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Increasing Social and Emotional Development in Preschoolers

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A Capstone Project for the Bachelor of Science in Human Development and Family Science

Introduction

My project focuses on ways that Hispanic immigrant parents can stimulate their preschool children's social and emotional development. Many children in the U.S. today are entering kindergarten not being emotionally and socially ready to spend time away from their caregivers and to have interactions with peers. When entering the school system for the first time children need to develop independence and social awareness. Communication and interactions between parent and child as well as the child with other children at a young age will both stimulate them and prepare them for interactions with others and set them a foundation for success. In the community of Watsonville, California, the general population is low-income and Hispanic immigrants. These factors directly relate to the issue of language barriers and resources which puts the children at a disadvantage causing them to play "catch up" to their peers. As a result of preschool children's difficulties with social-emotional skills, as well as language barriers in the community, there is a need for services that will help parents identify and practice ways to stimulate social and emotional development within their children. When a child is prepared socially and emotionally the goal is to better prepare their children for the transition from home to school. To address this need I created a one-day workshop in both English and Spanish for parents of preschoolers, that was provided through a local non-profit organization called La Manzana in Watsonville, CA, in hopes of teaching parents different ways to communicate with their child in ways that are verbal, non-verbal, and physical for their child to gain social and emotional development.

Needs Statement

When thinking of preparing a young child for school entry, one may think of cognitive

development but social and emotional readiness are also important. In a 2017 study conducted by

the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching on social-emotional readiness in

4-year-olds, it states "data showed that more than 7,000 kindergarten teachers in the U.S judged

children as unready for school in the following aspects: problems with language, emotional

immaturity, lack of general knowledge, and lack of social confidence" (Boyer, 1991). This shows

that the main factors teachers are seeing regarding the lack of readiness in children entering the

schooling system are maturity, social confidence, and language skills. All of these factors have a

direct correlation with social and emotional readiness. Social and emotional readiness are

important factors for being successful in the transition from home to school because this is

generally the first experience children are interacting with others outside of their household for a

long period. When a child is socially and emotionally self-regulated they can reflect on

interactions in the best way possible. Therefore I created a workshop that targets parents of

preschoolers aged 3-5, who come from a Hispanic immigrant background It will focus on the

following: helping children develop positive relationships with peers, helping children learn to

self-regulate, and accessible locations available for parents to take their children to heighten their

social-emotional readiness.

School readiness can be defined as a collaborative effort between parents and

professionals that aims to prepare the non-school-age child cognitively, socially, and emotionally

for school (CDSS, 2023). When a child is school they are at an advantage in building

friendships, advancing in academics, and able to go through the trial and error of the learning

process more easily. When a child is at lack school readiness they are more likely to carry the following traits: frustration when asked to follow steps in an orderly fashion, struggle to follow instructions in daily activities, struggle to attend to tasks as long as their peers, poor interactions with their peers both in and outside of the classroom, and have a hard time adapting to new activities and skills being taught. (Kidsense, 2023).

Social readiness can be defined as the extent to which a child exhibits social behaviors, skills, and knowledge necessary to be successful in elementary school (Farkas, 2023). Many children lack social readiness due to the lack of exposure to peers other than their family in their early childhood. Lack of exposure with others can cause an attachment style between child and caregiver making it harder for the child to adjust to the school setting being around unknown adults and children. Some challenges that children with attachment styles might face are trouble making connections with their peers and forming friendships, typically lagging both developmentally and academically, frequently misdiagnosed with a learning disorder, and may be withdrawn, rejected, or clingy (Levy, 2022). Social readiness can look like the following: positive interactions with peers, communication of one's feelings, recognizing self and peer boundaries, and being able to interact in an environment with others through self-regulation. When a child are socially ready when entering kindergarten they are set up for success in their academic performance because they are self-aware of what is acceptable and what is not.

Emotions are used to express oneself. Most commonly we see emotions of happiness or anger but there are also others like shyness, nervousness, being scared, and sadness. All of these emotions can be seen within children especially when transitioning from home to school. Emotional readiness is being able to self-regulate one's feelings. Emotional development requires self-concept, self-control, and the ability to regulate one's feelings while also being able to

identify and respond appropriately to others and their emotions (Dockett & Perry, 2009). Tantrums are commonly seen in children ages 1-3 as a result of a lack of self-regulation and being able to communicate their emotions which can lead to frustration and outbursts. Children must be taught and shown that being able to express their emotions appropriately is important. Communication is a key to teaching self-regulation. Being able to identify what you are feeling and why you are feeling that way can reduce tantrums and build self-control. Emotional readiness includes the ability to communicate with others including adults, being able to interact with peers in the classroom, form relationships with others, express emotions, show empathy towards others, and be motivated (Alzaharani, 2019). When a child can demonstrate these traits such as showing empathy they are more than likely to have a successful academic year because they will understand the importance of taking turns, sharing, waiting, and helping others. They are also able to recognize not only their emotions but also others in a way that they can help out the environment by attending to the needs of themselves and their peers in situations of sadness, anger, nervousness, etc.

