

10 Ways to Keep Joy and Social Emotional Learning Alive! (preK-1)

Our job as teachers is to create a feeling of belonging and joy so children will love coming to school and thrive as responsible learners and good friends.

Greet Every Child by Name and Create a Feeling of Belonging

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All photos are used with permission from teachers and parents.

1. There is nothing as sweet to a child as the sound of his or her name and teacher's eyes smiling a welcome. Use morning greetings, settling-in time, and gathering rituals to create feelings of safety, caring, and belonging.

With Happy Hearts We Dance and Sing



2. Sing, dance, and play games with your children every day. Emotional engagement is the key to all powerful learning.

Provide Art as Creative Expression



3. Provide art projects that allow for each child's unique, creative expression to shine through. Build visual learning and problem solving skills for the 21st century.

Use Playful Teaching and Learning: Grow Architects and Engineers



4. Create opportunities for rich, dramatic play and block building. Notice these young architects are inspired by famous buildings. Kindergarten building photos are a part of Teacher Shanda's class book: We Are Architects and Engineers.

Teach Children to Draw and Make Books!



5. Provide simple Independent Writing Center activities such as Guided Drawing and Book Making: Children delight in being the authors and illustrators.

Honor Young Authors and Illustrators: Proudly They Share Their Work



6. Invite kindergarten authors to proudly share their books with the class. Teacher Jaime notices detailed illustrations, sentences, creative ideas, and spaces between words.

Understand the Art and Science of Teaching Reading



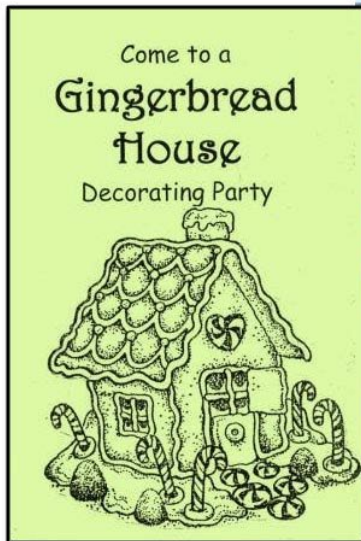
7. **Our students need** a solid foundation of phonemic awareness, oral language, phonics, and writing skills (encoding sounds to print) to build reading success! They practice daily with "read-every-word" books. Students also deserve to become "book lovers" and have experiences that nurture an "I can do it!" growth mindset. Familiar songs and rhymes are learned orally and illustrated for "I Can Read" Notebooks. (These become their favorite "read-in-other-ways" books.) Learning is social: Buddy readers track words, recite, and read together.

Engage Children in Stories



8. Read and reread your favorite children's books: Look for ways for the children to engage with the story. Books like *The Polar Express* and variations of *The Gingerbread Man* always bring delight. Master teacher and storyteller Joanie Cutler advises teachers to invite children into the story.

Families Are Partners in Kindergarten Learning



9. Teacher Laura invites families to share in celebrations of the seasons. A gingerbread house-making party is a winter treat that builds happy school memories.

Send Children out the Door with a Smile



10. Keep joy alive through the end of the day: Use your favorite farewell song to sing each child's name; send them out the door with a smile in their hearts. Consider the Dr. Becky Bailey ending ritual with teacher standing at the door to say goodbye to each child: Choose an "h" word, she tells them: Happy smile, hug, high-five, or handshake!

Your children will long remember the joy they felt in kindergarten and how proud they were to be authors and illustrators.



Learn more about Social Emotional Learning in Kindergarten: [Visit my TPT Shop](#)