

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

GUIDE & ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR EDUCATORS

capstone®





Introduction

Working together, building relationships, and being mindful of our own emotions and the feelings of others, has always been a critical component of child development. The term social and emotional learning or SEL is used to describe how people of all ages build skills around several core competencies, including showing empathy, making decisions, and connecting with others.



Social-Emotional Learning Every Day

Social-emotional learning is part of the work happening every day in classrooms throughout the world. Educators create spaces for students where they can learn together with their classmates. In these spaces, students learn more than just academic content. They learn skills that are foundational to their interactions both inside and outside of the classroom.

Although students can build self-awareness and responsible decision-making skills organically, social and emotional learning is an intentional process. SEL skills can be taught explicitly through experiential learning and teacher modeling. Like all skills that students learn in school, they require practice, feedback, and plenty of opportunities to apply these skills in an authentic environment.



SEL in Action

A commitment to SEL skill-building can take many forms. By setting an intention to this practice, you can connect your social and emotional learning goals to the English Language Arts skills you already focus on during the school year. SEL skill-building activities can go hand-in-hand with your literacy goals when students listen, share, read, and reflect together.

We've created a resource to help you unpack the term social-emotional learning and bring SEL into your classroom in a purposeful way this school year. First, we'll begin with an introduction to social and emotional learning, so you are well-versed in CASEL's core competencies for SEL. Then, we'll look at five activities you can try out in your classroom any time of year. Each activity focuses on one area of the five social and emotional learning competencies in CASEL's framework.

You'll also find resources from Capstone Connect to pair with each activity.



CASEL & Social and Emotional Learning Competencies

To begin our dive into SEL together, let's start with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Often referred to simply as CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning created and refined the definition for social and emotional learning shared below (CASEL, 2021):

“Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities.”



CASEL Framework

CASEL conducts research on the benefits of SEL and how to measure SEL in educational environments. They have also created a framework with five core competencies that have inspired the activity ideas shared in this guide. These core competencies include: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.



Social-Awareness

Students demonstrate self-awareness when they understand how they feel in different situations. This can include naming their own emotions, describing what is important to them, and even identifying bias. Students building this skill can also talk about their strengths and areas where they are working to improve through the development of a growth mindset.



Self-Management

Students demonstrate self-management when faced with a variety of situations. This can include moments when they are frustrated and stressed. Students building self-management skills work on setting goals, implementing stress management techniques, and planning effectively.



Responsible Decision-Making

Students demonstrate responsible decision-making when asked to weigh options, consider different perspectives, and reflect on their role as members of a group. This can include asking students to analyze information and consider pros and cons when making decisions. Students building responsible decision-making skills can talk about the thought process behind a decision they made.



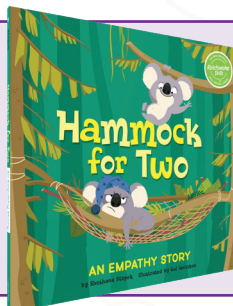
Relationship Skills

Students demonstrate relationship skills when navigating social situations that ask them to communicate clearly, work together as a team, and handle disagreements. This can include times when students use conflict resolution strategies and demonstrate leadership in a group setting. Students building relationship skills pause in a conversation to listen to their classmates and work together with students with different life experiences.



Self-Awareness

Students demonstrate social awareness skills when they show empathy and concern for others and take on someone else's perspective. This can include understanding the norms of a situation based on context and understanding how systems and organizations function. Students building social awareness skills have a deeper understanding of their community, including the diversity present in different situations.



Setting an Intention for Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning can take place within individual classrooms and benefits from the support of a school and district commitment. A commitment to social and emotional learning asks stakeholders to establish a mission and create opportunities for students to explore SEL competencies. Setting an intention should include: carving out time for planning, allocating time for reflection, and providing opportunities for feedback.

