

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 emotions and comfort with a full range of feelings (pleasure and warmth, anger and aggression, sadness, etc.). Engagement and forming relationships is necessary for engaging with the world (not becoming self-absorbed or withdrawn) and thus, for all learning. Engagement provides a sense of purpose in the child's actions and allows him to begin to communicate with social partners. Emotional cues and responses are the building blocks of intent, meaning, and the communication of symbols and ideas.

FEDC 3: Two-way purposeful communication

This is the child's ability to enter into two-way, purposeful (intentional) 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 the foundation of "cause and effect" thinking that underlies the subsequent development of logical and complex 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, 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 underlies understanding and use of symbols in verbal language, reading decoding, reading comprehension, mathematics, the sciences, and the arts and also allows the child to connect their needs and emotions to words and actions and act less impulsively.

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 begin to understand emerging concepts of space and time in a way that connects with their own actions and emotions. This is a prerequisite for all areas of academic learning particularly those that require logical and abstract thinking including mathematics, the sciences, and the social sciences. 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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