The Teachers' Newsletter
from Illinois Classrooms in Action

Start the Year Establishing Positive Relationships!

Teachers start their year with the goal of academic success for all of students. Creating connections with students and building relationships is a key component to the learning process. Educators who connect with students in their classroom personally, academically and socially will have the opportunity to influence their students' lives for the better. Establishing positive relationships at the beginning of the year and continuously integrating SEL into each day will enhance the learning that takes place regardless of the grade level or content delivered.

The Illinois Social Emotional Learning Standards play a critical role in the learning process. An emphasis on Goal 2 during the first few days and weeks of school will set the stage for a positive tone in the classroom. Creating activities and lessons with attention to relationship skills with peers can build a sense of belonging and support within the classroom. Initiating conversations and activities for students to connect early on with you and among their classmates will be beneficial all year long. Building a safe and relational classroom environment from the beginning facilitates learning, supports students to try new things, and helps develop resilience when work becomes challenging. What strategies will you put into play as your year begins?

ISBE Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Goals

#1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

#2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

#3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

Strategies to Support Interpersonal Skills and Positive Relationships All Year Long!

Grades K-3 Social Emotional Learning Goals, Standards and Benchmarks

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.							
Standard A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.		Standard B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.		Standard C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		Standard D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	
Recognize that others may experience situations differently from oneself.	Use listening skills to identify the feelings and perspectives of others.	Describe the ways that people are similar and different.	Describe positive qualities in others.	Identify ways to work and play well with others.	Demonstrate appropriate social and classroom behavior.	Identify problems and conflicts commonly experienced by peers.	Identify approaches to resolving conflicts constructively.

Establishing *a routine that includes a personal greeting* tells students that it is important that they are here, and you are excited to begin the day with them. Here is a video showing an example: https://youtu.be/TdukPkUo30c

Using *a morning circle activity* that asks questions and allows all students time to answer builds a sense of belonging and creates an environment that allows all perspectives to be recognized. Teaching students to see

SEL Goal #2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

the perspective of others also builds confidence in them to try new things without fear. When peers and educators are accepting of different perspectives, students will not fear failure but learn from it and persevere.

Conversation starters during circle time do not have to be about the academics for the day. Here are some great suggestions to develop Goal 2 in the Social Emotional Learning Standards:

- What do kids know more about than adults?
- What adult do you most act like? In what ways?
- Whose house is the most fun to visit? Why?
- Name all of the pets you have every had? (or would like to have?)

- Name three qualities of a good friend.
- How can you tell if someone is paying attention to you?
- How can you tell if someone is telling the truth or lying?

Grades 4-5 Social Emotional Learning Goals, Standards and Benchmarks

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.							
Standard A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.		Standard B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.		Standard C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		Standard D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	
Identify verbal, physical, and situational cues that indicate how others may feel.	Describe the expressed feelings and perspectives of others.	Identify differences among and contributions of various social and cultural groups.	Demonstrate how to work effectively with those who are different from oneself.	Describe approaches for making and keeping friends.	Analyze ways to work effectively in groups.	Describe causes and consequences of conflicts.	Apply constructive approaches in resolving conflicts.

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Using a *morning circle activity* that asks questions and allows all students time to answer builds a sense of belonging and creates an environment that allows all perspectives to be recognized. Teaching students to see the perspective of others also builds confidence in them to try new things without fear. When peers and educators are accepting of different perspectives, students will not fear failure but learn from it and persevere.

Conversation starters during circle time do not have to be about the academics for the day. Here are some great suggestions to develop Goal 2 in the Social Emotional Learning Standards:

- What do you say or do when someone compliments you?
- Would you ever go into space? Why?
- If you and your friends or family were to do something nice for someone, what would you do and why?
- If everyone in your home became dogs, what kind of dogs would they be? Why?

- Define courage. Who is the most courageous person you know?
- What is one thing about each of your family members that makes you proud?
- What do you think schools are like in other countries?
- How are you different from others? What does celebrate your differences mean to you?