As a parent, one can help your child be school-ready by encouraging social and emotional independence. Social-emotional readiness can be taught at home but can also be taught by engaging with others through physical activities. As children engage with others physically they gain better social skills, and communication skills, and build relationships. Children must engage with others to gain a better understanding of how others act and gain a better understanding of how to empathize with others (Jessica, 2018). In a 2007 study in regards to parent contribution to their child's social and emotional development, it speaks on the importance of social and emotional development through modeling. A child is more likely to learn new skills and traits through modeling what they see in their environment. The study

speaks on this topic when it states, "In brief, parents' generally positive emotional expression (with ''safe'' expression of negative emotions), openness to, and expertise in talking about emotions and encouraging reactions to children's emotions, all help their preschool children to become emotionally competent (Denham, 2007).

We must acknowledge the importance of social-emotional readiness among children entering kindergarten. According to the U.S Census Bureau about 84.3% of residents in Watsonville, California, identify as Hispanic with an immigrant background while the median household income is $67,000 with the primary language spoken being Spanish at 72% (U.S. Census Bureau,2022). Today immigrant children are the fastest growing population in the U.S. In fact, one in four children who reside in the U.S. belong to an immigrant family (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008). These factors all play a role in discussing social and emotional readiness in children given the area and background. While working in a community with such a big demographic of Hispanic immigrants I saw a big obstacle was language barriers. As of 2016, there were 11.5 million elementary and middle school students in the U.S. whose parents were born in a foreign country. The average family income of immigrant students is below those of students whose parents were born in the U.S. as well as the completion rate of high school for immigrant parents is lower than those of parents born in the U.S. (Zill, 2020). As a result, immigrant children are entering the educational system already at a disadvantage and have to work twice as hard as their peers.

As a parent, one can ease this demand by encouraging social-emotional readiness through immigrant-friendly programs such as Head Start, early education divisions, and La Escuelita (YWCA). All of these programs help children prepare for kindergarten as migrant students. They focus on the importance of English learning development as well as social and emotional

readiness. There are also many migrant-friendly workshops and events that encourage

social-emotional interactions among children such as library workshops at the Watsonville

library, Monthly community events at the Plaza in downtown Watsonville, CA, and local science

workshops held once a month at the community park in Watsonville, CA.

As a result of living and working in a community with such high demographics of

Hispanic immigrants, I created a one-day workshop within the community of Watsonville, CA,

that targets the parents of preschoolers and shows them the importance of enhancing social and

emotional readiness within their children to help them be successful in their transition from home

to school. In this workshop, I covered the many different ways parents can help stimulate their

child's social and emotional development, teach their child self-regulation skills, and local

organizations where parents can take their children to interact with peers as a way to stimulate

their social development.

Theory

Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development follows the individual stages of

human development from infancy to adulthood. Erikson's theory contains eight different

developmental stages that are influenced by physiological, biological, and social factors.

Erikson's theory is believed that depending on how you go through one stage of development,

will influence the next. For example, having succeeded through a stage easily will have a higher

chance of succeeding in the next one with few problems versus having struggled to complete the

stage will have you going into the next one with a disadvantage. Erikson's third stage: initiative

vs. guilt, ranges from preschool age 3 to 5 years. In this stage, children begin to enter their

exploring stage and start to assert their authority in their world through interactions with peers such as through play (Erikson, 1994).

This stage is very important because it is generally the first few interactions children are having with peers. Having that set in mind, Erikson's third stage was very influential throughout my research and while conducting my workshop. First, public interactions with others are most seen within playgroups, daycare, preschool, and extracurricular activities which is why I made it a point to cover this topic while doing my workshop to inform parents of the importance of peer interactions before their child enters kindergarten. Success in Erikson's third stage can look like a good balance of initiative and guilt. The initiative is the curiosity and the drive to attempt new activities and tasks. Guilt in this stage can look like feeling shameful for incompletion or failure at a skill, being "bad" in the view of an adult, and feeling embarrassed in front of others. When a child has a good balance they can feel the natural feelings of guilt but also the feeling that they can retry things and master skills. Parents can be very influential at this stage. Encouragement and praise during this stage lead to the successful completion of stage three and set a positive foundation for entering stage four.

Consideration of Diversity

My workshop consisted of 9 participants all of whom were parents and all native to my local community Watsonville, CA, which is where my workshop was held. In the city of Watsonville California, the general population consists of 51,525. Of those 51,525 residents, 39.8% are white while the majority of the population is Hispanic and or Latino at 84.3%. The percentage of foreign-born persons is 37.3%. A foreign-born population is defined as anyone who was not a U.S. citizen at birth. This includes respondents who indicated they were a U.S. citizen by naturalization or not a U.S. citizen (Census Bureau, 2023). Watsonville is a heavily

populated Hispanic immigrant community. The city is known for its agricultural fields where they produce goods such as strawberries, raspberries, lettuce, and apples. Many community members who work in these fields happen to be Hispanic and the primary language spoken at the work site is Spanish.

With all this in mind, I chose to implement my workshop at a location that specifically serves the Hispanic immigrant community and provides them with a number of assistance from translation to applying for services. My project directly worked with Hispanic immigrant parents of preschoolers and consisted of a workshop being taught in Spanish as well as English if needed. All participants who attended the workshop were parents to 1 or more children under 5 and all were fluent in Spanish. I had a total of 9 working-class participants, 7 women and 2 male.

