

REACH MS NEWSLETTER

Realizing Excellence for ALL Children in Mississippi

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

ISSUE 2

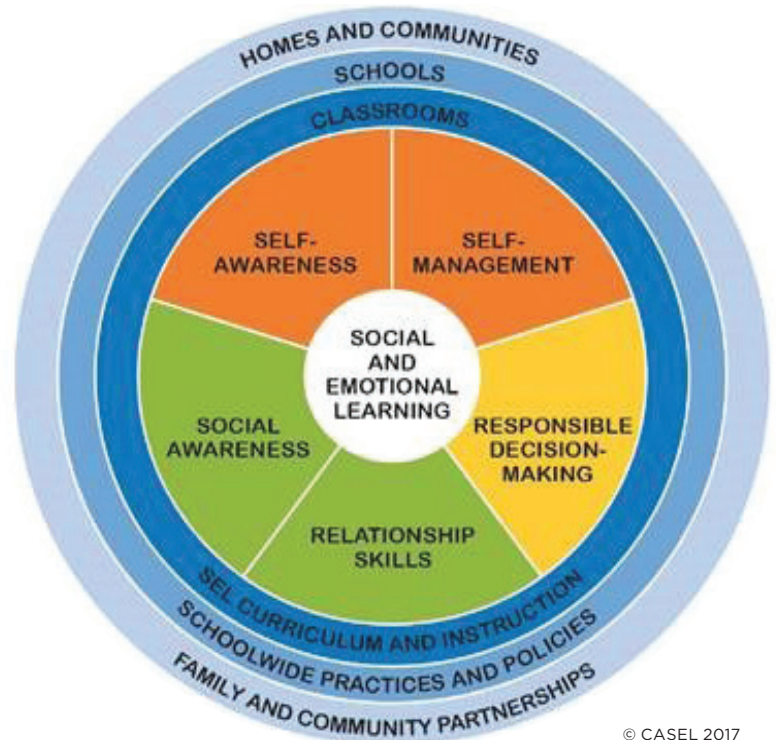
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY: SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness is one of the five core Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and is the first competency highlighted in this six-part newsletter series. The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines self-awareness in two parts, with the first being the ability to identify one's own thoughts, values and emotions, and recognize how these shape behavior. The second part of self-awareness involves the assessment of one's own abilities (e.g., strengths and weaknesses) and includes the need for confidence, optimism and knowing which weaknesses one can improve upon (CASEL, 2018).

Self-awareness is not only a core competency, but a particularly important skill to acquire because a person must first be able to identify, recognize and assess, as related to himself before he can do so for others. For example, I must first be able to recognize frustration in myself when I can't independently complete a worksheet and how that frustration contributes to my behavior of kicking the chair in front of me before I can process and appropriately respond to my peer behind me when she kicks my chair. Self-awareness is also important because it requires a person to look inward with the assessment portion of this competency. This examination of one's self has to occur before self-management, which is the competency that will be highlighted in the third newsletter.

When the majority of behaviors occur, they are rooted in an action, thought or feeling that came before them. Self-awareness is the red light that allows us to stop and think before we act or react. It provides us with the skills necessary to identify, recognize and assess our own thoughts, values, emotions, abilities and level of confidence, both in the moment and in general. As we grow, develop and mature, our self-awareness becomes more



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comprehensive, and our ability to be optimistic and grow in skills of all areas strengthens. Self-awareness is a competency that we keep coming back to because as we gain more abilities, we have to “re-become” self-aware.

The five specific skills at the heart of self-awareness are identifying emotions, accurate self-perception, recognizing strengths, self-confidence and self-efficacy. In the matrix on the following page, each of these skills is aligned to one grade band/the family. Some of the skills are more fitting to teach during one grade band than another, as some skills are more basic or prerequisites to other needed social-emotional skills inside and outside of the self-awareness competency. The strategies listed for each grade band are directly linked to the targeted skill. These strategies can be adapted across the grade bands for intentional teaching of the targeted skill at any age.

Resources:

- CASEL Website: casel.org/core-competencies
- Self-Assessing Social-Emotional Instruction and Competencies: gtlcenter.org/products-resources/self-assessing-social-and-emotional-instruction-and-competencies-tool-teachers
- Cosmic Kids: cosmickids.com

If they know where to step,
they are less likely to wander off the path.

