

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

ESSENTIAL FOR LEARNING, ESSENTIAL FOR LIFE

SUGGESTED SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING PRACTICES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADE 6

Social Emotional Learning Competency

Self-awareness: The ability to recognize one’s emotions, thoughts, goals, and values and how they influence one’s behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations, possessing a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy and optimism and a “growth mindset.” High levels of self-awareness require the ability to recognize how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected.

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths and personal growth areas
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy¹

Fostering Self-awareness may integrate with the following ELA Standards:

This compendium is not exhaustive; alignment with additional Standards may be possible. The crosswalk identifies standards that are applicable to teaching and/or reinforcing one or more of SEL competencies, providing examples for infusion into instruction. The bullets following each competency lists what students (at age and developmentally appropriate levels) will know and be able to do.

NYS ELA Learning Standards (Current through August 2020)	Next Generation Learning Standards (Full implementation September 2020)
6RL1, 6RL3, 6R4, 6RL5, 6W3a-e, 6W5, 6W8, 6SL4, 6SL6 (https://www.engageny.org/file/736/download/nysp12cclsela.pdf)	6R1, 6R3, 6R4, 6R5, 6W3a-e, 6W7, 6SL4, 6SL6 (http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/nys-next-generation-ela-standards.pdf)

SAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

- Engage students in brainstorming what self-awareness is and chart their responses; compare and contrast their ideas with the core competency definition. Teach new vocabulary as applicable as part of the discussion.
- Begin each day with a “Feelings Check In” using a scale from -5 to +5 to allow students a simple way to reflect upon and communicate how they are feeling when they arrive in school. Chart or informally track their answers. Then invite a moment of silence where everyone silently gives themselves a self-affirming message to start they day. Invite students to voluntarily share the message they gave themselves. For

¹ Adapted from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), 2017

instance, “I am angry with sister about an argument we had this morning, but I can still have a good day in class with my friends.”

- Teach students about self-talk. Let them know we all say things to ourselves and we all have the power to change our self- talk to make sure it is positive. This is called a self- affirmation and we can do it anytime. Let students practice this regularly.
- Encourage deep listening skills in the classroom by asking students to paraphrase one another’s answers. This honors the ideas that students share and helps both the speaker and the listener become more aware of their own thinking.
- Encourage students to share life experiences and encourage their peers to ask them follow up questions about the details of these experiences to help push the development of self-awareness in the speaker. Ask students to write about an experience they had that made them change how they thought or felt about an issue and explain why their thinking changed.
- Play “Feeling Charades” to support students in developing their feelings words vocabulary and their ability to physically recognize feelings in themselves and others.
- Ask students to work in small groups to identify feeling words and then share out in large group to generate a list of class feeling words that will be posted and added to throughout the semester and to which students can refer in their discussions or writing assignments. Lead a discussion of words that may relate to the same emotion but convey different shades of meaning.
- Engage students in a discussion (or a writing assignment) in which students to identify a character from literature that changed how s/he thought and/or felt about an issue over the course of the story and cite evidence from the story to support their ideas.
- Ask students to reflect upon, identify, and communicate their own “Anger Triggers”. Encourage students to reflect upon the physical sensations they experience when they are angry.
- Ask students to reflect upon, identify, and communicate their own “Nervousness Triggers”. Encourage students to reflect upon the physical sensations they experience when they are nervous.
- Ask students to reflect upon, identify, and communicate their own “Fear Triggers”. Encourage students to reflect upon the physical sensations they experience when they are fearful.
- Ask students to reflect upon, identify, and communicate their own “Peaceful and Happy Places”. Encourage students to reflect upon the physical sensations they experience when they are peaceful and happy.
- End each day by asking students to share their personal highs and lows for the day. Ask them to reflect upon how they can approach things differently to make tomorrow a better day.
- Encourage students to initiate their own visit to the “Peace Corner” if they need to practice calming down and raising their self-awareness because they are angry, nervous, fearful, or otherwise upset.

