaching.

Building positive social skills and healthy emotional relationships during the early years is more effective than trying to remedy problems later. Research demonstrates that preschool children who lack self-regulation and/or fail to develop positive relationships with peers are likely to encounter significant difficulties in school and in life. A recent study of children entering kindergarten found significant relationships between social and behavioral readiness in kindergarten and school outcomes. Specifically, by third grade, students assessed as not socially and behaviorally ready in kindergarten were significantly more likely to be retained in grade, receive services and supports through special education, and be suspended or expelled (Bettencourt, Gross & Ho, 2016). Children who don’t acquire



Teachers today report that more children are exhibiting challenging behaviors than in the past. Why might this be true? What might account for this perception?

minimal social competence and thus are unable to make friends are at significant risk of dropping out of school, becoming delinquent, or experiencing mental health problems in adolescence or adulthood (McCoy et al., 2017; Moffitt et al., 2011).

Even when children are 3 or 4 years old, it is possible to observe which children are socially isolated and do not make friends easily (Waller et al., 2016). Even adults

