



# MAKING THE CONNECTION

## Social Emotional Learning and Physical Activity

**Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a continuous learning process that plays a role in every aspect of a healthy, happy life.** It is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2019). More often than not, our lessons and activities already have social emotional learning built into them. Instead of thinking of SEL as a secondary topic, find intention behind the activities you're already implementing and integrate opportunities for children to develop these competencies.



### Self-Awareness

The ability to identify one's strengths and limitations and to maintain a well-grounded sense of confidence, efficacy, and emotional awareness.

### Self-Management

The ability to effectively manage stress and impulses through self-discipline and goal-setting.

### Social Awareness

The ability to understand various perspectives of others and one's interaction with diverse communities.

### Relationship Skills

The ability to communicate, cooperate, and negotiate in socially acceptable methods with others in social situations.

### Responsible Decision Making

The ability to utilize ethical standards and social cues while making thoughtful decisions about behavior and social interactions.

**ACTION** FOR HEALTHY KIDS 

Physical Activity Strategy	Example	Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Competency Impacts
<b>Active Recess</b>	Set up a relay competition that combines teamwork with individual problem-solving. Relays can be incorporated into lessons such as math problem-solving competitions or recess obstacle courses.	Relationship Skills Responsible- Decision Making Self-Awareness
<b>Active Environments</b>	Create spaces that foster creative learning and self-exploration. Active sensory areas in the hallway, classroom or even gymnasium, combine movement prompts and tools to help students refocus, self-regulate and manage stress.	Self-Awareness Self-Management
<b>Brain Breaks</b>	Incorporate brain breaks into your school day. Yoga and meditative breathing can allow both you and your students to identify emotions, manage stress, and reflect and analyze situations. Even a short 1-minute breathing exercise can serve as a “reset” button for all individuals in the classroom.	Self-Awareness Self-Management Responsible Decision Making
<b>Classroom Physical Activity</b>	Provide opportunities for students to connect the mind and body by incorporating active classroom equipment. Flexible seating (wobble chairs, floor desks, exercise balls), dance breaks, and stations all allow kids to move their bodies while learning in the classroom and begin to identify when they need a moment to refocus.	Responsible Decision Making Self-Awareness Self-Management
<b>Before &amp; After School Programming</b>	Encourage students and families to walk or bike to school together. Work with your school’s parent group to form walking groups for closer neighborhoods. Emphasize that not only does walking to and from school have physical health benefits, but it also allows children and families time to communicate about their day and learn more about each other.	Relationship Skills Social Awareness Self-Awareness
<b>Unstructured Time &amp; Play</b>	Build free time into your daily class schedule and allow students to engage in unstructured play. Unstructured playtime allows students to practice creative expression and develop skills such as self-discipline, analyzing situations, recognizing interests and strengths, and more.	Self- Awareness Responsible Decision Making Social Awareness Self-Management

## Tips

- When looking to replace or purchase new equipment, consider items that can be used in multiple places (PE class, during indoor or outdoor recess or in the classroom) and support cross-curricular team games.
- Connect with a local yoga teacher, or see if a parent or family member has training, to come in to teach a yoga class. You can also follow along with a free online video at your next all-staff meeting! Teachers and other staff members can then take what they learn in this class and incorporate it into mindfulness physical activity lessons in their own classrooms!
- Talk to parents and family members about the connection between physical activity/play and social emotional learning, and share tips that they can use at home to reinforce these skills.

## CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Do your students and their families understand why physical activity is important? Their go-to answer may be the physical benefits but remind them that there are also many mental benefits. Discuss the concept of endorphins and how exercising can make one happier!
- Check-in with students about how they are feeling emotionally and physically. Are they feeling physically energized but mentally stressed? Ask them to identify one thing that would help them to feel better. Allow them to reset and re-energize with an activity for 10 minutes, and encourage them to practice this technique at home with their families.



## Helpful resources

The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide Social Emotional Learning: <https://schoolguide.casel.org>

Video: SEL 101 for Parents: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2d0da6BZWA>

SEL 101 for Parents (Spanish): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz\\_aCbDI9uk&t=4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xz_aCbDI9uk&t=4s)

Aperture Education Webinars on Demand: <http://info.apertureed.com/archived-webinars>



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