

Emotions in Context

Three main contextual factors dictate how emotions are expressed in the classroom.

- **Age:** Older classrooms look different emotionally than younger classrooms. As children age, they become better at utilizing strategies to control their emotions.
- **Environment:** Different environments have different rules governing how emotions are expressed. Young children are beginning to understand what is acceptable at home is not always what is acceptable in the classroom.
- **Social:** As with environment, emotion expression depends on who is around. Children's emotion expression is different with peers and siblings than with teachers and parents.



Dr. Susanne Denham

Susanne Denham, Ph.D., of George Mason University, is an Applied Developmental Psychologist with expertise in social and emotional development of children. Apart from using her experience as a mother of three to initiate and explore her research on emotion and development in children, Dr. Denham has also used her 11 year, hands-on experience as a school psychologist to guide her research. She has authored numerous articles, book chapters, and two books on varying topics, from emotional and social competence in preschoolers and older children, to developmental psychopathology. Currently, Dr. Denham and her lab are investigating how teachers promote emotional competence in the preschool classroom.



EMOTIONS in the Classroom



Child Development Lab
George Mason University

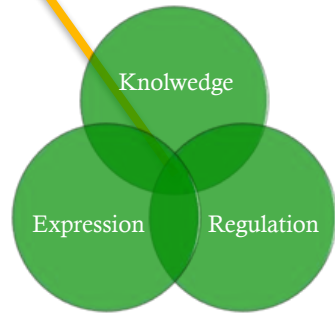
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-Created by Craig S. Bailey-

Emotional Competence



Emotions in the Classroom

Emotions lay at the heart of all interactions. Emotions are what tell us which memories are important, which people we care about, and which things we like and dislike. Unfortunately, we don't all automatically become experts in understanding our own and others' emotions or at regulating our emotions. Children are constantly learning about emotions as they interact with others, which is why teacher and peer interactions in the classroom are so important. Emotions are so intertwined with the social world that many social problems arise when emotions are misunderstood or when emotions are poorly regulated. Therefore, teachers are active participants in children's development of *Emotional Competence*.

Promoting Emotional Competence

Knowledge of Emotion

Especially during preschool, children learn about their own emotions, and the emotions of others. Knowing more about emotions better equips children in social situations to understand emotions expression and emotion situations that elicit emotions.

What you can do:

- Talk openly about all emotions and emotion situations
- Use everyday situations as opportunities to learn about emotions, such as conflicts between children



Expression of Emotion

Children are learning how to use their emotions and how to properly express their emotions.

Continuous negative emotions are what separate calm classrooms from turbulent classrooms.

What you can do:

- Be sensitive to even subtle emotional states by watching children's faces listening to their voices
- Create and maintain a warm, positive classroom climate for emotions



Regulation of Emotion

The development of self-regulation is a big part of childhood. Being able to control their positive and negative emotional experiences allow children to express their feelings in a socially acceptable way.

What you can do:

- Encourage prosocial responses to emotional situations
- Promote problem solving skills during emotionally strong situations