Learning Outcomes

I designed a 1-day informative workshop for parents of preschoolers aged 3-5 that showed the importance of their child being socially and emotionally developed before entering kindergarten. By the end of my workshop parents will be able to:

1. Parents will be able to identify 2 reasons why interactions with peers are important for a young child's social-emotional and academic development.

2. Parents will be able to identify 3 ways they can teach their children self-regulation skills for interacting with peers.

3. Parents will be able to identify 2 accessible and safe locations where they can take their young children to interact with peers in order to stimulate their social development.

Method

Location and Participants

The workshop on the importance of social and emotional development in preschoolers was given at a local organization called La Manzana in Watsonville, California. La Manzana offers a variety of parent education classes through a program called Triple P that holds monthly classes. The workshop was given over an hour and a half with 3 main topics covered, and each part lasted about 30 minutes. For this class, there were a total of 9 participants, all of which were parents to 1 or more children under the age of 5. Participants ranged between the ages of 26- 38. All participants were fluent in Spanish and 75% were bilingual in Spanish and English. All identified themselves as low-income or working class and included 6 mothers and 3 fathers.

Procedures and Materials

To begin the workshop, I introduced myself, my purpose in conducting this workshop, and what topics it would cover. I then handed out a form that asked for basic information such as their name, their preferred language, if they had children, and if so what ages, what they would consider their social class, and if they were local to the community. This took around 3 minutes to complete. After that was completed I began with my power points. See Appendix A for slides presented in the workshop.The first topic I covered was social and emotional development and defined the academic terms (social development, emotional development, and self-regulation). For each term I defined I gave examples as to how they are used in daily living. Then I explained

what social and emotional development can look like with preschoolers versus adults. I then

explained what significant role it can play when children are transitioning from home to school

for the first time. Then I gave examples of how we as adults and parents can help stimulate social

and emotional development within our children. All while giving this information I was also

providing translation in Spanish and taking questions after each main subject.

For part 2 of the workshop, I covered "ways your child can self-regulate". I first started

out by defining what is self regulation, explaining why it is important, and giving examples. I

then discussed that preschoolers are capable of self-regulating even at a young age but may

struggle to understand how to without guidance. I then decided to open the floor and ask the

participants what they think self-regulation looks like in preschoolers. I got two volunteers who

both gave good examples of self-regulation in preschoolers that I had also included in the next

slide where I explained how it would look like in preschoolers. I then covered how parents can

influence self-regulation in their children and the benefits of having a child who is able to

self-regulate when considering the transition to school.

For part 3 I covered the topic of positive interactions between preschoolers and peers.

Along with this, the general point of this section was to introduce local organizations that will

both stimulate and increase their child's social and emotional development. I made sure to

include free and or affordable places parents can take their children to. I explained each of the 5

local organizations that parents can take their children to in order to stimulate their social

development in depth with its own slide and included the following: hours of operation, price if

any, what they do, and the benefits it can have on one's child. After completing my slides I

handed out a worksheet with the following three statements: (1) Identify 3 ways you can teach

your children self-regulation skills when interacting with peers, (2) Identify 2 reasons why

interactions with peers are important for your child's social-emotional and academic

development, and (3) Identify 2 accessible and safe locations where you can take your young

children to interact with peers in order to stimulate their social development.

Results

Learning Outcome 1 was that parents would be able to identify 2 reasons why

interactions with peers are important for a young child's social-emotional and academic

development. After presenting the information during my workshop I completed the assessment

as a whole with the other 2 learning outcomes after my presentation was completed. The

assessment included 3 questions one for each learning outcome and was based on the

information I had provided. The first question stated my first learning outcome as a question.

During my presentation, I had provided 5 reasons why peer interactions are important for a

child's social-emotional and academic development. In order to have passed this assessment

parents had to be able to identify any 2 out of the 5 reasons I provided. Out of the 9 parents who

attended the workshop all 9 were able to list 2 reasons why peer interactions are important for

their child's social emotional and academic development. This makes my learning outcome 1

fully meet with 100% success rate.

Learning Outcome 2 was that parents would be able to identify 3 ways they can teach

their children self-regulation skills when interacting with peers. During my workshop, I provided

6 different ways parents could teach their children self-regulation skills along with examples.

The assessment required the parents to list 3 out of the 6 examples presented to them on the

worksheet. Of the 9 participants, 7/9 were able to complete the assessment fully with 100% while the other 2 participants were not. One participant was only able to identify 1 out of the 6 examples provided for this learning outcome, while the other participant left no answer. As a result of having a score of 7/9 participants completed this assessment with a perfect score of 100%, and learning outcome 2 was fully met.

Learning Outcome 3 was the parents would be able to identify 2 accessible and safe locations where they can take their young children to interact with peers in order to stimulate their social development. During my workshop, I provided the parents with 5 local organizations that focused on child enrichment and were both accessible and affordable. In order for participants to pass this section of the assessment they were required to list 2 out of the 4 organizations mentioned during the workshop on the worksheet. As a result, 9/9 participants were able to list 2 locations mentioned in the presentation making this learning outcome fully met. This part of the assessment had a popular location as most of the participants listed the same one which also happened to be the location that was most affordable and most flexible with their hours of operation.

