

## Self-regulation for Young Learners

### What is self-regulation?

**Self-regulation** is a set of underlying abilities that allow children to be successful in social interactions and learning. It's tied to brain development that occurs in the early childhood years and can be influenced by a child's early environment. **The good news:** Teachers can support the development of children's self-regulation, which will have a long-term positive impact on children's lives. Tools PreK and K curricula embed self-regulation and social-emotional development within academic activities and classroom management, building the foundational skills children need to be successful in school and life.

### Why does self-regulation matter?

Self-regulation is critical to closing the achievement gap for many at-risk children, as well as helping all children reach their highest potential.

To understand why self-regulation should be a focus of every early childhood teacher's practice, it's helpful to think about what self-regulation enables children to do, and the impact on children when they haven't yet developed these skills. See how the Tools approach helps young children improve self-regulation:

#### Without Self-regulation



**Children have a hard time waiting, sharing materials** and toys. They may know the rules but can't yet inhibit behaviors like grabbing or pushing.

**Children have a difficult time with transitions** like clean up or recess – ending something they want to do and doing something they don't want to do! They may 'melt down' and find it difficult to stop and transition to the next activity.



**Children may not be able to stay seated** and listen to a story, play a game or sit through a meal.

**When facing a difficult learning challenge**, children can get easily discouraged and give up; their minds and attention wander to other things.



#### With Self-regulation



**Children can take turns**, share materials, and wait for their turn. They can use strategies like asking for something they want, or playing with something else while they wait.

**Children can manage a transition** like bedtime or clean up time, even when they are disappointed that a fun time is coming to an end. Young children may still need support but self-regulation is what's needed to be successful at this.



**Children can control their attention** enough to listen to a story, play a game, and sit through a meal. Their attention may wander, but they can bring it back to the task at hand.

**With self-regulation, a child can persist** at challenging learning tasks, focusing their attention and intentionally using strategies to be an independent, self-regulated learner.

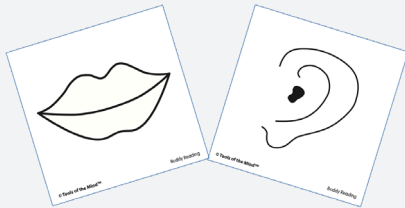


**What makes tools teachers unique?**  
**Tools teachers propel children's self-regulation development!**

**Tools of the Mind** designs the approach to classroom management, environment, schedule and all activities to promote self-regulation development. Our professional development model includes individualized classroom video coaching to help every teacher apply these practices in their classroom, and through learning by doing, see the impact of how building self-regulation improves child outcomes.

## SELF-REGULATION TOOLS FOR PREK & K TEACHERS

## External Mediators



**An external mediator is a tool** that children use to remember and independently follow 'a rule.' In Tools, we use **Lips and Ears** cards to empower pairs of children to independently take turns '**reading aloud**' and '**listening**.'

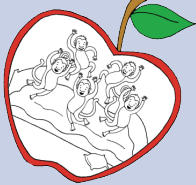
Tools external mediators are used in many ways to help children take turns in math activities and checking a partner's work. In writing children use the **Tools' Sound Map** to identify symbol-to-sound correspondences. In Kindergarten reading, children use a mediator card with reading strategies and partners help one another choose the best strategy to decode an unfamiliar word.

## Private Speech



**Talking aloud to yourself is a strategy** for learning and focusing attention. Tools activities are designed to intentionally engage children in using private speech and Tools teachers facilitate children's use of private speech. For example, children "tell their hands what to do" and say aloud the motor actions to form a letter, "around, close and down" as they learn penmanship.

## Attention Focusing Activities



5 little monkeys jumping on the bed...

**Tools teachers use focusing strategies** to boost classroom-level self-regulation when they observe it decreasing, or to gather attention after a transition. Rather than saying things like 'I'm waiting for David' or 'I like how Juanita is sitting' Tools teachers launch a fingerplay using changes in tempo and volume to draw all children in. When the fingerplay ends, the children are ready for the next activity.

## Planning Before Acting



**In Tools PreK classrooms,** each child makes a plan before they play in centers each day. Children say their plan out loud, then draw a picture of the plan, and write their plan with sounds to represent words. Each child works at their own level.

**In Tools Kindergarten classrooms,** children create a weekly learning plan and each morning, write to remember what they will do in 2 different centers each day. They conference with their teacher once/week and plan a weekly learning goal that they write at the top of their plan, and discuss with a Study Buddy each day.

## Make-believe Play



**In Tools PreK classrooms,** make-believe play themes are layered across all centers and children enjoy acting out pretend scenarios like eating in a restaurant or going to the doctor. In make-believe play, there is intrinsic motivation to remember what each 'role' does, 'follow the rules' of the role, and improvise story problems that you solve with your peers while staying in your roles.

**In Tools Kindergarten classrooms**, children enjoy dramatizing both fiction and nonfiction books the teacher reads aloud to them. Teachers facilitate high-level dramatization skills in Group Dramatization. Children independently practice these skills in Small Group Dramatization in literacy centers.

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