EMOTION FACES

Social-Emotional Learning Through Art

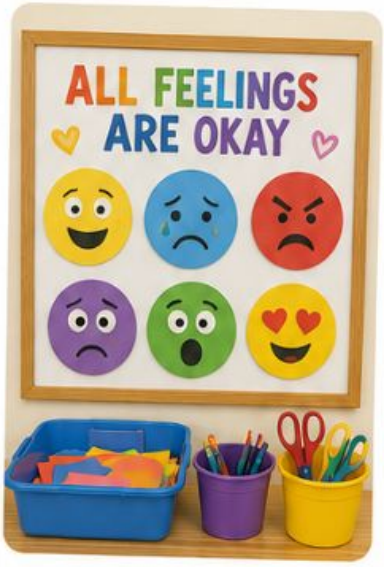
AAA Workspace Classroom Project Guide







Every day, students experience a wide range of emotions.
They feel excitement when learning something new, pride when completing a difficult assignment, frustration when something doesn't go as planned, and happiness when spending time with friends.
While students experience these emotions regularly, many young learners are still developing the skills needed to recognize, understand, and communicate what they are feeling.



That is where Emotion Faces can make a meaningful impact.
Emotion Faces is a simple classroom art activity that combines creativity with social-emotional learning. Using basic paper shapes, students create expressive faces that represent different emotions while developing communication skills, emotional awareness, and self-confidence.

At first glance, the project may seem like a straightforward art activity.
However, the true value comes from the conversations that occur during the process. As students create their faces, they begin discussing feelings, sharing experiences, and learning how emotions affect themselves and others.

The project provides a safe and supportive environment where students can practice emotional expression while strengthening fine motor skills and creative thinking.
Most importantly, students learn that emotions are normal, valuable, and worthy of discussion.

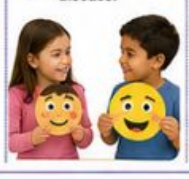
By creating, sharing, and reflecting, students build skills that support success both inside and outside the classroom.

THE EMOTION FACES PROCESS ♡

1. Choose an emotion.

2. Add facial features.

3. Add hair and details.

4. Share and discuss.

5. Reflect and celebrate.


CLASSROOM CONVERSATION

Teacher: How is your face feeling today?
Student: Happy!
Teacher: What made you feel that way?
Student: I got to play with my friends.
Teacher: That sounds wonderful!

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WHY EMOTION FACES MATTER

Social-emotional learning has become an essential part of modern education.

Students who can recognize and communicate their emotions are often better prepared to build positive relationships, solve problems, manage challenges, and participate successfully in classroom activities.

Emotion Faces helps students develop these important skills in an engaging and approachable way.





HAPPY
When students design a happy face, they think about what happiness looks like.



FRUSTRATED
When they create a frustrated face, they consider how frustration affects facial expressions and body language.



CALM
When they build a calm face, they reflect on situations that help them feel relaxed and comfortable.



WORRIED
When students make a worried face, they think about concerns and how worry feels in their bodies and minds.

This process encourages students to **connect emotions with real-life experiences.**



A CLASSROOM EXAMPLE

- Imagine a student who arrives at school after a difficult morning. During the Emotion Faces project, the student chooses to create a frustrated expression.
- As the activity progresses, the student explains that they had an argument with a sibling before coming to school.
- What began as a simple art project becomes an opportunity for communication, reflection, and support. The student learns that feelings can be discussed openly and that classmates often experience similar emotions.

These moments are often where the most meaningful learning occurs.

BENEFITS OF EMOTION FACES

Students learn to:

- Recognize emotions in themselves and others
- Expand emotional vocabulary
- Strengthen communication skills
- Build empathy
- Develop self-awareness
- Improve social interactions
- Practice active listening
- Gain confidence expressing ideas



The project supports academic learning while helping students develop **lifelong social-emotional skills.**



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Emotion Faces supports multiple areas of student development.