Discussion

The main focus of my capstone project was to inform parents on the importance of social and emotional development in preschoolers and teach them ways they can contribute to it. I completed this project by having three main focal points known as the learning outcomes. While taking into consideration the diversity of my participants, I made sure to focus on English and Spanish vocabulary as well as providing resources that were both affordable and accessible. After completing my workshop and the assessment I can conclude that my project was successful in meeting the focal point of my capstone. I can contribute my success in my project to 3 key

points, such as community outreach, community awareness, and language. I believe that

conducting my project in my hometown where I have spent numerous volunteer hours at

different organizations helped the success of my project due to the fact that I was able to get out

into my community and interact with the public and understand what needs had to be met. I also

believe that the fact I was able to communicate with my participants really made the project that

much more engaging for them because there was no language barrier and allowed for the

information to be given in clarity with understandable vocabulary. The results of my project were

consistent with the third stage of Erik Erikson's theory of Psychosocial Development. This

project went well with Erikson's third stage initiative vs. guilt because they both focused on

preschool years ages 3-5 and demonstrated how social factors such as peer interactions and

affluence a child's development. As mentioned above, the fact that I was able to have community

awareness in the location I chose to implement my project allowed me to have a workshop that

was tailored to the community and participants. Taking into consideration the community

demographics such as Hispanic, low-income, and Spanish-speaking made me prepared for the

workshop and helped me tailor the workshop around the participant's needs.

  Although all of my learning outcomes were fully met and my project was successful I do

believe there is room for improvement in the future. My project could be strengthened by having

the workshop be presented in Spanish because not all of my participants knew English but all of

my participants knew Spanish, having done the workshop in Spanish originally would have

saved more time by not having to translate back and forth. Another area of improvement could

be the time and duration of my workshop. Because my participants were of the working class it

was a struggle to find a time that allowed parents to attend a workshop after their workday, as

well, and having a 1.5-hour long workshop with parents who had just gotten out of work would

probably have been more beneficial if I had spread out the workshop over 3 different sessions. If I were to conduct my workshop again I would like to present it in Spanish and target a bigger Hispanic audience because many of my participants were new to this topic and were very engaged with the information provided. I would also like to have flyers of the organizations mentioned for learning outcome 3 so parents are able to have direct contact with these organizations as I was asked by multiple parents to write down names and numbers of organizations they liked after my workshop. I am very pleased with the outreach my project was able to provide in my community as well as the parent community and hope that in the future focus on a child's social and emotional development starting from home gets the attention it needs and reaches a larger audience across the country.

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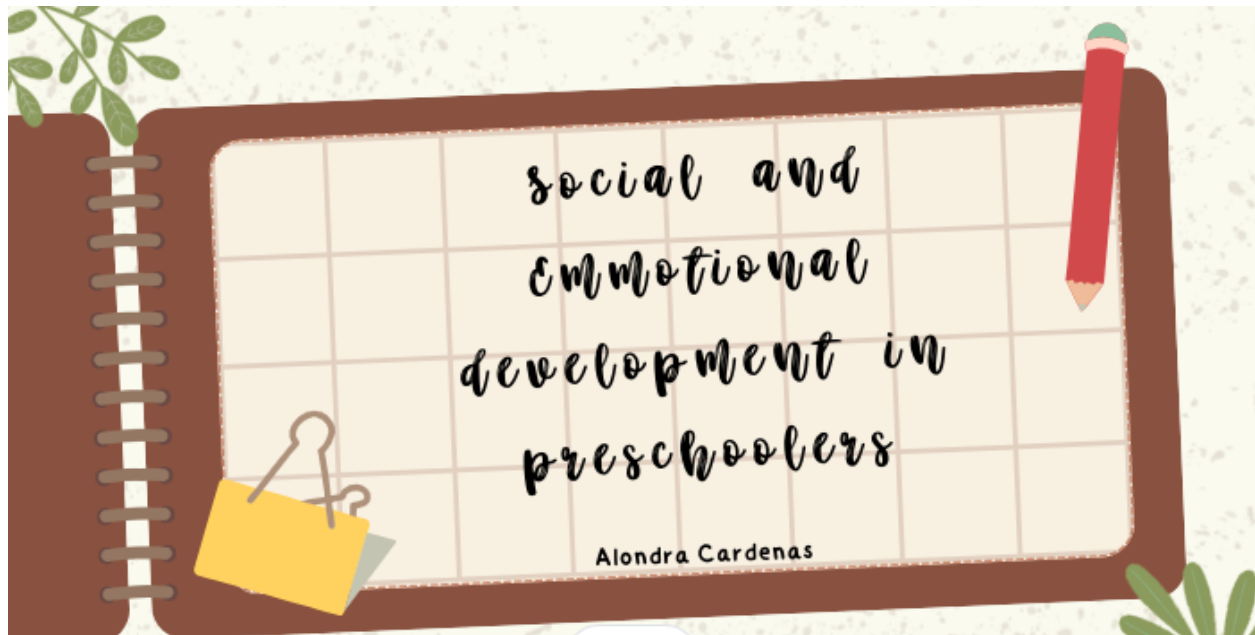   https://ifstudies.org/blog/how-do-the-children-of-immigrant-parents-perform-in-school

