



# From the Playroom

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## It's about relationships

When I think back to kindergarten, I remember big blocks, songs, and a sand play area – but most of all, I remember making a handprint out of clay. We sat in circles, got to paint (wearing oversized shirts), and came in and out of the room from a door that opened to a play area. I can see the room perfectly in my mind. The first day of school I wore a dress that my mom made and life was wonderful. Above all, I felt SAFE. It was Redwood Heights Elementary School in Oakland, California. The school has long since changed, but the heavy oak doors and large round brass knobs remain the same. The kindergarten classroom is in the same hallway, but the tables have been replaced by desks, there is no paint easel, and the walls are covered with letters, words, the days of week, calendars, and a poster that reminds children to stop, take a deep breath, and say how you feel.

Yes, kindergarten isn't what it used to be. But that's okay. In 50 years, someone else will have the same comment. Things change. But what hasn't changed, is the importance of relationships. Relationships with one another: Family, friends, colleagues, strangers, and acquaintances.

Core to healthy, long-term, and rewarding relationships is sensitivity to and awareness of the core components of emotional intelligence. Healthy relationships are dependent on the following components: Self-awareness of our own emotions and thoughts and how they are related to our behavior; one's ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations (self-management); the ability to take and understand the perspective of and empathize with others (social awareness).

As we work with others in schools, hold onto these key components. They will take you a long way.

Additionally, remember the basic skills of Primary Project: Let children lead, listen more than talk, keep the focus on children, reflect feelings, allow silence, and “let it go.” When you hear the stories of others and it reminds you of a similar experience, hold on to your story, save it for another day. These too are central to emotionally healthy communications.

Be an emotionally intelligent leader at your school. Leadership doesn’t come with a job title. Leadership comes from within.

Regardless of who said the following, it is so true:

*“Children (teachers, parents, colleagues, friends) may not remember what you said or did, but they will remember how you made them feel.”*

*–Deborah Johnson, Ed.D.  
Director of National Services, Children’s Institute*

Too often we underestimate  
the power of a touch, a smile,  
a kind word, a listening ear,  
an honest compliment, or the  
smallest act of caring, all of  
which have the potential to  
turn a life around.  
–Leo Buscaglia



# Meeting the Needs of Students

At South Seneca Elementary, staff is equipped in a wide variety of ways to meet the needs of our students, especially their social and/or emotional needs. Being a relatively small school (300 students), we pride ourselves on our ability to truly get to know each and every one of our students.

We have many programs, procedures, and committees in place that strive to identify needs whether they are academic, social, emotional, mental, and/or anything else that might be hindering student success. We have weekly Instructional Support Team (IST) and Coordination of Services Team (COST) meetings to review particular students. As principal, I also meet with grade level teams weekly to discuss various aspects pertaining to their grade level, but most importantly student concerns. All teachers (K-5) follow the Second Step curriculum which is aimed at social skill development. Finally, we utilize local BOCES and other resources to provide training to identify and respond to various student issues throughout the school year.

Our students are also involved in building the social and emotional health of children. Many of our 5th grade students serve as peer mediators who meet with younger students in a respectful format aimed at resolving peer to peer conflicts.

Although we have a solid foundation in place, we are always seeking to improve as a school to meet our students' needs. New this year, we will use a universal mental health screening for all incoming kindergarten students. We are also adding Primary Project, which will help us identify students in the primary grades with school adjustment, social, and/or emotional issues and then meet with them on a weekly basis.

I feel fortunate that we are a small school and a tight-knit community. We are lucky to have such great programs and teams in place who truly care about our students and always seek ways to help them find success in the classroom and life. As with any school/community, we have our share of issues, but we have dedicated, caring professionals to help combat these issues head on.

*—Adam Rundell  
Principal, South Seneca Elementary*

# Bringing the Lessons Home

## Supporting children as the new school year begins

As parents of school-age children, you've heard the buzz words that are in the air. Words like, "Common Core, standardized tests, data driven instruction, extended learning time, and school improvement status." These are just a handful and the list goes on.

If this sounds confusing or a lot to take in, imagine how children feel as they go to school every day. Each new school year brings about change! In school, students have an increased "pressure" to learn core subject material and cope with changes in teachers, classrooms, and even friends. Every child handles this challenge differently. Some approach it with enthusiasm and interest in classroom instruction and some may become more reserved, nervous, or have difficulty concentrating.

