

Home Connection

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Skill: Understanding Social-Emotional Competencies #3

Social and Emotional Learning is defined as helping students develop the skills to think, learn, and communicate in ways that allow them to discover the power they have within themselves to develop their potential and make choices that enhance the quality of their lives, relationships, and experiences. We know now that students' desires to belong and feel emotionally safe are critical to their ability to learn. We also know that isolation from peers and teachers during the pandemic brought intense feelings of loneliness and a lack of confidence. Overall, many students' social skill development suffered.

This Home Connection provides tips on how to identify each SEL Competency and how families can help their children with each competency. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will break down each core competency. The five competencies are; Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision Making, and Relationship Skills.

Competency 3: Social Awareness

1. Social Awareness is the “ability to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities to feel compassion for others, understand broader historical and social norms for behavior in different settings, and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.”
2. Social awareness begins at birth and continues throughout our lifespan. It enables us to build connections with others. It allows us to discover ourselves and who we are in the context of our relationships.
3. Key components of social awareness include *perspective-taking*, *empathy*, *diversity*, and *respect for others*.
4. By developing social awareness, students learn cooperation skills, conflict resolution, and how to establish and maintain friendships.
5. A child's ability to function in school is linked to their relationship with parents, teachers, and peers. The child's strong connections with others enhance resilience and function as a protective factor against the effects of risk factors they may face throughout their lives. For example, Diazgranados, Selman & Dionne (2015) found that students who are better able to

take the perspectives of others are more likely to use constructive problem-solving strategies when challenges arise in social situations. Another study found that students with strong social awareness engage in constructive communication and conflict resolution behaviors, helping them build positive relationships with peers and adults. The same study also found that a sense of social awareness was associated with lower rates of risk-taking behaviors, such as drug use and aggression (Greenberg et al., 2003).

6. During the preschool and elementary years, students begin to recognize how their actions affect others and begin to accept the consequences of their own actions. Adults can help facilitate by allowing children to solve problems with other children independently (with close supervision in case we need to step in). Parents and educators can also model respect, manners, cooperation, and socially acceptable interactions.
7. Questions that demonstrate social awareness include **“I wonder how that made ___ feel?”**, **“How would I feel if I were in that situation?”** **“What is ___ thinking?”**, **“They seem sad right now. Maybe I should ___.”**
8. At CAS, we do our best to facilitate Social Awareness through a variety of programs and activities. Some of these activities include International Day, Bilingual Book Program, Library Book Audits, assemblies focused on inclusivity and culture, read alouds that are focused on perspective, empathy, diversity, culture, and context. There are countless other programs that we facilitate and support, but it is evident that social awareness begins in the home.
9. We would suggest role-playing with your child and emphasizing empathy. Empathy is very difficult for many of our students and therefore taking advantage of those “teachable” moments is critical.

Resources:

Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines <https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ELG-PDF.pdf>

<https://www.panoramaed.com/blog/guide-to-core-sel-competencies>

www.casel.org

<https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/wellness/selearning/>

<https://www.nj.gov/education/safety/wellness/selearning/>

<https://www.n2u.com/blog/teaching-self-management-for-independence/>

<https://www.positiveaction.net/blog/teaching-self-management-skills>