

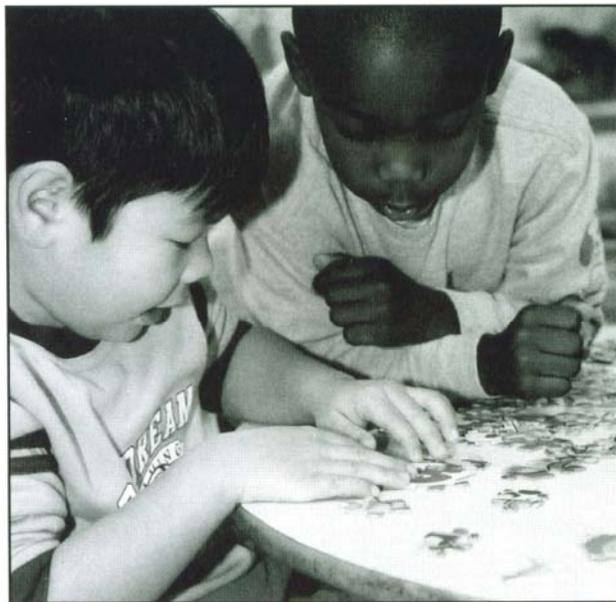
# BACK TO BASICS

## Social development

All children need the opportunity to grow into competent, caring adults. Loving support, a nurturing environment, and responsive adults contribute to a child's social development. Consider the developmental traits below and adjust according to the specific needs of the children in your care.

### Infants

- Need to be held and cuddled.
- Have distinct vocal patterns that indicate pain, hunger, discomfort, and need for social interaction. They need for you to respond immediately.
- Build brain connections through positive social interactions.
- Babble and coo—and need you to respond to continue the conversation.
- Search for the source of familiar sounds.
- Like to imitate actions such as clapping and waving bye-bye.
- Are lively and responsive to people they know and trust. They turn away from, ignore, or cry with others.



### Toddlers

- Show fear and distrust of unfamiliar people.
- Want you to be in sight—always.
- Offer toys and objects to others—and quickly take them back again. Toddlers are usually possessive about playthings; a favorite word is “mine.”
- Often repeat behaviors to get attention—from throwing food to jabbering on a toy telephone.
- Respond to simple requests and directions. They understand the meaning of the word “no” but will often test limits.
- Often develop an attachment to a toy, blanket, or stuffed animal for security.
- Let off steam by screaming and thrashing when frustrated, tired, or ignored.

### Preschoolers

- Want to be included in everything.
- Begin to understand concepts like taking turns and sharing, but often are unwilling to act on their understanding.
- Test language and social skills by arguing with adults and other children.
- Need opportunities for pretend and dramatic play activities, especially those that explore sex-role differences in everyday life.
- Need help distinguishing real from imaginary—especially among television, movie, and video characters and events.
- Respond well to choices rather than commands or open-ended requests.
- Have special friends, but best friends may change frequently. May have imaginary companions.

### School-agers

- Take part in group activities and are able to share materials, equipment, and attention.
- Like to tell jokes and make rhymes that show off new verbal dexterity and cognitive ability.
- Help with chores and tasks cheerfully.
- Continue to need adult support and comfort but are sometimes embarrassed to ask for help.
- Can be reluctant to show affection.
- Often resort to clingy, whiny, or aggressive behaviors during stressful times.
- Like group games, especially board games, and often compete to be the winner.
- Tend to be rigid in defining what's right and what's wrong. Compromise is difficult.
- Often defend sex-role stereotypes and usually prefer to play with children of the same sex.

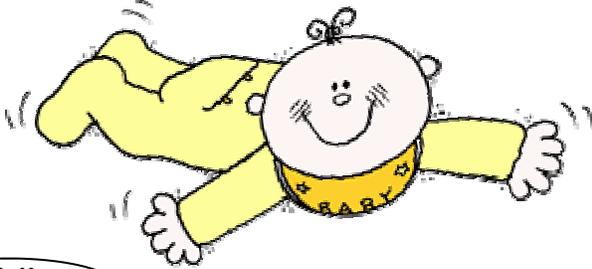
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This is the sixth of several pages of development information. Look for each one, printed on cardstock for durability, in our upcoming newsletters; we encourage you to collect each one for your files.

# Activities to Promote Social Development

## Infants

- **Look in the Mirror.** Sit on the floor with one baby at a time on your lap. Talk about his/her facial features. *Where are your eyes? Here they are! Your eyes are a beautiful brown color. Where is your nose? My nose is here, and your nose is right here!*
- **That's Me.** Ask families to provide photos of their infants. Photocopy and enlarge each photo. Laminate it, if possible. Place each baby's picture beside his/her crib. When you place the baby in the crib point to the photo. Say, *"That's you, Evan. We have your picture right beside your crib."* (The Complete Resource Book for Infants, by Pam Schiller.)



## Toddlers

- **Toys.** Toddlers are just learning a little about being social with other children. Encourage their interactions by purchasing toys such as a baby teeter-totter that requires two children to use it together. Then, when they sit on it, say *"Jo needs a friend, who can come and play with her?"* Or, encourage two children to join you holding hands to make a circle and sing:

*Motor Boat, Motor Boat, go so slow.*

*(walk very slowly in a circle)*

*Motor Boat, Motor Boat, go so fast.*

*(walk very quickly in a circle)*

*Motor Boat, Motor Boat, don't you CRASH! (everyone falls down giggling)*

- **Friendship Song.**

Tune: Do You Know the Muffin Man?

*Do you know you are my friend,  
You are my friend, you are my friend?  
Do you know you are my friend?  
I like to play with you.*

(The Complete Resource Book for Infants, by Pam Schiller.)

## Preschoolers

- **Mystery Person.** Tell the children you are thinking about someone in the group and that you would like them to guess who it is. You have some clues to help them guess. Select yourself as the first person to be guessed. Begin with a common characteristic and gradually become more specific. The children raise their hands when they think they know who it is. You might begin with clues like, "This person likes to play with puppets... this person likes fairy tales... this person is a teacher... this person is tall and has blond hair." Continue with clues about someone else. Once children understand the game, allow them to give the clues. (The Peaceful Classroom, by Charles A. Smith, Ph.D.)

## School-agers

- **Frankenclass.** Explain to the class that you will all be working together to make a very special paper person. Tell them that this person will be composed of drawings of everyone in the class. The children decide which part of the body they would like to be. One child can be the left hand, another the right foot, another the head, etc. Have each child lie on butcher paper so you can draw an outline of their chosen body part. Cut out the different outlines and have children decorate them with paint or crayons and write their name on their part of the body. The individual body parts should then be taped or stapled together to hang up on the wall. Use the occasion to discuss the range of physical differences in the class. (The Peaceful Classroom, by Charles A. Smith, Ph.D.)