GENERAL TEACHING PRACTICES

- Ask students open ended questions - questions which require more than one word to answer- about how they are feeling and encourage their reflection and response.
- Engage students in feedback loops (series of two or more questions about student thinking) to help students further clarify their own thinking about their emotions and develop metacognitive capabilities around self-awareness.
- Normalize the discussion of emotions in the classroom by:
 - Acknowledging student emotions with respect and neutrality.
 - Facilitating regular check-ins throughout the day that allow students to reflect upon and express how they are feeling.
 - Facilitating regular meditation or mindfulness periods in the classroom.
 - Facilitating the use of “I Feel Messages” for students in conflict.
- Support student autonomy by allowing for student choice
 - Allow for some choice in working partners.
 - Allow for some choice in where in the classroom the work may be completed.
 - Allow for some choice in how the work may be approached and/or completed.
- Integrate various modalities into the classroom to allow students an opportunity to become aware of their personal learning styles.
- Set up a “Peace Corner” where students can go to calm down, meditate, or solve conflicts peacefully with their peers.
- Discuss examples from literature that illustrate a character’s self-awareness. Choose moments in which a character articulates her/his inner thoughts about herself/himself, or changes behavior based on a new understanding about his/her past behavior. Ask students to discuss how the character developed her or his self-awareness.
- Ask students to openly discuss what lessons they have learned from their own life experiences, both positive and negative. Assign writing exercises that ask students to articulate the connection between past experiences and growing self-awareness in their own lives. Invite students share this writing with each other so that they can learn from each other’s experiences as well as their own.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADE 6

Social Emotional Learning Competency

Self-management: The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations; the ability to effectively manage stress, deal with difficult emotions and control impulses; the ability to motivate oneself, to set and work toward personal and academic goals and persist in long term and challenging tasks.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal-setting
- Organizational skills²

Fostering Self-management may integrate with the following ELA Standards:

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SAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

- Ask student to write an individual definition of what self-management is, then provide each student with the core competency definition; engage the class in a discussion comparing and contrasting their ideas with the core competency definition. Teach new vocabulary as applicable as part of the discussion.
- Teach various cooling down techniques such as deep breathing, light stretching, tense and release, counting backwards from ten, meditation, and self-talk.
- Allow students to initiate practice of these cooling down techniques at the “Peace Corner”.

² Adapted from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), 2017

- Teach the “Stop-Breath-Think” cooling down technique where students learn to pause in moments of stress/crisis, cool down, and think through their choices. Provide students with a brief informational text on the scientific impact of deep breathing on the body. Ask students to write about a time in their lives when this technique could have helped them handle a situation better.
- Allow students to practice the “Stop-Breath-Think” technique in role plays so that they become familiar with and comfortable using it in real life. Ask students to write a role play in which one character in a story they have read uses this technique to change how the character dealt with a conflict with another character.
- Provide all students with a “Feelings Journal”. Encourage students to write regular journals entries in their “Feelings Journal” to help them better understand their own feelings and calm down when they are upset.
- Generate a list of feelings words with students and add to it regularly; focus on helping students to recognize and understand the nuanced differences between words that describe feelings. Encourage students to use words from the list regularly in class discussions and/or their writing when examining either their feelings or the feelings of literary characters.
- Ask students to brainstorm alternative outcomes for various conflicts that they have experienced in real life. Ask them how they could have used their own self-management strategies to find a more positive outcome. Develop plans for dealing with similar situations in the future that employ techniques like “Stop-Breath-Think”, self-talk, meditation.
- Ask students to pick a character from literature that they admire for her or his ability to handle stress well. Ask them to write a paragraph or two about how the character successfully dealt with stress. Provide students with the opportunity to share their writing.
- Invite students to read over their own Feelings Journal periodically. In pairs, ask them to share their own successes in managing their own difficult emotions and the good choices they made. Then, ask the partners to share openly what they learned from each other about how to handle difficult emotions and/or how to persists in a difficult task.
- Teach students set realistic academic goals and encourage them to use positive self-talk and affirmations to mark their progress and celebrate their successes as they work towards these goals. Ask students to identify characters in their reading who they think have successfully worked toward a goal and discuss how and why the character was successful.
- Regularly provide students with 3-5-minutes during which to practice cooling down techniques such as stretching, deep breathing, meditation, writing in their feelings journal, etc.

GENERAL TEACHING PRACTICES

- Set up a “Peace Corner” where students can go to calm down, meditate, or solve conflicts peacefully with their peers.
- Encourage students to use the school’s peer mediation program/center to resolve interpersonal conflicts.