EMOTIONAL RECOGNITION

Students learn to identify common emotions through facial expressions and visual cues. As students compare different faces, they begin recognizing the subtle differences between emotions such as excitement, nervousness, frustration, and happiness.



EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Students strengthen their ability to use descriptive language when discussing feelings. Vocabulary words may include:

Happy | Sad | Angry | Nervous | Calm
Excited | Proud | Frustrated | Surprised | Worried

Expanding emotional vocabulary helps students communicate more effectively and accurately.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Students practice speaking, listening, and explaining their ideas. During discussions, students learn how to describe emotions, share experiences, and listen respectfully to classmates.



FINE MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

Cutting, arranging, positioning, and gluing paper shapes strengthens hand-eye coordination and dexterity. These skills support many other classroom activities including writing, drawing, and manipulating classroom tools.



SELF-AWARENESS

Students become more aware of their own emotional experiences. By thinking about how emotions feel and when they occur, students develop stronger self-reflection skills.



EMPATHY

Students learn that people may experience the same situation differently. Recognizing and respecting those differences helps build stronger classroom relationships.



When students understand and express their emotions, they build skills that support success in school and in life.

MATERIALS & CLASSROOM SETUP

One of the reasons Emotion Faces is so effective is its simplicity.

Most classrooms already have everything needed to complete the activity.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS

Basic Supplies:

- Construction Paper
- Cardstock
- Glue Sticks
- Safety Scissors
- Markers
- Crayons
- Colored Pencils



Optional Supplies:

- Wiggle Eyes
- Yarn
- Craft Foam
- Patterned Paper
- Stickers
- Decorative Shapes

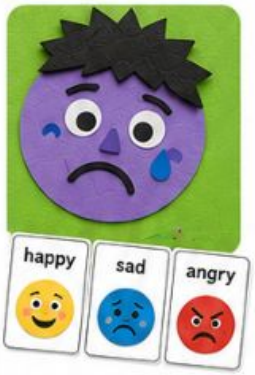


TEACHER PREPARATION

A small amount of preparation can significantly improve the flow of the activity.

Before students begin:

- Organize paper by color
- Prepare sample faces
- Set out scissors and glue
- Create emotion vocabulary cards
- Prepare discussion questions



Having materials organized allows students to focus on creativity rather than waiting for supplies.

CLASSROOM SETUP IDEAS

Many teachers find success using workstation models.

STATION ONE: Paper selection and cutting.



STATION TWO: Face assembly.



STATION THREE: Detailing and decoration.



STATION FOUR: Discussion and sharing.



This structure helps maintain engagement while reducing congestion around supply areas.

TEACHER TIP



- Consider displaying a classroom emotion chart before beginning the project. Visual examples help students understand emotional vocabulary and provide inspiration for their artwork.
- Students who struggle to identify emotions often benefit from having examples available throughout the activity.
- Emotion charts can also be referenced during class discussions to reinforce vocabulary and emotional awareness.



STEP-BY-STEP PROJECT GUIDE

Emotion Faces is most successful when teachers guide students through the process slowly and intentionally. While the finished project is important, the conversations and reflections that happen during the activity often provide the greatest learning opportunities.

1 STEP 1: INTRODUCE EMOTIONS

Begin by gathering students together for a short discussion.

Ask questions such as:

- How are you feeling today?
- What are some emotions people experience?
- Can two people feel differently about the same situation?
- How can we tell how someone is feeling?

Allow students to share examples and experiences. Encourage respectful listening and remind students that all emotions are normal.

Explain that they will be creating faces that represent different feelings.



2 STEP 2: CHOOSE AN EMOTION

Invite students to select an emotion they would like to create.

Some students may choose:

- Happy
- Sad
- Excited
- Calm

Others may choose:

- Frustrated
- Nervous
- Surprised
- Proud

Encourage students to think about a time they experienced the emotion they selected.



3 STEP 3: BUILD THE FACE

Provide students with paper shapes and encourage experimentation.

