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Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Competence: The Settling In Process in an International Setting

Family Handbook

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SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE: THE SETTLING IN PROCESS IN AN INTERNATIONAL SETTING

FAMILY HANDBOOK

"As a team, we will:

Communicate openly and honestly in order to build on one another's ideas.
Respect each other's differences, but keep the goal clear (for the children).
Encourage and motivate each other to enjoy the process through humour and
positivity.
Use flexibility and critical thinking to collaborate on shared goals."

Berlin, November, 2017

Group production by:

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LEGEND

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Additional explanations and theory.

Practical Tips:

Tips for daily routines and situations in kindergarten.

AUTHORS' NOTE

In this book, we use the term “family” for all kinds of structures where adults take emotional, financial and legal care children. We use the term “parent” to describe the most significant adult taking care of the child/children, who has an emotional bond with them. We use the word “educator” to describe the person working with a group of children in an institutionalised setting. We use the word “kindergarten” to describe this institutionalised setting for early years education. When referring to the general “child,” we use the plural pronoun “they,” in order to remain gender neutral. We recognize gender, culture and identity as a spectrum and intend for everyone to be represented in this text.

A NOTE FOR TRANSLATORS

The authors request that the careful choice of terminology, gender neutrality and representations of all genders and cultures will be respected in all future translations of this text.

INTRODUCTION

A multicultural kindergarten has the potential to be the foundation for a lifelong celebration of diversity. Settling into this new environment can be an exciting but potentially overwhelming time and can have implications for the whole family. The researchers and authors of this team have all worked in multilingual and multicultural kindergartens and have experience in making the process of settling young children into a diverse kindergarten a positive one.

This handbook was created with children between the ages of 11 months and 7 years in mind and intends to provide children with a positive settling in experience regardless of their cultural, social and emotional background.

The aim of this handbook is to help make the transition into a multicultural kindergarten as easy as possible for your child and family by addressing some key issues to help you prepare for what to expect.

This handbook focuses on:

- Introducing children to kindergarten.
- Working with educators on how to expand a child's community to include peers and non-family members.
- Providing tools and skills to foster social-emotional competencies.

This handbook is a compilation of theory and tips from experienced educators as well as collected knowledge from all partner institutions to offer ideas and reflections of respectful pedagogical methods. We consider it important to understand both the benefits and potential challenges that children may face when being part of a multilingual and multicultural environment. By sharing our personal experiences and expertise, we hope to offer ideas on how to best assist your child during their time in kindergarten and also to promote the relationship and cooperation between your family and your child's educators. This handbook will

provide information and descriptions of specific situations that may arise when entering a new kindergarten and tips on how they may be handled. It is our hope that ultimately this handbook may be used as a trusted source for you and your family to reference throughout your kindergarten experience and beyond.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LOVE AND AFFECTION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

We, as educators, have made a commitment to taking an empathetic, child-centred and affectionate approach to teaching and caretaking in early childhood education. Not only does this continue to be essential for strengthening our bonds with the children we work with, but we are also convinced that emotional care, love, affection and empathy are vital to a child's development and are fundamental aspect in the kindergarten as well as in the home. In recent years, the growing research in the fields of

neuroscience, psychology, psychoanalysis and biochemistry with regards to emotional life are converging to offer a deeper understanding of emotion that supports our experiences and beliefs as educators. In Sue Gerhardt's, *Why Love Matters*, she references neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, and writes that, "the rational part of the brain does not work on its own, but only at the same time as the basic regulatory and emotional parts of the brain" (Gehardt, 2015).

Feelings and emotions play a tremendous role in raising healthy and stable children. They are an undeniable aspect of human life, parenting and teaching. Through our work in early childhood education we are dedicated to nurturing the feelings and emotions of children and hope to offer them a view of the world that is shaped by respect, empathy, love and affection. All aspects of this handbook therefore stand on the fundamental ideas of a respectful, empathetic and affectionate way of interacting with one another.



CHAPTER 1

SETTLING IN

You and your child are about to embark on a wonderful journey into kindergarten life. Although this is a very exciting time, you may be having some mixed feelings about all of the changes ahead. Remember, you are not alone! Many parents feel this way as their children first start kindergarten. Entering into this experience with an open mind and working to build positive relationships with the educational team at your kindergarten will make the process much easier.

A good settling in process acknowledges the child's emotions and needs, builds trust between the child, carer and educator and ends with the child feeling safe in their new environment. A good relationship between the child and educator is the basis for all educational processes in the kindergarten, as a child can only demonstrate

explorative behaviour if they feel safe and secure (Graf & Seide, 2019). As such, the ultimate goal of settling in is for children to establish this type of sustainable relationship.

This chapter will familiarise you with the different ways the kindergarten may support your child during the settling in process and provide tips and tools for beginning this new experience with your child. Below you will find two sets of questions designed to help you to reflect on what aspects of kindergarten life are most important to your family to make sure that you and your child are prepared for your first days. One set is for you to discuss as a family and the other is for you to discuss with your child's educators. These questions should help to ease the transition into kindergarten and help to avoid any surprises during the settling in process.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AS A FAMILY BEFORE ENTERING KINDERGARTEN

- What are the most important things that a kindergarten should have available to my child?
- Is there anything we need support with as a family?
- How am I feeling about the settling in process?
- How would I like the kindergarten to support our home culture?
- What are my reasons for choosing a kindergarten with a different language?
- What things am I most excited about when my child joins the kindergarten?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE KINDERGARTEN ON YOUR FIRST DAY

LOGISTICS

- What supplies do I need to bring?

- What is the daily schedule and what is a typical day like?
- What kind of food will my child be provided with?

SETTLING IN

- What is the settling in process?
- How long will I be able to stay with my child during this process?
- What is my role as a parent during settling in?
- Should I play or interact with my child or others during settling in?

LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

- How do you support children from multilingual backgrounds?
- How can I support my child's language development at home?
- Are the educators experienced in settling in children with different languages spoken at home?

INTERCULTURAL

- What holidays will you celebrate with the children?

- How do you support children from culturally diverse backgrounds?

KINDERGARTEN SPECIFIC

- How do you handle behavioural challenges or discipline?
- How can I address any concerns or questions I have for the educators?
- What curriculum does the kindergarten follow?
- What is the child to educator ratio?

THE SETTLING IN PROCESS

The settling in process is a vital part of your child's journey into kindergarten and should be well planned to ensure that your family feels prepared. This process can vary from kindergarten to kindergarten, depending on the location, curriculum or philosophy of the institution.

