

Functional Emotional Developmental Capacities (FEDCs) and Relationship to Later Learning

FEDC 1: Shared attention and regulation

The child's ability to regulate his/her attention and behavior while being interested in the full range of sensations (sights, sounds, smells, their own movement patterns, etc.). This ability is necessary for the child to enter into a state of shared attention with another person and to process their environment, filter out distractions, and pay attention in a classroom and other age-appropriate settings.

FEDC 2: Engagement and relating

The child's ability to engage in relationships, including the depth and range of his/her pleasure and warmth, related feelings such as assertiveness or sadness that can be incorporated into the quality of engagement, and the stability of the child's engagement (does he withdraw or become aimless when under stress). Engagement and forming relationships is necessary for engaging with the world (not being self-absorbed), learning about "reality", and mastering all cognitive and later academic skills.

FEDC 3: Two-way purposeful communication

This is the child's ability to enter into two-way, purposeful communication including the exchange of facial expressions and gestures. At its most basic level, this involves back and forth interaction or "circles of communication". This involves the child's ability to be intentional in interactions and activities (e.g., child is able to initiate with another person to keep activities going, for desired objects or activities, affection, comfort, etc.). This is an essential building block for the development of "cause and effect" thinking which leads to more complex and logical thinking.

FEDC 4: Complex communication and problem solving

The child's ability to engage in long sequences of two-way communication involving gestures and/or words in order to achieve a goal, solve a problem, or carry on a conversation with a continuous flow of rapid, back-and-forth communication. Involves the child taking more and more initiative, having a more complex and well-formed sense of self, and increased understanding of causality. Underlies many academic skills such as understanding and constructing patterns and multi-step problem solving in mathematics, the development of scientific thinking, and concepts in other subjects as well as providing a critical foundation for participating successfully in the social world.

FEDC 5: Creating and using symbols and ideas

The child's ability to create and manipulate ideas to symbolize real and imagined events in play and other creative activities and to understand and use words and language. This capability not only underlies understanding and use of symbols in literacy/reading and math as well as the development of verbal language but also allows the child to connect needs and emotions to words and actions.

FEDC 6: Emotional and logical thinking

The child's ability to connect their feelings, ideas, and symbols together in a logical way. Ideas are linked together into logical sequences and play and imagination is more connected and elaborate. With this capacity children also begin to understand emerging concepts of space and time in a way that connects with their own actions and emotions. This is a necessary prerequisite for all academic learning particularly mathematics, science, and the social sciences and for language and reading comprehension. These capabilities also aid children and adolescents to better cope with difficult emotions, engage in social negotiations with others, and follow social rules.

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