

Core Belief

In order to be successful in and out of school, students need to learn a set of social and emotional competencies—cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control—and a set of academic competencies—academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors.

Social & Emotional Competencies



Cooperation

Students' ability to establish new relationships, maintain positive relationships and friendships, avoid social isolation, resolve conflicts, accept differences, be a contributing member of the classroom and school community, and work productively and positively with others.



Assertiveness

Students' ability to take initiative, stand up for their ideas without hurting or negating others, seek help, succeed at a challenging task, and recognize their individual self as separate from the circumstances or conditions they're in.



Responsibility

Students' ability to motivate themselves to take action and follow through on expectations; to define a problem, consider the consequences, and choose a positive solution.



Empathy

Students' ability to "see into" (recognize, understand) another's state of mind or emotions and be receptive to new ideas and perspectives; to appreciate and value differences and diversity in others; to have concern for others' welfare, even when it doesn't benefit or may come at a cost to oneself.



Self-Control

Students' ability to recognize and regulate their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors in order to be successful in the moment and remain on a successful trajectory.

Morning Meeting Format

Morning Meeting lasts up to a half hour each day and is made up of four sequential components: greeting, sharing, group activity, and morning message. The components intentionally provide opportunities for students to practice the skills of greeting, listening and responding, group problem-solving, and noticing and anticipating. Daily practice of the four components gradually weaves a web that binds a class together. Although there is much overlap, each component has its own purposes and structure.

- 1 *Greeting*** ■ Students greet each other by name, often including handshaking, singing, movement, and other activities.
- 2 *Sharing*** ■ Students share some news or information about themselves and respond to each other, articulating their thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a positive way.
- 3 *Group Activity*** ■ The whole class does a short, inclusive activity together, reinforcing learning and building class cohesion through active participation.
- 4 *Morning Message*** ■ Students practice academic skills and warm up for the day ahead by reading and discussing a daily note to the class posted by their teacher.

Purposes of Morning Meeting

- Sets a tone for respectful and engaged learning in a climate of trust
- Builds and enhances connections among students and between students and teachers
- Merges academic, social, and emotional learning
- Motivates students by addressing the human need to feel a sense of significance and belonging, and to have fun
- Through the repetition of many ordinary moments of respectful interaction, enables some extraordinary moments

Greeting helps students learn and use each other's names

Knowing someone's name and feeling comfortable using it provides many options for personal connection. It lets us call on each other during a discussion. It is a way we get each other's attention, enabling us to ask a question, request help, offer congratulations, or whisper an apology.

We can't assume that just because students are grouped together they will all learn each other's names. Halfway through the school year, a math teacher from a small regional school, where students from several adjacent towns met for the first time in seventh grade, asked a student to hand a set of papers back to the class. He was surprised to find that she couldn't do it. Why? She couldn't match the names on the papers with the faces of her peers. She simply didn't know all her classmates' names.

A student who doesn't know her classmates well enough to hand them their work is unlikely to feel familiar enough with them to offer her dissenting opinion about a character in a short story, or admit that she doesn't quite get this business of "3 is to 21 as x is to 28," or share a poem she wrote about her grandmother. And what a loss that would be, both for her and for her classmates.

Knowing that others know our name and hearing our name used is also a reminder of our identity, our individuality within a larger whole. Students identify with their school, their class within that school, their athletic teams, and other extracurricular groups they may be part of. They are Pine Street School students, Bluefish swimmers, or Girl Scout Troop #33. While we value feeling a part of larger communities, it's also essential to retain our sense of individuality. Hearing our name lets us know that someone cares about speaking to us as an individual. Our name allows us to claim ownership when we are proud of what we have created, a stamp that lets the world know we exist and that what we have done is important.

Greeting provides practice in offering hospitality

Educator and author Parker Palmer writes, "Hospitality is always an act that benefits the host even more than the guest. The concept of hospitality arose in ancient times when this reciprocity was easier to see: In nomadic cultures, the food and shelter one gave to a stranger yesterday is the food and shelter one hopes to receive from a stranger tomorrow. By offering hospitality, one participates in the endless reweaving of a social fabric on which all can depend" (Palmer, 1998, p. 50).

Welcoming each other to our classroom every day is an act of hospitality. The offering of that welcome, one to another, affirms that we are caretakers of each other in that community. Being a host also implies, builds, and strengthens a person's ownership and investment in that place.

