

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS: KEY TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

SEL Issue Brief, Part 2



FREE SEL RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS

NATIONAL RESOURCES

[CASEL Roadmap for Reopening Schools](#)

[CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL](#)

[Learning Policy Institute](#)

[EdSurge's 11 Ways Schools Can Involve Families in SEL Programming](#)

[Barton Lab Family-Professional Partnerships](#)

STATE RESOURCES

[SEL4SC - Social Emotional Learning Alliance for South Carolina](#)

[SC Department of Education - Family & Community Engagement](#)

[South Carolina State Library Family Engagement Kits](#)

CFEC RESOURCES

[Summer Olympics Family Games](#)

[Anderson 2](#)

[Chester](#)

[North Columbia](#)

[Empower Oconee SC Resiliency Kits](#)

[Resiliency During a Pandemic:](#)

[Article 1 & Article 2](#)

FAMILY-SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS AND SEL

by Lorilei Swanson, PhD, LMFT, LPC

Parents are the experts on their children's unique social, emotional, and behavioral characteristics. They are also the first teachers of their children and have been impacting and developing their child's social and emotional skills for years. Although parents are likely doing things every day to influence their child's social and emotional learning (SEL), it is a relatively new thing in schools and many parents may not know what SEL is and why it is important.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning ([CASEL](#)) identifies these five core competencies of SEL: Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, and Relationship Skills. Children who learn how to express emotions in healthy ways and engage in caring and respectful relationships are happier, more competent, and more capable of dealing with the pressures of life with greater strength, wisdom, and resilience. Additionally, research summarized by [Edutopia](#) indicates that SEL instruction enhances academic achievement. Although anyone can benefit from developing social and emotional skills at any age, the earlier the better. Children who are socially and emotionally competent by the age of eight have a decreased risk for depression, violence, substance abuse, and other serious mental health issues as young adults.

Just as teachers need to learn, practice and model SEL to effectively support SEL in the classroom (see [SEL Issue Brief, Part 1](#)), parents also need to learn, practice, and model SEL to effectively support SEL at home. Students need parents, teachers, and schools on the same page, so SEL is consistent as they transition from school to home. Schools can enhance SEL by forming authentic family-school partnerships based on collaboration, two-way communication and mutual respect as outlined in the [Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#). Schools can develop these partnerships by giving families the guidance and support they need to reinforce what is being taught in the classroom. At the same time schools can invite families to be involved in the SEL process and seek information from families about what is working and what needs to be improved.

The resources shared in this issue support the creation of meaningful family-school partnership opportunities to foster and support the social, emotional, and academic growth and development of students.



SUPPORTING SEL AT SCHOOL

by Julia Beaty, LISW-CP, TBRI® Practitioner

As the [Karyn Purvis Institute of Child Development \(KP-ICD\)](#) explains, though children in a classroom may be of a similar *chronological* age, they may vary widely in terms of their *social-emotional developmental* age. And for teachers, it is critical not only to employ SEL to provide growth opportunities to students, but also to support laying foundations for cognitive, social, and emotional pathways for students who may not yet have them.

The [Aspen Institute summarizes](#), SEL helps “build cognitive skills and helps students learn academic content and apply their knowledge,” and supporting students’ social and emotional development produces an 11 percentage point gain in grades and test scores! As educators, your primary leadership role lies in adopting the mindset of SEL: an expectation for learning, affording students ongoing opportunities to support healthy neurodevelopment through SEL practice, and seeing yourself as an active learner and participant in SEL with students. Not only does SEL build social and emotional competence of students but it also builds upon the felt safety of the environment, which precedes all other classroom learning. As Trainer Sarah Mercado shares in [KP-ICD’s TBRI & Trauma-Informed Classrooms Training](#), “We must create an environment where our kids not only *are* safe but *feel* safe in their soul.” And as CASEL notes, when the entire school community engages in SEL, it creates a “caring, motivating, and equitable learning environment that promotes social, emotional, and academic growth.”

The [EASEL Lab](#) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education recommends several practices to engage families, not only with SEL opportunities at school but also to support practice at home. Critical to the success of any SEL and social-emotional development is the foundational work of building strong relationships, partnering with families, and receiving/providing ongoing support. This starts by **learning about families**, whether through surveys, phone calls, open houses, etc. to learn about the family, including concerns, special skills, and their likes/dislikes. Secondly, schools must **invite families to create their own SEL goals** for their children, including specific skills they’d like their children develop. To strengthen student commitment to SEL, **invite the child to set their own SEL goals** and share challenges they face along the way. Next, determine an **internal staff person** who can serve as a liaison between educators and families, focused on SEL and family engagement. SEL efforts can also be supported by a collaborative school-community SEL team, including families, a recommendation that CASEL also makes in their Guide to Schoolwide SEL..

Additionally, schools should **create a resource center** for families, and in an era of various learning settings, consider not only physically accessible resources but digitally accessible ones for remote learners who may have limited in-person contact with school facility-based resources. Finally, be sure to **plan ongoing opportunities** for families to learn more about SEL, whether sharing a resource at a class event or providing examples of how to practice a specific skill.

In concluding their Roadmap to Reopening, CASEL urges schools to “support educators in reflecting on data around their own instructional practices and learning environment, especially when trying out new strategies or modes of teaching...[a practice which will]...share power, deepen relationships, and continuously improve support for students, families, and staff,” and urges teachers to answer the question, “How can we as leaders model humility, vulnerability, growth mindset, and our own self-reflection to promote a culture of continuous improvement?”

SUPPORTING SEL AT HOME

by Laurann Gallitto, MMFT

CASEL Videos for Families - [English & Spanish](#)

Parents have a front-row seat to child development, including children’s strong emotions and impulsive behaviors. While challenging at times, with SEL coaching and support from trusted adults, children can not only learn what is happening inside themselves, but how to pull from their own reservoir of resilience to work with and through their emotions and behaviors toward a more manageable state. SEL strategies can also lead to improved academic achievement and attitudes about school, as well as reduced emotional stress and engagement in fewer negative behaviors.

All of these factors help students reach their potential not only in school, but in their lives beyond graduation and throughout their careers. When schools and families work together, they can build positive, safe, and supportive school climates that promote learning and create strong connections that reinforce social and emotional skills. Families that understand and value SEL can help provide consistent supports for their students across their school and home lives. As children learn social and emotional skills, it’s important that they have opportunities to practice and apply those strategies at school *and at home*.

Five Tips for Supporting SEL at Home - Ideas and Tool for Working with Parents & Families & Family Engagement and SEL

- 1. Self-awareness.** Take time to talk about feelings every day by sharing your own feelings and asking your child to name their feelings.
- 2. Self-management.** Teach and model positive ways of managing stress, disappointment, and anger.
- 3. Social awareness.** Use story time to develop social awareness by asking your child how they would feel if they were in a similar situation as the characters in the story.
- 4. Relationship skills.** Develop your child’s ability to resolve a conflict, by asking questions about the situation instead of giving advice: *What do you think your friend was feeling? How can you work to make things right?*
- 5. Responsible decision-making.** Talk to your child about consequences by asking questions like: *What might happen if you choose not to wear your coat if it is cold outside? How might your friend feel if you cancel your plans to get together?*

For more resources for parents/caregivers: [CASEL Parent SEL Resources](#), SEL Discussion Series for Parents and Caregivers – [English](#) & [Spanish](#), [CASEL Family-School Partnerships](#), and [Usable Knowledge for Parents & Families](#).