- Acknowledge and praise student’s ability to use the “Peace Corner” to effectively cool down and self-manage.
- Acknowledge and praise student’s ability to manage their own emotions and/or shift their own behavior without your help.
- Work to provide clear and consistent behavior expectations for your students so that they are not confused or frustrated by unclear expectations or directions.
- Maintain a low reactivity to unwanted student behavior.
- Work to model your own self-management skills in class. Use cooling down techniques at moments when you are frustrated so that students can see these techniques modeled by an adult in context.
- Work to display patience with all your students. In moments where you feel impatient draw on our own self-management skills and model cooling down in front of the students.
- Regularly acknowledge and praise sustained student effort in academics as separate and distinct from student performance.
- Praise each student’s work in comparison to the work that they have done previously and the effort that they have invested.
- Discuss examples from literature in which characters successfully manage their difficult emotions or persist in a difficult task. Ask students to analyze how the character(s) manages these emotions or manages to persist. Ask students to produce a writing response that explains what self-management techniques they have learned from the character. Ask students to explain why they think effective self-management is an important life skill.
- Teach students to break down long term goals into smaller manageable tasks. Allow time for students to track their own progress and for them to acknowledge their efforts with self-affirmations.
- Allow students time to adjust their goals or their game plan for reaching them based on their current progress.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADE 6

Social Emotional Learning Competency

Social awareness: The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others
- Recognizing and using resources and supports³

Fostering Social awareness may integrate with the following ELA Standards:

This compendium is not exhaustive; alignment with additional Standards may be possible. The crosswalk identifies standards that are applicable to teaching and/or reinforcing one or more of SEL competencies, providing examples for infusion into instruction. The bullets following each competency lists what students (at age and developmentally appropriate levels) will know and be able to do.

NYS ELA Learning Standards

(Current through August 2020)

[6R3, 6R6, 6R11, 6W2a&f, 6W3a, 6W3b, 6W3c, 6W3d, 6W3e, 6W9a, 6W11, 6SL1a-e, 6SL5, 6SL6, 6L3, 6L4, 6L5, 6L6](#)
(<https://www.engageny.org/file/736/download/nysp12cclsela.pdf>)

Next Generation Learning Standards

(Full implementation September 2020)

[6R3, 6R6, 6R9, 6W2, 6W3, 6W4, 6W5, 6SL1, 6SL5, 6SL6, 6L3, 6L4, 6L5, 6L6](#)
(<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/programs/curriculum-instruction/nys-next-generation-ela-standards.pdf>)

SAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

- Provide the class with the definition of social awareness; work with the class to ensure that all new vocabulary is understood by students. Divide the class into small groups with each group brainstorming a list of reasons why social awareness is an important life skill. Provide each small group with the opportunity to share their reasons with the class as a whole. Engage students in discussion of their ideas.
- Teach lessons on the importance of respecting different point of view, emphasizing that each of us has different points of view based on our various life experiences. Engage students in a discussion of how two characters handle their differing points of view in a piece of literature.

³ Adapted from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), 2017

- Play the game “The Opinion Continuum”. Designate sections of the room as “agree”, “disagree”, and “not sure”. Present various statements (i.e. “Boys and girls can be best friends”, “We should all speak more than one language”) and allow the students to silently move to the area of the room that best represents their point of view. Facilitate a discussion where students express their point of view while respecting the point of view of others. Ask students to express appreciation and understanding for a point of view that they do not share.
- Lead a lesson on recognizing and appreciating general commonalities and differences. Ask students to sit with a partner and determine five things that they have in common and five things on which they differ. Ask students if they discovered anything new about their partner during this exercise.
- Lead a lesson on recognizing and appreciating cultural differences. Ask students to sit with a partner and interview each other about their culture. Ask students if they discovered anything new about their partner during this exercise.
- Lead a discussion about ethnicity and race explaining that ethnicity includes the region of the world that you are from and its traditions and that race is used to describe just skin color. Ask students to compare and contrast the meaning of these terms and to come up with examples of both.
- Introduce the term stereotype (Stereotype: General ideas about a group of people applied to all its members.). Provide some examples: i.e. All teenagers are loud. All Asian kids are good at math. Lead a discussion about how stereotypes can affect us and ask the students if anyone has ever assumed things about them because they are a member of a certain group. Ask them to describe this experience and how they felt.
- Introduce the term prejudice (Prejudice: Judgmental and negative ideas about a group of people applied to all its members.). Provide some examples: i.e. Teenage boys with saggy jeans and hoodies are criminals. People who speak with an accent are uneducated.) Lead a discussion about how prejudice can affect us and ask students if anyone has ever judged them negatively because they are a member of a certain group. Ask them to describe this experience and how they felt.
- Introduce the term discrimination (Discrimination: Action taken against someone based on prejudice.). Provide some examples: i.e. A shop owner follows teenage boys around the store assuming they will steal. A cashier talks very slowly when she speaks to a person with an accent because she assumes the person cannot understand.) Lead a discussion about how discrimination can affect us and ask students if anyone has ever discriminated against them. Ask them to describe this experience and how it made them feel.
- Have students brainstorm ways that they can stand up to prejudice and discrimination when they witness it in their school or in the community.
- Have students work in pairs and listen to one another’s point of view of various topics. Have them respectfully paraphrase each other’s point of view.
- Present various photographs from newspapers and other media. Ask students to read the body language of the people in the photographs and imagine how they are feeling. Ask students to imagine what they might have said to one another based on what they seem to be feeling.

