

Social-Emotional Learning Newsletter

March 2014 Edition

A NOTE FROM YOUR COACHES: Let's cross our fingers that March brings us more luck with good weather than February did! We understand that the number of snow days has made following the pacing guides nearly impossible. Please adjust this to best meet your students' needs. Remember your SEL coaches are always available to assist with lesson delivery, or pull small groups and provide instruction, so please don't hesitate to ask. We also want to remind those grades that have students taking PSSAs that PATHS or Second Step lessons often offer students a break from academic pressures. Incorporating these lessons during testing days is a great way to promote SEL and give students an outlet to express themselves. Please feel free to email or stop us in the hallway with any questions regarding implementation or ideas for lesson delivery. We are more than happy to help!



How to Promote Decision Making in Your Classroom

By March, students in all grades have been introduced to how to identify problem situations. The next step is to ensure students are able to make **positive** decisions in handling difficult situations. Decision making on the DESSA scale can be identified as; "a child's approach to problem solving that involves learning from others and from her or his previous experiences, using her or his values to guide her or his actions and accepting responsibility for her or his decisions". Here are some **strategies** to promote your students Decision Making:

- Give Students Options:** An easy way to expose them to decision making is to give them options for academic assignments. This can be as simple as offering a choice of different assignments that all meet the same standards (write a paper, or perform a skit) or giving choices over which problems to complete for homework. By providing options for completing assignments, students will learn how to identify which option is best for them, as well as feel the independence of being able to make a choice.
- Advice Columnist:** This can be done using a guided reading, novel study, or independent reading book where a character is having a problem. In younger grades teachers might identify the problem for students. Older students can identify the problem a specific character is having and then ask students to write a letter giving that character advice on how to solve the problem and explain why their solution would work. This is much like "Dear Problem Solvers" used in some PATHS lessons, but ties in social-emotional concepts to academic content.
- Role Model:** Ask students to identify a positive role model in their lives. Then, have them write a letter to this person explaining why they are their role model. By identifying the positive traits that they want to uphold, students gain experience in understanding what they value and how this guides their actions.

PATHS and Second Step Lessons lend themselves easily to language skills such as reading and writing. Younger grades can use the same ideas but incorporate drawing to allow students to express their ideas!



Devereux
CENTER FOR RESILIENT CHILDREN

Strategies to Encourage Self-Management with Your Students

An overall theme of PATHS and Second Step is to help students manage their feelings and actions in positive ways. When students can control their own emotions and behaviors, it allows them to maintain attention, complete tasks, or handle a difficult situation. We need to support students to do this independently so they are applying strategies to real world situations. Here are ***some tips*** for ways to promote this in your classroom:

- **Self-Monitoring:** Students should be able to identify when they are using appropriate or inappropriate behaviors. Here is a [link](#) that has a variety of options, [Self-Monitoring Tips](#). A simple way to help students monitor their own behavior is to have students rate themselves for behavior in the morning and in the afternoon. This is a strategy you may only use with select students who have daily problems with Self-Management. Primary grades might use a smiley face rating system, using a happy, sad, and straight face to rate their behavior. Intermediate grades can use a number scale 1-5, 1=using no inappropriate behaviors and 5=many inappropriate behaviors. Students can chart their own behavior each day for both morning and afternoon. At the end of the week, check-in with the student to reflect on the chart. The goal is for students to identify their own behaviors and take ownership in making better choices.
- **Check-List Systems:** Some students have trouble completing tasks because they may be overwhelmed by too much information being presented at one time. Try breaking down tasks for these students in a step by step checklist. Primary students may need a pre-made checklist with each step needed to complete a task, but intermediate grades can be encouraged to write their own checklist as the teacher is giving directions for an assignment. This may help students manage their behavior and emotions because they can read and physically check off when a step is completed.
- **Promote Calming Down Techniques:** Don't forget both Second Step and PATHS curriculums offer their own strategies that help students learn how to calm down when having an uncomfortable feeling. Teachers should refer to these when addressing problem behaviors so students can learn to utilize them when needed.

Cooperation	
Color in the face that best describes how well you cooperated in PE.	
I behaved well.	
I was nice to classmates.	
I helped my group members.	
I did not get bossy.	
I shared things with all group members.	
I worked well with other students.	
I tried hard to finish.	
I didn't waste time.	

Here is another form that can be used for students to self-monitor their behaviors. For more information on self-monitoring check out this site: [Self-Monitoring Tips](#)

Principal's Corner

PSSA time can be stressful for both students and staff. Principals, here are some strategies to promote resilience in your students and staff during this time:

Relaxation Tip of the Day: Offer a relaxation tip of the day for staff and students to help them feel calm each morning prior to the beginning of testing. This might be an activity for classes to try together or a breathing technique to try when they feel overwhelmed with testing.

Positive Messages: Post positive messages in the hallway or in classrooms. Students love knowing they received a personal message from the principal and this will help get students motivated before and during testing.