

Social-Emotional Learning : What is it?

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is defined as “the process through which children, youth, 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” (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2015). The New York State Department of Education has recognized the importance of SEL as an integral component of student success by outlining a set of SEL-specific benchmarks for students in preschool through twelfth grade (NYSED, 2018). The Bethpage School District prioritizes student’s mental health and, through the implementation of SEL, cultivates an environment for student success in academics and beyond.

Social-Emotional Learning in Bethpage Schools

Within the Bethpage School District, we incorporate various approaches to SEL. In all of our elementary schools, we utilize the Zones of Regulation curriculum. Further, for students in K-5, we implement the Second-Step program. At JFK Middle school, a variety of different social-emotional learning lessons are taught to students. District-wide, we incorporate Mindfulness principles throughout all grade levels, and encourage the Responsive Classroom approach to teaching and learning.

Zones of Regulation

District mental health professionals teach Zones of Regulation lessons to all students in K-5 on a monthly basis. The Zones of Regulation is a curriculum that helps children to better understand and regulate their emotions. Through a color-coded visual system corresponding with common traffic symbols/colors, students are taught to identify their emotions as they relate to the four different “zones.” This curriculum creates a common language for students to communicate how they feel. Further, this curriculum educates students on ways to identify when those around them are in different zones, how different situations/events can cause them to move from one zone to another, and different techniques to either calm or alert themselves. This curriculum emphasizes that no zone is “bad” and that it is

OK to feel different emotions. The goal in utilizing this curriculum is to foster self-regulation amongst students.

- A sample K-2 lesson plan can be found here: [Zones of Regulation K-2](#)
- A sample K-1 lesson plan can be found here [Feeling Worried K-1](#)
- A sample 3-5 lesson plan can be found here: [Zones of Regulation 3-5](#)

For more information, please reach out to your school principal.

Second Step

From kindergarten through fifth grade, classroom teachers in our district utilize the evidence-based Second Step curriculum. This multifaceted program offers skills-based lessons on social problem solving through engaging games, stories and songs. The program additionally incorporates lessons on impulse control in order to encourage socially appropriate behaviors. Further, the Second Step program encompasses empathy training to help students to be more aware of the emotions of others. Lastly, similar to the Zones of Regulation program, the Second Step curriculum includes coping skills training and teaches students ways to calm down when emotionally distressed.

- A sample 1st grade lesson plan for Second Step can be found here: [Feeling Frustrated Lesson](#)
- A sample 3rd grade lesson plan can be found here: [Asking Questions](#)
- A sample 5th grade level plan can be found here: [When? Where? Who?](#)

For more information, please reach out to your school principal.

Mindfulness

As a district, we encourage the practice of mindfulness amongst students and staff members in order to promote mental well-being. We utilize the Calm App throughout our district as a method for providing students and staff with mindfulness-based relaxation exercises. Further, mindful morning practices are offered to staff. Mindfulness is described as “awareness that rises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zin, 1994, p. 4).

Incorporating mindfulness can have benefits for both children and adults such as reduced stress levels, increased focus and levels of working memory, decreased emotional reactivity, and encourages cognitive flexibility.

Responsive Classroom

Throughout the Bethpage School District, use of the Responsive Classroom approach is encouraged through training offered to faculty and staff. Responsive Classroom is an approach to teaching based on the belief that integrating academic and social-emotional skills creates an environment where students can do their best learning. Responsive classroom is an evidence-based framework for teaching and discipline that promotes engaging academics, a sense of positive community, effective management, and developmentally responsive teaching. Students participate in morning meetings and/or closing circles with their teachers and classmates to foster a sense of community and cooperation in the classroom. The Responsive Classroom framework recognizes the power of teacher language and offers specific language strategies for various areas of teaching. In the Responsive Classroom approach, positive adult language is language that's direct, brief, and focused clearly on specific actions that help children meet academic and behavior expectations and thrive as valued members of a learning community. Examples of positive adult language include reinforcing language, reminding language, and redirecting language. For more information, please speak to your building principal.