

Social competence & self-regulation is best supported by:

- ⇒ Adults who focus on a child's strengths and interests and use these to invite others into their play
- ⇒ Educators having common expectations about how things are done and promote consistent practice
- ⇒ Adults who join in children's play to model reasoning, predicting and reflecting processes and language
- ⇒ Learning experiences that support children to initiate interactions and join in play and social experiences
- ⇒ Educators using the *Respect Reflect Relate* observation scales to reflect and to examine what is happening in their setting and consider what might need to change to help guide behaviour in the most positive way
- ⇒ Teaching children self-regulation & relaxation skills such as yoga, sensory experiences, calm box of sensory objects, caring for a animal/pet
- ⇒ Seeing resolution of social issues through stories, puppets, etc
- ⇒ ILPs and a planned curriculum that supports the learning of social skills and is contextually relevant
- ⇒ Educators who respect that families are first teachers
- ⇒ Provision of fun and playful experiences where children experience success and joy.

Social competence is least supported by:

- ⇒ Punishment that demeans the child, shows disrespect for the child, or isolates the child such as 'time out' or a 'naughty chair'
- ⇒ Causing children shame in front of their peers such as naming them a 'naughty' child
- ⇒ Adults who are poor models of self-regulation such as yelling at the children
- ⇒ Adults who interpret children's behaviour as a personal attack or misread children's experiences of emotions
- ⇒ When adults have unrealistic expectations of a child eg expecting a young child to sit for long periods of time
- ⇒ Giving children mixed messages such as giving them a choice when there is no choice (eg Do you want to come inside?)
- ⇒ Chastising children for what they shouldn't do rather than emphasising the positive behaviours (eg We don't stand on tables here).



Children learn well when people continually talk to them. The words that are spoken are received by the child's spirit when they are spoken gently & with patience. It is this spirit that gives the child confidence.

The learning enters into his spirit and remains with him.

Katrina Tjitayi, 2013

The following will support Teachers and AEWs to guide their own and a child's behaviour:

- Alpamilara wangkama palumpa wuyurpa, yaaltji-yaaltji paluru pukularira inkantjaku. *Talk to him/her about how he/she is feeling and what will make him/her happy.*
- Tjitji tjuta alpamilanma mirpanarinyangka, tjiturutjiturinyangka. Purkarangku, wirura wangkama. *Help the child who is angry or sad by speaking to him/her gently.*
- Tjapinma, nyaaringu paluru. *Ask him/her what happened.*
- Tjitji kutjupa tjuta tjapinma, tjana tjinguru ninti, nyaaringu tjitji nyanga paluru. *Ask other children as they may know what happened.*
- Tjitjingka itingka nyinama, munu palula wirura wangkama, pilunarinytjaku. *Sit with the child and talk nicely to him/her to settle him/her down.*
- Alpamilara wangkama, kutjupa kutjupangka inkanytjaku munu tjungu inkama palula ka paluru palyaringkula inkaku kutjupa tjutangka tjungu. *Suggest that he/she play with something different and sit and play with him/her for a while until she/he is happy to join in the play with others.*
- Alpamilara tjapira kulinma palumpa wuyurpa tjara, paluru pikaringkunyitja yaaltji-yaaltji wiya nyinantjaku. *Talk to him/her about how to control his emotions and not fight.*
- Munu nyangama palunya rawangku, paluru palya mulararira pukulpa inkanytjaku. *Keep watching him/her until he is playing happily.*
- Ngalkilpa wiru. *Intervene if someone is getting hurt*
- Kalypanma. *Forgive*
- Sari wangkama. *Say Sorry*
- Ampunma. *Hug*
- Tjunguringama. *Come together*
- Pilunmanama kutjaratu. *Quieten both of them.*
- Kutjaratu wangkama kalyparingkula. *Talk to them both when they have forgiven each other.*
- Mara witinytja. *Get them to shake hands.*
- Waltja piti wangka (tjinguru palumpa malanypa kangkuru, kuta, ngunyitju kulunypa) *Talk to their family (perhaps a sibling or their mother's younger sister).*

Guiding children's social competence Early Childhood

This document provides guidance on specific pedagogical practices that support the development of children's social competence and self-regulation in Anangu Playgroups, Preschools & in transition to School.

In all our Early Childhood centres, programs and preschools we want our babies, our toddlers and our preschool children to be looked after and taught in a caring and thoughtful way so that our children's spirit and body will grow strong and healthy.

PYEC Philosophy Statement for Early Childhood 2012



Understanding behaviour

All human behaviour is a form of communication. A baby may cry when she is hungry or wet, just like an adult may fiddle when going for a job interview. If we understand children's behaviour as a communication, we need to 'tune-into' what the behaviour is telling us about what is happening for the child. It is our responsibility as adults to support children in developing behaviours that will help them become socially competent members of their community. Those behaviours that challenge us most, tell us about children's unregulated emotional state. The mistake we often make is to react to the behaviour and in doing so ignoring the emotional driver behind the behaviour and responding to that. For example, a child refuses to come to a group experience and runs away when the educator insists. The educator might read this as defiant behaviour and describe the child as 'naughty'. There may be many reasons behind the child's reluctance to join the group that have nothing to do with the educator. So the adult needs to firstly regulate their own emotional state, and consider how the child might be experiencing what is happening. The depth of the relationship the educator has with the child will help in understanding the function of the behaviour: Could this be a flight or fight response? What do we know about the child's relationship with other children? Is this a learned pattern of behaviour? When the adult has a strong relationship with the child they will know when to follow the child's lead or to take charge.