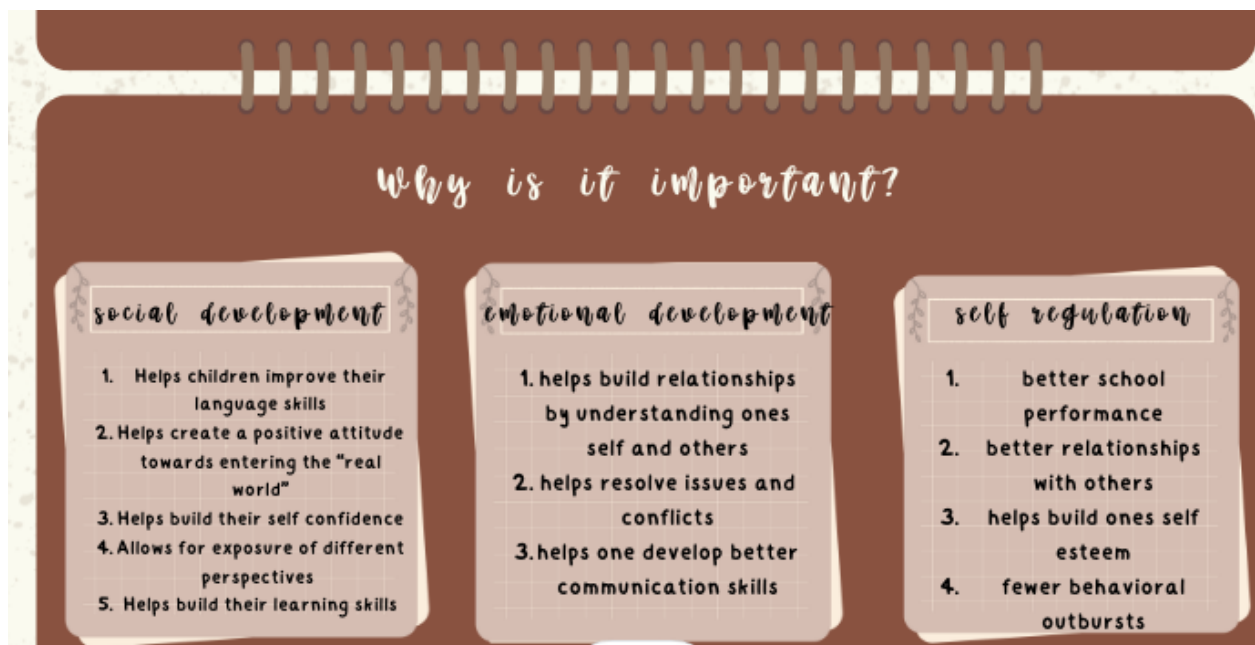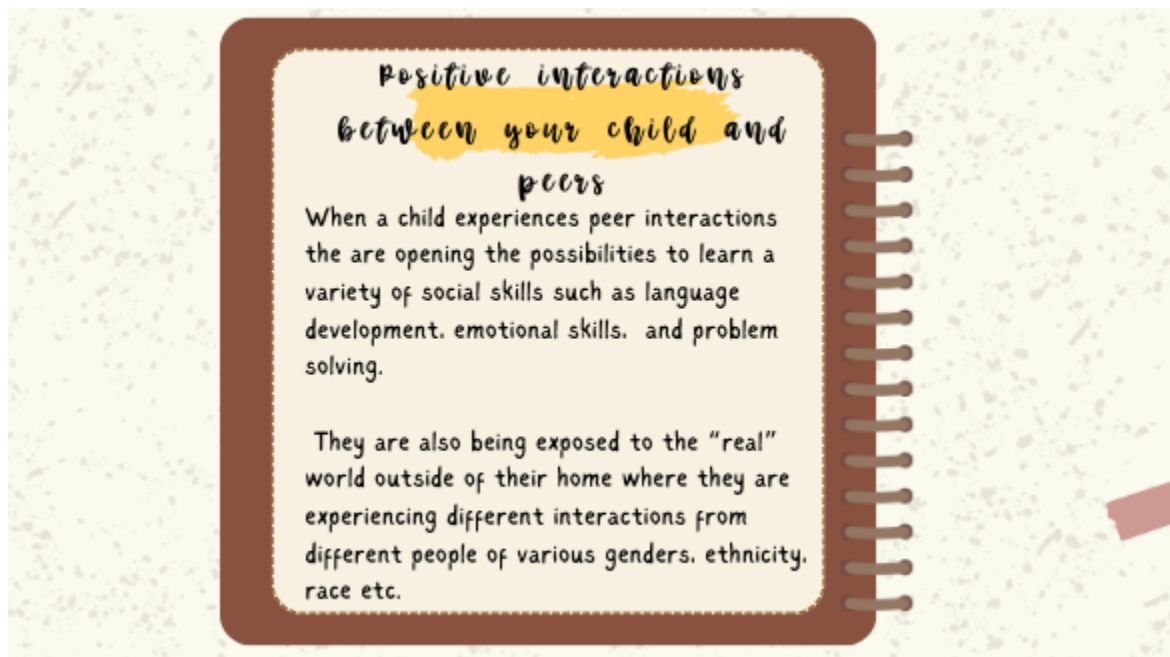Erikson's stages of psychosocial development - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf. (n.d.).
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Appendix A

Slides presented during workshop

what does it mean?

social development

Social development is the process a child goes through that teaches them to interact with other peers around them

emotional development

Emotional development is understanding and regulating of ones own feelings as well as being aware of others feelings.

self regulation

Self regulation is the act of managing thoughts and feelings in ones self

why is it important?

social development

1. Helps children improve their language skills
2. Helps create a positive attitude towards entering the "real world"
3. Helps build their self confidence
4. Allows for exposure of different perspectives
5. Helps build their learning skills

emotional development

1. helps build relationships by understanding ones self and others
2. helps resolve issues and conflicts
3. helps one develop better communication skills

self regulation

1. better school performance
2. better relationships with others
3. helps build ones self esteem
4. fewer behavioral outbursts

ways your child can self regulate

✓ taking a break
✓ practicing breathing techniques
✓ practicing self reflection
✓ create a share journal

positive interactions between your child and peers

When a child experiences peer interactions the are opening the possibilities to learn a variety of social skills such as language development. emotional skills. and problem solving.