The activity ideas in this guide are designed to help you incorporate SEL skills within traditional learning experiences, such as time allocated for English Language Arts instruction during a literacy block. All five activities include an overview of a core competency area and why you might want to focus on that particular skill. In addition, there is a suggested sequence for the activity, prompts to facilitate a whole class or small group discussion, and extension activities. Each activity also has suggested resources for student readers from the Capstone Connect library. These activities are designed for you to use at any point in the school year and are ready for you to customize to the needs of your students.

Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). 2021. SEL is . . . Retrieved from <https://casel.org/what-is-sel>



ACTIVITY #1

Social-Awareness: Notice & Name Our Emotions



OBJECTIVE

To help students understand that they can notice and name their emotions.

CASEL defines this competency (2021) as: “*Self-awareness: The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.*”

The self-awareness competency asks students to notice the emotions they have throughout the school year. At an elementary school level, students should be able to share how they are feeling. Students should notice if their feelings link directly to an event and understand that feelings change over time.

Before the Activity

In the days leading up to this activity, think aloud and share with your class how you are feeling at different parts of the day. You might say, “I was so surprised this morning when...” or “I was feeling scared this afternoon when...”

Activity Sequence

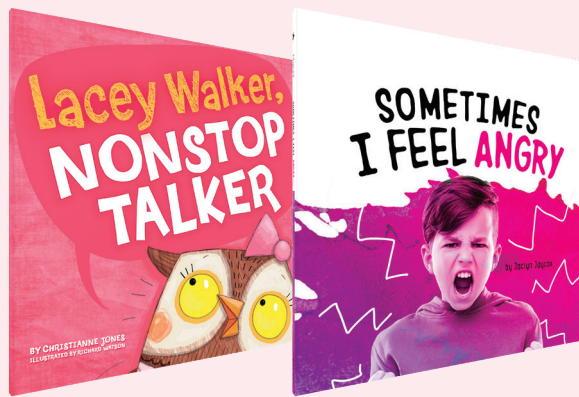
- Ask your students to close their eyes and think of a time when they were surprised; you might share an example of a time you were surprised, then pause and let students think about a moment when they felt the same way. Repeat this with the feelings of being happy and angry.
- Introduce the text, *Sometimes I Feel Angry* by Jaclyn Jaycox. You might say, “Today we are going to read a book about what it means to be angry. All of us have felt angry before; it is normal to feel angry. We are going to read this book and talk about feelings and emotions like feeling angry, surprised, and scared today.”
- Read the book aloud to students. You might pause on Page 8 and share a moment when you were angry about something you weren’t able to do.
- Ask students to think about a moment when they felt surprised, scared, angry, or another emotion. You might introduce a sentence starter to students such as, “I felt _____ [emotion] _____ when _____ [event] _____.” Have students turn and talk and share their emotions and event with a partner.
- Share with students how they can notice and name their feelings as those emotions are happening or after they are happening. You might say, “Sometimes when we are having feelings about a situation, we share with others right away. Sometimes we wait until afterward to talk about our feelings.”
- Ask students to illustrate or write about a moment where they had a strong feeling. You might give them a choice of drawing a picture or telling a story. Share a story of your own with students and model expectations for how they will capture their moment (drawing, writing, or a combination).
- Provide an opportunity for students to share their stories with their classmates if they wish.

After the Activity

- In the days following this activity, ask students to pause to share how they are feeling at that moment or to share how they were feeling earlier in the day. You might ask students to draw a picture to share with a partner or write a story just to share with you.

Recommended Resources for Self-Awareness

- *Lacey Walker, Nonstop Talker* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Sometimes I Feel Angry* ([print](#))
- Self-Control (PebbleGo)



ACTIVITY #2

Self-Management: Reflect & Set Goals Related to Tough Situations



OBJECTIVE

To help students reflect on the way a situation makes them feel and how to manage their emotions.

CASEL defines this competency (2021) as: “*Self-management: The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.*”

The self-management competency asks students to think about how they act when a situation is challenging, easy to handle, or frustrating. At an elementary school level, students should be able to notice that they feel and act differently when presented with a new situation. Students should be able to manage their reactions if they agree or disagree with a decision, and set goals related to their own personal development.