GENERAL TEACHING PRACTICES

- Use examples from literature that illustrate stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination. Facilitate discussions where students discuss these concepts and the way that characters did or could have stood up to stereotype, prejudice, and discrimination.
- Take time to get to know and to respect the cultural background(s) of your students.
- Do not mandate that all students participate in all holiday celebrations. Rather than assigning work that is holiday specific, allow students to produce work related to any seasonal holiday from any cultural tradition which they personally practice or which interests them.
- Ask students to paraphrase one another's points of view with respect.
- Encourage students to ask follow up questions to peers whose point of view they do not agree with or understand.
- Assign students with different points of view on various topics to work collaboratively on a project.
- Allow students to take the lead in discussions and become curious about their unique contribution or way of looking at things. Rather than presenting, follow the lead of students in class discussions.
- Encourage students to be aware of their peer's personal space and emotional states. Encourage students to support one another if they notice someone who is physically uncomfortable or struggling emotionally.
- Encourage students who are in conflict with one another to visit the Peace Corner to discuss their conflicting points of view and come to a peaceful resolution.
- Make sure you provide clarity and consistency with classroom rules.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADE 6

Social Emotional Learning Competency

Relationship skills: The ability to maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek help when needed.

- Communication skills
- Social engagement
- Relationship-building
- Conflict resolution skills
- Teamwork
- Seeking help when needed⁴

Fostering Relationship skills may integrate with the following ELA Standards:

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SAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

- Engage the class in brainstorming what relationship skills means; chart responses. Share the definition of the core competency and engage students in a discussion of the importance of developing these life skills. Ask each student to choose a skill they personally think is important and write a paragraph or two about why this skill is important to her/him.
- Define assertiveness as the ability to stand up for oneself without being unkind or mean to others.

⁴ Adapted from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), 2017

- Teach explicit assertiveness skills such as I Feel Messages, I Need Statements, boundary setting, and basic negotiation skills.
- Allows students to practice assertiveness skills in role plays so that they are more comfortable using them in real life.
- Teach students to determine the difference between their wants and their needs and to learn to negotiate to get their needs met using assertiveness techniques.
- Encourage students to use assertiveness skills to resolve their own conflicts in the Peace Corner.
- Teach paraphrasing as a deep listening skill.
- Encourage students to calm down and paraphrase each other's point of view specifically when they are in conflict as a way of gaining a deeper understanding of each other's point of view and supporting a process of resolution; ask students to rewrite a conflict from a piece of literature they are reading, with one character using paraphrasing skills to defuse the conflict.
- Teach students the meaning of compromise and allow them to role plays situations of conflict in which both characters compromise to find a satisfactory solution; ask students to write a paragraph or two in which they identify a character in literature who would have benefitted by being able to compromise with another character and explain why.
- Teach students that bullying is defined as actions that are repeated, meant to harm others, and exploit a real or perceived imbalance of power. Remind students about how stereotypes and prejudice come into play in bullying situations. Allow students to role play bullying scenarios and to brainstorm ways that they can stand up for themselves and others in these situations.
- Teach students the basics of mediation. Allow students who are in conflict to ask a peer to mediate and help them find a peaceful solution to their problem.
- Teach students about tone and encourage them to use a calm tone when speaking to one another about disagreements or misunderstandings.
- Engage students in examining the power that words have to help or hinder a relationship; ask students to generate a list of words that could have either a positive or a negative impact on another person with whom one disagrees and explain why they think the way they do; engage students in identifying words whose use with different groups of people may be hurtful and discuss why.
- Engage in fun group activities to build a strong and positive community in the classroom.

GENERAL TEACHING PRACTICES

- Invest in 1:1, individual interactions with all of your students throughout the day.
- Allow students to engage with one another in pairs and groups as a regular part of instruction.
- Demonstrate trustworthiness and consistency with your students. Make sure your word is gold and model for them positive qualities of relationship building for them.