They are also being exposed to the "real" world outside of their home where they are experiencing different interactions from different people of various genders. ethnicity. race etc.

LOCAL orginizations

City of Watsonville community parks

Itty Bitty Sports

Itty Bitty Sports is for young players ages 3-5 taking the first steps into Basketball, T-Ball, and Flag Football. These action packed sessions are filled with age-appropriate activities that will help your child to develop their motor and socialization skills. Learning the fundamentals and having fun are the goals of this program!

Ages: 3-5
Location: Callaghan Park
price: $80

Camp Wow

Our popular Camp WOW (Wild on Watsonville) day camps are designed to give children a fun, active, diverse and safe experience. Our experienced Camp Leaders plan games, art, recreational activities and field trips around weekly themes.
Ages: 5+
Location: Ramsy park Family center
price: $230 (whole summer)

LOCAL orginizations

YWCA of Watsonville

eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Watsonville

La Escuelita

Providing morning and afternoon 3.5 hrs sessions. Our program is structured according to the Quality Improvement Rating System and activities are guided by Pyramid Model developed by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundation for Early Learning. We focus on children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development in a safe and nurturing environment.
Ages: 2-5
Location: 118 2nd Street Watsonville, CA 95076
Price: 0

PAJARO VALLEY CHILDREN'S CENTER

Pajaro Valley Children's Center

Pajaro Valley Children's Center provides developmentally appropriate early care for children ages 3 months to the entry of first grade. PVCC promotes a safe, nurturing, and culturally diverse environment while maintaining consistency through a predictable schedule of daily activities
Ages: 3 months- 6
Location: 231 Montecito Avenue Watsonville, CA 95076
Price: 0

Thank you

Appendix B *Provide a title*

NEEDS STATMENT

Participants

- LOCAL community members of Watsonville, CA
- All parents to 1 or more children under 5
- Age range 25-38
  - All participants were fluent in Spanish
  - 3/4 participants were bilingual in English and Spanish

The problem

teachers today are seeing a trend of lack of readiness within children entering the schooling system due to maturity, self confidence, and langyage skills. All of these factors have a direct correlation with social and emotional readiness.

The need

Social and emotional readiness are important factors for being successful in the transition from home to school because this is generally the first experience children are interacting with others outside of their household for a long period. When a child is socially and emotionally self regulated they are able to reflect on interactions in the best way possible

THEORY: ERIK ERIKSON PSYCHSOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Erikson's believed that each person goes through eight different developmental stages throughout their whole life starting from birth to death. His theory is dependent on physiological, biological, and social factors that is said to be influential factors on the success of which each stage of development is completed

Stage 3: Initiative vs. Guilt

this stage is is focused on preschool years 3-5. During this stage children begin to enter their exploring stage and start to assert their authority in their world by interactions with peers such as play
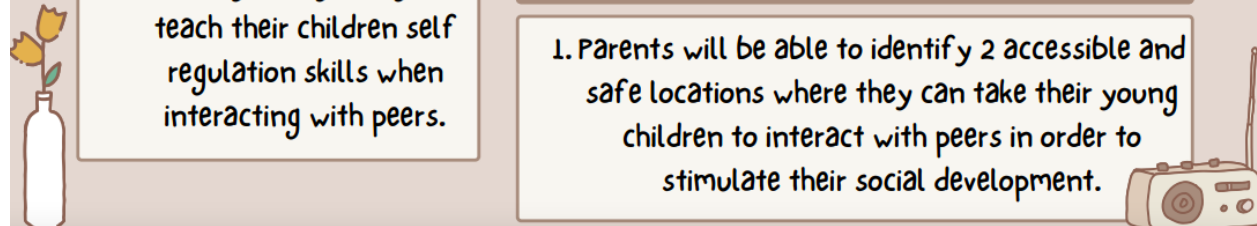
LEARNING OUTCOMES

LO #1

1. Parents will be able to identify 2 reasons why interactions with peers are important for a young child's social-emotional and academic development.

LO #2

1. Parents will be able to identify 3 ways they can teach their children self regulation skills when interacting with peers.

LO #3

1. Parents will be able to identify 2 accessible and safe locations where they can take their young children to interact with peers in order to stimulate their social development.

