



WHAT IS IT?

SELF-REGULATION is the skill to control one’s own attention, emotions, and behaviors. Self-regulation is foundational to learning because it allows students to cope with the demands of the classroom.



Key skills and concepts	Definitions
Behavior Regulation	The skill to control one’s own behavior. This includes following directions, stopping impulsive responses (e.g., raising your hand instead of calling out), and controlling one’s own body. In the classroom this includes sitting quietly during a story and walking instead of running to go outside.
Cognitive Regulation/ Executive Functioning	The skill to plan, focus, and direct attention to tasks. Mentally holding and manipulating information. In kindergarten, this includes remembering classroom rules (e.g., using inside voices) even when excited, remembering multi-step routines (e.g., what to do to get ready for dismissal), and being able to shift gears during transitions.
Emotion Regulation	The skill to manage one’s own emotions. This includes being able to calm down after a frustrating event, persist during a frustrating task, and handle disappointment.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Self-regulation is a foundational skill that...

- Supports learning by directly influencing motivation and engagement in the classroom
- Predicts children’s school success, even beyond their IQ and their achievement in reading and math



HOW DOES IT DEVELOP?

At this age	Children can typically:
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow classroom rules and routines with reminders from adults • Manage their own actions, words, and behavior with support from adults • Focus attention on tasks and experiences for longer periods of time • Begin to demonstrate flexibility in thinking and behavior
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate control over actions and words in response to a slightly challenging situation • Manage behavior according to expectations and refrain from responding impulsively • Delay having desires met, such as agreeing to wait turn • Maintain focus on activities for longer periods of time independently • Successfully follow multi-step directions, sometimes with reminders
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize when their own behaviors are inappropriate • Control their actions and words in increasingly demanding situations • Follow rules established and monitored by someone else • Follow a series of three commands in a row independently • Start developing the skills to reason and think logically • Think through things before making decisions

SKILL: SELF-REGULATION

USING THE CHILD BEHAVIOR RATING SCALE DATA

WHAT CAN THE CBRS TELL ME?

The CBRS is a useful screening tool. Data from the Self-Regulation Subscale can help you identify students in your classroom who are struggling to display the self-control skills needed for learning. However, the CBRS is just one brief measure— it is not sensitive enough to comprehensively assess a student's self-regulation skills. And, importantly, it does not provide information as to why a student might be struggling.

For example, a child could be struggling to observe rules and follow directions because:

- *They became distracted by something else and never heard the direction*
- *The rule or direction had too many steps/was too hard for a child that age*
- *The rule or direction was not clear*
- *Something stressful is happening at home and it's affecting the child's self-control skills*

The CBRS is a tool that can guide next steps. However, it needs to be combined with other information in order to best support a student's self-regulation skills. Below are some other things to consider as you examine your students' CBRS data:

- *Are there students who you are particularly concerned about?*
- *Why do you think they might be struggling?*
- *Are there some simple things you can do in your classroom to support their developing skills?*
- *What is happening right before and right after they are struggling?*
- *What other information would be helpful to better understand why this student is struggling?*

COMBINING THE CBRS WITH OTHER INFORMATION

It is important to **GATHER MORE INFORMATION** in order to better understand how to best support self-regulation skills for a particular student, a group of students, or all of the students in your classroom. You can start by talking with other individuals who interact with the students (e.g., parents, other teachers), but the most important information is likely to come from observations of student behavior in your own classroom.

When you intentionally **OBSERVE** students, you can gather critical, objective information about their behavior. For example, you can identify when and where certain behaviors are most likely to occur and what happens before, during, and after the behavior. This information will help you to determine the best strategies to use to support students' skills.

Please see [Guide to Observing Children's Behavior](#) for more information.

SKILL: SELF-REGULATION

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S SELF-REGULATION SKILLS

STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	RESOURCES										
Use Reinforcement	Reinforcement is providing something (praise, rewards) after a student displays a desired behavior that makes the behavior more likely to happen again. Reinforcers come in many forms; for example, labeled praise, actively observing a student's actions, a hug, stickers or stamps, a special activity, or a smile.	Examples of Reinforcers (LOOK ©) Labeled Praise (LOOK ©) Reinforcement Systems (LOOK ©) Visual Reinforcement Boards (LOOK ©)										
Use Effective Commands	Effective commands are simple and clear directives given to a student to increase his or her compliance. They: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Obtain the student's attention, ✓ Are stated specifically and assertively, ✓ Provide one directive at a time, and ✓ Are stated positively 	Communication is the Key (TACSEI ©)										
Allow Choice	Choice is providing a student the opportunity to indicate what he or she would prefer to do at a given moment during the day. Teachers decide on a set of activities (usually two) that are appropriate for the student to engage in at a particular time and then encourage the student to choose between activities.	Using Choice Brief (CSEFEL ©) Using Choice Handout (CSEFEL ©)										
Use Cues and Visuals	<i>Cues</i> are quick verbal or non-verbal reminders of an expected behavior. <i>Visuals</i> are materials that teachers can use throughout the day to help students remember what they should be doing. Cues and visuals are effective at the classroom level and also for specific students.	Examples of Cues and Visuals (LOOK ©) Stop Signs (TACSEI ©)										
Modify Your Activities and Environment	Modifying activities and environments is a set of techniques used to increase students' on-task behaviors in the classroom by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Planning developmentally appropriate activities, ✓ Adapting and modifying tasks to maximize active engagement, and ✓ Organizing the classroom to minimize distraction. 	Zoning to Maximize Learning (NCQTL ©) Stop Signs (TACSEI ©)										
Play Games	Incorporate games and activities throughout the day that encourage the use of self-regulation skills. For example: <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">✓ Red Light, Green Light</td> <td style="width: 50%;">✓ Conduct an Orchestra</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓ Simon Says (with music)</td> <td>✓ Balance Beams</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓ Freeze Game</td> <td>✓ Fast/Slow</td> </tr> <tr> <td>✓ Hula Hoops and Bells</td> <td>✓ Yoga</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>✓ Head Toes Knees Shoulders</td> </tr> </table>	✓ Red Light, Green Light	✓ Conduct an Orchestra	✓ Simon Says (with music)	✓ Balance Beams	✓ Freeze Game	✓ Fast/Slow	✓ Hula Hoops and Bells	✓ Yoga		✓ Head Toes Knees Shoulders	Guide to Playing Games (VKRP ©)
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	✓ Head Toes Knees Shoulders											

REFERENCES

Administration for Children and Families Office of Head Start
 Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL©)
 Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL©)
 Learning to Objectively Observe Kids (LOOK ©)
 National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning (NCQTL ©)
 Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children (TACSEI ©)