

# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN A VIRTUAL WORLD



**Amy Reyes, MBA**

**Early Learning Specialist**

**Wyoming Department of Education**

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If only I knew  
then what I  
know now!



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Children's social and emotional health affects their overall development and learning. Research indicates that children who are mentally healthy tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, more eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than less mentally healthy peers.



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

- Children who exhibit social and emotional difficulties tend to have trouble following directions and participating in learning activities. Compared with healthier peers, they may be more likely to suffer rejection by classmates, have low self-esteem, do poorly in school, and be suspended. Thus, children's social and emotional health is just as important as their physical health, affects their capacity to develop and potential to lead a fulfilling life.



# EARLY LEARNING

- Early Learning is a critical component of a child's education. Research has linked early intervention with both cognitive and social emotional gains since the early 20th century, and clearly shows that children enrolled in a form of early learning programs benefit by receiving an education before kindergarten.



# STUDIES SHOW THAT CHILDREN ENROLLED IN PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS SHOWCASE THE FOLLOWING BENEFITS

- Better behavioral patterns
- Higher IQ scores when enrolling in kindergarten
- Faster learning
- Higher socio-economic outcomes later in life
- Between 1.3% to 3.5% higher income over the course of their careers



# PLAYING CATCH UP

- Studies show that children that are behind when they enter kindergarten tend to remain behind for their entire educational career, and even beyond. These gaps in achievement are difficult and expensive to close with K-12 education alone, and the improved earnings show that early intervention is an intelligent investment.
- The overwhelming evidence shows that children who enter kindergarten behind are likely to remain behind throughout their educational careers and beyond. These gaps in achievement are difficult and expensive to close with K-12 education alone. We can help ensure children show up to kindergarten ready to learn by providing our youngest learners with options to access high-quality early childhood programs from ages zero to five—where they can develop the full range of skills necessary to be successful in school and life.

# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- SEL helps students understand their thoughts and emotions and how to express and feel these emotions. While SEL can increase self-awareness, it can also help individuals show more empathy toward others because they're better able to understand what another individual may be feeling. Social emotional learning can help to improve a student's attitude toward school and other individuals. It can also lead to reduced depression and stress, which can ultimately increase self-esteem and boost performance in school.
- In our diverse world, it's becoming increasingly important to incorporate SEL into the curriculum. The good news for educators is that social emotional learning does not need to be a single designated subject like math or science. Teachers can leverage SEL strategies to promote learning in everyday classroom activities.
- Here are some ways teachers can connect with students and incorporate SEL in the classroom in a remote and in-person environment;

# TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

- Children who have trusting relationships with their teachers are, on average, more willing to ask questions, solve problems, try new tasks, and express their thinking than their peers without such relationships.
- Young children develop and learn in the context of relationships. A trusting and caring teacher, child relationship is essential for children's optimum development.



# SOCIAL BENEFITS

- Children benefit socially, emotionally, and academically when teachers intentionally create close, trusting relationships but gaining the trust of every child is not as simple as being nice and engaging.
- How can teachers create trusting relationships with all of the children? Remember consistently offering warmth, affection, respect, and genuine care is essential.



# WARMTH AND AFFECTION

- Warmth and affection, even on bad days and when children are misbehaving are critical to children's well-being in early education settings. They contribute to developing secure relationships between children and adults, provide models of gentle behavior, and are linked with children's ability to interact positively with peers.



# HOW TO INCORPORATE SEL IN THE CLASSROOM EVEN VIRTUALLY

There are many simple, creative ways to encourage social emotional learning in the classroom. While some lessons and subjects may lend themselves better to this type of learning than others, try some of these activities with your students to see which ones they respond to best.

## **Emotional Check-In for Students**

- Start or end the school day with an SEL check-in. Ask each student how he or she feels. Visual aids that depict various emotions may help younger kids articulate their feelings. Make sure to follow up with any students who express negative emotions like anger, frustration, or sadness.
- It's important to gauge each student's comfort level during these check-ins. If it seems certain students are reluctant to share, you may want to have one-on-one check-ins throughout the day instead doing this in a group setting.