METHOD
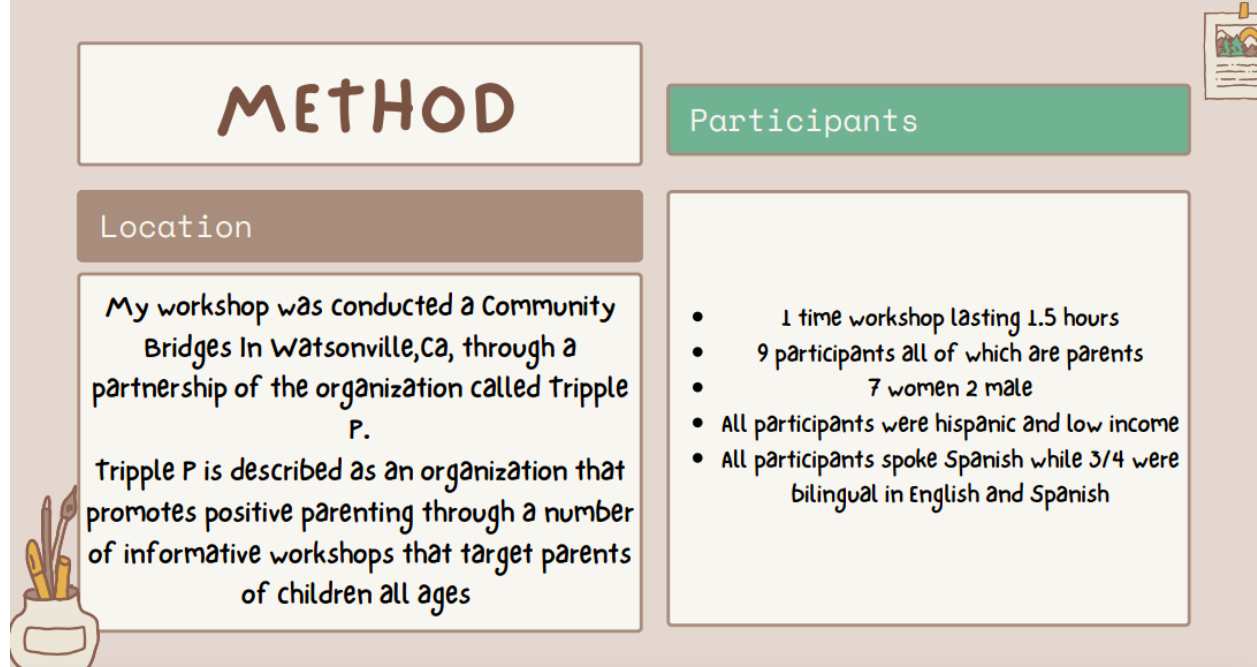
Location

My workshop was conducted a Community Bridges In Watsonville,Ca, through a partnership of the organization called Tripple P.

Tripple P is described as an organization that promotes positive parenting through a number of informative workshops that target parents of children all ages

Participants

- 1 time workshop lasting 1.5 hours
- 9 participants all of which are parents
- 7 women 2 male
- All participants were hispanic and low income
- All participants spoke Spanish while 3/4 were bilingual in English and Spanish

PROCEDURES AND MATERIALS

Introduction

I first started with introducing myself and my purpose in conducting this workshop and what it would cover. I then handed out a form that asked for basic information such as their name, their preferred language, if they had children and if so what ages, what they would consider their social class, and if they were local to the community.

LO #1

- introduced social and emotional development and defined the terms
- gave examples as to how they are used in daily living
- Then explained how soci-emo development can look within toddlers
- then I gave examples how we as adults and parents can help stimulate social and emotional development within our children
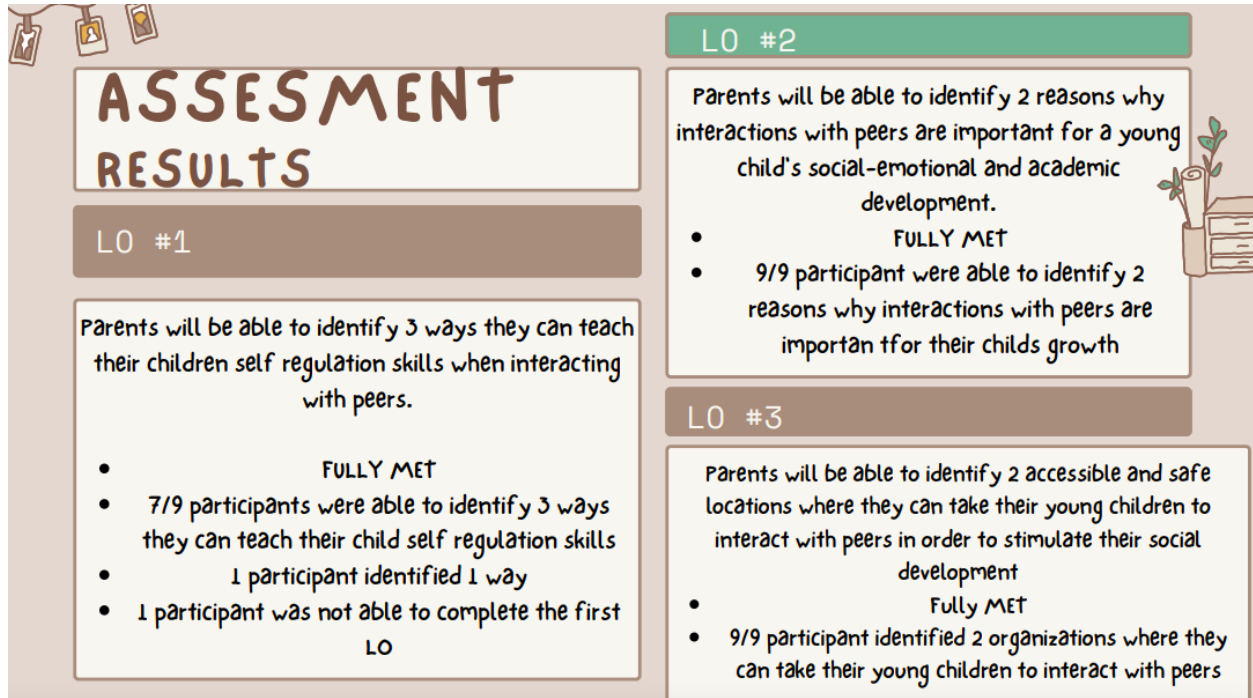
PROCEDURES AND MATERIALS