SEL Goal #2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Grades 6-8 Social Emotional Learning Goals, Standards and Benchmarks

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.							
Standard A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.		Standard B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.		Standard C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		Standard D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	
Predict others' feelings and perspectives in a variety of situations.	Analyze how one's behavior may affect others.	Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to bullying and identify ways to address it.	Analyze the effects of taking action to oppose bullying based on individual and group differences.	Analyze ways to establish positive relationships with others.	Demonstrate cooperation and teamwork to promote group effectiveness.	Evaluate strategies for preventing and resolving interpersonal problems.	Define unhealthy peer pressure and evaluate strategies for resisting it.

Establishing *a routine that includes a personal greeting* tells students that it is important that they are here, and you are excited to begin the day with them. Here is a video showing an example: (notice that the teacher doesn't get it "perfect" every time!) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4buD-w9cj4&t=193s

Using a conversation activity that asks questions and allows all students time to answer builds a sense of belonging and creates an environment that allows all perspectives to be recognized. Teaching students to see the perspective of others also builds confidence in them to try new things without fear. When peers and educators are accepting of different perspectives, students will not fear failure but learn from it and persevere.

Conversation starters during advisory or once a week in each classroom do not have to be about the academics for the day. It may take as little as 5-8 minutes to do this, but the decreased amount of time dealing with discipline issues will make it worth the effort. Here are some great suggestions to develop Goal 2 in the Social Emotional Learning Standards:

- What is the nicest thing you have ever done for someone?
- Name three qualities of a good friend. Do you have these qualities?
- Define respect. How do you earn respect? Who should you show respect to?
- If money and time were no object, what would you most like to do for someone else?

- Name your ancestors. Where did they come from? If you could, what would you ask them?
- What is your favorite story about you when you were younger?
- Why do you think people do or say mean things to other people?

SEL Goal #2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

Grades 9-10 Social Emotional Learning Goals, Standards and Benchmarks

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.							
Standard A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.		Standard B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.		Standard C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		Standard D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	
Demonstrate how to express understanding of those who hold different opinions.	Demonstrate ways to express empathy for others.	Evaluate strategies for being respectful of others and opposing stereotyping and prejudice.	Evaluate how advocacy for the rights of others contributes to the common good.	Evaluate the application of communication and social skills in daily interactions with peers, teachers, and families.	Plan, implement, and evaluate participation in a group project.	Evaluate the effects of using negotiation skills to reach win-win solutions.	Evaluate current conflict-resolution skills and plan how to improve them.

Grades 11-12 Social Emotional Learning Goals, Standards and Benchmarks

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.							
Standard A- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.		Standard B- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.		Standard C- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		Standard D- Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	
Analyze similarities and differences between one's own and others' perspectives.	Use conversation skills to understand others' feelings and perspectives.	Analyze the origins and negative effects of stereotyping and prejudice.	Demonstrate respect for individuals from different social and cultural groups.	Evaluate the effects of requesting support from and providing support to others.	Evaluate one's contribution in groups as a member and leader.	Analyze how listening and talking accurately help in resolving conflicts.	Analyze how conflict-resolution skills contribute to work within a group.

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Using a conversation activity that asks questions and allows all students time to answer builds a sense of belonging and creates an environment that allows all perspectives to be recognized. Teaching students to see the perspective of others also builds confidence in them to try new things without fear. When peers and educators are accepting of different perspectives students will not fear failure but learn from it and persevere.

Conversation starters during advisory, study hall or 10 minutes of class time do not have to be about the academics for the day. Taking time once a week or at the end of a class period to have these conversations will help reduce student anxiety, build a sense of relationship between everyone and reduce the time taken with disciplinary issues. Here are some great suggestions to develop Goal 2 in the Social Emotional Learning Standards:

- What form of discipline is most effective? When you are a parent, what method will you use?
- What would it be like if everyone looked alike and acted alike?
- Whose house is the most fun to visit? Why?
- What is your favorite family photo?

- What would you do if someone gave you a gift that you already had?
- Name an old friend that you would love to see again and why?
- How can you tell if someone is telling the truth or lying?
- In what ways are you generous? Could you be more generous?