Here are some thoughts on how we as parents can support our children now that the new school year is underway:

1. Think of your child's teacher as your partner! When parents and schools work together, success often follows. Research tells us that when you are involved in your child's education, students earn higher grades, have better attendance, and are more likely to graduate from high school.
2. When talking with your children, be supportive of their teacher and what is happening at school. Discuss any concerns you may have directly with the teacher.
3. Education today can be stressful or uncomfortable for some students, yet interesting and enjoyable for others. Wherever your student falls, it's important to be able to acknowledge (not ask about) your child's feelings. For example, you might say, "you seem upset and about to cry" or "you are pleased with how you did on that test today." Acknowledging your child's feelings not only lets them know that you are paying attention, but also develops their vocabulary and cope with everyday stresses or highlights as well.
4. Take time to play! Young children love to play and parents or caregivers are sometimes the best partners. Play offers a release for children (and adults). Find something that you like to do together and PLAY!

*—Lynn Smith, LMSW  
Social Worker, Children's Institute*

*Please feel free to copy this page and share it with Primary Project parents.*

# Trayendo las Lecciones al Hogar

## Apoyando a los niños al comienzo del nuevo año escolar

Como padres de niños de edad escolar, han escuchado las palabras de moda que están en el aire. Palabras como, “Núcleo Común, pruebas estandarizadas, instrucción dirigida por datos, tiempo de aprendizaje extendido y status de mejora de la escuela.” Éstos son sólo unos ejemplos y la lista sigue.

Si esto parece confuso o mucho para digerir, imagínense cómo se sienten los niños cuando van a la escuela todos los días. ¡Cada año escolar nuevo trae cambios! En la escuela, los niños tienen mayor “presión” para aprender material de las asignaturas comunes y lidiar con cambios en los maestros, salones de clase y hasta los amigos. Cada niño lidia con este reto de modo diferente. Algunos lo ven con entusiasmo e interés en la instrucción en el salón de clases y otros se tornan más reservados, nerviosos o tienen dificultad para concentrarse.

Aquí damos algunas ideas acerca de cómo los padres pueden apoyar a nuestros niños ahora que el nuevo año escolar ha empezado:

1. ¡Piense que el maestro de su niño(a) es su socio! Cuando los padres y las escuelas trabajan juntos, el éxito por lo general sigue. Los estudios nos dicen que cuando usted se involucra en la educación de su niño(a), los estudiantes obtienen mejores calificaciones, la asistencia es mejor y tienen mayor probabilidad de graduarse de escuela secundaria.
2. Cuando hable con sus niños, apoye a sus maestros y lo que está ocurriendo en la escuela. Discuta cualquier preocupación que usted tenga directamente con el maestro.
3. La educación hoy día es más estresante o incómoda para algunos estudiantes, y sin embargo, interesante y agradable para otros. No obstante dónde cae su niño(a), es importante poder reconocer (no preguntar acerca de) los sentimientos de su niño(a). Por ejemplo, usted puede decir, “parece que estás perturbado y que vas a llorar” o “estás satisfecho de cómo saliste en la prueba hoy.” Reconocer los sentimientos de su niño(a) no sólo le deja saber que usted le está prestando atención, sino que también desarrolla su vocabulario y habilidad para lidiar con los estreses o puntos destacados también.
4. ¡Tome tiempo para jugar! Los niños jóvenes disfrutan de jugar y los padres o cuidadores son a menudo las mejores parejas. El juego ofrece un escape para los niños (y adultos). ¡Encuentre algo que les guste hacer juntos y JUEGUE!

—Lynn Smith, LMSW  
Trabajadora Social, Children’s Institute

*Siéntase en libertad de copiar esta página y compartirla con los padres del Primary Project.*

# Congratulations to

Black River Elementary School, Black River, NY  
Carthage Elementary School, Carthage, NY  
Egret Lake Elementary School, West Palm Beach, FL  
Golden Grove Community Elementary School, West Palm Beach, FL  
Jupiter Elementary School, Jupiter, FL  
Lantana Elementary School, Lantana, FL  
Montgomery C. Smith Intermediate School, Hudson, NY  
Pioneer at Arcade Elementary, Arcade, NY  
Seminole Trails Elementary, West Palm Beach, FL  
South Olive Elementary School, West Palm Beach, FL  
The Children's School of Rochester No. 15, Rochester, NY

for receiving Primary Project  
National Certification

## Website update

Children's Institute's website has a new look – we've added more information about our programs, services, and training! We've also added a safe, secure way to donate online as well as purchase our assessment measures and resource materials via the website. New training classes are being added throughout the year with easy, online registrations so check back frequently. Visit our updated website at [www.childrensinstitute.net](http://www.childrensinstitute.net).



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STRENGTHENING SOCIAL AND  
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274 N. Goodman Street, Suite D103  
Rochester, New York 14607  
(585) 295-1000 (phone)  
(585) 295-1090 (fax)  
(877) 888-7647 (toll free)

[www.childrensinstitute.net](http://www.childrensinstitute.net)

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