We practice daily the skills of welcoming each other—the clear voice, the friendly smile, the careful remembering that Nicholas likes to be called Nick, the firm handshake. When guests visit and are part of our circle, we extend a welcome to them as well, although it can feel a bit awkward at first. “Should we call him Mike or Mr. DiAngelo?” whispers Andy to his teacher when he notices that his friend Matt’s father is coming to Morning Meeting. “Could you check with him and see which would feel more comfortable?” replies his teacher.

Several important messages are conveyed in this suggestion. First, our culture offers no single right answer to the question of how to address elders. Some parents prefer being called by their first names; others deem it disrespectful. Second, the role of a host is to make the guest feel respected and comfortable. And third, asking a polite and direct question is a fine way to get an answer you need. It is practice in assertiveness seasoned with courtesy, not an easy blend to achieve at any age.

Kindergarten teacher Eileen Mariani related the story of a January morning in her room.

The habit of greeting within the Morning Meeting circle had been well established. On that particular morning it was Isaac’s turn to begin the greeting. Isaac was a shy boy who approached this task with some trepidation. Eileen watched carefully, ready to help if Isaac seemed worried at any point. But, no need, he was doing splendidly.

“Good Morning, Friends” (page 75) was the greeting and it had been clapped and stamped with a nicely modulated glee around the circle, just returning to Isaac, when he glanced up and then stood abruptly, heading for the door. Eileen, whose view of the door was blocked by a bookshelf, also rose to see what was going on. There stood Isaac, framed by the doorway, hand extended to a distinguished-looking visitor who was entering the room with the principal. “Good morning, Mr. . . . uh . . . I’m sorry, what is your name, please?” Isaac proceeded to shake the visitor’s hand before walking gravely back to his place on the rug to continue the meeting.

The months of modeling and practicing, the discussions of “What can you do if you don’t remember someone’s name?” had taken hold and enabled Isaac to extend graceful hospitality and true welcome, not just during Morning Meeting with classmates, but beyond it, even to a stranger at the door.

Highlights of Greeting

- Ensures that every child names and notices others at the outset of the day and is named in return
- Allows the teacher to observe and “take the pulse” of the group that day
- Provides practice in elements of effective communication, such as looking at each other, using a friendly voice and friendly body language, speaking clearly and audibly, listening respectfully, and waiting one’s turn
- Requires students to extend the range of classmates they spontaneously notice and greet
- Helps students to reach across gender, clique, and friendship lines
- Challenges the intellect (when the greeting structure uses math patterns, phrases in various languages, and set making, for example) and provides practice in academic skills

Sharing develops important social and emotional competencies

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified five core groups of social and emotional competencies that children need for success in school and in life. These competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Sharing helps build skills in all of these areas (CASEL, n.d.).

Self-awareness and responsible decision-making

Melanie stands to speak during an open-topic sharing. “My dad and I are going camping this weekend, just the two of us. We’re going to go fishing, which is something we really love to do!”

This upcoming trip is what is most important to Melanie right now. At other times, she might have chosen to share about her interest in roller skating or a movie she had just seen. When the day’s sharing topic is open, students learn about the process of choosing a topic. They practice self-awareness as they reflect on their interests and values.

Self-awareness also comes into play when students respond to a teacher-chosen topic. For example, Salome’s teacher says the topic of the day’s sharing is “someone who shows courage.” Now Salome has to decide: Will she share about her seventy-two-year-old grandmother, always terrified of the water, who is bravely taking beginner’s swimming lessons? Or will she share a story she saw on the evening news about firefighters who rescued three people from an apartment fire?

Students also need to make decisions about the appropriateness of the information they share, discerning between items suitable for the public arena and those that should stay more private. Of course, we don’t assume that students will know how to make these kinds of decisions at the outset of the year; we teach them how to sort and we coach and check in throughout the year.

Self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills

In all sharing formats, sharers and listeners are taking part in a reciprocal relationship of respect and caring. For this to be successful, both parties need to learn how to manage their behaviors and feelings. Sharers need to communicate clearly, and listeners need to listen attentively and respond with insight and empathy. These are complex skills that require ongoing support and teaching.

For example, we ask the class, “What can we do to be respectful when waiting for our turn to talk?” Or we reinforce, “Everyone spoke clearly and used Audience Voices today.” We brainstorm questions that listeners can ask to elicit information and show

curiosity about another's news or views. We generate a list of sentence starters that help listeners focus on the person sharing and demonstrate that they want to understand the sharer's perspective and care about what the sharer is saying. With our careful scaffolding, our guiding hand while they practice, and our feedback, students develop their abilities to compose and deliver their sharing and respond to others' sharing.

