



Strategies for Social and Emotional Learning

SEL can help boost academic achievement

The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) promotes the idea that students perform better when academics are combined with social and emotional learning (SEL). According to CASEL, children can learn how to deal with their emotions and relationships with others in healthy ways just as they can learn language or mathematics skills.

Key SEL skills include:

- Self-awareness (recognizing feelings and managing them)
- Understanding others (developing empathy)
- Making responsible decisions (considering long-term consequences)
- Understanding yourself (handling emotions and dealing with obstacles)
- Building healthy relationships (saying no to negative peer pressure)



Mastering these skills helps children succeed in school and life, according to CASEL. They become happier and more confident. Parents can foster social and emotional learning at home with these techniques:

Focus on strengths – When your child brings home a test, talk first about what he or she did well. Then talk about what can be improved. Praise specific strengths. Don't just criticize things that were done wrong.

Follow up with consequences for misbehavior – Decide on consequences that are fair and can be carried out. Don't let anger lead you to say "No television for a month" when you know that the TV will go back on in one or two days.

Ask children how they feel – When you ask your child about his or her feelings, the message is that their feelings matter and that you care.

Find ways to stay calm when angry – Learn to recognize trigger situations and do something about them before you lose control. Sit down as a family and talk about what everyone can do to stay calm.

Be willing to apologize – Parents need to be able to apologize to their children if what they said was not what they meant. By doing this, you are being a good role model and showing how important it is to apologize after hurting someone.

Give children choices and respect their wishes – When children have a chance to make choices, they learn how to solve problems. Giving children ways to express preferences and make decisions shows that their ideas and feelings matter.

Ask questions that help children solve problems on their own – Don't be tempted to step in and take over when a child has a problem. Asking good questions can help children develop the ability to find solutions on their own. For example, you can ask "What do you think you can do in this situation?"

Encourage sharing and helping – You and your child can prepare food in a homeless shelter or go on a fund-raising walk-a-thon. You can help elderly neighbors or needy families. These kinds of activities teach children that what they do can make a difference in the lives of others.

For more information, go to casel.org.