What is most important is for your family to be properly informed on whichever method it is that your chosen kindergarten uses so that you can be a full participant of the process. This

is especially crucial if your child is entering a kindergarten where they do not speak the language or if the culture of this kindergarten is significantly different to your family's home culture or the culture of your child's previous educational setting.

It is normal to experience a variety of emotions when your child starts kindergarten for the first time or enters a new kindergarten with a different language than what they are familiar with.

You are both facing a new stage in life and you may feel insecure about placing your child into a stranger's hands for the first time. The kindergarten educators should work to understand your concerns and individualise the process for you and your family as much as possible.

Even if this is not your first experience settling a child into a kindergarten, each situation is unique, and it is important to recognise and take your concerns seriously. As a parent, you should feel as safe and secure with this process as possible so that you may in turn reflect a positive outlook onto your child.

Settling In Methods Should:

- Be child-centred and take each child's individual needs into account.
- Consider the needs of the family.
- Value and respect the views of all participants in the process.
- Have a flexible timeline.

BUILDING TRUST

Taking into account the range of emotions you may be experiencing during this time is important. Speaking with your child's educators during the first few days to get an overview of the process will allow you to form your initial views of the kindergarten and start a relationship with them.

Some kindergartens may do home visits and can discuss the settling in process and address any questions

you may have at this time. Others will have the initial settling in talk at the kindergarten, with a visit arranged for both you and your child to see the place together. Make the most of this opportunity to ask any pressing questions and share important information with your child's new educators. This is the best time to start the process of building a bond of trust between you and the kindergarten. This trust will enable you to impart confidence on your child when they start at the kindergarten.

GOING WITH THE FLOW

Although not always easy, it is important that you try to relax during this early sensitive stage. Children are tuned into the moods in their environment and can notice when parents are worried or nervous. Children have their own daily rhythm that reflects the rhythm of your family life. This natural rhythm will adapt and change over time to suit new situations. When settled and comfortably attending the kindergarten, children will naturally adapt to the rhythm of this new environment. It is natural that your child may be nervous. Validating their feelings, allowing them to adjust at their own pace and offering them security is a vital part of the process. If there are

questions or concerns regarding the day to day routines and schedules, you should be able to discuss these with educators and staff at the kindergarten.

GETTING TO KNOW A NEW LANGUAGE

If the language of the kindergarten is different from your home language, it is beneficial to talk to the kindergarten about techniques and ways to help your child understand the daily structure. If you have recently relocated and are in need of language services yourself, the kindergarten may have access to resources that can help you to navigate your new environment.

Building Bridges Between Home and Kindergarten Language

- The educators may have ideas and materials for what you can do at home with your child to help support them as they learn about a new language in the kindergarten.
- Talking to your child at home about their daily schedule, which should be given to you by their educators, will help prepare them for what will happen in the classroom.

PREPARATIONS AT HOME

Joining a new kindergarten is a big change for children and their families. To make the settling in process smoother and easier, families can do the following:

- Get to know the settling in process in the kindergarten and what will be expected of you during this time.
 - Explain the process in a simple way to your child. During the initial meeting, you could ask for the kindergarten's timeline and use this with your child.
 - Involve your child in the preparations. Keep the mood light and positive. Go shopping together for anything required when joining the kindergarten such as a backpack, water bottle or a new stuffed animal.
 - Breastfeeding: create a rhythm so that your child no longer needs breastfeeding during the hours they will be at kindergarten.
- Prepare anything else your child may need to make them feel secure in the setting. You can bring a family photo from home, a sleeping toy and/or a blanket that can help with settling in.

As this may be the first time your child is in an institutionalised social setting, they will probably notice many differences in the routines at kindergartens compared to those at home. Remaining consistent in your own routines will allow the settling in process to support you and your child.

All children approach the settling in process differently. While some children may be confident to walk in independently, others will benefit from a more structured and supportive start. The main objective is to create an open dialogue with your kindergarten educators to find out what works best for you and your child. Working together with the educators in the kindergarten will provide your child with the best chance to have a happy and successful transition into the new setting.

Easing Transitions During the Kindergarten Day

Drop-off and developing a farewell ritual with your child

When you bring your child to the kindergarten in the morning, try to be calm and relaxed. You should always say goodbye to your child in the same way each day. For example, with a hug, a kiss or a positive message such as, "I'm leaving now, I'll pick you up later. Have a great day!"

Picking up your child from kindergarten

It is important for your child to understand that when you return, it is not to play but to say goodbye and leave for the day. Try to avoid prolonging the departure as it may be confusing, especially early on in the process. It is also very important to be fully present and to give your child your full attention. Ask about your child's day from the educator and give your child positive feedback.

At home

Recap your child's day with them, noting anything that the educators discussed during the end of day feedback. Depending on your child's age, you may be doing most of the talking. Remember to use positive language! Try not to put pressure on your child to provide information, but rather give them the time and space to share any information, concerns or successes they had during the day on their own terms.

CHAPTER 2

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Open communication between educators and families is vital when building and sustaining a positive and supportive partnership. It is important that both sides make efforts to show their commitment to and interest in the child's development through expressing cultural concerns, differences, habits and any other important information in order to succeed. From parent-educator relationships to play dates, this chapter will explore how culture can affect the ways in which we adapt to new environments and provide tips on how to successfully build relationships within them.

INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCES

When a family is entering into a new kindergarten, the child's educators will want to learn more about the family's culture at home in order to better

help the child and encourage communication with the parents. Educators will also be sure to clarify information they have received with the families to confirm that everything is accurate.

For families and children, familiarising yourselves with the new kindergarten can be a first step in recognising and experiencing this diversity. For children, it may be that some values which are present in their home culture are experienced differently in the second culture (whether it be a national or kindergarten specific culture). Families can hold on to their own culture and also help their children understand and prepare for new patterns, routines and concepts that may be different from what they do at home.

Only a few things about a culture are immediately visible. In fact, only 10%

of a culture, the so-called “surface culture”, is visible from the outside. The other 90% is made up of structures that cannot be seen straight away (Hall, 1976). As demonstrated in the chart below, there are many aspects

of a person's culture that are initially unknown, making it additionally important for families to inform educators of any of these deeper cultural aspects that may help them and their child with the settling in process.

