



DAVENPORT
Community Schools
G R O W I N G E X C E L L E N C E

Family Learning Guide

*Social Emotional Learning for
Sixth through Eighth Graders*



What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults:

- *Understand and manage emotions*
- *Set and achieve positive goals*
- *Feel and show empathy for others*
- *Establish and maintain positive relationships*
- *Make responsible decisions*

Why do schools care about SEL?

Children's emotions and relationships affect how and what they learn, and how they use what they learn in school and at home. Emotions can allow us to have an active interest in learning. However, unmanaged stress and poor regulation of impulses interfere with attention and memory and contribute to behaviors disruptive to learning.

Learning is a social and interactive process. It takes place in collaboration with one's teachers, in the company of one's peers, and with the support of one's family. Relationships are the engine of learning.

What are Iowa's Social Emotional Competencies?

The Iowa Department of Education has organized social emotional learning around five core competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

At the sixth through eighth grade level, these are:

Competencies	Learning Targets
Self Awareness	Identifying Emotions Accurate Self Perception Self Confidence
Self Management	Impulse Control Stress Management Self Discipline Self Motivation Goal Setting Organizational Skills
Social Awareness	Perspective Taking and Empathy Appreciating Diversity and Respect for Others Civic Engagement
Relationship Skills	Communication Social Engagement Relationship Building Teamwork
Responsible Decision Making	Identifying Problems Analyzing Solutions and Solving Problems Evaluating and Reflecting Ethical Responsibility

Self Awareness

What is Self Awareness?

Self Awareness is the ability accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. It is the ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism and a "growth mindset."

What Should Sixth–Eighth Graders be Able to Do?

Identifying Emotions

- *Recognize and communicate one's emotions to others in a healthy way.*
- *Identify emotional stressors.*
- *Summarize how thoughts and emotions affect behavior.*

Accurate Self Perception

- *Identify how personal qualities and interests affect decision-making.*
- *Examine how personal emotional states contribute to or detract from the ability to problem solve.*
- *Categorize personal skills, strengths and interests the learner wants to develop.*
- *Select priorities for personal improvement that builds on strengths.*
- *Differentiate how personal qualities influences choices and success.*
- *Select priorities and build on strengths and identify areas for improvement.*
- *Discover the abilities needed to achieve high quality results and outcomes.*

Self Confidence

- *Express positive beliefs in one's ability to achieve and contribute.*
- *Examine conditions that influence confidence in oneself.*
- *Critique his/her abilities that lead to high quality results and outcomes.*

What can Families do at Home to Help Children Develop Self Awareness?

Give feedback about strengths and interests. Help your child reflect on his/her strengths and interests by telling him/her, "I can tell you are proud of how you did on your last test. Can you tell me what you are most proud of?"

Promote self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform specific tasks, like public speaking, studying, sports, etc. Encourage your child and acknowledge their ability to be successful. For example, if your child was able to study hard and get a good grade on a test, compliment them for their effort and hard work.

Ask questions. Ask children questions about their emotions, experiences, and stressors. This will help them recognize their emotions and communicate them to others in a healthy way.

Encourage a growth mindset. Sometimes your child may feel like he/she will never improve his/her skills. If you encourage a growth mindset, your child will learn that he/she can accomplish his/her goals with hard work. For example, instead of allowing your children to say, "I'm not good at writing," teach them to say, "Writing is difficult, but I will study and work hard to accomplish my goals."

Have open conversations about stress and its impact. Stress is inevitable, so learning to manage it is a necessary skill. Discuss the stress that your child is facing and provide solutions to decrease stress.

Self Management

What is Self Management?

Self-management includes regulation one's emotions, stress management, self-control, self-motivation, and setting and achieving goals.

What Should Sixth–Eighth Graders be Able to Do?

Impulse Control

- *Identify productive self-regulating strategies to process emotions and reframe thoughts and behaviors.*
- *Demonstrate productive self-regulation strategies to manage emotions and reframe thoughts and behaviors.*

Stress Management

- *Identify stressors that result in physical or emotional responses.*
- *Identify healthy practices that can minimize response to stress and promote physical and mental wellness.*
- *Communicate the need for assistance to manage stress as needed.*

Goal Setting

- *Create, monitor, adapt, and evaluate goals to achieve success in school and life.*
- *Identify internal and external resources necessary to overcome obstacles in meeting goals.*
- *Reflect on process and outcome of goal setting.*

Organizational Skills

- *Manage materials, space, time and responsibilities effectively.*

Self-Discipline and Self-Motivation

- *Demonstrate the ability to stay actively engaged and persist in activities.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to delay immediate gratification.*
- *Model the ability to adapt and overcome obstacles.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to take initiative.*
- *Demonstrate the ability to work independently.*

What can Families do at Home to Help Children Develop Self-Management?

