

REACH MS NEWSLETTER

Realizing Excellence for ALL Children in Mississippi

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

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SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY: SOCIAL AWARENESS

In this fourth installment of our six-part SEL Newsletter series, we are expanding beyond skills related to inward development of one's own self to how we relate to others and navigate in the world around us. Social awareness is the third of the five core Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies and the first competency that shifts from this inward to outward view. (CASEL, 2018). In the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) definition, both an understanding of societal norms as well as the ability to view life from and relate to others both similar and different from oneself are essential components of social awareness (CASEL, 2018).

In order to become a socially aware person, one must first have a basic understanding of both the behaviors all people have and the rules that all people should follow for fairness. These societal norms in the early years include understanding that turn taking, sharing, voice level, etc. are needed so that all children are able to have a turn on the slide and speak in a voice that does not hurt others' ears. In later years, this acknowledgement is what allows us to know why it's inappropriate to get seconds and thirds at supper before everyone has gotten a plate, it's important to bring library books back on time, and who goes first at a stop sign. In order for rules and behaviors to be inclusive of all people, diversity must be understood. Diversity includes age, race, ethnicity, shared interests, religion, and disability. Appreciating diversity allows for a socially aware person to understand why a two-year-old bites when he wants a toy versus why a seven-year-old verbally requests a toy, why specific foods might not be the most appropriate entrée at a dinner with first-time guests, and why suggesting a group report on the effects of bat conservation would not be of interest to all. These rules and behaviors for all bring order as well as the foundation for successful and sustained interactions with others.

With this understanding of societal norms, one is able to take



on the perspective of others, especially if one is able to appreciate the diversity shared among peers. The ability of perspective taking allows for one to recognize others' feelings and begin to show empathy for other people. For example, a person would be able to understand why having a birthday party at a skating rink would exclude his peer sitting two rows behind him in math class who is a wheel chair user. By appreciating this diversity, taking on his friend's perspective, and recognizing his peer's feeling of being left out, he would be able to empathize with his friend. Optimistically, he would change the location or central activity of roller skating for his birthday party. This party change as well as additional decisions made involving others are done so out of respect for others' diversities.

The five specific skills at the heart of social awareness are: identifying universal behaviors and rules, appreciating diversity, taking on others' perspectives, displaying empathy, and respecting others. 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 social-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.org/core-competencies
- isbe.net/Pages/Social-Emotional-Learning-Standards.aspx



