

Tips for Families: Nurturing Social-Emotional Learning at Home

Social-emotional learning, or SEL, is an essential element of every child’s education. SEL is a framework for helping students develop critical skills for how they interact with others, manage their own emotions and behaviors, and develop into confident, productive, and empathetic individuals. Social-emotional skill-building is organized around five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

In schools, SEL skill development is embedded in the curriculum, but families can support their children’s social and emotional learning at home. Here are some tips:

Develop a Routine	Work with your child to map a daily routine for when they do an SEL activity. These could be activities that your child’s teacher provides or activities you find on a website or social media. Setting aside a specific time every day to work with your child on social-emotional skill-building establishes an expectation that SEL is an important part of everyday life
Engage Together	Join your child when they are working on SEL activities. By engaging in the activities together, you build enthusiasm and demonstrate that SEL is important to you as a person.
Express Vulnerability	A key component of SEL is self-reflection, time to think about who we are, how we feel, and how we react to a given situation. To support your child in developing SEL skills, it is important to model how to express vulnerability. In doing this, you demonstrate to your child that their feelings are valid and important, including feelings of uncertainty about what the future holds. When adults are vulnerable, we are showing that it is okay to express our emotions in order to address them.
Look for Teachable Moments	Throughout your daily routine, consider opportunities for integrating SEL skills into what is happening in your home. The more we show how relevant SEL is, the more kids will value, appreciate, and use these tools to manage themselves and the situations they are in. Teachable moments include disagreements with siblings, anxiousness about world or community events, challenges with school, disappointment about missing activities or events, worry about relationships with family and friends, and more.