Before the Activity

In the days leading up to this activity, think aloud and share with your class how you are working towards a goal related to a tough situation in your life. You might say, “I am trying to not feel too disappointed when my favorite football team loses a game...” or “I am working on not jumping up and down too much when I win a board game so my family doesn’t feel bad that they didn’t win...”

Activity Sequence

- Display the text, *Lucia Lacorte, Poor Sport* by Christianne Jones and show the cover and title to students. Introduce the term poor sport to students and share an example or story from your own life that helps illustrate this concept. You might say, “It’s okay to be disappointed when you lose and happy when you win a game. We use the word poor sport to describe someone who has a bad attitude when they lose or celebrates way too much when they win – a poor sport is someone who makes other people feel bad. Sometimes a poor sport complains loudly and stomps their feet when they lose. A poor sport could also be someone who wins a game and jumps up and down really loudly and teases someone who didn’t win.”
- Ask students to think about a character of a book, television show, or movie that might be described as a poor sport. You might ask students to turn and talk to a partner to share or give a thumbs up when they think of someone.
- Read aloud, *Lucia Lacorte, Poor Sport* to your class placing emphasis on some of the ways Lucia sulks and celebrates in the story.
- Share with students how everyone can act like a poor sport sometimes because we all have feelings of being frustrated and disappointed when we lose and being really happy and excited when we win.
- Ask students to think about what advice they would give to Lucia Lacorte or someone who is being a poor sport. You might ask them to turn and talk to a partner to think about what they might say.

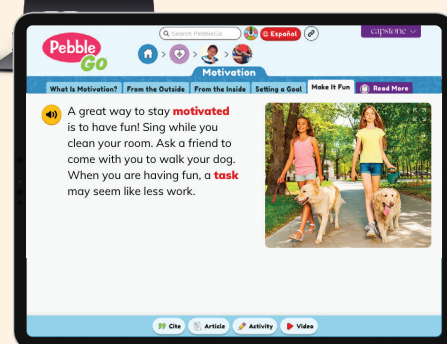
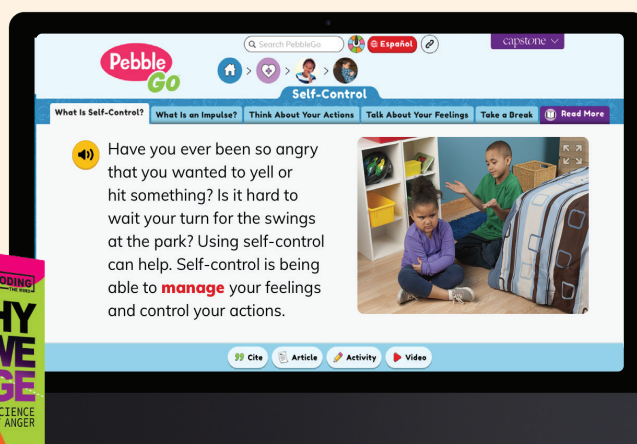
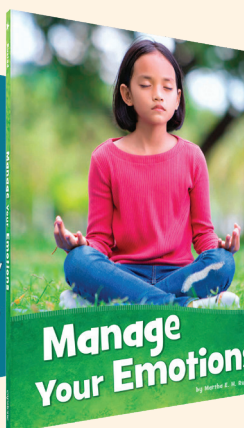
- Share with students that we can set goals for ourselves to help us manage our feelings in different situations, like when we win something or lose something. Introduce sentence stems like, “I can be a good sport when I win by _____” and “I can be a good sport when I lose by _____”
- Model with examples from the story, *Lucia Lacorte, Poor Sport*, and provide time for students to write or illustrate a response and share with a classmate.

After the Activity

- In the days following this activity, share moments when you notice students in the class or characters in other books acting like a good sport. If there is an example of a character in another book being a poor sport you might ask students how they would handle that situation differently.

