

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: RELATIONSHIP SKILLS

With this fifth installment of our six-part SEL newsletter series, we are combining all of the competencies we have provided content on so far and weaving them together to form and sustain healthy relationships. Relationship skills is the fourth of the five core Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies, placing its emphasis on interactions with a tiered-like approach to the sub-skills that it encompasses (CASEL, 2018). In the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) definition, relationship skills begin with the ability for one to communicate, cooperate, seek and provide support to others. From this cooperation brings the necessity to manage conflict and handle peer pressure.

Communication is the foundation of relationship skills. In order for individuals to have relationships of any type, they must be able to communicate appropriately with one another. This begins with gestures, facial expressions and crying with infants, and extends throughout childhood and adulthood, where people learn more sophisticated gestures, use body language, form verbal language, and use written language, as well. The goal of communication is delivering a message, which individuals do by both their behaviors and their language. In the younger years, this includes understanding that words are the primary course of communication rather than hitting, biting and throwing tantrums. As we get older, appropriate communication includes the ability to follow societal norms, like knowing the frequency and type of compliments to give another and understanding that written communication does not always capture the exact message we intended to relay. Communication is what individuals use to seek out support from others, as well as to provide support others have asked of them. One must have an understanding of when (e.g., after trying it twice alone, when mom hangs up the phone) and how (e.g., using nice words, SOS signals) to request support. Communication is also used to provide assistance to others with words, like giving directions to a location, or with our gestures, like using our hands to show another how to turn a puzzle piece for it to fit.

In order to cooperate with others, individuals must first have the ability to communicate. We cooperate when we take turns, share, trade, work on a group project, and give and provide assistance



to others. Our interactions with one another can be cooperative in nature, or we can always be the one in the group who decides where to eat on Friday night, who chooses a seat first, or who uses the classroom I-Pad for almost all of free choice time. When we cooperate well with others, we prevent conflicts. However, conflicts are inevitable and a part of relationships. By using good communication skills and cooperating, we are able to manage conflicts by compromising to allow individuals to each have a week to choose where to eat on Friday night, others to choose a seat first, and a trade of the I-Pad for the colored pencils. Communication also gives individuals a voice to agree or disagree with others. In this way, individuals have the ability to not fall to peer pressure, to not bully others, to stand up for what they think is right, and to assist others. The ability of a person to resist peer pressure when needed and how a person treats his peers begins with the interactions he engages in as a young child. Modeled, encouraged and reinforced appropriate interactions for young children are vital to relationship skills.

Though any social emotional skill could be included as part of relationship skills, the five core skills inside relationship skills are engaging in social interactions, requesting and providing peer support, understanding and preventing bullying, working together as a team, and preventing, managing and solving conflicts. In the matrix on the following page, each of these skills is aligned to one grade band/the family; however, all of these skills are appropriate to teach in any grade or through the family at varying levels of depth. 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	Engaging in Social Interactions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide students with opportunities to engage in interactions with others (e.g., group projects, centers, free choice) and emphasize using nice words, turn taking and sharing. csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb8.pdf 2. Engage in one-on-one interactions with students, modeling appropriate social interactions (e.g., greeting by name, at eye level, calm voice, positive feedback). csefel.vanderbilt.edu/briefs/wwb12.pdf 3. Encourage children to make three popsicle puppet sticks – stop sign (stop), lips (speak) and two hands holding a toy (share). Provide scenarios to the class of a problem that might occur and have the students hold up what sign they would use to symbolize asking another student to stop, to speak words to communicate with that student, or to share with that student. education.com/activity/article/popsiclepuppets_preschool 4. Practice your students' listening skills in social interactions by hiding an object in the classroom and then providing directions – one at a time – on how to find the object. education.com/activity/article/hoppeduphide_preschool 5. Construct a class story. Pick a topic for the story, and have the students in the class take turns contributing a sentence or two to the story. Then, have the students construct an art mural that displays the story's content.
Elementary 2nd – 5th	Requesting and Providing Peer Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice role play and modeling to demonstrate appropriate peer support strategies, such as asking for help, turn-taking, sharing, etc. 2. Use think-pair-share strategy. This strategy allows students to think individually about a solution and share their ideas with classmates. tinyurl.com/2a48zb5 3. Use the jigsaw strategy. Arrange students in small groups and assign each student a different piece of information. Students will use the individual information to piece together a clear picture of the topic. educationworld.com/a_curr/strategy/strategy036.shtml 4. Practice peer tutoring and allow students the opportunity to take turns teaching each other about various topics. 5. Promote positive peer relationships through team-building and friendship activities. tinyurl.com/y65o8tm3
Middle School 6th – 8th	Understanding and Preventing Bullying	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach students to recognize and respond to bullying and intolerance. Lead a classroom discussion to identify places where bullying typically happens (e.g., on the way to and from school, in the cafeteria, and in the school yard). Have students research the different types of bullying and write an essay about one of the types and how to prevent that type of bullying. stopbullying.gov 2. Have students present their essays and discuss the different types of bullying and possible ways to prevent them. 3. Discuss the importance of being an “upstander” instead of a bystander. Brainstorm phrases students can use to reject negative comments or social media posts. Have students create posters that show how to use phrases to stop bullying. edutopia.org/blog/stop-bullying-create-upstanders-becki-cohn-vargas 4. Practice being an “upstander” through role play scenarios. 5. Assign class to read a book about bullying. Facilitate a discussion about what happened in the book and how the bullying could have been prevented. ed.buffalo.edu/content/dam/ed/alberti/docs/Alberti-Center-Toolkit-for-Middle-School-Educators.pdf
High School 9th – 12th	Working Together as a Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teach lessons to develop speaking and listening skills (e.g., how to identify and prepare one's message, how to introduce oneself and be sure others are listening, how to speak loudly and clearly so that others can hear, etc.). CASEL.org 2. Apply goal-setting skills in helping a group develop action steps for achieving a group goal. 3. Analyze differences in the distribution of power in various relationships and how this affects communication styles. 4. Use literature as an opportunity to teach students a lesson or lessons on how to resolve conflicts peacefully. CASEL.org 5. Provide class time for team-building activities. Instruct the class that they are to work in groups to make a full hamburger that starts with a bun and that has pickle, lettuce, tomato, cheese, meat and another bun (in that order). Tape one ingredient onto each student's back and instruct students to work together to find all the necessary ingredients and line up in order. The first group to do so correctly wins. You can either play silently, or you can tell students not to say what ingredient is on their backs but only provide hints. sadtler.com/school/ela-blog/team-building-activities-for-high-school-students
Family	Preventing, Managing and Solving Conflicts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help your child learn to find the “real issue” and address it instead of focusing on the “symptoms” of the problem they are facing. Assist them in looking deeper to get to the heart of the matter and address that issue to avoid constant fighting. 2. Teach your children to agree to disagree. It is perfectly ok that we don't always see eye to eye on every subject. 3. Show your children that in most situations, compromise is a great option in conflict resolution. It's easy to say and hard to do at times, but help them learn to find a middle ground that can allow both parties to feel satisfied with the outcome. 4. Listen. Be mindful of the environment and recognize when conflict is brewing. Try to get a handle on it before it spirals out of control. Also be proactive and try to recognize potential problems and put interventions in place ahead of time to prevent the conflict altogether. loveisrespect.org/healthy-relationships/conflict-resolution 5. Model the appropriate behavior you would like to see from your children. If you want your children to demonstrate calmness, you have to remain calm. If you want them to be respectful, you have to be respectful. Be their best role model. education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/capabilities/personal/Pages/respectfulrel.aspx

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