LO #2

- introduced what self regulation is, with examples and the improtance of it
- demonstrated different ways your child can self regulate
- introduced how parents can influence self regulation in their children

LO #3

- introduced the topic of positive interactions between toddlers and peers.
- transitioned into introducing local organizations that will both stimulate and increase their child's social and emotional development.
- I explained each organization and included the following: hours of operation, price if any, what they do, and the benefits it can have on one's child

ASSESSMENT RESULTS

LO #1

Parents will be able to identify 3 ways they can teach their children self regulation skills when interacting with peers.

- FULLY MET
- 7/9 participants were able to identify 3 ways they can teach their child self regulation skills
- 1 participant identified 1 way
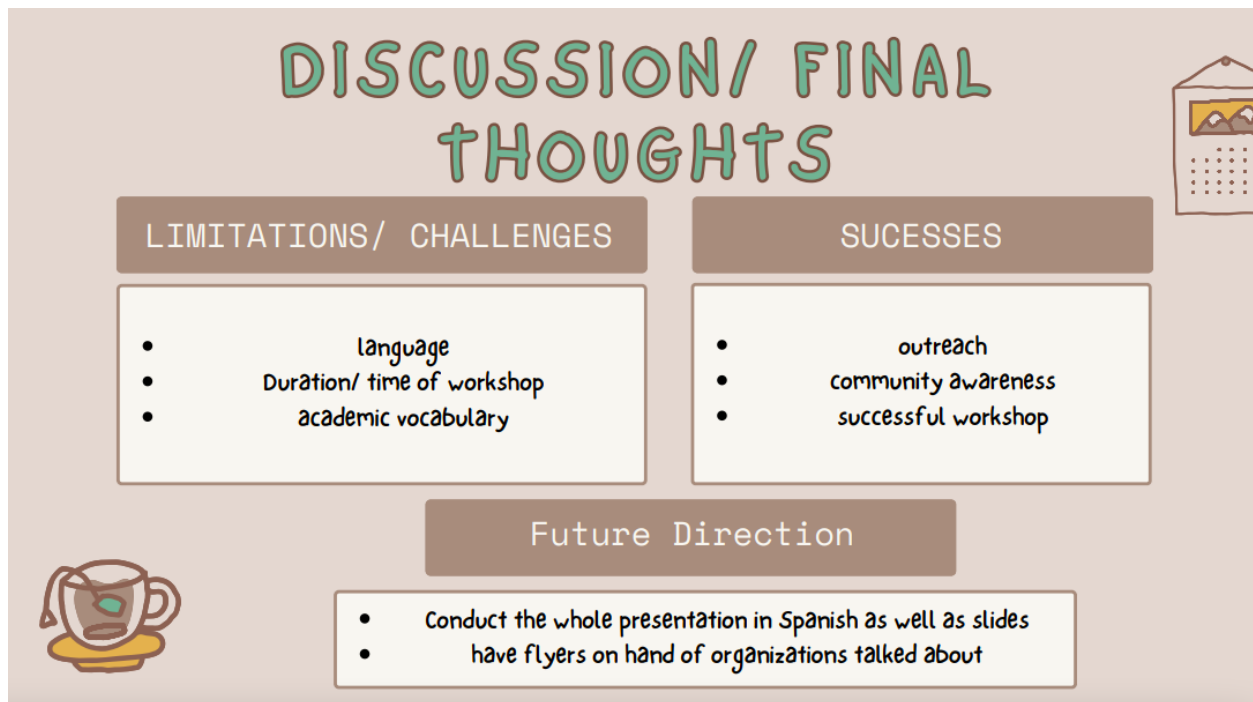- 1 participant was not able to complete the first LO

LO #2

Parents will be able to identify 2 reasons why interactions with peers are important for a young child's social-emotional and academic development.

- FULLY MET
- 9/9 participant were able to identify 2 reasons why interactions with peers are importan tfor their childs growth

LO #3

Parents will be able to identify 2 accessible and safe locations where they can take their young children to interact with peers in order to stimulate their social development

- Fully MET
- 9/9 participant identified 2 organizations where they can take their young children to interact with peers

DISCUSSION/ FINAL THOUGHTS

LIMITATIONS/ CHALLENGES

- language
- Duration/ time of workshop
- academic vocabulary

SUCESSES

- outreach
- community awareness
- successful workshop

Future Direction

- Conduct the whole presentation in Spanish as well as slides
- have flyers on hand of organizations talked about