Recommended Resources for Self-Management

- Lucia Lacorte, *Poor Sport* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Manage Your Emotions* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Why We Rage: The Science of Anger* ([print](#))
- Self-Control (PebbleGo)
- Motivation (PebbleGo)



ACTIVITY #3

Responsible Decision-Making: Choosing to Be a Respectful Classmate



OBJECTIVE

To help students understand that they can make the choice to be respectful in their interactions with others. CASEL defines this competency (2021) as: “*Responsible decision-making: The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.*”

The responsible decision-making competency asks students to take ownership of the choices that they make when interacting with friends, classmates, and anyone they encounter throughout the school day. At an elementary school level, students should be able to act responsibly and make choices that take the feelings of others into consideration.

Before the Activity

In the days leading up to this activity, share stories of choices that you made throughout the day that impacted others. You might say, “One of the other teachers in my school said she loves sweet treats so I chose to share my chocolate chip cookies with her,” or “At the store yesterday I saw someone drop their bag of groceries so I chose to help them pick it up.”

Activity Sequence

- Share with students how we make big and little choices throughout our day. You might say, “In the morning, we choose to brush our teeth before leaving for school. In the middle of the day, we choose where to play during recess. At the end of the day, we choose which book to read after school.”
- Ask students to turn and talk with a partner, or share with a classmate, a choice they made already that day. You can jot down some of the choices you hear students share on chart paper, an interactive whiteboard, or another space that is easy for students to see.
- Display the cover of the book, *I Am Respectful* by Melissa Higgins and introduce the idea that although some of our choices have to do just with ourselves, that many of our choices impact others. You might say, “Today we are going to read a book that shows how choices can impact others, and how it is important to make decisions that impact others in a positive way.”
- Read *I Am Respectful* aloud to the class, and pause to emphasize words like *polite*, *respectful*, *calm*, or others you would like students to notice.
- Ask students to think about a time when they had to make a choice on how to act. You might share an example of a time when you made a positive choice, or when you wish you made a better choice.

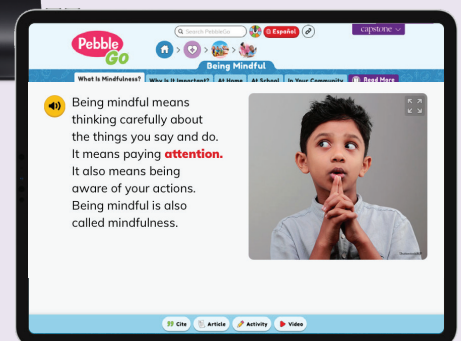
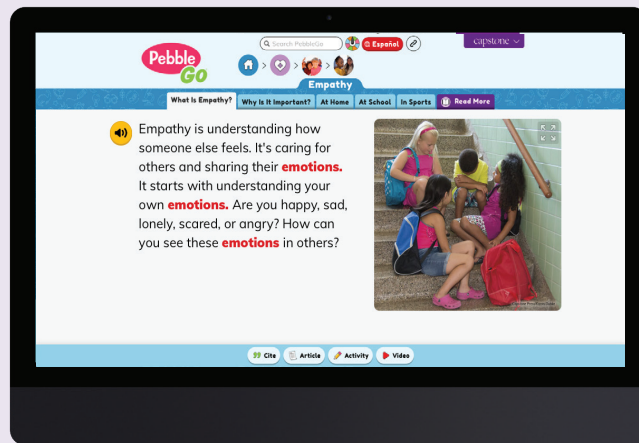
- Share a scenario with students where someone would have to make a decision on how to act. You might say, “Imagine you see someone who drops their books when coming back from the classroom library. What decisions do you have? What can you choose to do?”
- Ask students to turn and talk with a partner, or share with a classmate, a choice they could make in that situation. You can jot down some of the choices you hear students share on chart paper, an interactive whiteboard, or another space that is easy for students to see.
- Present two or three more scenarios that would resonate with your group of students and have them pick one to think about on their own. Ask them to write about or illustrate how they would respond in that scenario and share their decisions with the class.

After the Activity

- In the days following this activity, encourage students to think about the choices they have in different situations. Ask them, “What choices do you have?” when they are working through a problem with a classmate, or ask them, “What other choice could that character have made?” when reading a story together.