Teach self-management techniques like belly breathing, yoga positions, counting to ten, or other relaxation exercises. This helps your child learn to manage his/her stress and anxiety.

Help your children brainstorm ways to motivate themselves. Finding motivation to do an undesired activity is difficult for people of all ages. Help your children find ways to motivate themselves so it is easier for them to complete necessary tasks. For example, help your child plan out their day in advance, so they understand what tasks need to be completed by the end of the day.

Encourage your children to save a desired activity until he/she has completed his/her tasks or duties. For example, teach your children to complete their homework before they hang out with their friends.

Model and talk about your own goals. Setting goals can be daunting, so modeling that you have your own goals can help your children conceptualize goal setting. For example, discuss things like fitness goals, health goals, or personal goals. This will normalize and encourage goal setting.

Give feedback when your child perseveres. Tell him/her things like, "I know that was hard, but you never gave up. You kept going even when it was difficult for you, and I am really proud of you. You should be proud of yourself, too." This will encourage him/her to continue to persevere when he/she has.

Social Awareness

What is Social Awareness?

Social awareness connotes perspective-taking; empathy; respecting diversity; understanding social and ethical norms of behavior; and recognizing family, school, and community.

What Should Sixth–Eighth Graders be Able to Do?

Perspective–Taking and Empathy

- *Demonstrate awareness of other people's emotions, life experiences and perspectives through a cross-cultural lens.*
- *Identify and interpret social cues for how others feel and respond constructively.*
- *Predict others' feelings and reactions.*
- *Recognize and validate another person's feelings and reactions.*

Appreciating Diversity and Respect for Others

- *Demonstrate an awareness of differences and respect for human dignity.*
- *Identify contributions of various social and cultural groups.*
- *Demonstrate willingness to integrate diverse points of view.*
- *Demonstrate consideration for the feelings, wishes, cultures, languages histories, rights, and traditions of others.*
- *Work effectively with those who are similar and different from oneself.*

Civic Engagement

- *Recognize the role of volunteerism in the functioning of our society.*
- *Identify strategies to improve the community.*
- *Demonstrate advocacy skills.*
- *Model active engagement in family, school, and community projects and events.*

What can Families do at Home to Help Children Develop Social Awareness?

Have your children discuss and reflect on the different groups they belong to (family, community, country, etc.) and how their membership in these groups impacts the way they see the world.

Show respect and enthusiasm for learning about diversity. Showing your own interest in learning about diverse groups of people will motivate your children to be interested in it as well.

Model acceptance of others who have different attitudes and values. We encounter people with different attitudes and values frequently in our lives. Listen to them, understand their point of view, and expect your children to do the same.

Encourage your children to volunteer and give back to the community. Volunteering has a large role in our society. It helps us understand the issues that exist in our community and encourages us to make changes on a larger scale. Help your children get involved at their local food pantry, school, animal shelter, etc.

Discuss empathy. Empathy is the ability to put ourselves in another person's shoes and view the world from their perspective. Empathy can be discussed in a variety of ways, especially in relation to current events. Ask your children about their feelings on a situation, and how they would feel if they experienced it.

Relationship Skills

What are Relationship Skills?

Relationship skills connote building relationships with diverse individuals and groups, communicating clearly, working cooperatively, resolving conflicts, and seeking help.

What Should Sixth–Eighth Graders be Able to Do?

Communication

- *Interpret, infer and use facial expressions, body language, gestures, and tone to impact interactions.*
- *Use facial expressions, body language, gestures, words, and tone to interact effectively with others in a variety of ways.*
- *Attentively listens and responds to the needs, wants, and ideas of others.*
- *Deliver and receive compliments, feedback, and constructive critique, and respond appropriately.*
- *Recognize impact of cell phone/tablet or other electronic forms on social media.*

Social Engagement

- *Initiate and engage in social interactions with peers and adults.*
- *Analyze social situations and environments and respond appropriately.*
- *Recognize that the same norms and behaviors for face-to-face interactions apply to interactions through social media.*

Relationship Building

- *Identify and demonstrate personal qualities and decisions that contribute to a healthy relationship.*
- *Identify and apply strategies for handling relationships that are not safe, healthy, or positive.*
- *Express interest and appreciation for others.*
- *Create and maintain positive and supportive relationships with adults and learners.*
- *Demonstrate advocacy skills for self and others when necessary.*

Teamwork

- *Demonstrate collaborative skills with others (listen, encourage, acknowledge opinions, compromise, reach consensus).*
- *Acknowledge others' diverse strengths and contributions to a group/team effort.*
- *Demonstrate graciousness in winning and losing.*

What can families do at home to help children develop relationship skills?