Ask students to think about:

- What shape should the eyes be?
- Where should the eyebrows go?
- What type of mouth shows this feeling?

Students quickly discover that even small changes can dramatically change the expression of a face.



4 STEP 4: ADD DETAILS

Students may personalize their artwork with:

- Hair
- Hats
- Glasses
- Earrings
- Freckles
- Accessories

These details help students take ownership of their projects.



5 STEP 5: SHARE AND REFLECT

Invite students to explain:

- Which emotion they chose
- Why they selected it
- What inspired their design
- A time they experienced that feeling

These conversations often become the most valuable part of the lesson.



TEACHER TIP

✗ Avoid correcting emotional interpretations.

Instead of saying:

"That's not what a frustrated face looks like."

✓ Try:

"Tell us why you chose those features."

This encourages creativity and communication.

BUILDING EMOTIONAL VOCABULARY

Many students can identify basic emotions but struggle to describe them in detail.

Emotion Faces provides opportunities to build stronger emotional vocabulary.

HAPPY



Happy emotions are often connected to:

- Friendship
- Success
- Family
- Celebrations

Discussion Questions:

- What makes you happy?
- What does happiness feel like?
- How can you tell someone is happy?

SAD



Sadness is a normal part of life.

Discussion Questions:

- What helps when you're feeling sad?
- Who can you talk to?
- How can friends show support?

ANGRY



Students benefit from learning healthy ways to manage anger.

Discussion Questions:

- What causes frustration?
- What helps you calm down?
- What are healthy ways to express anger?

NERVOUS



Many students experience nervous feelings before tests, presentations, or new experiences.

Discussion Questions:

- What makes people feel nervous?
- How can nervousness be helpful?
- What helps you feel more confident?

CALM



Calm emotions help students focus and learn.

Discussion Questions:

- When do you feel calm?
- What activities help you relax?
- What does a calm face look like?

PROUD



Pride develops confidence and motivation.

Discussion Questions:

- What accomplishments make you proud?
- How do you celebrate success?
- How can you encourage others?

EXCITED



Excitement often brings energy and enthusiasm.

Discussion Questions:

- What are you looking forward to?
- How does excitement feel?
- How can excitement help learning?

FRUSTRATED



Learning how to manage frustration is an important life skill.

Discussion Questions:

- What causes frustration?
- What helps when something feels difficult?
- How can we solve problems when frustrated?

SURPRISED



Surprise can be positive or unexpected.

Discussion Questions:

- What surprises you?
- How does surprise feel?
- How can you react in a positive way?

Using Emotion Faces to talk about feelings helps students understand themselves, support others, and build a positive classroom community.

TEACHER CONVERSATION GUIDE

One of the greatest benefits of Emotion Faces is the opportunity for meaningful conversations.

QUESTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

- What made your face look this way?
- Why did you choose this emotion?
- Have you felt this way before?
- What usually causes this feeling?



QUESTIONS THAT BUILD EMPATHY

- How would you help someone feeling this way?
- What advice would you give a friend?
- How can classmates support each other?



QUESTIONS THAT PROMOTE PROBLEM SOLVING

- What helps when you're frustrated?
- How can you calm down when upset?
- What are healthy ways to express emotions?



QUESTIONS THAT ENCOURAGE SELF-AWARENESS

- What emotions do you experience most often?
- Which emotions are easiest to recognize?
- Which emotions are hardest to describe?



TEACHER TIP

There are no right or wrong answers. The goal is to encourage thoughtful discussion and emotional awareness.

CLASSROOM EXTENSIONS

Emotion Faces can be expanded into additional activities throughout the school year.

MORNING CHECK-IN BOARD

Students place their emotion face on a classroom board each morning.

This provides:

- Emotional awareness
- Daily communication opportunities
- Insight for teachers



EMOTION MATCHING GAME

Display multiple faces and ask students to:

- Identify emotions
- Explain their choices
- Compare expressions



STORY CHARACTER CONNECTIONS

While reading books, ask:

- How is the character feeling?
- Which emotion face matches the story?
- Why?