Recommended Resources for Responsible Decision-Making

- *I Am Respectful* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Cyberbullying* ([print](#))
- Empathy (PebbleGo)
- Being Mindful (PebbleGo)



ACTIVITY #4

Relationship Skills: How to Handle Bullying Behavior



OBJECTIVE

To help students understand that getting along with others is important and that they may come across bullying inside and outside of school.

CASEL defines this competency (2021) as: “*Relationship skills: The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.*”

The relationship skills competency asks students to work together with different classmates and understand that conflicts may arise. At an elementary school level, students should be able to stand up for others, ask for help, and communicate with their classmates if there is a disagreement or a need to compromise.

Before the Activity

In the days leading up to this activity, point out moments when students, or characters in a book you read, resolve a conflict or tackle a tough situation. You might say, “Did you notice how that character stood up for their friend that was being called a mean name?” or “Students at Table 4 did a great job of working together and using kind words – even when they were feeling a bit frustrated solving our STEM challenge activity.”

Activity Sequence

- Share with students that it is always important to use kind words when working with others. You might say, “We work with others in many different ways, like solving a math problem together, playing a game in physical education class, or even completing a puzzle with a family member at home. Sometimes when a person gets frustrated or angry they can use words that hurt another person’s feelings and that is never okay.”
- Introduce the cover of the book, *Insults Aren’t Funny: What to Do About Verbal Bullying* by Amanda Doering. If the term verbal bullying is new to students, you might say, “Verbal bullying is bullying that uses words, or times when someone says something mean to hurt another person’s feelings on purpose.”
- Ask students to close their eyes and think about a moment in their own life when someone used words that weren’t very nice, or said something to hurt their feelings.
- Read the book, *Insults Aren’t Funny: What to Do About Verbal Bullying*, aloud to students, you might pause during the first few pages (such as at the end of page six) to ask students to turn and share with a classmate how they would feel if they were Casey.
- After finishing the book ask students to think about what they could say if they are being called a name, or they see that someone else is being bullied. You might introduce the terms *bystander* (a person who sees something happen but doesn’t take part) and *upstander* (a person who sees something happen and speaks out when someone needs help).

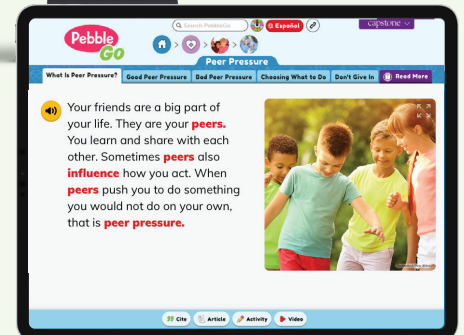
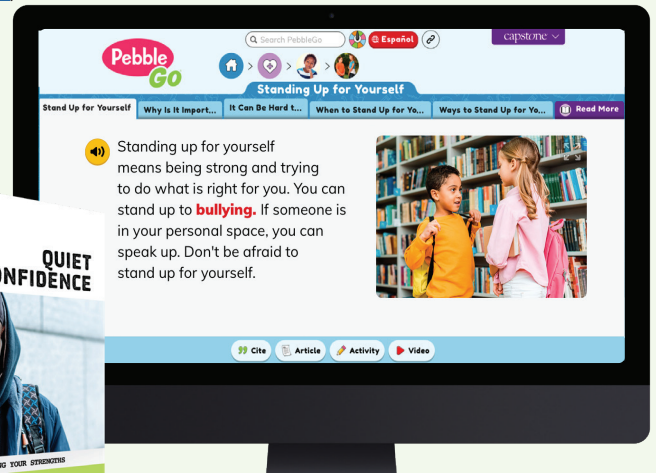
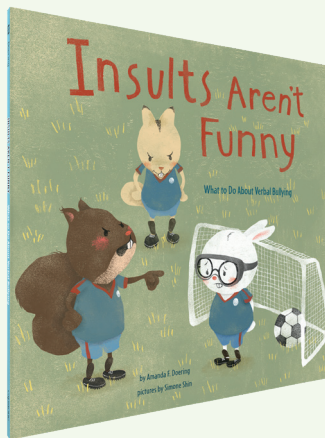
- Ask students to brainstorm what they would do if they were Casey, and if they were on the field when Casey was being called names. Create a T-chart and jot down ideas that students share. You might ask students to turn and talk with a partner and collect examples for a class T-chart.
- After students have thought about what they could do in a situation like the character's, ask them to illustrate (or describe with words) a time when they might stand up for a friend that is being bullied. You might ask students to snap a picture of their story or illustration with a digital device and record their voice as they explain their thinking.