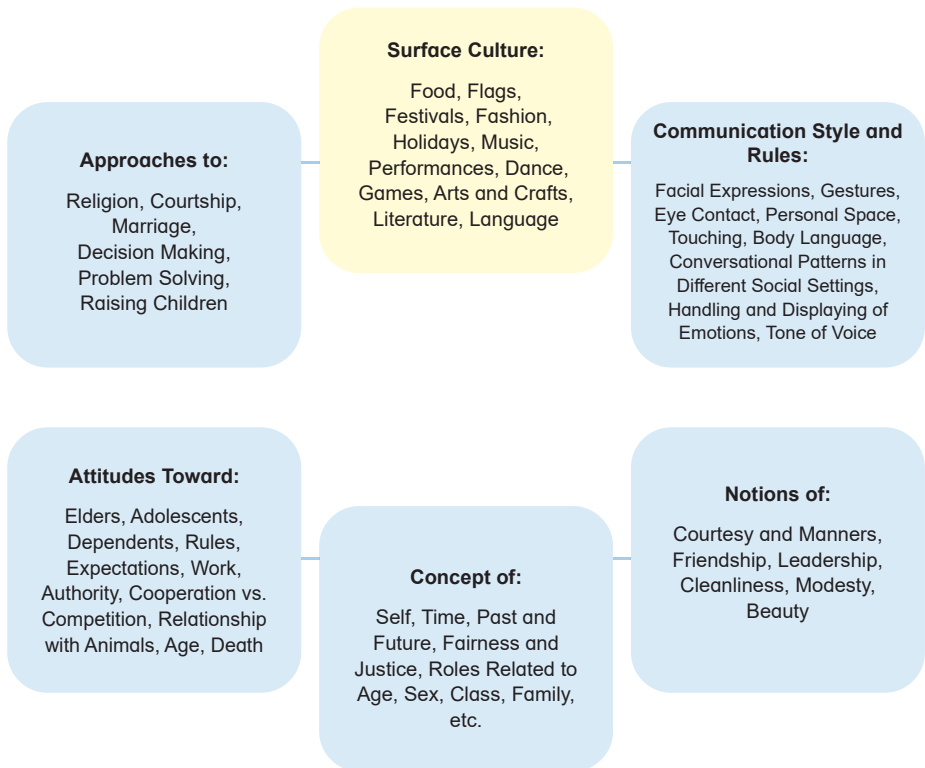


Chart: Adapted from Hall's Concept of the Cultural Iceberg (Hall, 1976).

In a diverse team and kindergarten, there will inevitably be people with many different physical traits as well. Children who are used to being surrounded by people with similar appearances to themselves could potentially be overwhelmed by this change and

may need a “settling in” in this regard. It is important for parents to observe how their children are reacting to their new environments and to communicate with the educators if they notice that their child may need additional support in any area.

Reflecting Diversity at Home

Read stories with your child that represent a range of people with different backgrounds, abilities, personalities, interests and gender identities. Books which include images of various types of people provide children a window to other parts of the world and help them to gain an understanding of the diversity within it (Bishop, 1990).

Fostering a line of communication and taking an interest in the home cultures of the children of their class is the role of the educator. Providing them with context, cultural background and home habits of the child and their family environment can help to clear up a variety of cultural differences and helps educators understand the child's situation better. Good communication and cooperation between educators and families are the key to success.

PARENTS AS PARTNERS

The relationship between parents and educators is vital to not only further the

educational and developmental opportunities for the child, but to make certain they have the best opportunity to thrive. Forming professional relationships with educators who do not know your family and can potentially have expectations that your family does not understand may present certain challenges (Braukhane & Knobeloch, 2011). The following section aims to provide tools for you to use to work constructively together with your child's educator while keeping your child's best interests in mind.

Educators have clear visions and goals about how the routine in their kindergarten group should work. Families

from cultures with different pedagogical ideas/beliefs should express their concerns and sensitivities early on to help create comfort and trust (Siegel & Bryson, 2018). The chart below presents the main conditions of an intercultural parent - educator partnership.

Parents are responsible for following rules regarding the environment and settling in and should ask questions if something is unclear. Educators are responsible for clearly explaining why rules exist, how they are deve-

lopmentally appropriate and how they support the child's wellbeing. Parents need to be open to discussing different techniques and to their children adapting to different boundaries and rules. Parents may also find that these approaches and techniques could be helpful at home.

Occasionally, you may have different opinions to your child's educators. It is important to voice your concerns and find the appropriate channels to further discuss standards, routines and

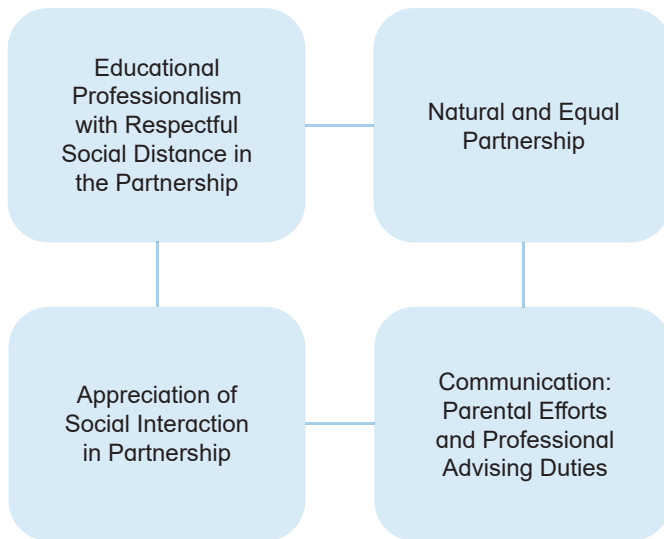


Chart: Conditions of an Intercultural Parent-Educator Partnership. Created by Berlin Cosmopolitan School. Adapted from concepts in (Hujala, Turja, Gaspar, Veisson, & Waniganayake, 2009).

procedures within the kindergarten. If you feel that your concerns are not taken seriously, the manager/principal/director of the setting should be able to provide you with more information and support.

PLAY DATES

Children benefit from the joys of interacting and spending time with one another. Play dates with other children are a great way to give your child the

Preparing for a Play Date with a New Peer

- **Food and special diets:** Diets may be culturally specific, or preference based, and it is important to show acceptance of other parents' choices for their children. This may mean offering vegetarian options and foods with lower sugar content. Be understanding if parents and children bring their own food and if you are not sure if your dietary needs will be met, feel free to ask the host!
- **Family cultures:** Some families may expect to drink tea or coffee before leaving their child alone with another family, while others will simply drop their child off at the door.
- **Dropping children off:** The age at which a child stays alone with another family varies from culture to culture, but especially from child to child. If parents leave their children alone with another family, they should always be available and leave an emergency number. If children do not want to stay alone with other families, this time can be used so that parents can get to know each other. It is helpful to communicate in advance whether a play date with or without parents is being considered and whether this is in the best interest of all children.

opportunity to develop social skills and make friends. These meetings are mostly free play arrangements aimed to motivate and encourage social interaction, promote an acknowledgement of differences and similarities and foster an understanding of how everyone is different.