GRADE/BAND	SKILL TARGETED	STRATEGIES
Early Childhood Pre-K – 1st	Identifying Emotions The ability to name or point to emotions when they are described, shown a visual, or in self or others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Write down a list of emotions (both positive and negative) that are appropriate to teach your students. Choose an emotion of the week or month to include in both instruction and daily routines. Intentionally teach emotions to students by relating a visual of that emotion (e.g., picture, face in mirror, others' faces, etc.) with the name of the emotion. For free printables, including emotion face visuals, visit csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html and scroll down to "Teaching Social Emotional Skills." Discuss that it is okay to feel a negative emotion (e.g., sad, mad, frustrated). The important part is how we act on it. Choose a negative emotion and play "thumbs up/thumbs down" by acting out a behavior someone might do when they feel that chosen emotion and having students thumbs up if the behavior is appropriate or thumbs down if the behavior is not. Have students "sign in" in the morning by writing their names or clipping a picture of themselves to the emotion picture they are feeling. Discuss one of the emotions chosen. As you read thematic and other classroom books, point out emotions that the characters have and discuss them with your students.
Elementary 2nd – 5th	Accurate Self-perception The knowledge individuals have about the kind of person they are, including beliefs, values, skills and talents	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create self-portraits that can be easily executed as a sketch, drawing or painting, using any medium the student chooses. The portraits may be impromptu from memory, or students may use mirrors. The picture does not have to be exact, but it should be representative of that student. It is a good idea to have students complete this activity more than once during the school year to see how their self-perceptions change. Use a "Who Am I?" questionnaire. This activity is a great way for teachers to get to know their students at the beginning of the year, along with the students getting to know themselves. Explain to students that the questionnaire will be kept confidential so they can be as open and honest as possible. This should include questions about what the student likes, dislikes, what makes them happy, sad, scared, etc. Ask about things they think they are good at and things they would like to improve. Help students create/draw a personal shield, divided into sections with each section describing something about themselves, including things they do well, things they would like to improve, favorite things or places, goals or aspirations. Explain to students how these traits work together to create who they are as people and can help "shield" them from negative influences by knowing their true selves. Have students choose pictures, words or symbols clipped from magazines that represent things they enjoy doing or own, places they've been, people they admire, or careers they desire. Students can share their collage with the class or have fellow students guess which collage belongs to whom. At the beginning of the school year, have students write letters to themselves. This could include what they hope to learn this year, goals they have, who their friends are, their favorite things, predictions for the upcoming year, and advice for their future selves. At the end of the year, each student can write another letter reflecting on the year that has passed and what he/she looks forward to for the next year. Templates for these activities: polk-fl.net/community/volunteers/documents/ymConfidenceActivities.pdf
Middle School 6th – 8th	Recognizing Strengths The ability to identify one's own strengths	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Have students complete a personal inventory that helps them identify strengths and areas of improvement, not only in school-related activities, but also out-of-school activities. therapistaid.com/therapy-worksheet/my-strengths-and-qualities/values/adults Assist students in developing personal goals. Identify ways they can use their strengths to help reach their goals. Have students write traits about themselves on 10 strips of paper and rank the traits in order of what they like best to least. Have the students remove one trait. Discuss how they felt about choosing and losing that trait. Continue having them remove traits and discussing how they feel about this. Then have them add traits back and discuss how that made them feel. If journaling, have students journal their thoughts about this activity. Have students journal about their strengths and how they can use them to reach their goals in school or out of school. Divide students into small groups. Focusing on one member of the group at a time, have each student tell all the positive things they can about that person. A recorder should write down all of the comments and give it to the student. Continue with the other members of the group. Students will then take their lists and include them in their journals.
High School 9th – 12th	Self-confidence A feeling of trust in one's abilities, qualities and judgment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support students to see the connections between current tasks and their personal goals and interests (e.g., reflect on their personal aspirations, goals and objectives in writing assignments). Have students take an inventory of their personal strengths and describe them through journal writing, creating a PowerPoint presentation, graphic novel, collage, etc. Ask students to reflect on a time when they overcame an obstacle to accomplish something that was important to them, and then share their accomplishments through small-group discussion. Have each student set a goal that is achievable within a month or two, related to an area of interest (e.g., a sport, hobby, musical instrument, etc.). Facilitate follow-up discussions regarding progress and accomplishment of the stated goals. Utilize small groups to discuss how students feel when giving or receiving help or a compliment. youevanston.org/tl_files/youevanston/images/Staff%20Manual/May2013%20updates/Appendices%20-%20Sample%20Activities.pdf
Family	Self-efficacy The belief in your own ability to succeed in achieving a goal and having the confidence to know you can do whatever you set your mind to by managing how you think, feel and behave	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage children to recall times when they have succeeded in the past through their own hard work and strengths. Pulling from one's own experiences of success has the strongest influence on self-efficacy. Be an encourager for your child. Helpful feedback and coaching from others can also help self-efficacy grow stronger. When someone you trust encourages you by reminding you of your strengths and abilities, it helps you overcome your own self-doubt. It also helps you bounce back from a setback. Remind children that the images they see in their minds can guide them to success. Sometimes it can really help to imagine yourself accomplishing a task. Help children learn to read their bodies and emotions. It can help them feel more ready to face a difficult task. We all get nervous when we have to do something challenging, but when we read those feelings in a positive way, such as feeling excited instead of anxious, it helps us think about the situation in a completely different way. Teach your children they have the power to choose their attitudes. Having positive emotions and moods builds self-efficacy, making you feel more optimistic about what's ahead. Free self-efficacy toolkit: transformingeducation.org/self-efficacy-toolkit

REACH MS at THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

118 College Drive #5057, Hattiesburg, MS 39406 | Phone: 601.266.4693 | Web: usm.edu/reachms | Email: REACHMS@usm.edu