Perhaps the most difficult skill to learn in this arena is that of responding effectively to others' sharing.

"I bet you feel really happy that you can get your cast taken off tomorrow."

"What's one special thing you're going to do on your trip to Florida?"

"It sounds like you really liked interviewing your grandpa and writing about him."

These questions and comments, offered by listeners to various students' sharings, say "I paid attention to you; I care about how you feel." They require seeing things from another's perspective, an ability educator Sheldon Berman (1998) calls "the linchpin in the development of social consciousness." Whether the sharing is about something momentous or a more everyday occurrence, responding well requires stepping outside our own vantage point to imagine how another person feels and using constructive words and tones in response to what he or she said.

In a seventh grade classroom, Graham proudly shares that he had an "awesome" visit with his mother over the weekend. Graham's parents are divorced and he sees his mom only occasionally. The class listens intently while he describes his visit with her. His pleasure and excitement are evident in the details he reveals. He ends his sharing with "I'm ready for questions and comments." Slowly, carefully, several hands go up. The first questions ask for more detail.

"You said your mom gave you a present. What was it?"

"What restaurant did you go to?"

As the students get more comfortable, their questions and comments show their understanding—and their empathy.

"Do you miss your mom a lot when she leaves?"

"I think you really like seeing your mom."

"What was the best part for you?"

“I met his mom,” a classmate says. “She’s nice.” Graham’s smile is wide and proud.

This is a simple but rich exchange, filled with expressions of interest and caring.

It doesn’t always go so smoothly, of course. “We got a new puppy this weekend,” shares kindergartner Tessa. “I’m ready for questions and comments.” Hands shoot up around the circle. Tessa calls on Allie.

“I have a dog, too, and this morning he threw up on the rug,” begins Allie, turning the attention away from the sharer onto herself. She takes a breath as she prepares to launch into her tale.

Her teacher takes advantage of the pause. “Tomorrow when it’s your turn to share you can tell us about your dog. Right now, can you think of a question or a comment for Tessa about her news?”

Reminded, Allie certainly can. “I bet you like to play with him,” she says. And sharing is back on track.

GETTING STARTED

Model appropriate behaviors when introducing group activity

Just as with all classroom activities, how a teacher introduces Morning Meeting group activity has a big impact on students' success with it. Explain that this is a time within Morning Meeting when the whole group will do an activity together. In whatever language is appropriate and respectful to the age group, note that it will be important in these activities for each person to take good care of herself or himself, as well as taking care of other people in the group. I've found it works well to begin by saying something like, "The third part of our Morning Meeting each day will be doing an activity together as a whole group. We'll be moving, talking, acting, singing, chanting, or playing a game. As we do all these active things, what will we need to remember to do so that all of us can enjoy this time and learn together?"

After students share some ideas, choose a couple that are important to the activity for the day and model constructive behaviors related to those ideas. Eventually, you'll find it helpful to model the following:

- How to move safely through the circle
- How to keep your body in control
- How to wait for your turn
- What to do if someone makes a mistake
- What voice level to use (for speaking, chanting, and singing)
- What to do if a classmate needs help
- How to help everyone feel included
- How to work with a partner or small group

"Eventually" is a key word here. Opportunities to model activities and discuss how they're going will happen throughout the year. Carefully choose relatively simple, low-risk activities at the outset so that the group experiences success without the need for extensive preparation. Modeling one element at a time, specifically and thoroughly, works better than trying to conduct an exhaustive Grand Tour of constructive activity behaviors.

Also, spend some time thinking about what academic skills the class might need to learn or review for a group activity you're planning, and then teach the skills one at a time so students have a scaffold for achieving success. As the class is ready, you can add variations to the activity or introduce new, more complex activities.

For younger children, consider teaching complex activities over several days. For example, for songs, chants, and poems, start by having children simply echo each line as you read it. On another day, have the class sing or recite the lines chorally without echoing you. Still later, add movements for each line.

For older students, you can often similarly break down complex activities but cover all the steps in the same meeting. For example, the first time students do *What Are You Doing?*, a pantomime activity in which two students at a time interact in the center of the circle, you might model how to move safely into and out of the center, how to do the pantomime, and how to interact respectfully.

