Developing Self Regulation in the Preschool Environment

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Defining Self Regulation

Type in a word that represents the term “self regulation”
Components of Self Regulation

- Self Regulation is a combination of two different components:

  1. The cognitive component, which is the degree to which children can regulate their own behaviors, are reflective and can plan and think aloud...controlling and remembering on purpose

  2. Social-Emotional component, is the ability to inhibit and delay gratification. To control their emotions, and to have the ability to internalize the rules
Self Regulation is grounded in Vygotsky’s theory of higher level psychological functions such as:

Conscious awareness (I know what I know)

Selective Attention (I can direct my attention to what I need to attend to)

Voluntary Memory (This is important for me to remember)
Kindergarten teachers rate “difficulty to follow directions” as their number one concern, teachers indicate more than half their students experience difficulty in this area. Instead of ‘reading, ‘writing, and ‘rithmetic it really needs to start with REGULATION!
Marshmallow Experiment Video
Characteristics of a successful learner

- Independence
- Responsibility
- Curiosity
- Initiative
- Cooperation
- Risk-taking
- Creativity
- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Resourcefulness
Where to Begin

In order to support the development of self regulation skills, teachers need to understand how the skills develop and the theory and research that suggests that social and physical environments can help develop these skills in children.
Stages of Self Regulation

“To be able to regulate your own physical actions as well as your social, emotional and cognitive process”

Stage 1. Being regulated by another person (Teacher regulation or peer regulation)

Stage 2. Regulating another person (other-regulation)

Stage 3. Regulating themselves, voluntarily and independently from others (self regulation)
Stage One – Teacher Regulation

Teacher regulation is “When children do what the teacher asks them to do in the classroom, when children comply and act because of a teacher directive or the presence of the teacher in the classroom reminding them what to do or how to do it”.
Stage Two - Other Regulation

“The process of the child showing knowledge of their ability to internalize the rules and boundaries. When they use their knowledge to show understanding of the rules, they are in the beginning stages of learning to apply the rules to themselves.”
Stage Three - Self Regulation

Self regulation grows out of the child voluntarily – where they voluntarily inhibit behavior, where they are motivated by their own internal desires, not dictated by an adult.
Self Regulation in the Classroom

- Curriculum Goals
- Environment
- Instructional strategies
Illinois Early Learning Standards/Benchmarks

Social/Emotional Development

• Exhibit persistence and creativity in seeking solutions to problems
• Shows some initiative and independence in actions
• Use appropriate communication skills when expressing needs, wants and feelings
• BEGIN to understand and follow rules
• Use the classroom environment purposefully and respectfully
• Engage in cooperative group play
• Begin to share materials and experiences and take turns
Social Emotional Objectives of Creative Curriculum

Regulates own emotions and behaviors
  Manages feelings
  Follows limits and expectations
  Takes care of own needs appropriately
Establishes and sustains positive relationship
  Forms relationships with adults
  Responds to emotional cues
  Interacts with peers
  Makes Friends
Participates cooperatively and constructively in group situations
Balances needs and rights of self and others
Solves social problems
Environment

- The classroom environment needs to be set up so children can explore and experiment independently and learn to make choices.

- The classroom environment is where children learn to build relationships with adults and other children.
Environment

- Three teaching strategies that are critical for scaffolding of children’s self regulation in the classroom:
  - 1. Modeling
  - 2. Using hints and cues
  - 3. Gradually withdrawing adult support
Modeling:

- Teacher demonstrates appropriate behavior
- Model Language
- Model Social Skills
Hints and Cues

Using hints and cues – both verbal and nonverbal
Hints and Cues

When you are making observations in your classroom you have to know where each child is in their development of self regulation so you can provide positive physical and verbal cues to move them forward.
Gradually withdrawing Adult Support

General strategies to teach self-control

Take a break:
Encourage children to “take a break” from a situation where they are feeling angry or upset.

Encourage children to ask for help. If they need it, let them know where to find you.
Developing Self Regulation

- Mature Intentional Make-Believe Play
- Positive Classroom Interactions
- Games/Activities that foster self-regulation
- Embedding self-regulation components into all activities (teacher focus)
Mature Intentional Make-Believe Play

Research shows that intentional make-believe play actually makes teaching academics easier.

Intentional make-believe play provides a context in which to practice all three types of interaction (regulation by others, other-regulation and self-regulation) necessary for the full development of self-regulation in a way that other activities do not provide.
Most teachers view conflicts over props as a failure to take turns. But Vygotskians place the blame squarely on the children’s immature level of play.
Mature Intentional Make-Believe Play

Vygotskians believe there are six characteristics to mature intentional play:

1. Intentionally planning play
2. Planning for explicit roles and the rules
3. Realistic props can be used but symbolic props represent a more mature intentional play
4. Mature play has an extended timeframe
5. Mature play has expanded use of language
6. Mature play is pretend play at a higher level
It is important to establish an emotional communication with each child daily on a one to one basis. Once this relationship is created, it must be maintained throughout the year.
Games that Foster Self Regulation

The Freeze Game.