Secure, respectful & reciprocal relationships:

Educators who give priority to nurturing relationships and providing children with consistent emotional support can assist children to develop the skills and understandings they need to interact positively with others. They also help children to learn about their responsibilities to others, to appreciate their connectedness and interdependence as learners, and to value collaboration and teamwork.

When our little people are overwhelmed by big emotions it's our job to share our calm, not join their chaos. L. R. Knost

What are the common expectations in our Playgroups & Preschools?

Educators in the Anangu Lands Partnership will:

- ⇒ **Create safe, secure, supportive learning environments** that are organised, inviting, challenging and inclusive. Minimise the times during which children are expected to do the same thing at the same time and maintain good supervision of children. Ensure resources, materials and equipment in the indoor and outdoor environments that children can explore and use freely in their play, are sufficient in variety and number to minimise disputes over their use. Plan thoughtfully for when children are transitioning within the routines of the day.
- ⇒ **View children as competent and hold developmentally appropriate high expectations**. Acknowledge each child's uniqueness in positive ways and provide children with strategies to make informed choices about their behaviours. Listen to and learn about children's understandings of themselves. Acknowledge the complexity of children's emotions and relationships and sensitively intervene in ways that promote consideration of alternative perspectives and social inclusion.
- ⇒ **Intentionally and mindfully support children to interact with others with care, empathy and respect**. Mediate and assist children to negotiate their rights in relation to the rights of others. Model explicit communication strategies to support children to initiate interactions and join in play and social experiences in ways that sustain productive relationships with others. Engage children in discussions about respectful and equal relations such as when a child dominates in the use of resources.
- ⇒ **Reflect on practice** to evaluate the effectiveness of learning opportunities, environments, routines and experiences offered and the approaches taken to enable children's learning, and use this to inform your planning. Notice and listen carefully to children's concerns and discuss diverse perspectives on issues of inclusion and exclusion and fair and unfair behaviour.
- ⇒ **Support children's self-regulation** by naming and helping children to recognise feelings and emotions. Provide experiences and spaces that enable children to experience relaxing/calming feelings. Be emotionally available and support children's expression of their thoughts and feelings. Be a role model for self-regulation and respond calmly when children are experiencing big emotions.
- ⇒ **Develop culturally competent pedagogies**. When early childhood educators respect the diversity of families and communities they make curriculum decisions that uphold all children's rights to have their language, culture, abilities and strengths acknowledged and valued and are responsive to the complexity of children's and families' lives.
- ⇒ **Use play as an opportunity for guiding children's social competence**. Children are receptive to a wide range of experiences. What is included or excluded from the curriculum affects how children learn, develop and understand their world and in turn how they behave. Children who are actively engaged in their learning and are intentionally supported by the adults around them have little need for disruptive, uncooperative or unfriendly behaviour.



REFERENCES

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- **Circle of Security** – Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin & Powell, 1998
- **Making SPACE for Learning: Trauma informed practice in schools.** Australia Childhood Foundation, 2010
- **Reimagining Childhood.** Rinaldi. C. Government of SA. 2013
- **Red Dirt Curriculum: Re-imagining Remote Education.** Sydney Myer Rural Lecture Series, 2013
- **SMART Online Training**
<http://www.childhood.org.au/for-professionals/smart-online-training>



Top 5 teaching tips for working with Anangu children to develop social competence & self-regulation

1. TRAUMA INFORMED

Children who have experienced or are experiencing trauma are often hyper-vigilant and have an immediate fight/flight response to perceived threat. Recognise early warning signs in children and minimise potential triggers such as, yelling, changes in people, routines or environment. All educators need to be informed about the impact of trauma on children's development and of trauma informed pedagogies.



2. UNDERSTANDING TEASING—INKATJINGANI or UULINANYI

Teasing can be joking around or it can be unkind and meant to hurt. Anangu children can tease with the raise of an eyebrow; a finger on the eye or the twitch of the nose. Piranpa educators often don't see it or even know it has happened. Its meaning is seldom understood by the teacher. Even the youngest pre-school child knows how to say to a teacher, "He teasing". Acknowledge to the injured child that they have been heard. Approach the other child, with the injured child and help them to resolve the conflict. Use restorative justice principles. Children may need to be kept apart for a time through redirecting play.

4. RELATIONSHIPS MATTER

It is important for Piranpa and Anangu staff to work collaboratively in understanding and responding to children. Be very sensitive in how children's behavior is handled so as not to cause shame (miri paku) for the child and their family. It might be a good idea to get the Anangu Coordinator to help you do it the "right way" until you feel more comfortable.

3. SPECIFIC TO ANANGU CHILDREN

Most Anangu children come to pre-school with little understanding of English or the formal structures that an educational setting has. Ideas to support behavior are:

- Explicit reinforcement of positive behaviours
- Explicit teaching of social behaviours, especially in Pitjantjatjara
- Providing visual images of what children are expected to do such as routines and rituals.

5. DISCIPLINE ANANGU WAY

In Anangu culture there is a gesture or interaction that is an accepted way to reconcile a disagreement between young children. The gesture of reconciliation is when a child holds out their hand to accept the touch from the child they have hurt. *Ngapartjingku puwa* is a cultural practice that Piranpa teachers **do not** participate in. Whenever possible, teachers will model to families and AEWs different ways of managing children's behavior and different ways to say sorry (eg with words and a gentle touch or hug).

The child has a hundred languages, a hundred hands, a hundred thoughts, a hundred ways of thinking, of playing, of speaking.

Loris Malaguzzi, cited in Rinaldi 2013