Interactive Modeling is an effective way to teach or review skills students need for a group activity. “Today we’re going to play a fast and in-control game of Speed Ball,” Mr. Coughlin tells his first grade class. “I’m going to throw the ball to Willy. Watch and tell me what makes my throw both fast and in control.” He throws the ball low and carefully and Willy catches it easily.

“What did you notice that made that throw both fast and in control?”

“You didn’t wing it at him,” volunteers Zeke.

“That’s right. And where did I aim it?”

“At his belly.”

Mr. Coughlin nods.

“You threw it kind of easy,” offers Claire.

“Why did I do that? Wouldn’t it be faster to throw it hard?”

“No,” maintains Claire. “Because Willy’s not that far away from you and it would probably just bounce off him, or it would go out of the circle and he would have to go get it and then it would really slow things down.”

Aaron’s hand is up. He is a versatile and talented athlete and loves any chance to throw a ball—or talk about it. “If you were throwing at Amy or somebody all the way across the circle, you’d have to throw harder, though.”

“So you noticed,” summarizes Mr. Coughlin, naming specific behaviors with key words that can be quick reminders later, “that I used careful aim and a just-hard-enough throw, depending on whom I’m throwing to.”

He then invites a student volunteer to demonstrate a throw using those behaviors. Finally, Mr. Coughlin has the class practice briefly before beginning the Speed Ball

activity “for real.” The modeling takes only a few minutes, and Mr. Coughlin offers a chance for students to try applying the behaviors right away—an important step in helping students truly absorb new learning.

Model how to handle mistakes

Fourth grade teacher Mr. Roth is determined that his classroom will be one in which making a mistake is fine for any student—during group activity or any other time of day. He conveys this message daily in various ways, from displaying a poster on the wall that says “The only person who doesn’t make a mistake is a person who never does anything” to telling stories from his own everyday life that feature an error in thinking and the learning he gained from it. It is not a message accepted readily by nine-year-olds, who are painfully aware and critical of their own and their peers’ imperfections, so when Mr. Roth introduces a new group activity in which students create equations, he uses modeling to help them learn how to respond when mistakes are made.

“When we do an activity like this, we will sometimes make mistakes,” he says. “It’s important that we notice mistakes in an honest and respectful way so that we can learn from them.”

Earlier he had enlisted Jocelyn, a student for whom math comes easily, to help with today’s modeling. Now he brings her into the lesson: “Today is the fourth. Jocelyn, please make up an equation using the number four that has a mistake in it. I’m going to be a student who catches the mistake. Everyone, watch me and notice how I respond.”

“One hundred divided by twenty is four,” offers Jocelyn, writing it on the chart.

Mr. Roth looks thoughtful for a moment and then slowly puts his hand up. “I think that one hundred divided by twenty is five.”

Breaking out of acting mode, he turns to the class and asks, “What did you notice?”

Kelly responds first: “You didn’t shoot your hand up really fast, like, ‘Ooh, ooh, I see a mistake!’”

“What did I do?” asks Mr. Roth.

“You put it up like normal—it wasn’t a big deal,” Kelly adds, and other students chime in.

“You kept your voice nice and didn’t sound know-it-all.”

“You said what you thought was right, not that Jocelyn was wrong.”

“You didn’t laugh or roll your eyes.”

“What did my face look like?” inquires Mr. Roth.

“You had your regular face on.”

As the modeling ends and flows seamlessly into the activity, Mr. Roth watches for students putting their newly learned skill into action when classmates make mistakes.

Reflecting on the lesson later, he’s pleased that the students recognized the details of what makes for an honest and respectful response to a mistake. He also knows that habits don’t change easily and that in the days and weeks ahead, eyes will roll and hands will wave excitedly at a mistake. And he will remind, redirect, and reinforce—always with the same respect he has asked students to show when they notice others’ mistakes.

Wednesday, Nov. 12, 2014

Dear Friendly Workers,

We have been practicing giving compliments to each other. Today in Writer's Workshop we will be doing peer conferences. What might be something that you could compliment your writing partner about? Write your idea below.



Your teacher, Mrs. Davis

Ideas for working with the message

- Choral read the message.
- Have a brief discussion about compliments. Possible questions:
 - Why do we give compliments?
 - What are some things to remember when giving a compliment to someone?
 - How does it feel to receive a compliment? What might you do when you receive a compliment?

9/25/2014

Welcome, Recyclers, to the Team Recycling Challenge!

We all know how important it is to recycle, right? But did you also know that recycling depends on companies wanting to reuse plastics, paper, and other materials to make new products?