After the Activity

- In the days following this activity, encourage students to share stories of kindness in your classroom to celebrate small moments. You might create a physical space for students to post notes or pictures, or you might have students share special moments they observed as part of a weekly routine in a class meeting.

Recommended Resources for Relationship Skills

- *Insults Aren't Funny: What to Do About Verbal Bullying* ([print](#))
- *Bullying* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Quiet Confidence: The Shy Guide to Using Your Strengths* ([print](#))
- Peer Pressure (PebbleGo)
- Standing Up for Yourself (PebbleGo)



ACTIVITY #5

Self-Awareness: Taking on Someone Else's Perspective



OBJECTIVE

To help students understand that people can feel different in the same situation and show concern for the feelings of others.

CASEL defines this competency (2021) as: “*Social awareness: The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.*”

The social awareness competency asks students to feel compassion and concern for others, especially if someone feels out of place. At an elementary school level, students should be able to understand social norms, identify that everyone has different strengths, and show empathy and gratitude.

Before the Activity

In the days leading up to this activity, share stories where you learned something surprising about someone, such as a fictional character, historical figure, or person in your own life. You might say, “Until I read this new book, I didn’t realize that in the wintertime in Iceland there is only 5 hours of light. It must be so different to go to school there,” or “Today I learned something new about the life of [historical figure your class is studying]...”

Activity Sequence

- Ask students to think about their favorite season and why they love it. You might say, “Even though I love drinking hot chocolate in the winter months, autumn is my favorite season because I love getting dressed up for Halloween.” Have students turn and share their answer with a classmate.
- Introduce the idea to students that everyone has different favorite things and different experiences. You might say, “It’s important to remember that everyone has had different experiences in their lives that make them a special, unique person. Even if you and a friend have the same favorite season, the reasons why you chose that season as your favorite could be different.”
- Share with students that being a good classmate means that we think about other people’s feelings, not just our own. You might say, “Just like a friend might have a different favorite season, ice cream flavor, or movie than you, they might have different feelings than you, too.”
- Show the cover of *No More Teasing* by Fran Manushkin and ask students, “Based on the illustration on the cover, how do you think these two characters are feeling at this moment?” Encourage students to share their thoughts.
- Introduce the story by sharing an intention with students. You might say, “Today we are going to read a story where two characters are in the same place, the same situation, but have very different feelings. We are going to read a story about the importance of thinking about other people’s perspective and how they might be feeling.”
- Read *No More Teasing* aloud to the class. Pause as you read to ask students how Katie might feel, or how they would feel if they were in the main character’s shoes.

- After you finish the book, ask students to work with a partner to make a list of words that describe how someone might feel if they are being teased. Encourage the pair of students to share their words with another group. You might ask the pair of students to write each word they chose on a sticky note and see how many match up with the words chosen by the other group of students.

After the Activity

- In the days following this activity, encourage students to think about the perspectives of others, including characters in a book you read, or people who live in different parts of the world related to a social studies unit. You might use phrases like, “I wonder what the weather is like in [a different part of the world] today,” or “I understand why this character might act that way when faced with [a situation from a book].”

Recommended Resources for Relationship Skills

- *No More Teasing* ([ePub](#))
- *I Am Caring* ([print](#), [ePub](#))
- *Unstoppable: How Jim Thorpe and the Carlisle Indian School Football Team Defeated Army* ([print](#))
- *Being Mindful* (PebbleGo)