Through play dates, parents can model how to have positive interactions with others. The more effective modelling from a parent the child has, the more likely they are to move out of their comfort zone and be open to new people and situations.

If your child is new to the group or does not have spoken language yet, ask educators who your child enjoys playing with or might interact positively with. Embrace the range of different friendships your child may make. Every friendship offers new and unique experiences for your child!

In addition to play dates, birthday parties are a great opportunity to bring the whole group together. Parties can happen at a playground or other spaces such as children's cafes,

theatres, museums and neighbourhood houses. It is a great opportunity to connect with other parents and get to know each other. By celebrating together, everyone feels included, and new families quickly become part of the community.

It is a good idea to arrange play dates with different children and take turns with other parents. Being open, fair, respectful and empathetic are key in these arrangements. Working in partnership with educators and other families is an important part of not only your child's transition into the new kindergarten community, but to develop your own community in the new environment. Play dates can also facilitate a sense of community, which can in turn help to foster a feeling of belonging in the community.

Remember to focus on your own sense of well-being as well as that of your child. Parents who feel confident and happy in their environment are more capable of ensuring children are equipped with the tools they need to thrive.



CHAPTER 3

DAY TO DAY ROUTINES

Daily routines at the kindergarten are needed to assure the health and care of your child. They should be consistent and follow all health and safety regulations which will be in effect in most countries. This chapter will discuss the importance of routines, specifically when beginning at a mul-

tilingual kindergarten, how to balance routines from home and school, the importance of a daily schedule and differing approaches to rest, mealtimes and how a new climate can affect a child's routine. Additionally, you will read about how routines can contribute to your child's language acquisition.

Important Routines to Consider

- Mealtimes
- Sleep and quiet times
- Hygiene tasks such as handwashing and nappy changing
- Toileting
- Getting dressed and undressed

What other routines are important in your household?

Where adults can usually cope with changes when necessary, a child needs more preparation and support to help process new situations. Children first obtain their sense of security through close contact with parents or caregivers and regular routines in the home. Children see their home routines as familiar and comforting and they actively rely on them from an early age. When children start at kindergarten or change kindergartens, their home routine will inevitably experience some change as well. The goal of established routines is to help your child feel comfortable both at home

and in the kindergarten. The information you provide to the kindergarten can help guarantee that your child's home routines are reflected and supported in the routines in the kindergarten.

Your kindergarten should know the following information about your home routines:

- What are your daily routines for meal-times, sleep times, outdoor activities and hobbies?
- When is your main family meal?
- Where and when does your child nap during the day?
- How does your child eat? What are their favourite foods? What do they dislike? What utensils do they eat with?
- What are your child's toileting habits?

How the Kindergarten Might Support Your Child's Language Development

- Picture cards
- Timelines: a row of pictures sequencing the daily routine
- Repetitive words for familiar routines like: "tidy up time" and "snack time"
- Small pieces of the child's home language incorporated into the daily routines

It is important to provide further information if your child has attended a previous kindergarten:

- What were the similarities and differences?
- What routines and schedules were followed?
- What languages were used?

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN HOME AND KIN- DERGARTEN

It is normal to have concerns at the beginning of a new kindergarten experience. You may feel that your child is experiencing some form of regression relating to their sleeping and eating habits which may cause you as a parent to worry. Furthermore, you may also worry about how they are coping with their surroundings in a language they may not understand.

Through efficient communication, educators can help clarify the schedule and the changes in behaviour, which may be common in the group, and can provide strategies and materials the kindergarten is using for language development.

Reflecting the Routines at Home

Consider asking the kindergarten for a copy of the daily schedule and timeline. Discuss the schedule with your child in your home language to reinforce the routines and assist your child to understand them in the kindergarten.

Most kindergartens may vary in their organisation of routines. Routines may be developed for their specific kindergarten or structured to align with their pedagogical philosophy. One system that concentrates heavily on routines is the Pikler approach.

The Emmi Pikler Approach

One of the focuses of the Pikler approach is the slowing down of today's society. Instead of rushing through routines, going from activity to activity in a calm, peaceful environment is prioritised. Educators take on the role as caregivers who work at the pace of the children with a constant verbal and non-verbal dialogue between themselves and the child. Children direct the routine and time for sharing the experience together. The routines are the main focus rather than simply necessary transitions to begin the next activity. Although the Pikler approach was originally developed for children living in the Lóczy orphanage in Budapest in the mid twentieth century, this philosophy resonates in the twenty-first century as many daily routines and caring moments have become rushed in our fast-paced world.

SLEEPING, NAPPING AND QUIET TIME

If you consider all of the different sleep cultures from around the world regarding how a child is accompanied to sleep, you will find significant differences not only from culture to culture but from family to family within (Owens, 2011). There is a question of how far a kindergarten can respond to the individual sleeping habits and needs of each child. Parental wishes, observations of specialists, age mixture within the group and opinions of educators may not always be in harmony. Every child

has a different need for sleep and require different types of support falling asleep. Some children fall asleep outside in a pushchair, others in bed with a favourite toy or blanket or to a story being read aloud. While still respecting the routine and the sleep habits of other children in the group, the kindergarten and parents should consider together how much sleep is necessary for the child and what kind of sleep aids can be provided. Parents should keep in mind that during the settling in period, sleep in the kindergarten may initially influence sleeping patterns at home.

Making Sleep and Naptime Easier

- Consider bringing a comfort item from home.
- Discuss the sleep time in your home language.
- Inquire about the nap time environment, what the children are sleeping on and what the staff do to aid sleep.
- Ask questions about the age in which children will stop sleeping and what kind of relaxation time children will have instead.

WEATHER AND APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Depending on your child's experience of climate, the process of getting ready to go outside may differ from what they are familiar with. Being used to a warm and dry environment could create discomfort for the children while being dressed to go out to play in wet and cold conditions. The necessity to wear many layers before leaving home in the morning can cause stress even before arriving at the kindergarten and may make outside play a difficult experience. On the other hand, if a child is used to lower temperatures, they may

feel overheated and uncomfortable when expected to wear heavy winter gear at the kindergarten. Going out in the rain may be difficult for some children, as getting wet may not be a pleasant experience for them. Other children will thrive in wet weather and happily splash in puddles until they are soaked. The joys of outside play are an important part of learning and growing. The most important thing is for the kindergarten to understand what your child is used to in terms of climate and clothing so that they are prepared to work with you to make this specific aspect of the transition easier.