Later today in science, we'll form product development teams. Each team will invent a new product that uses at least one recycled material. What can you do to help your team meet this challenge successfully? Write one idea here.

Give everybody a
turn to speak

Divide up responsibilities

Ideas for working with the message

- Use "Word Turns" (go around circle with each person reading just one word). Challenge the class to work as a group to read it as fluently as possible, as if one person is reading it.
- Invite students to briefly share what recycled products they or their families use.
- Ask students to read aloud their idea and discuss what makes teams successful. Encourage students to add any new ideas they think of to the message throughout the day.

February 5, 2015

Good Morning, Eighth Graders.

I have noticed how invested you all have been in our class discussions about bullying. It really does take all of us working together to make our school safe for everyone.

Last week we had a rich discussion about what actually is bullying behavior. Today we will begin talking about how we can be an ally to someone targeted by bullying. Be thinking about what it might look like and sound like to be an ally, what might be hard about being an ally, and what can help us be an ally even if it's hard. We will begin to share some ideas in meeting today.

Your ally, Mrs. Davis

Ideas for working with the message

- Begin a brief discussion about the meaning of the word "ally" to make sure everyone understands the meaning. For example, you might ask, "What is an ally? Where have you heard this word before?"
- Have students discuss with partners what might be hard about being an ally to a target of bullying and what can help them overcome those challenges. Have a few students share out.

Cultivate the Social and Emotional Benefits of Morning Meeting All Day

- Plan purposefully
- Be transparent
- Model
- Practice
- Reinforce progress

Support Teachers' Growth Using Morning Meeting to Teach Social and Emotional Skills

- Provide training
- Book studies
- Schedule Morning Meeting
- Set the expectation
- Facilitate peer observation



What the Research Says

Two studies conducted by independent evaluators and aligned with the ESSA Tiers of Evidence

1 Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study

University of Virginia's Curry School of Education conducted a major research study which showed that the use of the *Responsive Classroom* approach is associated with higher academic achievement, improved teacher-student interactions, and higher quality instruction.

QUICK LOOK:

- Three-year longitudinal study, 2008–2011
- Principal Investigator: Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman
- Funded by the U.S. Department of Education
- Involved 24 elementary schools in a large mid-Atlantic district
- Schools were assigned randomly to intervention and comparison groups
- Followed 350 teachers and over 2,900 students from grades three to five

For more information, visit www.respondiveclassroom.org/about/research or www.socialdevelopmentlab.org

"The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning"

In 2011, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 school-based, social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. Compared to controls, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance that reflected an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.casel.org/library

2 The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning

The Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, evaluated the economic benefits of social-emotional learning (SEL) by studying six interventions, including the *Responsive Classroom* approach. Researchers found that "improving SEL shows measurable benefits that exceed its costs, often by considerable amounts." Specifically, **for every dollar schools spent on *Responsive Classroom*, there was a return of almost nine dollars per student.**

QUICK LOOK:

- Benefit-cost analysis of six SEL programs, 2015
- Research Team at Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education (Belfield et al.)
- Funded by NoVo Foundation
- Average cost for *Responsive Classroom* per student over three years, grades three to five: \$900
- Benefits, based on standardized gains in math and reading in grade five: \$8,920 or an almost 9:1 return on investment¹
- Programs selected based on evidence of effectiveness, prominence in SEL field, and diversity of students served

For more information, visit www.respondiveclassroom.org/about/research or www.cbcse.org/publications

¹Researchers have used Benefit-Cost Analysis since the 1960s to determine the rate of return on investments in education. This independent Benefit-Cost Analysis by Belfield et al. (2015) found immediate benefits to students during the three years of *Responsive Classroom* (RC) participation as well as post-RC estimated benefits accrued from high school to adulthood through lifetime earnings.

Why does *Responsive Classroom* work?

Our Theory of Change

We know from research and 35 years of educators' self-reports that when teachers consistently use the *Responsive Classroom* approach, behavior problems decrease and students' social and academic skills increase. We also know that teachers feel more efficacious and students feel more engaged in their learning.

But how exactly does this change take place?

Center for Responsive Schools, in collaboration with principal scientist Dr. Herb Turner, is in the process of studying this question and has developed the following theory of change to illustrate the likely impact of the *Responsive Classroom* approach on teacher beliefs and practices and student behavior and outcomes. This research agenda is consistent with the ESSA evidence guidelines.