Children and teachers danced to music. When the teacher stopped the music, everyone froze. We used slow and fast songs and had children dance slowly to slow songs and quickly to fast songs. Once children mastered these skills, children tried moving to opposite cues: children tried to remember to dance quickly to the slow songs and slowly to the fast songs!

Cooperative Freeze

Related to the Freeze Game, when the music stopped, children found a mat to stand on and froze. Teachers removed mats so that children had to cooperate with one another to find a space for everyone on fewer mats. We also taped different colored paper to each mat. When the music stopped, a teacher held up a specific color and children stood on the mat with the matching color.
Games that Foster Self Regulation

Red Light, Purple Light.

Like Red Light, Green Light, a teacher acted as a “stop light” by standing at the opposite end of the room from the children. The “stop light” held up different colors to represent stop and go. We used different colors, such as purple for “go” and orange for “stop” and then did the opposite. We also used different shapes to represent stop and go. For example a yellow square for “go,” but a yellow triangle was “stop.” Children also had a turn being the stop light!
Children pretended to sleep when the circle leader sang, “Sleeping, sleeping, all the children are sleeping.” Once children were pretending to sleep, the circle leader said, “And when they woke up... they were [monkeys]!” Children woke up and pretended to act like monkeys. The circle leader then repeated the song and suggested other animals. Children who were pretending to sleep were called on to give suggestions for other animals. We made this more complicated by showing 3 different colored circles (ex: red, blue, purple). On the red circle was a picture of a snake, on the blue circle was a picture of a butterfly and there was no animal on the purple circle. When it was time to wake up, the circle leader pointed to one of the circles and the children acted out the animal on that circle. Pointing to the purple circle (the circle with no picture) allowed the leader to choose any animal. After a few rounds, we removed the pictures and children had to remember what animal was on each circle.
Games that Foster Self Regulation

Conducting an Orchestra

Every child used a musical instrument. The circle leader used a drum stick as a conducting baton. When the conductor waved the baton, children played their instruments. When the conductor put the baton down, children stopped. Children played their instruments quickly when the baton moved quickly and slowly when the baton moved slowly. Children were also asked to respond to opposite cues. For example, when the conductor waved the baton, children stopped playing their instruments and when the conductor set the baton down, children played their instruments.
Games that Foster Self Regulation

Drum Beats

Teachers used drum beats to represent different actions that children can do while sitting (e.g., clapping or stomping) or while moving around the room (e.g., walking or dancing). For example, children walked quickly to fast drumming, slowly to slow drumming, and froze when the drumming stopped. Teachers also asked children to respond to opposite cues (walk slowly to fast drum beats and quickly to slow drum beats). Teachers also associated different actions with specific drum cues. For example, slow drumming meant stomping feet and fast drumming meant jumping jacks.
Embed in Every Activity

Teach them how to communicate with one another

State the expectation and have the child repeat it back

Help the child verbally plan the day
How do you start your day?

Greet each child as they enter the room. This allows you to evaluate the mood of the child. It allows a teacher to be proactive instead of reactive to their behaviors.
Components of the Day

- Small Group Time
- Large Group Time
- Transition Time
- Choice Time
Self regulation skills are best taught to begin with in a small group setting.

If you know they child is struggling with self regulation – sit them next to you or a child that has good self regulation

Make sure clear consistent expectations are conveyed to the child.
Large Group Time

Large group is a great time to do attention focusing activities.

Make sure your behavior expectations during large group time are developmentally appropriate.
Transition Time

- Use a pretend transition – Let’s pretend to be a mouse as we line up...
- Children are less likely to run to the next thing if they have been given clear expectations for their behavior
- Remember that children who struggle with self regulation will need more support during transition time – it’s important to be proactive instead of reactive
Choice Time

- Building self regulation skills
- Teaching children how to “play”
- Embedded learning in the interest areas
- Teachers role/Assistants role
Vygotsky believed that the activity during which young children are most likely to learn how to self-regulate is the special kind of play that we call “intentional dramatic play”.

This type of play begins in the dramatic play area and must be taught.
Children who do not make choices for their own behavior but instead rely on other children, parents, teachers, or adults to make choices for them do not learn self-regulation.
“Learning self regulation happen within children’s everyday experiences with trusted adults who regulate their own thinking, attention, emotions, behavior and motivation”

Ida Rose Florez