

## Let's Work Together Teaching Guide

Dear Educator,

Students' emotions matter! Emotions have a tremendous impact on how students interact with others during discussions and collaborative projects, at recess, in the lunchroom, and throughout the day. When students can manage their emotions and socialize with peers, they develop positive relationships and are in a better position to learn at school, at home, and in the community. Equally important, your feelings and emotions matter as much as those of your students. Throughout the school day, you're managing your feelings and reactions while interacting with students, colleagues, and administrators to build trusting relationships and maintain an upbeat learning environment.

The World Economic Forum identified the top ten skills and strategies students will need in the workplace by 2020.\* Number six on this list is "emotional intelligence," which includes four characteristics:

- Self-awareness—the ability to recognize your emotions and feelings, measure how these affect others, and keep disruptive impulses under control.
- Self-management or self-control—the ability to monitor and modify reactions to situations and others.
- Empathy for others, which includes understanding their feelings and point of view as well as reaching out to support them.
- Social skills, including the ability to build trusting relationships, successfully engage in teamwork, and promote cooperation and empathy.

Social emotional skills can be learned at any age. At school, when learning experiences are student-centered and involve team projects, group discussions, sharing ideas, and negotiating behavior and work expectations, students have opportunities to develop, adjust, and refine the four characteristics of emotional intelligence. Social emotional learning (SEL) works best when the learning experiences students engage in offer them practice and time for self-reflecting on academic tasks as well as the life skill of emotional intelligence.

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# Social Emotional Learning

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\* <https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/world-economic-forum-on-the-top-10-skills-and-workforce-strategies-in-2020/>

## SCHOOL EXPERIENCES DEVELOP SEL LEARNING

Instead of playing games in isolation, develop students' social emotional intelligence using these authentic learning experiences:

**Daily teacher read alouds** invite students to learn about SEL by stepping into the shoes of characters and living and feeling as they do.

**Mini-lessons** give you a chance to think aloud and show students how you feel about characters in a book; their problems, interactions, and kindnesses; and how each one copes with stressful situations.

**Small group instruction** allows students to experience and understand characters' emotional intelligence. In addition, students can hear the reactions and suggestions of peers, measure them against their own responses, and grow.

**Independent reading** offers adventures and life lessons when students read self-selected books.

**Collaborative projects** are opportunities for students to work as a team, listen to and value diverse ideas, compromise, and show kindness and understanding to each team member.

## BOOKS: A SPRINGBOARD FOR SEL LEARNING

Books can foster discussions on managing emotions and feeling empathy for others because they allow students to observe how characters solve personal problems, build positive relationships, and cope with emotional reactions to different situations. Moreover, books can become students' road maps for increasing their emotional well-being because they can begin to compare and understand their situation in relation to the events characters live through. A powerful story stays with readers as they replay parts, step into the skin of beloved characters, and live through events that can inform and change their reactions, while also giving them the strength to deal with an issue. Equally important, books can confirm to students that others feel lonely, left out, and criticized, sending the powerful message: *You are not alone.*

As learners explore SEL topics in books, they see problems and issues through multiple lenses, and this can help them cope with similar challenges in their daily lives. An unending source of comfort to readers experiencing emotional stress, books can also change the thinking of those who are the cause of emotional stress by making visible the effects their words and actions have on others.

You can read aloud SEL books and also select some for small group reading and discussion. Whichever road you take—reading aloud and/or small group work—enhancing and enlarging students' emotional intelligence gives them a twenty-first-century skill that they will access and use throughout their lives.

### TEACHING TIP:

#### Debriefing and Goal Setting

Set aside time for students to debrief and celebrate what worked during discussions and collaborative projects. Use the following questions and be sure to ask students for examples:

- Did you respect and value diverse ideas?
- Did you disagree politely?
- Did you offer support to peers?
- Did you listen actively to understand the ideas of others?
- Did you ask helpful questions?
- Did you participate and contribute?

Ask students to use comments shared during the debriefing to set one or two goals for their next meeting. Then invite students to share what they can do to reach their goal. For example, if the goal is to avoid interrupting a classmate, students might say: We need to

- concentrate on what's being said, not on our own thoughts;
- understand that interrupting shows we don't respect and value other perspectives;
- recognize that we will be able to respond after our classmate finishes; and
- encourage diverse interpretations and suggestions.

## QUESTIONS STUDENTS CAN DISCUSS

These questions work whether your students read or listen to the same book or each group member reads a different book. When teachers read aloud, students can turn and talk and then respond to a question. If you have students read different books and discuss these in a small group, they develop a broader view of social emotional learning and their peers introduce them to books they might want to read and enjoy.

- Explain what the story reveals about cooperating. How does cooperation help others? Why is it important?
- What did the story teach you about kindness? About helping others? About wanting to fit in?
- How does it feel to not have a friend? How can you help a friendless person?
- Why is it important to help students new to your community and class feel accepted and safe?
- How did the protagonist manage his/her emotions?
- What can you learn from the way a character solved a big problem?
- What did the book teach you about helping others?
- How did family support the protagonist? How did that help maintain positive emotions?
- What kinds of relationships did you notice? Which were trusting and why?
- How did a person change a character's feelings about others?
- Why did the character who lacked compassion and empathy change?
- What did the protagonist worry about or fear? How were these emotions dealt with?
- Why is it tough to take the first steps to letting people know you and your stories?
- What acts of kindness did you notice in your book? How did kindness help the person giving it? Receiving it?
- What made the protagonist feel different and alone? How were these emotional challenges resolved?
- With classmates, act out a favorite part of an SEL book and ask the class: What did you learn from this mini-drama?

## TEACHING TIP:

### Encourage Students to Ask Questions

To engage students in discussion about a book, you can use the questions on the left side of this page. However, it's also important to ask students to share their own questions. By doing that, you tap into their wonderings, gain insights into what they perceive as important, and better understand the personal connections they make to the story.

Start with an open-ended question. After reading aloud a chunk of text, ask: *What questions do you have about the part you just heard or read?* If students don't pose questions, prompt them to wonder about a problem, a character's feelings, and ways the character can or should react to the situation or event. Ask them to evaluate decisions, actions, dialogue, or inner thoughts. You can also invite readers to step into the protagonist's shoes and ask questions the main character might pose in a specific situation. Doing this offers your students practice in considering situations from diverse perspectives and teaches them to look at and better understand their worlds and experiences.

