

Strong minds, mindful hearts

A checklist of K–12 social-emotional learning activities

Start your year off on the right foot with these activities that help your students develop strengths across [CASEL's five SEL competencies](#). Revisit them throughout the year as your classroom climate evolves, and your students will become SEL superstars in no time!

Self-awareness

Establish routines that help your students identify and interpret their emotions and understand how their feelings influence their behavior.

The Feelings Wheel

For younger students, introduce the [Feelings Wheel](#). This chart breaks down emotions into seven basic categories and provides further detail for each emotion. Show a clip from Pixar's *Inside Out* to facilitate a discussion about understanding feelings.

Journaling

Older students can keep tabs on their emotions by writing in a journal. Giving them content-specific prompts can help them uncover roadblocks in their learning and give you valuable insights into what you can do to foster success.

Example: *How did you feel before today's math test? How about after? How do you think your feelings prior to the test affected your score? What can you do to feel even more confident next time?*

Self-management

Use these activities to help your students develop self-management skills to control impulses and achieve personal and academic goals.

Wait a minute!

This activity helps younger students develop impulse control. In five-minute bursts, such as at the start of the day or between lessons, ask a high-interest question, but don't accept responses right away! Give students time to think of their answers and build self-control. The questions can be non-academic, fun topics, like "Would you rather have Superman's or Iron Man's powers? Why?"

Back-to-school bucket list

Ask your middle and high school students to create a bucket list of things they want to accomplish during the school year. Encourage them to add academic, social, and personal goals to their buckets. Revisit the list throughout the year to help students reflect on accomplishments and make plans to achieve their goals.





Social awareness

Throughout the year, engage with your students in activities to help them understand differing perspectives and empathize with others.

How am I feeling?

Help younger students learn how to observe and interpret body language and facial expressions with a quick game of charades. Take turns with your students acting out different emotions (without using words or telling the group what you're acting out). As students guess the emotion, engage them in conversation about the body language and facial expressions that clued them to how the actor feels.

Five-Minute Film Festival

This [YouTube playlist](#) contains several short videos you can share with your older students to start conversations about kindness, empathy, and connection. Keep this list in your back pocket for when you have a few extra minutes or whenever your class needs to reset their perspectives.

Relationship skills

Communication is the basis of all good relationships. The activities below will help your students communicate clearly from kindergarten through their senior year and beyond.

What's in the bag?

Clear communication is one of the most essential skills students can develop from a young age. Work on communication skills by placing an object in a bag and asking students to give clues about the object. They'll have to communicate clearly if they want their friends to guess the object!

How to give feedback

As students enter middle school and beyond, we often ask them to give their peers feedback on academic work. This [handout](#) from ACT for Youth provides scenarios that help your students understand how to give positive and corrective feedback without judgment.

Responsible decision-making

These activities will help your students become good decision-makers by understanding the basis for rules and why we follow them and encouraging them to take risks and solve problems.

Classroom norms Q&A

Establishing classroom norms at the beginning of the year is a great time to introduce younger students to the "why" behind rules and expectations. As you introduce each norm, ask students questions such as: Why do we have this rule? What might happen if we didn't have this rule? What does following this rule look like? Revisit this exercise throughout the year as your classroom climate and norms evolve.

Broken escalator

Teach your older students (or students of any age!) that it's okay to get stuck. It's how they respond to getting stuck that counts. Show them this [broken escalator](#) video, and after you all have a good laugh, conduct a conversation about how stalling and simply yelling for "Help!" is far less effective than embracing challenges and trying new ways to work through them.