

## FEBRUARY IS PSYCHOLOGY MONTH

*Psychology is for Everyone*



### Supporting Your Child's Growth Through Social-Emotional Learning

PSYCHOLOGY PROMOTES SUCCESS



ONE GOAL...MANY PATHS  
HELPING STUDENTS REACH THEIR INDIVIDUAL POTENTIAL

February 2018

### Toronto Catholic District School Board Psychology Newsletter

*February is Psychology Month in Canada, and members of the TCDSB Psychology Department are happy to offer this newsletter to all families, educators, and support staff.*

As parents and educators we support our children in learning their ABC's and numbers when they are young, but we also know that it is equally important to support them in their social and emotional growth. Social-emotional learning is the development of life skills that support children in their ability to understand and manage their feelings, solve problems, form and maintain positive relationships, and manage their behaviour. When children and youth learn these skills and use them in everyday situations, they build resiliency and overall well-being. A child's social and emotional skills are constantly developing from the early years into adolescence and may develop at different points in time. Both the home and school environments can support a child in learning these essential skills.

The leading organization for social-emotional learning or SEL is the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) which was created in 1994. There are five SEL competencies identified based on research, which can be taught:

- Self-awareness
- Social Awareness
- Self-management
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision making



### What is The Connection Between Social-Emotional Learning and School Success?

Research demonstrates that social-emotional learning impacts on children's and youth's well-being as well as how well they do at school. Those who are able to understand themselves and others, and who can regulate their behaviour are more likely to find the classroom easier to manage, have more friends, and are better able to focus on learning, and therefore, benefit more fully from instruction (Toplak, West and Stanovich, 2013). Studies show that students who are more self-aware and confident about their learning abilities try harder and tend to persist when they are facing challenges (Aronson, 2002). Furthermore, students who display effective problem solving skills and ability to make responsible decisions with their homework and studying, perform better academically (Zins & Elias, 2007). When SEL skills are taught and fostered, students show both immediate and long term gains in academic achievement, and overall well-being.

## How Can You Help Promote Social and Emotional Learning At Home and At School?

Home and school are the most important places for the child's social and emotional learning. As children get older, this learning continues at home and at school, well into adolescence. Here are some strategies to teach the five core competencies of social and emotional learning:

**Self-awareness:** Involves understanding of one's own feelings, goals, and values. It also includes a positive mindset and confidence in your own capabilities to do well. Some useful strategies:

- use different words to describe emotions, use books, role play, and discussions to point out emotions to your child and expand your child's social and emotional vocabulary
- talk about your own emotions and expressing them in a respectful manner
- teach your child or teen to develop a positive mindset and optimism.

**Social awareness:** Involves the ability to understand other people's feelings, empathize and feel compassion for others. It includes awareness of social norms and recognizing that the family and community are the source for support. Some useful strategies:

- model empathy for your child/student by expressing understanding their emotions or point of view
- model being grateful in your relationships with people and teach your child/student to express kindness and gratitude
- share and promote values such as honesty, loyalty, generosity, kindness, and respect for others
- teach the importance of being polite to others by listening while others speak and not interrupting.

**Self-management:** Includes skills which enable a child or youth to regulate their own emotions and behaviour. A young person with well-developed self-management skills is able to delay gratification, control impulses, and switch from a strategy that doesn't work to a better strategy. Some useful strategies:

- teach your child/student strategies to manage stress, such as deep breathing, counting to 10, asking for assistance
- share your own experiences when faced with stressful situations and how you coped with them
- model positive coping strategies
- talk to your child or teen about the step by step process to reach their goals and the importance of patience and perseverance
- compliment your child/student when they delay a pleasant activity and choose to complete a required task first.



**Relationship skills:** Skills that help a child or youth establish and maintain positive relationships. These skills involve communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting social pressure, managing conflicts confidently, and asking for help when needed. Some useful strategies:

- engage in conversations with the child/youth about friendships
- discuss importance of trust in his/her relationships
- practice active listening with your child/student; emphasize eye contact and show interest while listening.

**Responsible decision making:** Involves learning how to make choices about your behaviour and social interactions. The skills involve considering ethical standards, safety concerns, behavioural norms for risky behaviours, the health and

wellbeing of self and others, and making a realistic evaluation of various consequences of your actions. Some useful strategies:

- show your child or teen that you support their decisions
- talk through problems, logical consequences, and resolutions
- teach steps in decision making: identifying a decision, thinking of options, evaluating options, choosing a strategy and checking how it works.

**Spirituality** is an important component of the social and emotional growth for the young person. It provides a moral compass for a young person when using any of the five core social and emotional competencies and assist them in their life.

### Further Readings

For more suggestions on how to support social-emotional growth:

#### References:

- *The Collaborative for Academics, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)
- *Kids Matter* [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)
- *Edutopia* [www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org)
- [www.parenttoolkit.com](http://www.parenttoolkit.com)
- Toplak, M. E., West, R. F., & Stanovich, K. E. (2013). Practitioner review: Do performance based measures and ratings of executive function assess the same construct? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 54(2), 131-143. doi: 10.1111/jcpp.12001
- Zins, J. E., & Elias, M. J. (2007). Social and emotional Learning: Promoting the development of all students. *Journal of Education and Psychological Consultation*, 17(2-3), 233-255. doi: 10.1080/10474410701413152
- Aronson, J. (2002). *Improving academic achievement: Impact of psychological factors on education*. New York: Academic Press.



By: Marci Buhagiar and Ewa Romanski (Psychology Staff)

Chief Psychologist: Dr. Maria Kokai

To read our previous newsletters

<https://www.tcdsb.org/ProgramsServices/SpecialEducation/psychology/newsletters/Pages/default.aspx>