Making the Most of Outside Play

- If possible, visit the playground together before you start at the kindergarten.
- Shop for weather-appropriate clothes together.
- Investigate the different feelings, colours and textures of each piece of clothing before starting the kindergarten.
- Discuss how to play in puddles and other outside areas safely.
- Find age appropriate books about the weather (for example, *Froggy Gets Dressed*, *The Snowy Day*).

FOOD AND CELEBRATIONS

Food and eating habits differ across cultures. Mealtimes are an important part of our cultural identity; these traditions form a large part of who we are and should be respected. The food within the kindergarten will usually represent the dietary needs and regulations of the country. It is important that you are clear about your child's dietary requirements before you start at the kindergarten so they can offer a suitable alternative.

It is normal to be concerned about the amount your child is eating and your

child's educators should be open to discussing this with you. If the kindergarten allows, you may also be able to bring food from home or a nutritional supplement if it seems necessary.

Routines are repetitive in both language and experience and thus provide a foundation for learning multiple languages. Words such as 'toilet,' 'cracker,' 'water' and 'milk' will become the building blocks for greater language acquisition. Your child will benefit from this stability, enabling them to feel secure and to investigate this new environment with joy and confidence.

Making Mealtimes Tasty

- Your kindergarten should provide a menu with the snacks and meals for the week. Discuss these in your home language so your child is prepared for the meals as they may look different to the meals you enjoy at home.
- Check that the kindergarten maintains a list of any allergies to specific foods. Please also communicate foods that your child does not eat for cultural reasons.
- Enjoy some of the same meals at home on occasion or use the same ingredients in your own style of cooking.
- If there is a special cultural celebration, ask if you can participate by preparing a dish for or with the children.

- When your child is verbal enough, it is great to talk with your child about what they ate in the kindergarten to help them reflect on the new foods they have tried. This is also a way for you to learn what they like to eat while at kindergarten.

CHAPTER 4

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

Social-emotional competence is the ability to interact positively with others, regulate emotions and behaviour, solve problems and communicate effectively (Innis, 2018). This chapter will discuss how to use this new experience to help your child develop skills which will allow them to make decisions and actively participate in their new environment.

In the kindergarten environment, the social and emotional development of your child goes hand in hand with many other aspects of learning and should provide a solid foundation for your child to conquer whatever challenges they may face in day to day life.

Research shows a strong link between social-emotional competence and cognitive development, language acquisition, mental health and general academic success (Houseman, 2017). The job of educators is not to simply develop your child's intellectual competencies, but rather to view their development from a holistic approach in order to support them in reaching their fullest potential in all developmental areas.

THE COMPETENT CHILD

The competent child is the one who is capable, not only in their eyes, but in the eyes of those around them.

The competent child is not pushed to be competent, but rather provided an encouraging environment that helps them succeed and allows them to build self-confidence. The competent child recognises their ability to contribute to their environment. This builds self-esteem, self-awareness and an interest in their own motivation (Staley, 1998).

Jesper Juul was a Danish family therapist who wrote several books on parent-teacher partnerships in which he encouraged adults to look at children from an equal perspective. He underlines the fact that raising a competent child takes more than just speaking in a democratic way; it also requires developing a dialog based on equality.

He sees competent children as those who are teaching parents what they need to learn. Children offer you the feedback you need in order to gain your own competence and be able to dispose of all behavioural patterns that have proved to be unproductive in the past (Juul, 2011).

As a parent, it is important to take your child's experiences and personality into consideration. These aspects of a child's experience help contribute to competence, which can support their ability to make decisions and participate in activities.

Raising a Competent Child

- Lead by example. Foster an environment of respect and understanding for others. Your child watches you in social interactions and learns how to use these skills in their own relationships.
- Remember that you are also in a learning process, just like your child. Show them that you are also open to new experiences.
- Listen to your child. Children have a voice and they want to be heard. Having them as a part of the decision-making process will give them a sense of empowerment.

Fun Ways to Develop Emotional Competence Outside of the Classroom

- Play lots of games (board or card games for example) which encourage waiting for a turn and following rules. Taking turns with other children during play is a skill to be developed.
- Encourage your child to help around the house and give them small tasks to participate in. Your child could help set the table for mealtimes, help in food preparation, load the dishwasher or any other age-appropriate routines in your home.
- Visit your local library, bookshop or order books online. Read books to your child about all kinds of emotions and social situations. Your child will love repetition so do not be concerned if they request the same book multiple times.
- Books help to develop vocabulary. By reading books with new words, children's vocabulary will expand and they will have more words through which to express themselves, in turn helping them in building relationships.
- Facilitate role play for children to re-enact and experience emotions and social situations in a safe environment.
- Expose your child to theatre, music and films that include a theme of sharing, caring, problem solving, respect and emotions.
- Together with your child, find a way of helping regulate feelings of frustration that works both at home and kindergarten.
- Take your child on play dates with children in the neighbourhood or ask an educator at kindergarten who your child likes to play with to encourage positive interactions.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE

In life, we are given a range of different challenges and we must not only overcome them, but find ways to make the most of them. What does this mean for your family and your child? You and your family may encounter changes such as the beginning of kindergarten, the start of school, the birth of siblings, separation or moving to a new house/location. As a family, you have probably had some hesitations towards the prospect of your child starting a kindergarten in a new language and possibly a new country. It is important not only to help your child settle into a new environment, but also provide them with the tools to succeed within it.

When a child has developed resilience, it is easier to demonstrate autonomy, social competence, problem solving skills and to understand surrounding situations (Bernard, 1995). Building off of this, children entering a new environment may not have needed to develop resilience, and this is where fostering prosilience comes into play. Working closely with the educators in your child's kindergarten towards developing prosilience will help your child feel confident and in control of

their new environment. When facing new challenges in kindergarten, your child has the potential to gain positive resources that will serve them throughout their whole life.

WHAT IS PROSILIENCE?

As we all know, life is full of unexpected situations, which could unsettle adults and children alike. Resilience is one of the most important skills a person could have in order to live a balanced life and be able to move on after facing a challenging situation. Resilience is the force that helps us deal with a negative experience *after* it happened. Prosilience is the skill that helps us prepare for future challenges *before* they happen (Hoopes, 2017). Prosilience is the proactive attitude a person has, which makes it possible for them to strengthen their resilience.

