

Individual Matters

Discover.
Act.
Grow.

• **Newsletter — September 2026 Issue**

In this month's newsletter:

- ✓ Play is Serious Business
- ✓ Fall 2026 Social-Emotional Group for K-5 Students

Play is Serious Business

There is a particular kind of heartbreak that only a parent knows: watching your child stand on the outside of the game, come home from a playdate in tears, or ask, “Why don't they want to play with me?” For some children, the hardest part of childhood isn't learning to read or count, but learning how to find your place with other people.

And if you've ever sat in the car after a disastrous playdate thinking, *Surely there has to be a better way to teach this*, you are far from alone.



Research has shown that at least 1 in 5 parents of children ages 6–12 say their child has no friends or not enough friends. More than half report that their child faces at least one obstacle to making new friends.

So what is the answer? Turns out it is a fun one! Play.

For a young child, play is a laboratory for figuring out how other humans work. Play is where children discover *who they are, what they're capable of, and how they want to show up in the world*. Through laughter, movement, imagination, challenge, and connection, they practice self-control and confidence, learn their limits and how to stretch them, discover their own gifts, receive feedback, read the room, see the world through someone else's eyes, and learn when to hold their ground and when to make room for a new idea. *It's where children practice the beautiful, messy work of being human—finding their own voice while learning how to listen, connect, create, recover, and grow alongside others.*

Children are practicing self-regulation, empathy, communication, problem-solving, flexibility, cooperation, and

perspective-taking—all while building a fort out of cushions or arguing passionately about who gets to be the dragon.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, we started treating learning as work, and play as the reward for finishing the work.

We see the worksheet, the reading level, the completed assignment—we can measure those things. Play is harder to quantify. It looks like laughter, movement, imagination, negotiation, mistakes, and sometimes a spectacular argument over who goes first.

But for young children, play isn't what happens after the important learning. Play is where the most important learning happens.

Mother Nature has been running her curriculum for millions of years—young mammals play with other young mammals, because learning how to move, connect, negotiate, recover, and belong to a group is part of learning how to be alive and survive.

Puppies wrestle. Monkeys chase each other. Otters tumble around.

Apparently, mammals have understood for a very long time that you don't become good at being part of a group by reading a manual about it. *You practice.*

Whether a child is struggling socially, is socially gifted, or somewhere in between, practice matters enormously.

The child who doesn't know how to enter a game needs a chance to practice entering a game.

The child who gets overwhelmed when someone says “no” needs a safe place to experience rejection and recover.

The child who always wants to be in charge needs opportunities to discover that other people have ideas, too.

The child who feels everything *so deeply* needs a place to learn that big feelings can come and go without the sky falling.

That's the beautiful thing about play. It gives children a place to try, mess up, repair, try again, and try again without the stakes being quite so high.

The lessons learned through play quietly follow a child into every room of their lives—from the classroom to the office, and eventually into the relationships, partnerships, and families they build. *I can join. I can handle it when things don't go my way. I can make things right. I can be a good friend. I belong here. I can help others feel they belong.*

That is why play is serious business!

Underneath the giggling, negotiating, arguing, imagining, and occasionally spectacular meltdown, a child is practicing one of life's biggest jobs: *learning how to be human with other humans.*

The power of play can be a form of psychological first aid. Organizations like the Flying Seagull Project use circus

arts, laughter, and games to help children in crisis zones, hospitals, and refugee camps heal from trauma. By creating safe spaces for children to simply be kids, they help restore a sense of normalcy and emotional well-being to vulnerable youth experiencing extreme adversity around the world.



Essentials in Life: A Social-Emotional Group for K-5 Students in Grand Junction

Looking for a fun, supportive way to help your child build confidence, friendship skills, focus, emotional regulation, and resilience? ❤️

EIL's Essentials in Life groups use play, stories, movement, and imagination to help elementary students learn the skills they need for school, friendships, and big feelings.

Small groups begin in Grand Junction the week of September 21 — space is limited! Reach out to learn more or reserve your spot.



**Essentials
in Learning**
elevated coaching,
exceptional results

Essentials in Life

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROUPS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

LEARN • PLAY • IMAGINE • GROW

**Strong skills today.
Bright futures
tomorrow.**

Essentials in Life is an 8-week social-emotional group where children use their imagination, play, stories, movement, and games to build the skills they need to succeed in school, make friends, manage big feelings, and feel confident every day.



A supportive, indoor group where imagination takes us on amazing adventures!

Based on the evidence-informed *Play, Learn & Enjoy!* curriculum

**K-2
ESSENTIALS IN LIFE**

MONDAYS
4:30 – 5:30 PM

**GRADES 3-5
ESSENTIALS IN LIFE**

WEDNESDAYS
4:30 – 5:30 PM

SKILLS WE EXPLORE

Self-Regulation	Focus & Attention
Emotional Awareness	Communication
Friendship Skills	Teamwork
Problem Solving	Mindfulness
Flexible Thinking	Confidence & Resilience

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Small Groups (6-8 students)
- 8 Weekly 60-Minute Sessions
- Fun, Engaging, Play-Based Learning
- Weekly Parent Connection
- Led by an Experienced Elementary School Counselor

INVESTMENT

\$320
per child
for the full 8-week session
(\$40 per week)

PERFECT FOR KIDS WHO...

- Have big feelings or worries
- Need help making or keeping friends
- Get frustrated easily
- Need confidence building
- Want to strengthen emotional regulation and coping skills
- Learn best through play, stories, movement, and hands-on activities

**GROUPS BEGIN THE WEEK OF
SEPTEMBER 21ST!**

**REGISTER BY
SEPTEMBER 17TH**

SPACE IS LIMITED!
Reserve Your Spot Today!

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We're here to support your child's success—in school, in life, and beyond.

“Play is the highest form of research.”

— Albert Einstein

Wishing You a Happy September!



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Executive Director



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