

## APPLICATION OF CASEL IN THE CLASSROOM

### Self-Awareness

#### Reflective Writing

Reflective writing not only helps students develop self-awareness but also empathy and compassion, too. As a teacher, you can start each day by giving students five to ten minutes to write about a prompt that encourages self-reflection. Practicing reflective writing daily can help students learn to consider their thoughts and feelings in a self-aware way.

#### Use emojis to help your students identify their emotions.

Noticing, naming, understanding, and sharing emotions are a big part of social-emotional learning for little ones.

#### Nurture a culture of kindness.

At the beginning of the year, read *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* a story about the power of kind words. Then, create your bucket for the classroom. Get a small tin bucket from a craft store and cut 3-by-3-inch pieces out of card stock. Your students can write kindness, appreciation, and love messages on the cards throughout the week to fill up the bucket. At the end of each week, spend a few minutes sharing these notes of encouragement to end the week on a positive note.

#### Build self-esteem with paper beads.

As a teacher, Ask your students to think about what makes them special and strong. Hand out several long strips of colored paper to each student. Then, instruct them to write a positive sentence about themselves on each strip. Next, have them tightly roll each strip of paper around a pencil and secure the strip with tape at the end. Once they have created a handful of positive rolled paper beads, students can string them together with yarn to create a necklace or bracelet to remind them of their uniqueness.



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## Emotional Vocabulary Lists

Self-awareness activities are a great way to help students understand emotional cues. Include several words describing emotions in your class vocabulary lists, like "joyful" or "scared." When you introduce a new emotional vocabulary word, discuss what it means and how students can recognize this feeling in themselves and others.

For older grades, try complex emotional vocabulary words like “jubilant” or “apprehensive” to broaden their emotional understanding.

## **Self-Management**

### SMART Goal Challenge

Self-motivation is an essential component of social-emotional learning. If you want to help self-motivate your students, try challenging them to reach their potential by setting SMART goals as a class.

At the beginning of the month or quarter, work with each student to set a SMART goal for themselves. SMART goals must be **Specific, Measurable, Agreed-Upon, Relevant, and Time-Bound**. Check-in with your students several times throughout the month to measure their progress and support them if any challenges arise.

Give them a piece of candy or other rewards if your students meet their goal by the agreed-upon end date. Suppose they do not; offer encouragement and work with them to accomplish their goal.

## **Responsible Decision Making**

### Class Contract

One way to encourage responsible decision-making is by collaborating with your students to create a classroom contract. An effective classroom contract should contain two things: your expectations as a teacher and your students' hopes and needs for the school year.



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Putting a contract together with your students can help them feel like their voices are heard and that you are willing to listen. To make this activity interesting for your students, you can include "exciting" information like class parties or rewards for meeting academic goals. It is fun and, more importantly, establishes your classroom environment as one where everyone's choices matter.

## Student Council

Depending on your needs, As a teacher, you could involve your entire class in the student council or have them elect representatives. By bringing your students in to discuss classroom needs and upcoming events, student councils can involve your class in the school community while teaching them responsibility.

If this is your first time holding a council, discuss with your class to decide which student council ideas would work best.

## “What Would You Do?” Activity

Practicing tough decisions can help your students learn how their actions affect others. Give your students a list of situations in which they would have to make an important choice. Have them write down an answer to each situation by themselves, then discuss their answers as a class.

Here are a few problem-solving scenarios to get your students started:

- While playing with your little brother, he accidentally breaks your favorite toy. What do you do next?
- You see a new girl playing by herself at recess. What do you say to her?
- You are eating a sugar cookie, and your friend asks if he can have a bite. How do you respond?

## **Relationship Skills**

### Conflict Resolution Read-Along

Helping students resolve conflicts will benefit them for the rest of their lives. Moreover, thanks to their timeless lessons, fairy tale read-along can help your class get a discussion on conflict resolution skills going.



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Choose a beloved fairy tale to read as a class, like Goldilocks and the Three Bears, Little Red Riding Hood, or Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. As you read the story to your students, ask them the following questions:

- What is this story's main conflict?
- What do the main characters want to happen?
- How can the characters work together to make everyone happy?

Then, turn the discussion to recent conflicts students have had in their life. Have your students share times when, like the fairy tale characters, they conflicted with another person. Ask them how they worked with that person to improve the situation and any advice they have to share with the class.

### Teach your students how to work in a group.

Being able to work in a group setting is an important life skill. Students will learn how to negotiate with others, develop leadership skills, and determine their strengths to best contribute to the group.

## **Social Awareness**

### Classroom Service Projects

Service activities are a fun and meaningful way to connect your students to the world around them. By helping others, a class service project can help students develop empathy. Here are a few service project ideas you can do as your class to make your community a better place:

- Hold a clothing, books, or canned foods drive for a local shelter
- Visit a local nursing home as a class
- Clean up litter around your school or at a nearby park
- Create care packages for families in need around the holidays
- Raise money for your school or a charity through a bake sale

### Listening Circles

To begin this activity that teaches active listening, separate your class into groups of four or five students. Have students take turns answering a get-to-know-you



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question. If any student interrupts the person talking, remind them that everyone gets to a turn sharing their answer.

Here are a few question ideas:

- Where would you travel if you could go anywhere in the world?
- What makes you feel happiest?
- If you were an animal, which one would you be?
- Who do you look up to the most and why?
- When you grow up, what do you want to be?

At the end of the activity, come together for a class discussion about what they learned in their groups. To ensure every student feels included, try pairing them up and having them share one thing about their partner after the activity.

### Diversity Story Time

Teaching diversity in the classroom is an essential component of social awareness. During read-aloud story times, try to pick books about people of different cultures, races/ethnicities, religions, and other backgrounds. After reading one of these books to your students, discuss how differences make the world better and ask what they learned from the story.

Here are a few popular children's books about diversity to get you started:

- *It is Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
- *Families, Families, Families!* by Suzanne Lang

### Practice role-play

Sometimes you must put yourself in someone else's shoes to truly understand a situation. Taking some time to help the students practice what to do in tricky or troubling situations in your classroom creates social-emotional learning activities that help your students develop empathy and understand other people's feelings. For example, it is a great strategy to use when discussing bullying.



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