



Dear Ridgefield Educators,

With the spread of COVID-19, social distancing, and school closures, our routines and sense of stability have been disrupted, making social-emotional learning (SEL) more important than ever before. The following information has been adapted from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Committee for Children (Second Step), and Teaching Tolerance, and provides several ways that educators may choose to provide a trauma informed approach during remote social emotional learning with a focus on instilling safety, connection, and hope.

- **Greet** students by name and create a virtual routine (similar to a handshake, a hug, or a high five) to invite connection
- Have students take turns creating a picture/image and sharing it with teacher to use as the virtual background in meetings (when possible), or create other fun and engaging backgrounds
- Engage in a quick **mindfulness or self-calming** exercise such as smelling a flower or completing four-corner breathing prior to completing the lesson. Four-corner breathing simply involves inhaling deeply and exhaling deeply four times. Students can complete this breathing exercise by standing up and taking one inhale and exhale breath while facing each of the four corners in a room. Consider the option to display virtually one of the mindful exercises and have students do the exercise together
- Conduct a virtual **community circle** prior to other instruction; circles could include:
 - share one tough moment and one hopeful moment of the day
 - share one new lesson they learned about themselves during the day
 - focus on gratitude and encourage students to write one thing they appreciate about classmates
 - share one strategy they are using to stay hopeful
 - share one strategy they are using to stay connected with others
 - identify one fun thing they can do at home that helps them feel calm or happy
 - write down the names of two or three people that they can reach out to for support either in person in their homes, or via their phones or online
 - identify acts of kindness or support they can offer each other or their family while they are at home
- **Second Step lessons**

Although many teachers K-8 have completed all the lessons in the Second Step units, now is an important time to review and reinforce the Empathy and Emotion Management units, focusing on supporting students to understand and manage their emotions and anxiety as it relates to COVID 19 and not being in school currently. To help support social emotional learning at home, for the week of April 6th, families will receive a SEL

resource guide focused on these Second Step skills. This SEL resource guide is a self-paced resource divided into five sections, focusing on five primary SEL skills to support our students during this time. These SEL skills include:

- emotion management
- calming down
- managing anxious feelings
- empathy and showing compassion for others
- seeking help

The intent of the SEL resource guide is not to necessarily teach any new SEL skills but to review and reinforce those skills students have already learned and ones that they and their families may be needing the most right now. The letter to families will be sent via Skyward the morning of April 6th. Families will receive a letter explaining the SEL resource guide and a link to access this guide. For grades K-5, the SEL resource guide will provide families access to the Second Step videos, songs, and activity handouts and home links, as well as other supporting SEL documents to reinforce these skills. For grades 6-12, the SEL resource guide will have embedded links focusing on these five skills, as well as other supporting SEL documents. Staff in each building will also receive the parent letter on Monday morning so you will have full access to see what families are receiving and reviewing with their child.

The importance of **empathy and kindness**...

Support students in how to identify what others are feeling and to show their care and concern with acts of kindness. Have students reflect on how being at home because of COVID-19 is a kind and helpful act.

- Remind students that others can have the same or different feelings about being at home, or about the pandemic (perspective taking)
- Have students reflect on how it feels when someone else has empathy for them—when another person feels and understands how they feel
- Have students identify acts of kindness or support that would feel helpful to them as individuals during this time
- Have students identify acts of kindness or support they can offer each other and their families while they are at home

The importance of **educator self-care**...

- Practice self-kindness, and remember that it is best to take care of yourself before you try to take care of anyone else
- Take time to check in with yourself to gain insight into where you may be struggling. Once you identify the issues, work to create a plan to address the issues you can control and to work on letting go of the ones you cannot.
- Utilize social supports as needed. Consider planning a virtual coffee break or lunch hour with colleagues or other educators via Zoom, where you might share strategies that are or are not working, talk about what you're cooking or watching on Netflix, and experience a much-needed sense of community
- Create a routine that includes getting up at a regular time, getting ready and dressed for the day, a work schedule, some way to move your body and some breaks to connect to others.
- Remember that, as adults, we are the best predictors of how our students and children are doing; they are watching and listening to us. When we take care of ourselves, we are showing them how they can take care of themselves, too.