



Social-Emotional Learning

Acquiring knowledge, skills and behaviors to succeed in life.

We all know that it is essential for children to master important academic skills, such as reading and mathematics. That's why they go to school. But it is equally important for students to develop the "soft skills" that we all need to navigate the world successfully. These include things like how to manage their own feelings and emotions, how to respect others and how to build strong, positive relationships. This is called Social-Emotional Learning (SEL).

According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, there are five core competencies that will help individuals—both children and adults—navigate the world more successfully. They are:

- **Self-awareness:** Know your own strengths and weaknesses and have a "growth mindset."
- **Self-management:** Manage your stresses and impulses and be prepared to set and work towards goals.
- **Social awareness:** Be open to the perspectives of others and respect cultural differences
- **Relationship skills:** Work on your communication skills, your willingness to cooperate with others and accept constructive criticism.
- **Responsible decision-making:** Make good choices based on ethical standards, safety and social norms.

What is SEL?

Social-Emotional Learning is not a course or a lesson. It is a process that enriches our lives and the lives of those around us. It makes us more aware of ourselves and others, and the relationships we have with others.

SEL works in the context of the family, the classroom, the school and the entire community.



Expect
great
things.



Pittsburgh
Public Schools



The Pittsburgh Public Schools' five-year strategic plan calls for initiatives that create a positive and supportive school culture. By incorporating Social-Emotional Learning skills in the classroom, students and teachers enjoy a richer and more productive learning environment.

PPS and SEL.

At Pittsburgh Public Schools, we believe that SEL is the foundation on which academic learning takes place. When students feel confident in their abilities and their value to their class, when they know how to ask for and offer help and understand that resources are available to them, they are better able to achieve their full potential.

To better serve our students, we strive to deepen our own SEL. Teachers and school staff participate in lessons and discussions about SEL competencies. We try to make connections to elements of SEL throughout the day to show students that this is important, that people care about it, and that it is relevant to everyday life. Most importantly, we try to model our behavior in a way that helps students become more aware of their own competencies.



Ways to promote SEL skills at home.

When SEL is reinforced at home as well as in the classroom, students are more likely to acquire the skills they need. Here are a few examples of things you can do at home:

- After your child has accomplished something exciting, congratulate him or her for the hard work and effort they put in to reach that milestone rather than for the actual achievement. *This supports self-awareness and an understanding that success isn't just luck, it's something that you work towards.*
- Work with your child to establish a daily routine for getting homework done, completing chores or other important tasks. Acknowledge that it's often frustrating when you want to do something fun but have to wait and complete something that's necessary first. *This builds skills in self-management and responsible decision-making.*
- When reading a book or watching a movie together, talk about what the characters may be thinking and how they may be feeling based on what's going on in the story. *This promotes reflection, builds proficiency with discussing emotions and supports social awareness.*
- Discuss different situations, both positive and not-so-positive, that have happened at school or your community. Ask open ended questions such as "What did you say? What happened next? What else might you have done at that moment? Why do you think that was the outcome?" and brainstorm together ways that your child might react in these situations. Focus on coming up with specific appropriate strategies, such as phrases that could be used to ask for help from a teacher, or actions that could be done if they see a friend who seems sad. *This supports all areas of SEL and specifically aids with relationship skills.*



Research shows that when students have higher SEL competencies, they achieve higher reading and math test scores and have lower rates of suspensions and absenteeism.

Need more information?
Contact sel@pghschools.org.

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Partners Support Social-Emotional Learning.

More than 100 community partners support the efforts of PPS, and in doing so, enhance the Social-Emotional Learning of our students. Many organizations provide mentoring that helps students build positive relationships and achieve their full potential. Others provide mediation and conflict-resolution strategies that help students manage their impulses and stresses. Still others offer mental health services, mindfulness training, team activities and yoga. Together, they build a network of trust, and help students make better choices.

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