GRADE/BAND	SKILL TARGETED	STRATEGIES
Early Childhood Pre-K – 1st	Perspective Taking	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discuss how a child/character may/does feel after something positive or negative happens (e.g., sickness, new baby, fall on playground, etc.). For free printables including emotion face visuals: csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html - scroll down to "Teaching Social Emotional Skills." 2. Using a story with multiple characters and perspectives (i.e., <i>Goldilocks and The Three Bears</i>), discuss with students how each character feels with the different elements in the story by having them choose emotions from a visual chart, graphing the emotions felt at each story element, etc. thespeechroomnews.com/2014/03/preschool-perspective-taking.html 3. Play "How would I feel if..." by naming a scenario and asking students to tell you how they would feel if what was named happened to them. 4. Discuss how people can have different feelings regarding the same event, topic, action, etc. Extend this activity by reading <i>My Many Colored Days</i> by Dr. Seuss and have students attribute a color to a feeling (link below). 5. Play "Guess how I feel" by having a student use facial expressions, body language, gestures, etc. but no words to display how he/she feels. Have other students guess how this child feels. Visit the link below for other activity suggestions. csefel.vanderbilt.edu/booknook/many_colored_days.pdf
Elementary 2nd – 5th	Displaying Empathy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Morning Meetings or Community Circles are a great way for students to connect & listen to each other. Explain the concept of "active listening" and model for students what it looks like. Each student should have a chance to speak while others listen respectfully and reflect on what was said. 2. Use the "Wrinkled Heart" activity to teach students the power of hurtful words and actions. Each student creates their own paper heart or create a large one for the whole class. Students share examples of things people do or say that can hurt their feelings. For each example, fold a piece of the heart. Then, have students share positive experiences that made them feel good and unfold the heart for each one. Afterwards, discuss how the heart looks and explain the effects of hurtful words and actions. 3. Teach students to put themselves in "Someone Else's Shoes." Students can create their own set of paper shoes to go along with this activity. Have students role-play with different positive and negative scenarios and discuss how they would feel if they were in the same situation. 4. Create an "Appreciation Box" where students can write positive notes of encouragement for their fellow students, teacher, or other adults. Messages can be shared daily, weekly, etc. with students. 5. "Caught Being Kind" can be used to recognize when students display random acts of kindness throughout the day/week. Older students can also acknowledge acts of kindness by their fellow classmates. momentousinstitute.org/blog/caught-being-kind
Middle School 6th – 8th	Respecting Others	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Divide into small groups and instruct students to brainstorm and discuss what "respect" means to each of them. 2. While in small groups have students make a list of synonyms for the word respect (examples: esteem, honor, regard, value, cherish, appreciate, admire, praise, compliment). 3. While in small groups have students discuss what "respect" does not mean. What do they consider disrespectful? 4. Facilitate a classroom discussion about individual likes and dislikes. Invite each student to share something he or she likes very much. That could be a food, an activity, a place or anything else. After students share, you might ask some of the students to identify things that other students like but they don't like as much. Conclude the discussion by emphasizing that people should treat one another respectfully in spite of their differences. educationworld.com/a_lesson/lesson/lesson329.shtml 5. Instruct students to watch a 30-minute television show at home and write about how characters showed respect or disrespect to others.
High School 9th – 12th	Appreciating Diversity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a large group, discuss the aspects of different cultures, language, food, religion, customs and traditions, child rearing etc. Divide the students into small groups and have them create a PowerPoint describing a culture they create. Each group will present the PowerPoint to the class discussing why they chose each of the aspects. 2. Using students' own neighborhoods ask them to identify different types of diversity: old people, young people, people of different professions, people with disabilities, and people of different political beliefs. Discuss the opinions/perspectives that are different from their own. 3. Ask students the following question, "How does where you are from influence who you are?" This might include religion, region, ethnicity, how old parents/caregivers are, what beliefs you share as a family, whether you come from a single or two-family home, whether or not you have siblings. Discuss how these things impact the perception and understanding of others. 4. Instruct students to write each word on a sheet of notebook paper, followed by the first thought that comes to mind when they think of a person in that role. Read the following words aloud, one by one, allowing students time to write their first thoughts: Cheerleader, Grandmother, Teacher, Gang Member, Honor Roll Student, Dancer, Construction Worker, etc. 5. Have the class select two words from the original list. Divide students into small groups of three or four students. Assign half of the groups the first word and the remaining groups the second word. Give the groups four or five minutes to list as many characteristics as possible of their assigned word. When the task is complete, generate a list of all responses on the chalkboard or chart paper. Discuss the accuracy of the characteristics. Have students consider which of the characteristics listed could be considered assumptions. Have students consider whether the assumptions can cause people to develop stereotypes about groups. diversitycouncil.org/diversity-lesson-plans-high-school
Family	Identifying Universal Behavior/Rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help your children learn that social awareness is the ability to recognize and understand the emotions of others. To do that, we must teach them to understand social cues and cultural standards. 2. Pass social awareness skills on to your kids - talk to them - a lot! Watch movies and TV shows together and try to decipher what the characters are feeling and point out/discuss how people from different cultures may react differently in various situations. 3. Raise social awareness by teaching your kids to ask questions. Instead of assuming how other people feel, kids can learn to ask people how they're feeling and what they need from the people around them. The more our kids "interview" the people around them, the more socially aware they will become. 4. Help your kids more deeply understand their own emotions and their own needs. We are much more likely to feel empathy for others when we fully understand ourselves. It helps us to be better able to put ourselves in the shoes of the people around us and raise our social awareness. 5. Think about your own social skills. Ask yourself, "How are my reactions and responses affecting my child? Am I a good example of good social behavior? Am I fostering his self-esteem and providing him with positive support and encouragement? How do I react when he questions me or wants to talk about his concerns?" Remember that your child is looking to you as an example. Taking a moment to consider how you interact with him and others is an important part of nurturing his social skills. parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/advice/parents-guide-to-social-and-emotional-development

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