- Use examples in literature to demonstrate positive relationships and negative relationships.
- Ask students to compare and contrast character relationships in literature and discuss and/or write about what makes the literary relationships positive or negative; ask students to analyze the impact both kinds of relationships had on characters.
- Have students write in their Feeling Journal about the what qualities they value in a friendship.
- Have students write in the Feelings Journal about what kind of friend they want to be to others and explain why they feel the way they do.
- Hold regular class meetings to solve class problems collaboratively and peacefully.
- Allow students to work out their own inter-personal issues in the Peace Corner.
- Praise students for applying assertiveness skills to the solving of their own problems.

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS, GRADE 6

Social Emotional Learning Competency

Responsible decision-making: The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms; the ability to make a realistic evaluation of consequences and various actions and to consider the well-being of oneself and others.

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Problem-solving
- Evaluating consequences
- Constructive decision making based upon consideration of the wellbeing of self and others⁵

Fostering Responsible decision-making may integrate with the following ELA Standards:

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SAMPLE SEL ACTIVITIES

- Provide the class with the definition of responsible decision making; work with the class to ensure that all new vocabulary is understood by students. Divide the class into small groups with each group brainstorming a list of reasons why responsible decision making is an important life skill. Provide each small group with the opportunity to share their reasons with the class as a whole. Engage students in discussion of their ideas.
- Engage students in generating a list of social norms that they feel are important for each person in the class and/or in the school to live by. Engage students in a discussion of why they feel these norms are important.

⁵ Adapted from the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL), 2017

- Ask students to identify a character who did not consider the wellbeing of others when s/he made a decision and write about the consequences of this decision on the character him/herself and on those who were harmed. Provide students with the opportunity to share their writing.
- Hold one or more class session during which students come to consensus about class rules. Allow students to brainstorm various choices and the consequences that would result from these choices. Allow the group to determine together the best choices through discussion, debate, voting, etc.
- Present students with real life challenging ethical situations through reading brief informational texts. Ask students to explore challenging ethical situations in role plays. Allow students to role play various choices and their consequences. Ask them to compare and contrast the various consequences that follow from various choices. Ask them to write an essay in which they relate their insights to one or more pieces of literature they have read.
- Facilitate a discussion about life experiences that the students have had that are ethically challenging. Allow the students to talk in pairs or small groups about various choices that they could make.
- Discuss ways that calming down and assertiveness techniques can be used to de-escalate conflicts. Have students analyze conflicts to determine how and when they can become dangerous, how and when individuals can de-escalate them, and how and when they can be avoided all together.
- Review all negotiation and mediation skills regularly and promote their use.
- Promote citizenship in the classroom and in the school by noticing the ways - both formal and informal – in which your students help one another; ask students to identify areas in need of improvement and to examine why these areas exist.
- Engage students in a collaborative service project to identify a classroom or school need and address the need.

GENERAL TEACHING PRACTICES

- Clarify your expectations of your students' behavior in class, in the hallways, etc. and explain why these expectations are important to you.
- Facilitate student use of the school's peer mediation program to solve their own problems peacefully.
- Consider asking students who use the Peace Corner to clearly communicate the details of their resolution and their commitment to the resolution to you and the class as a whole.
- Analyze character choices and consequences in literature. Ask students to imagine and discuss and/or write about alternate approaches to the ethical problem presented in the piece of literature.
- Ask students to write an "alternate ending" for a piece of literature that presents complex ethical problems.
- Provide students with informational texts that describe world events and ask them to analyze the ethical problems that they see in today's world. Ask them to write in their Feeling Journal about the way that

the current social problems that they see in today's world affect them personally. Ask them to discuss in writing how they think a particular situation should be resolved based on their research.

- Ask students to envision a better world - what would it look like, how would people treat one another, how would some of the problems of today be solved?
- Ask student to write a description of their own utopian world. Allow them to name this alternate world and ask them to be as specific as possible in describing how problems would be dealt with in this alternate and ideal world.
- Regularly ask students for their help with a variety of tasks from passing out paper to paraphrasing directions to keeping track of time. Ask them to help one another when they are finished with their own work.

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The activities and teaching practices included in these resources are those of the authoring school districts and do not necessarily reflect the recommendations or position of the New York State Education Department. Resources provided within this page are examples for voluntary use by schools and districts in the development of curriculum-aligned SEL resources.