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Supporting SEL in ELA

Using **Mentor Texts** as an SEL Strategy: When considering strategies to support social awareness and interpersonal skills, *modeling positive relationships through texts* is an easy strategy to implement. Young students can often critique the actions of characters very well when prompted to compare them to the rules of the classroom. Using emotion charts to analyze how characters feel before and after events or how characters interact with others in a story can support students in not only understanding the meaning of a specific emotion but also the various synonyms to that emotion. When students note a negative interaction between characters in a text, they can brainstorm other ways to react more positively. They can write letters or role play with others to practice appropriate responses. Through support, Venn Diagrams can be created to compare and contrast the different emotions. When students are offered opportunities to analyze characters, they are often also meeting the ELA Reading Standards!

Differing Perspectives: Young students do not readily recognize that others may experience situations differently from oneself. *Multiple exposures to a variety of texts, movie clips, poems, and scenarios allow students to use listening skills to identify the feelings and perspectives of others*. The key is selecting materials that clearly showcase an event that could provide different perspectives. Quickly surveying students about how they have or would react to an event generally yields enough data to show that not everyone has the same perspective. Some example texts to illustrate perspectives are: · The Pout-Pout Fish by Deborah Diesen; · The Grumpy Monkey by Suzanne Lang; and · Annie Bananie by Leah Komaiko Using movie trailers or Disney Pixar Shorts that are readily accessible on YouTube is a more interactive way to display perspectives as well. The shorts are usually wordless and emotions can be analyzed by students in a variety of ways.

Supporting SEL Through Discourse in Mathematics

The Standards for Mathematical Practice (SMP) describe varieties of expertise that mathematics educators at all levels should seek to develop in their students. SEL Goal 2, Use social-awareness and interpersonal skill to establish and maintain positive relationships, is very apparent in the intentions of SMP 3 and 6. When the SMPs are examined through the lens of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), it is easy to see the explicit connections between the two:

SMP 3 – Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.
- "Students justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others. They reason inductively about data, making plausible arguments that take into account the context from which the data arose."
- "Students at all grades can listen or read the arguments of others, decide whether they make sense, and ask useful questions to clarify or improve the arguments."

SEL Competencies highlighted in SMP 3 –
✓ *To anticipate how students' own argument may be interpreted and received, take on the perspectives of others*

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✓ *Understand others' perspectives to effectively interpret their arguments*
✓ *Listen actively to further explore the argument of others*

SMP 6 – Attend to precision.
- "Mathematically proficient students try to communicate precisely to others. They try to use clear definitions in discussion with others…"
- "Students give carefully formulated explanations to each other."

    SEL Competencies highlighted in SMP 6 –
    ✓ *Take on the perspective of others and be aware of others' thoughts and feelings in order to strengthen the effectiveness of communication*

(2019). Insidemathematics.org. Retrieved 26 July 2019, from http://www.insidemathematics.org/assets/common-core-resources/social-emotional-learning/a_integrating_sel_and_ccssm_making_the_case.pdf

By engaging students in mathematical discourse, educators are facilitating students as they share, explain, question, challenge, relate, predict, justify, and generalize. The goal for mathematics education should be task-based and discourse-rich instruction where students spend a lot of time comparing solution pathways and critiquing the reasoning of other students and groups. In classrooms where students are not yet comfortable with that level of discourse, the following activities and resources are a great place to start. It is important to recognize that the person talking about the math is the person learning the math. The objective is to get the students to do the talking and explaining while the teacher's role shifts from direct instructor to that of facilitator. Most of what the teacher says should be questions that help students work together, rely more on themselves to determine whether something is mathematically correct, reason mathematically, evaluate their process and engage in productive peer interaction, comprehend the problem, conjecture, invent and solve problems, make connections to other problems, and persevere.

> *The goal for mathematics education should be task-based and discourse-rich instruction where students spend a lot of time comparing solution pathways and critiquing the reasoning of other students and groups.*

Activities and Resources to Support Discourse in the Classroom:
- Asking Questions that Support Discourse
- Math Talks
- Which One Doesn't Belong?
- What's Going On In This Graph?
- Notice and Wonder
- Estimation 180

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Supporting SEL in Science

Science knowledge is most meaningful when constructed socially through collaboration. To create an authentic experience in science classrooms, it is important to begin the school year by establishing how this social construction of scientific knowledge will happen.