The researchers on this team understand the term prosilience to be a link between social-emotional competence and resilience.

In this section, we will explore how some of the factors which help to foster resilience in children can be applied to prosilience and consequently what role it can play in the settling in process (Frölich-Gildhoff, 2015).

How Prosilience Relates to Resilience and Social-Emotional Competence

Resilient individuals are not resilient on their own, similarly the idea of prosilience requires leaders in the child's life to help them build up these tools of competence, self-esteem and ability to participate to develop prosilience. The idea of prosilience puts its focus on resources and competencies, combined with the power of positive thinking.

1. SELF-PERCEPTION

When children first begin to perceive themselves, they do it through the eyes of the people in the environment around

them. While interacting with others, children observe temperament, tone of voice, facial expressions and body movements. These can all affect how the child in turn perceives himself.

Change of Perspective

If a child feels sincerely accepted with all of their strengths and weaknesses and not only valued when they have done something particularly well, it will be easier for the child to build up psychological resilience (Hüther, 2008).

Often a change of perspective can help: a child who is described as stubborn could equally be perceived as persistent. In order to support a healthy self-perception in children, parents need to be able to see their children's traits in a positive light and model this type of language and attitude for them. In doing so, they are able to plant the seeds of prosilience by providing personal language that helps to shape the child's perception of who they are.

2. SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is the ability to control your reactions in moments of high emotions. It is our job as adults to help children learn how to identify and name these emotions so that they may better regulate them.

The support we provide contributes to fostering resilience by helping children to have the confidence and understanding that they can calm themselves down or ask for help as needed. Young children are still developing their abilities to regulate on their own and must be provided the space and support to do so.

Development of Self-Regulation

During the settling in process, parental and educator support in self-regulation will look different at each age.

- In general, the younger the child, the more modelling they may need. Parents may also use a transitional object, such as a blanket or cuddle toy to help young children settle in and feel more comfortable without their parent here. These objects may later be gently phased out.
- Older children may need support self-regulating through daily challenges which may upset them such as falling down, experiencing a conflict with a peer, etc. It is important that regardless of the challenge, children begin to realise and show signs of understanding that they will be okay, even without a parent from home present. When comfort is found with the educator nearby and the child begins to calm down on their own, this is a positive sign that the settling in process is working.

Modelling and Supporting Self-Regulation

- Maintain a calm attitude when your child becomes frustrated or upset.
- If they fall, instead of immediately rushing to their side, calmly ask, “Are you okay?”
- Use positive words when your child is upset to help them view the situation from a more positive perspective. For example, when leaving from the kindergarten, you can say “You are going to have a great day!” or “I will come to pick you up soon.” instead of “I’m sorry I have to go.”
- As your child is working on something that is difficult for them, show support, but also help them understand that it is okay not to reach their goal right away.
- Help your child prepare themselves for the moments that may cause them disappointment and might be difficult to control. One of these moments could be the time you need to leave the park or when you need to tidy up the toys to start another activity. A simple warning such as “In 5 minutes, we will tidy up and get ready for bed.” is beneficial to assist in this process.

3. SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is a child's ability to believe they can take on or perform a task. This trait helps children to reach a goal as well as push through difficult moments. A child's belief or trust in their own abilities is important for the way they approach a situation. These abilities depend on the child's own previous experiences (Frölich-Gildhoff, 2015).

You can support your child's self-efficacy by giving them opportunities to make their own choices and participate in their own environment. The confidence they feel in being active participants can help them handle future challenges. Resilient children are proud of themselves and their achievements. They firmly know their actions can make a difference, they accept difficult tasks as opportunities and are confident in their abilities. When entering the kindergarten for the first time, promoting their self-efficacy in the new environment will be extremely important. If they see themselves as a competent participant in their new classroom community, it will contribute to their growing sense of self-efficacy.

4. SOCIAL COMPETENCE

Children's social competence is about learning to build relationships with peers and adults around them. Having people to rely on when you enter an unexpected situation makes it a lot easier to get through. Relationships with the people around us become a support network, and as the network strengthens, so will the support we receive.

When children begin kindergarten, they need the support of their parents and educators to form friendships with their peers and build trust with their educators. A great way to help your child build their social competence is by modelling positive relationships with those around you; demonstrating friendliness and showing empathy towards the people you encounter. If a child has not had much social experience prior to entering kindergarten, the initial contact with so many new people may feel overwhelming. You can help them prepare for this by talking about the new children they will meet and by reading stories about making new friends and going to kindergar-

ten. Social competence contributes to a child's prosilience by helping the child feel confident and comfortable relying on the connections they have made and the support they can gain through them.

Promoting Self-Efficacy

- Give children participation rights: Participation rights refer to giving children the knowledge that they can take part in their environment. Examples of this include: Giving them choices of what to wear to kindergarten, asking if they want to hold your hand or walk into the classroom, having them help to unpack their water bottle, hang up their coat, etc.
- Show empathy: Showing your child you understand that a situation is frustrating or difficult will help them feel encouraged to try. "I know we left your water bottle at home today, and I can tell that this is bothering you, but I believe that you and your teacher can get a cup to drink out of and I know that it will be alright."
- Be patient: As your child is learning to be self-sufficient and take part in their environment, it is the role of the parents to let them try and wait until they ask for help before stepping in. For example: If a child is trying to hang their coat on the hook at kindergarten and struggling, you can let them know, "I am here, just let me know if you'd like some help," but otherwise, let them try and give them encouragement as they work on the task.

5. PROBLEM SOLVING

The ability to problem solve provides children with a toolbox of skills that helps them to approach situations whether social or personal and to successfully tackle them. That means they can use these skills to learn how to set realistic goals for themselves, encourage themselves to take risks, explore their environment with confidence and to come up with their own solutions to challenges that come their way (Frölich-Gildhoff, 2015). In a new kindergarten, if a child already feels confident that they can solve or attempt to solve their own problems, they will be much more flexible and open to this new environment and the problems that might arise.

Children are born as competent, empathic and social human beings. By accepting and validating their emotions, supporting their relationships and respecting them, you help them build positive self-esteem. Children benefit from parents who they can learn from, and who can learn from them as they strengthen their relationship day by day, experience by experience. Through proactive approaches on the part of the educators and parents, pro-silience can promote the child's innate ability to be resilient.

Phrases to Facilitate Problem Solving

- “We can try it again soon.”
- “Let’s try to make the best of this situation.”
- “We will find a solution.”
- “You would like to build a house. How can you do that? What materials can you use?”
- “You and your sister both want to play with the baby, but there is only one. What can you do?”

