

# Social Emotional Learning Newsletter

November 2013 Edition

**A NOTE FROM YOUR COACHES:** Happy Fall everyone! We, Becky Guzie and Elissa Sewell, are returning as your PATHS coaches this school year and are excited for another year of great work with Social Emotional Learning in the Allentown School District. From what we've seen so far the SEL initiative has really taken off! We will continue doing newsletters again this school year, but will be shifting the focus from PATHS Newsletters to a more general Social Emotional Newsletter in hopes that some of these tips and strategies will help you generalize SEL throughout the school day. We will focus each newsletter on a specific scale from the DESSA and DECA along with specific strategies that lend themselves to the PATHS or Second Step curricula. We'd also like to remind you that our availability to help you is more flexible this year and we'd like to help wherever needed. This may include leading small group lessons, working with individual students or helping with grade level meetings. We look forward to another wonderful school year!



## How to Foster Self-Awareness in the Classroom

Self-awareness is defined as a child's realistic understanding of her/his strengths and challenges and consistent desire for self-improvement. As educators we want to support students in becoming self-aware so they are able to make choices based on their own feelings and emotions. Here are some strategies to try in your classroom:

- **Feelings Check-In:** Conduct a feelings check-in 3-4 times a day to give students a chance to reflect on how they are feeling at that time and why. Explicitly having students recognize their feelings will help build their own understanding of Self-Awareness. Elementary teachers can ask students to use their Feeling Faces or the Feeling Poster to identify different feelings.
- **All About Me Collage:** Use pictures, words, or symbols clipped from magazines that represent things students own, enjoy doing, places they've been, people they admire, or careers they desire. Students create a collage to represent themselves that can be displayed in the classroom.
- **Ranking Traits:** Have students write 10 traits (positive or negative) on separate strips of paper about themselves. Ask students to rank the traits from what they feel is most important to least. After students have ranked, they can write a reflection about why these traits are important to who they are.
- **Journaling:** Many teachers use journals daily to give students the chance to write in a less structured format. Periodically have students go back through and reread their old entries. In small groups, have students reflect on what they learned from their old entries.

Feelings Check-In can be done on a cut-out thermometer for students to recognize the intensity of their feelings throughout the day. The thermometer can be used in conjunction with Feelings Faces or Posters for PATHS classrooms.

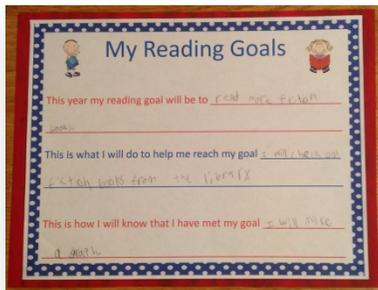


One way to create an All About Me Collage: cut out silhouette of students' heads and ask them to fill with items that describe who they are.

## How to Foster Initiative in the Classroom

Student initiative describes how persistent a student is in completing a task and the motivation students show when reaching a goal. Promoting initiative in students is crucial in creating internally motivated individuals. Try some of these strategies in your classroom if you notice student(s) struggling with developing this concept:

- **Make Goals:** Ask students to write goals they wish to accomplish this school year on slips of paper. These can be school or home oriented such as improving their handwriting, or remembering to make their bed every morning. Give each student a baggy to keep goals in for the year. Have students pick out one goal randomly from the baggy. This will be the goal they work towards for the month. Have a weekly check in to see what progress students are making and what adjustments they could make. At the end of the month have students write a reflection on how working towards this goal went. If they accomplished their goal they can select another from the baggy, or continue working towards it if it has not been met.
- **Model:** What better way for students to learn initiative than watching their teacher show positive initiative? When something is difficult for you, model how you handle the situation, how you don't give up, and how you find a different solution when your first one doesn't work. Students love to see how others handle situations that might frustrate them. When students face a problem, or a difficult task, guide them through with encouraging phrases, such as "don't give up, let's try another way!"
- **Let the Students Be the Teacher:** Let your students teach the class how to do something. Students love to be in charge and this experience will foster their self-confidence. Each student can pick a different task, and explain to peers how to do it. This also supports positive relationships within your classroom.



Students can also make goals for each subject area and focus on one each quarter to make goal setting more intentional and to drive student initiative.

### Extending Social-Emotional Learning from School to Home

As teachers you promote the use of SEL skills throughout the school day but what happens when your students head home after the school day is over? Many of these skills are ones that students can easily carry over and even share with parents or other siblings. During parent teacher conferences you may want to share with families what PATHS and Second Step are and what our SEL Initiative is focusing on in Allentown. Helping point out these SEL concepts can be a helpful reminder for parents of how to guide problem solving at home. An additional activity you can try is:

#### Family Feelings Interview

Ask students to pick one or two family members to "interview" about their day. Students should focus on how they felt at different times and why that family member felt that way. Pictures can be used for younger students. This gives students a chance to practice communicating with their families, as well as for families and students to reflect how our feelings can change throughout the day. Students can share their interviews with the class or a partner the next day.

### Principals Corner

Here are some pointers to check if you are promoting an SEL school:

- Refer to PATHS or Second Step during your morning announcements
- Have appropriate PATHS or Second Step posters displayed in your office that you can reference when students are sent to you with a problem
- Use the "My Problem Page" with students who are facing a problem
- Encourage staff to consistently use PATHS or Second Step language in hallways, classroom, office, and cafeteria
- For elementary schools have a set of Feeling Faces in your desk for students to use
- Observe PATHS or Second Step lessons and provide feedback to students and teachers