Emotional Development in Early Childhood

Ann Brand, Ph.D.
University of Wisconsin-Stout
ECE Conference 2015
Goals of the Presentation

• Explore the development of emotions in early childhood.
• Explore the concept of emotional competence and why it is important for social and academic development.
• Discuss how teachers can assist children in their classroom in developing emotional competence.
Experience of Emotion

• Specific emotions are experienced at birth.
  – Joy, fear, anger, sadness.
  – Function to assist the infant in meeting needs.
  – Function to assist in regulation of arousal (Thompson, 2006).

• Emergence of self-conscious emotions in second year.
  – Shame, guilt, embarrassment, pride (Lewis, 2002).
Emotion Language and Understanding

• 2-3 years old
  – Increase in emotion vocabulary
  – Past, present, future experiences of emotion.
  – Understanding the causes and consequences of specific emotions.

• 4-5 years old
  – Ability to reflect on emotion.
  – Ability to take another person’s perspective.
  – Learning social rules for expressing emotion.
Emotional Competence

• **Definition**: ability to feel that you are effective at mastering emotions in many different social situations that evoke emotion (Saarni et al., 2006).

• **Important components:**
  – Awareness of emotion in self.
  – Awareness of emotion in others.
  – Emotion regulation.
Emotional Competence and Developmental Outcomes

• **Social Competence**: skill in negotiating social relationships.

• Emotional competence associated with positive peer relationships (Fabes et al., 1999; Saarni et al., 2006).
  - Can effectively regulate emotions and control emotional response in social interaction.
  - Can identify emotions in others and respond more effectively.
Emotional Competence and Developmental Outcomes

• Academic Competence: achievement and skills needed for success.

• Emotional competence associated with academic success.
  
  – Through emotion regulation (Valiente et al., 2008)
  
  – Through social competence (Elias & Haynes, 2008; Ladd, 2003)
Importance of Teachers in Developing Emotional Competence

• Early childhood ripe for sowing seeds of strong emotional competence.
• Teachers have unique opportunities in a social setting with multiple care-takers and peers.
• Many opportunities for teaching, guiding, and modeling emotional competence skills in the classroom—both on an individual basis and in a group setting (Ahn, 2005; Ashiabi, 2000).
Helping Children Develop Emotional Competence

• More than just being warm & supportive.

• Two different parental approaches to expression of emotion: (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).
  – Emotion Coaching
  – Emotion Dismissing

• Research indicates that emotion coaching parenting is crucial in developing emotional competence in children (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997).
Emotion Coaching in the Classroom: Five Steps (Gottman, 1997)

1) Being aware of child’s emotions.
2) Recognizing emotion as an opportunity for intimacy and teaching.
3) Listening empathically and validating child’s feelings.
4) Helping child verbally label emotions.
5) Setting limits while helping the child problem solve.
Five Steps to Emotion Problem Solving
(Gottman, 1997)

1) Set limits.
2) Identify goals.
3) Brain storm solutions.
4) Evaluate proposed solutions.
5) Chose a solution.
Teaching Emotion Vocabulary

• Planned Lessons
  – Colors
  – Songs
  – Physical sensations

• Using Emotion Words in Daily Tasks
  – Labeling your own emotions.
  – Highlighting cause/effect between situations and specific emotions.

• Role Play
Reading Books About Emotion

• Books present opportunities for emotion awareness, labeling, empathy, cause and effect, and problem solving.

• Examples
  – *Julius, the Baby of the World* by Kevin Hankes
  – *Franklin’s Bad Day* by Paulette Bourgeois

• Engage kids in skills of emotion competence.
  – Identifying their own feelings with the character.
  – Finding effective ways to express feelings of character.
  – Brainstorming solutions to cope with feelings of character.
In Summary:

• Teachers have unique opportunity to encourage the development of emotional competence.

• You will help to set the children in your classroom on a pathway to social and academic competence as they continue to grow and develop through childhood and adolescence.
For Copies of This Presentation:

- Please send an email to: branda@uwstout.edu
- Includes presentation, web resources on emotional competence, a list of suggested books regarding emotions to read with children, and references for additional reading.
Web Resources

- List of songs that can be used for teaching about emotion and problem solving: [http://www.songsforteaching.com/positiveattitudes.htm](http://www.songsforteaching.com/positiveattitudes.htm)
- Link to the Gottman Institute with more information on parenting, emotion coaching, and relationships: [http://www.gottman.com/](http://www.gottman.com/)
- Links to programs designed specifically to assist in teaching emotion competence to children:
  - MindUp: [http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/](http://thehawnfoundation.org/mindup/)
Suggested Books For Exploring Emotions With Young Children

• Ahn’s Anger by Gail Silver
• Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst and illustrated by Ray Cruz
• The Berenstain Bears series By Stan and Jan Berenstain
• Everybody Has Feelings by Charles E. Avery
• Feelings By Aliki
• Franklin’s Bad Day By Paulette Bourgeois and Brenda Clark
• Harry and the Terrible Whatzit By Dick Gackenbach
• Holes and Peeks By Ann Jonas
• I Like Your Buttons By Sarah Marwil Lamstein
• Ira Sleeps Over By Bernard Waber
• Julius, the Baby of the World By Kevin Hankes
• Mama Cat Has Three Kittens by Denise Fleming
• Mindful Monkey, Happy Panda by Lauren Alderfer and Kerry Lee MacLean
• No, David! By David Shannon
• Peter's Chair by Ezra Jack Keats
• Shy Charles By Rosemary Wells
• Today I Feel Silly and Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee Curtis
• Uncle Elephant By Arnold Lobel
• When Sophie Gest Angry - Really, Really Angry  by Molly Bang
• William's Doll by Charlotte Zolotow and William Pene duBois
References