Encouraging children to explore solutions to small challenges in their everyday life and teaching them to think outside the box is a great way to develop their problem solving skills.

CHAPTER 5

DIVERSITY AND ITS ROLE IN THE SETTLING IN PROCESS

Children are in the process of trying to make sense of the world around them. When children feel understood, it helps to support their independence and empowers them to explore and investigate their environments (Biermeier, 2015). This chapter will provide information for all families to learn more about what inclusion looks like within a kindergarten environment, and the approaches educators use to help children realise that they are understood and seen.

WHAT HELPS A CHILD FEEL UNDERSTOOD?

Not feeling understood can be discouraging. It can make a child feel left out or abandoned and in turn, cause them to doubt their own opinions, ultimately affecting their self-esteem. Not feeling understood can lead to frustration in children and this frustration can come

out in a variety of ways. When a child does feel understood, this can contribute to them feeling accepted and is an important way for them to know they are part of a community. Interaction with other people is a basic need for human beings. Feeling understood opens communication and allows the child to start exploring rather than worrying about whether or not someone will understand them.

There are various individual cues that children use to help adults understand their needs such as different types of crying, facial expressions, gestures and so on. A carer can observe and learn to read these signals to see each individual's needs with time. Children who are shown unconditional care and respect will find the understanding they require to function until they are better able to process the verbal information given to them.

WELCOMING ALL CHILDREN

All children have the right to social participation (Nations, 1989). All people, regardless of their cultural background or language, their individual abilities, their religious beliefs, gender identity or sexuality, have the right to participate in society and to have access to fair educational opportunities (Nations, 2006).

Educators will generally set up their classroom with different learning styles in mind. The play material may have sensory, nature and art options, allowing all children a range of experiences. Educators should review and make certain that their processes, structures and attitudes allow every child to participate, including those with additional needs.

It is necessary for a kindergarten to be informed if a child has previously been diagnosed with any additional learning needs. Parents and educators will discuss what will best help the child to settle in and develop a clear plan of what this could look like while allowing for flexibility where needed. It is good to talk about how to prepare for the first few days as it may be slightly different depending on the child's needs. If the parent has ideas of how the educators can better support their child, this would be a great time to share them. The more information parents can give and share, the better the process will be for everyone.

Promoting Understanding in the Classroom

When verbal communication is lacking, a word or gesture can be taught to help a child indicate their wants and needs. Consider sharing a few words in your home language with your child's educators which may help them to better understand your child until further verbal communication is established.

ALL TYPES OF FAMILIES

Families come in all shapes and sizes, including but not limited to families with parents identifying as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, etc. (LGBTI+), single parent families, families who have or are planning to have a child by way of insemination, surrogacy, or adoption, families who are co-parenting, patchwork families, etc. (Tomlins, 2018) (Hočevár, 2014).

Educators and professionals strive to build a community of families that can support each other. It is important that young children in a kindergarten grow up with an appreciation and respect for the diversity of families, identities, culture and ethnicities that surround them.

Early childhood education provides the ideal setting for children to learn about different identities and cultures while forming friendships with people from a wide range of backgrounds.

SELF-AWARENESS AND BIASES IN CHILDREN

Children who are in a kindergarten are at an age where experiences have a significant impact in laying the foundations for learning, behaviour, values and health. As children become more aware of their own physical traits and characteristics, they also become more aware of the differences between themselves and others. Children can form both positive and negative ideas and attitudes about these differences, also known as biases (Tomlins, 2018).

Being Open and Communicative

- Find time to welcome new parents to the community.
- All children have individual needs. Speaking openly with other parents can be a way to support one another.
- Arrange play dates outside of the kindergarten to support the settling in process.

All children have an equal right to play, learn, make friends and grow. Children are not judgemental by nature but can pick up on the negativity they hear or feel around them. If we remain open and receptive to the differences of others, they will do so as well and this will allow for an enriched learning environment for all children.

Early childhood is a crucial time to instill in children a sense of pride in family and identity, and an appreciation of diversity. By teaching children the importance of treating others equally and celebrating different families and cultures, parents and educators can have a significant impact on how children's attitudes develop.

Addressing Biases

- The main difficulty when addressing biases is that adults may be uncomfortable confronting sensitive topics. If a child makes a comment about a different type of family, it can be enough to simply acknowledge that there are indeed various family structures and to use examples that children can relate to.
- Children will reflect and respect your reactions to different types of family structures. New topics and novel situations may not be understood right away and will take time to process depending on the age of the child.
- Literature which depicts different family models can be particularly helpful when questions arise, but should also be available at all times in your child's library to encourage awareness. See the suggested reading section at the end of this handbook for some ideas.
- Responding to prejudice or discriminatory attitudes and behaviours can be particularly confronting. It is important for all children and families to deal with these issues together as soon as they arise. Educators should always be available for support if needed.

CONCLUSION

It is our hope that this handbook has provided you with useful concepts and tools on the best ways to support your child's social-emotional competence in their new kindergarten environment. Through sharing our own experiences with settling in children into an international setting, we hope that you have gained further insight and feel more confident as you enter into the process yourself.

The key ideas that we would like you to take away from this handbook are:

- how to benefit from intercultural experiences,
- how to better understand differences that you and your child may encounter and how to approach them together,
- ways to best communicate with your child's educators,
- and ways to create positive relationships throughout the entire kindergarten community.

With this information, we encourage you to strengthen your family's routines in addition to embracing new ones, building a bridge between home and kindergarten.

It is our wish for you that reading this material has helped you feel inspired and excited to begin this partnership with your child's educators and that you will be able to take the knowledge gained here and apply it to your own upcoming settling in experience. We hope that you will continue to return to this handbook for additional support when needed.

As educators, we thank you for your dedication to supporting your child's best interests and for giving us your time and attention. We wish you all the best as you and your family begin this new adventure!

MATERIAL LIST: EDUCATORS AND PARENTS AS PARTNERS

PARENT AND CHILD MATERIALS

PARENT / CHILD RECIPE SAMPLE

This material is a suggestion of what educators could do to help families feel more comfortable with the food being served in the kindergarten. It provides a sample recipe, written in a child-friendly way with pictures, big letters, and simple instructions. Families can make dishes with their child in anticipation of what may be served at the kindergarten.

SPOTIFY PLAYLISTS

This material focuses on the auditory connection children make between home and kindergarten. There are a variety of pre-made playlists provided as an example of how music from different cultural celebrations can be played both at home and school to reinforce this home/school connection as well as the importance of celebrating all cultures.

