



**Calm Counts: The Importance of Teaching Self-Control**  
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Keep calm and...read on? We've long known the ability to stay calm in the face of frustration is a key social-emotional skill but research shows a link between self-control and academic success. Self-regulation can be thought of as the ability to put a moment between a feeling and an action. In our classrooms we teach strategies to help children pause before reacting and deal with strong emotions.

What's so exciting for us at Wonders is that studies indicate that adding certain fun games to our plans can have a real impact on our students' self-control. By regularly playing and systematically tweaking simple games the children already enjoy, we can actually improve their ability to process directions, inhibit impulses, and choose better responses. For example, altering expectations (so that Simon Says becomes Simon Doesn't Say and Red Light, Green Light becomes Green Light, Purple Light) actually adds an increased level of complexity regarding inhibiting initial reactions.

We teach self-control strategies even to our students who are too young for Simon Says. Our teachers model calming techniques such as verbally acknowledging our own feelings, counting slowly to five, and taking deep breaths to relax our bodies. Even toddlers can learn to "belly breathe" or release tension by "balloon bursting." We read stories that show characters being flexible when dealing with change and we practice recognizing the emotions of others. For example, when handling a heated negotiation over a favorite toy you might hear a teacher say, "Let's look at her face." Consider trying these strategies at home.