FEELINGS JOURNAL

Students write about:

- Recent experiences
- Emotional responses
- Problem-solving strategies



PARTNER INTERVIEWS

Students ask classmates questions about emotions and experiences.

This strengthens communication and listening skills.



DIFFERENTIATION & INCLUSION

Emotion Faces can be adapted for a wide variety of learners.

AUTISM SUPPORT CLASSROOMS

Use:

- Visual schedules
- Emotion cards
- Structured choices
- Predictable routines







ENGLISH LEARNERS

Provide:

- Picture supports
- Vocabulary cards
- Sentence starters
- Partner activities



SENTENCE STARTERS

I feel _____ when _____.

I look like this because _____.

I can _____ when I feel _____.



EMERGING COMMUNICATORS

Allow students to:

- Point to emotions
- Use picture cards
- Use communication devices
- Work with partners







ADVANCED LEARNERS

Challenge students to:

- Create mixed emotions
- Develop characters
- Write stories
- Explain emotional complexity







SMALL GROUP INSTRUCTION

Small groups often provide additional support for students who need extra guidance.



BENEFITS:

- More individual attention
- Stronger relationships
- Targeted instruction
- Increased confidence
- Safe environment

COMMON CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION
Students choose only happy faces. 	Introduce a wider range of emotional vocabulary and examples. 
Students struggle identifying emotions. 	Use visual emotion charts and classroom discussions. 
Students rush through the project. 	Require reflection and sharing before projects are considered complete. 
Students copy classmates. 	Encourage personal experiences and unique interpretations. 
Students hesitate to participate. 	Provide multiple communication options including pointing, drawing, or partner sharing. 

Every student experiences emotions differently.
With the right support, every student can succeed!

CROSS-CURRICULAR LEARNING

Emotion Faces connects to many subjects and helps students grow academically and emotionally.

LANGUAGE ARTS

Students:

- Expand vocabulary
- Practice speaking
- Develop listening skills
- Write reflections



HEALTH EDUCATION

Students learn:

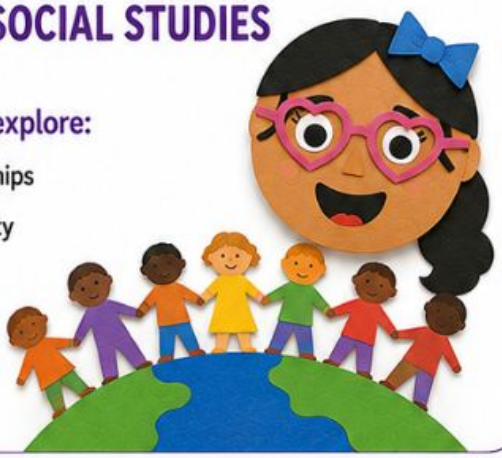
- Emotional wellness
- Self-regulation
- Healthy coping strategies



SOCIAL STUDIES

Students explore:

- Relationships
- Community
- Respect
- Empathy



ART

Students practice:

- Design
- Creativity
- Composition
- Visual communication



CHARACTER EDUCATION

Emotion Faces supports many social-emotional learning programs and classroom culture initiatives.



When subjects connect, learning becomes meaningful, memorable, and impactful.

BUILD YOUR SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING STATION

Emotion Faces transforms simple classroom supplies into opportunities for communication, creativity, reflection, and growth.

RECOMMENDED PROJECT KIT


Construction Paper


Cardstock


Glue Sticks


Safety Scissors


Markers


Colored Pencils


Storage Containers


Labels



FINAL THOUGHT

When students create, discuss, reflect, and share emotions through art, they are doing far more than completing a classroom project.

They are developing **communication skills**, building **emotional awareness**, strengthening **relationships**, and learning how to **understand themselves and others**.

These skills support success throughout the classroom, throughout school, and throughout life.