"...Science is fundamentally a social enterprise, and scientific knowledge advances through collaboration and in the context of a social system with well-developed norms…" Framework for K-12 Science Education.

Students need to know that they are seeking to construct explanations about phenomena using the evidence they collect. Because this is an iterative process, ideas will change as new evidence is discovered. Students need to be comfortable sharing ideas that may not be fully developed so that they, and their peers, can build upon them. Students also need to be shown how to respectfully ask for clarification and evidence from their peers who share their ideas.

Our current understanding of best practices in science instruction tells us that we need to change the way that students talk in class. Traditionally, the talk with which students have engaged in science classes has been in responding to teachers' questions, hoping they correctly identify the answer the teacher has in mind. We need to encourage students to engage in the iterative process of science by sharing their ideas, observations, and evidence with the understanding that those ideas may change as new evidence is discovered. This allows students to make their thinking visible, identify their misconceptions, and build more sophisticated explanations of phenomena over time.

The beginning of the school year is vitally important to establish expectations and a classroom culture that encourages student deliberation. An environment needs to be created so that students are comfortable sharing their ideas and prior experiences. Students need to be supported and comfortable in taking risk.

RESOURCES PROMOTING SEL IN SCIENCE

STEM Teaching Tools Practice Brief 6, "How can I get my students to learn science by productively talking to each other?" outlines the importance of discourse between students in science class and provides resources to foster this practice. This resource can be found here: http://stemteachingtools.org/brief/6

Chapter 5, "Making Thinking Visible, Talk and Argument" from the book Ready, Set, Science!: Putting Research to Work in K-8 Science Classrooms describes the goals of student talk in the classroom and makes some suggestions for how to accomplish these goals. The section of the chapter called, "Science Class, Establishing Classroom Norms for Discussion" describes how one teacher promotes productive talk between her students and uses classroom norms to create an environment where students are comfortable taking risks. This book, in its entirety, can be downloaded for free here: https://www.nap.edu/catalog/11882/ready-set-science-putting-research-to-work-in-k-8.

Another valuable resource in understanding the importance of discourse and providing methods of promoting productive student talk is Ambitious Science Teaching's "A Discourse Primer for Science Teachers."

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Supporting SEL in Social Science

The social sciences provide a multitude of opportunities to allow students to practice SEL Goal 2. Looking for some specific strategies and resources to try? Check these out!

Facing History: Fostering Civil Discourse

How can you create a safe and reflective classroom where students learn to exchange ideas and listen respectfully to each other? What strategies are most effective in helping students practice constructive civil discourse?

In the aftermath of a divisive United States presidential election and ongoing issues related to race, justice, and policing, educators are rightly concerned about the lessons that today's middle and high school students might be absorbing. Educators have an essential role to play in creating classrooms where students learn to listen respectfully to different opinions and experiences, try out ideas and positions, and give—and get—constructive feedback without fear or intimidation.

Fostering Civil Discourse: A Guide for Classroom Conversations from Facing History and Ourselves provides several strategies designed to help navigate these challenging times and support students to develop effective skills for civic participation. This guide can be accessed by creating a free account at Facing History and Ourselves.

Structured Academic Controversy

A Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) is a type of cooperative learning strategy in which small teams of students learn about a controversial issue from multiple perspectives. Working in pairs and then coming together in four-person teams, students explore a question by reading about and then presenting contrasting positions. Afterwards, they engage in discussion to reach consensus. The SAC technique is designed to engage students in controversy and then guide them to seek consensus. This structure can be used to discuss historical or current events within the classroom.

RESOURCES PROMOTING SEL IN SOCIAL SCIENCE LEARNING RESOURCES

Several sites offer great resources to get started using the Structured Academic Controversy strategy in the classroom.

- TeachingHistory.org – Provides general information about the SAC strategy

- Stanford History Education Group – Provides SAC structure and resources from multiple historical time periods throughout history (available by creating a free account)

- ProCon.org – Provides resources to support both sides of current controversial discussions (structure of SAC not provided)

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