COLOURFUL FRIENDS

This material explores language connections through drawings and colours

and is recommended for children three and above. These pictures can be given to families to help children learn simple words, such as colours and how to say hello in the language of their new kindergarten.

GLOSSARY

Definitions to apply in a kindergarten context:

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is a two-way communication process where both participants of a conversation feel understood. It shows empathy and allows the listener to interpret and evaluate what they hear. It is a technique and an attitude that fosters positive communication skills (Active Listening and i-messages, N.D.) (Jalongo, 1995).

BILINGUAL / BILINGUALISM

Bilingualism is the ability to use two languages equally. These languages can be acquired simultaneously, learning two languages at the same time from birth, or by successively learning the second language after the first language has already been established (Ianco -Worrell, 1972) (Lexico, 2019)

BONDING

According to the Oxford dictionary definition (n.d.), “Bonding is the establishment of a relationship or link with someone based on shared feelings, interests, or experiences (Bonding).” In this text, researchers used concepts applied by Emmi Pikler and write about bonding keeping the theories of John Bowlby in mind (Tardos, 2007) (Bowlby, 1969).

COMPETENCE

Competence, according to the New Oxford Dictionary of English definition (n.d.), “is the ability to do something successfully or efficiently (Competence).” In the early childhood context, researchers refer to the concept of The Competent Child as referred to in Reggio Emilia (Edwards, et al., 2012), as well as Jesper Juul’s explanations of competent children (Juul, 2011).

DIVERSITY SENSITIVE EDUCATION

In this handbook, this term refers to diverse approaches of addressing the different living conditions and group affiliations as well as the different abilities, talents or disabilities of a child and provides the basis of a bias-aware pedagogy.

Specialists in kindergartens should note the diversity and heterogeneity

of the children sensitively and design their pedagogical work around their respective needs. Basic dimensions of diversity in a kindergarten could include:

- gender,
- culture/ethnicity,
- additional educational needs,
- and the socioeconomic situation of children and their families.

Diversity-conscious education aims to counteract the exclusion and stigmatisation of people on the basis of prejudices and biases. Respect, empathy, tolerance, acceptance and appreciation towards other people and cultures should be promoted (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2009).

GENDER / GENDER ROLES

Traditionally, gender is the division of people into two categories: “men” and “women.” Gender roles are learned behaviours by a person as appropriate to their gender, determined by the prevailing cultural norms (Eicher & Roach-Higgins, 1992). In these handbooks, the authors approach the topic of gender norms when referring to all types of children and families in the attempt to stray away from gender norms and focus on people as individuals.

INTERCULTURALISM

Interculturalism refers to when people from different cultural backgrounds mutually share concepts and accept what the others consider to be culturally 'normal'. This exchange of ideas creates a respect for these other cultures and fosters the forming of strong relationships (Hujala, Turja, Gaspar, Veisson, & Waniganayake, 2009).

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism refers to the social structures of an organisation or society, where different cultures co-exist. The authors of this handbook consider teaching and understanding multiculturalism as a value as it helps children to have a better understanding and knowledge of their own culture as well as helping them to be respectfully informed of other cultures (Blum, 1992).

MULTILINGUALISM

Multilingualism is the ability to use more than two languages equally. These languages can be acquired simultaneously, learning multiple languages at the same time from birth, or by successively learning languages after the first language has already been established (De Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2007).

PARENT-EDUCATOR PARTNERSHIP

An educational partnership is the shared responsibility and cooperation of parents and educators in relation to the education of a child based on dialogue and communication. Developmental and educational goals are shared, discussed and agreed upon for the benefit of the child. Parents and educators educate children together by providing them with developmental and learning aids for a variety of situations (Christenson & Cleary, 1990). Educational goals, topics and interests of the child are exchanged and deepened.

PROSILIENCE

Prosilience is the ability to successfully adapt to life's tasks in the face of adverse conditions or to "bounce back" from negative experiences (Hoopes, 2017).

ROLE MODEL

A role model is someone who sets a good example for others. Children look to their family members as examples to follow. In the context of this handbook, the authors refer to role models as educators, parents or someone who can demonstrate positive ways for children to interact with and understand their environments.

SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is the awareness of one's own body and feelings which develops out of experiences (Staley, 1998).

SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is the conviction that a person can master difficult tasks or life problems on the basis of one's own competencies. A child with high self-efficacy is confident that they can accomplish their desires. Since this ability is best developed through experience, it is important that the level of difficulty of the task is individually tailored to each child (Policy, 2018) (Bar-on & Elias, 2007).

SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation is the ability to manage disruptive emotions, behaviours and impulses. This is achieved through introspection, self-assessment and metacognition (the awareness and understanding of one's own thought process) (Housman, 2017). This means that the child consciously perceives the different aspects of his or her behaviour, then successfully evaluates and executes the steps needed to redirect their emotions in order to achieve a more positive outcome. Age

appropriate emotional self-regulation is often a core competence a child has to learn (in kindergarten).

SENSITIVITY

The concept of "sensitivity" was developed by Mary Ainsworth as part of her research on the quality of mother-baby bonding. Through a sensitive approach, based on an accepting and appreciative attitude, educators support the children's education and development processes. The educators perceive the interests, needs and signals of the children, observe them and/or ask questions to create an overall atmosphere in which the children feel comfortable, accepted and safe. The pedagogical experts are also aware that general conditions (structures of everyday life, the colleague's absence, etc.) can influence sensitivity (Pederson, Bailey, Tarabulsky, Bento, & Moran, 2014).

TRANSITION

Transitions are a critical life event that can have a positive or negative effect on the development of a child (Hedegaard & Flear, 2019). If adaptation to the new situation is not successful, stress can arise. How children manage a transition depends, among other things, on their psychological

resilience. Examples of significant transitions for children are; transition to the kindergarten, primary school and secondary school, transition into adolescence, the separation or divorce of parents, the birth of a sibling as well as moving to a new home.

TRUST

Trust, or basic trust is understood in psychology as the inner emotional security that a child develops in the first months of their life. This basic trust arises from positive life experiences, exemplifying a secure arrangement in the world and security that their personal needs will be met. Primary trust can develop when the parent continuously and consistently looks after a child, and lovingly supports their development (Erikson, 1963).

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Children need healthy environments in which to grow, develop, play and learn. Their environments are complex and ever-changing.

The adult can be a role model, providing children with appropriate, healthy options and behaviour in all aspects of life.

This way, educators and families are helping children develop into confident, independent people who have a strong sense of self-efficacy, empathy and are internationally minded.