Give your children feedback when they work well with others. When your children use teamwork or other collaborative skills, let them know they're doing a good job. Say things like, "You did a great job working with your siblings today. I am so proud of your teamwork skills. Keep it up!"

Model and reinforce effective communication and relationship skills.

Children learn a lot from observing others, so it is important to model effective communication and relationship skills at home. Use the tone, body language, and facial expressions that you want your child to use when communicating with others. Initiate and engage in conversations with others and engage in healthy relationships.

Establish a conflict-resolution process that is used any time there is a conflict.

This strategy can help your children understand how to approach a conflict in a respectful and consistent way. This will encourage them to use the strategy that they have practiced in the future.

Discuss social media. Social media is a large part of many middle school students' lives. It can be a fun way to communicate with friends and family, but its misuse also has many consequences for their future. Talk to your children about using social media safely. Teach them to share minimal information, use clean language, and only talk to people they personally know. They should treat social media as if they were interacting with someone face-to-face.

Discuss healthy relationships. Adolescents are in several kinds of relationships, including with parents, friends, and perhaps a significant other. These relationships may look different, but they should all be healthy and safe. Discuss aspects of healthy relationships like boundaries, trust, communication, and honesty.

Responsible Decision–Making

What is Responsible Decision–Making?

Responsible decision-making refers to considering the well-being of self and others; recognizing one's responsibility to behave ethically; basing decisions on safety, social, and ethical considerations; evaluating realistic consequences of various actions and making constructive, safe choices for self, relationships, and school.

What Should Sixth–Eighth Graders be Able to Do?

Identify Problems

- *Identify a variety of problems and decisions that affect learners' lives.*
- *Define characteristics of safe and unsafe situations, including online safety.*

Analyzing Situations and Solving Problems

- *Generate multiple solutions for solving problems in a variety of ways.*
- *Consider well-being of self and others when making decisions.*
- *Differentiate between situations where the learner can problem solve without assistance and situations that require assistance.*
- *Identify when peer, social, and cultural norms affect decision making.*
- *Apply choice and accept responsibility for outcome.*

Evaluating and Reflecting

- *Reflect on the positive and negative consequences of decisions for oneself and others.*
- *Reflect on past decisions and apply learning to new situations.*
- *Reflect on choices, decisions, and possible impact on the future.*

Ethical Responsibility

- *Demonstrate equity, fairness, and respect, in actions that positively impact the greater good.*
- *Accept ownership for actions.*

What can Families do at Home to Help Children Develop Responsible Decision–Making?

Support your children through the steps of making a decision when they face a choice or decision. Decision-making can be difficult, and children often need support when making decisions. Talk to them about the steps that need to be taken and how to go about them. Listen to their ideas and allow them to lead the conversation.

Give your child feedback for making good decisions. Acknowledging your child's good decisions will encourage him/her to keep making them in the future. For example, when they do their homework without being asked, say, "I'm so proud that you did your homework without being asked. Thank you for being responsible."

Discuss logical consequences and the impact decisions may have on your child's future. Consequences occur after every behavior, and these consequences can be good or bad. The choices that your children make can have an impact on their lives. It is important to either praise them or discuss changes with them as needed.

Give your child responsibility. Your child will not be able to learn about responsibility if he/she is not allowed to put it into practice. Giving your child the freedom to do things like creating his/her study schedule or participating in an extracurricular activity will help him/her grow.

Communicating with School

Your child's teacher and school counselor are great sources of information about the social emotional development of your child. Ask them how they think your child is doing with being on track with the skills discussed in this guide. Be sure to ask what they see in school, and how you can support your child's development at home.

Ask questions such as:

- *How do you feel my child is doing in getting along with peers? What strengths and challenges do you see?*
- *What are your observations about my child's ability to understand and manage emotions?*
- *Tell me about how my child is doing with both following directions and solving problems effectively in the classroom.*
- *In general, how do you think my child is doing in his/her social-emotional development in terms of what you would expect from this age?*
- *Are there any specific things you would like us to work on at home to help with social emotional challenges in the classroom?*

Concerns about Development

All children have areas of strength and areas of challenge as they grow and learn. For some children, an area of challenge is around social and emotional development.

If you are concerned about your child's development, ***talk to your child's school counselor*** about your concerns. Ask what he/she sees and if there are recommendations that may help your child. Ask your school counselor about extra groups or programs that might help your child learn these skills.

Talk with your child's pediatrician or family doctor about your concerns. Sometimes children have a medical condition or developmental challenge that can interfere with their ability to be as successful as we would like.

Ask your child's pediatrician for a referral to a community-based provider that specializes in helping children learn additional social and emotional skills. Community-based counselors use strategies to help children learn and practice skills that they can use to improve their social and emotional skills in everyday life.



For more information about social emotional learning, visit the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning at: <https://casel.org/>



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