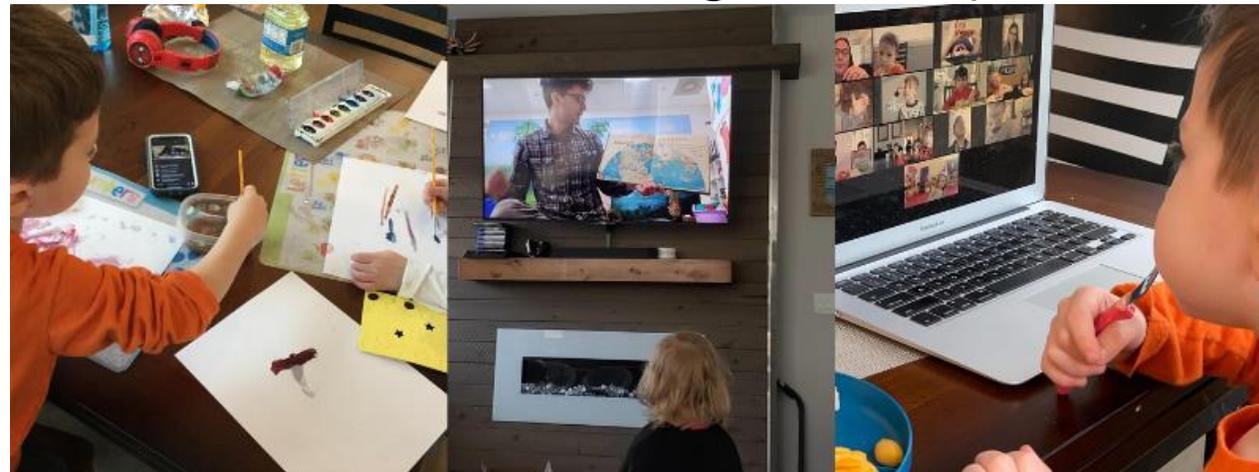
## **Incorporate SEL Into Story Time**

- Whether you're reading aloud to the class or your students read on their own, you can turn story time into a lesson in SEL. Ask the students to describe what happened to the protagonist or another character and how they think this character feels based on their circumstances. You can also delve a little deeper and ask students to put themselves in the character's shoes and think about how they would feel in a similar situation.

**As an added bonus, you'll be able to make sure the students are able to comprehend what they're reading.**

# VIRTUAL CHECK INS

- With social distancing, it's more imperative than ever to check in regularly with your students. Whether it's touching base on how they're feeling emotionally or getting a gauge on how they're adapting to their new learning environment, try to schedule recurring time to connect with your students.
- You may also want to set aside some time to connect with parents who can provide some insight into how their child is doing with stay-at-home measures and remote learning.



# SHOWING RESPECT

- Showing respect is a key way to connect with children and strengthen positive relationships. It helps children feel more confident and competent to explore and learn
- Listens with full attention and restates what children say (often also seizing the opportunity to expose the children to new vocabulary). Jason, a 4-year-old, says, “Look, I made a truck with lots of Legos!” Ms. Carnes replies, “Oh, I see, Jason. You built a truck with dozens of Legos.” Jason adds, “I use this truck to deliver apples and bananas to the grocery store.” Ms. Carnes responds, “Using a truck to deliver nutritious fruits to the grocery store is helpful.” Listening to children attentively and reflectively enhances their self-worth and confidence. When teachers actively listen to children, they convey that they care about what the children have to say, and the children are more likely to share their thoughts, ideas, feelings, and stories.

# REFLECTING

- Reflects children's feelings-

Frowning, Jasper says to the teacher, "Michael has all the big blocks!" Ms. Carnes responds, "Jasper, you seem upset that there are no more large blocks to build with right now. It is difficult to wait!" Amy says with enthusiasm, "We are about to go outside!" Ms. Carnes answers, "The sparkles in your eyes tell me you can hardly wait to go outside. You are excited." When they accept and reflect children's feelings, teachers exhibit sensitivity and caring in a way children understand. Teachers' acknowledgments make children feel heard and accepted. As a result, children feel safe to express their emotions and receive support in identifying, labeling, and better understanding their emotions.

# QUALITY TIME

- Spends private, quality time with individual children through one-on-one activities, such as story reading and game playing.

Emily is sad when her mom leaves. Ms. Carnes reads her a book in a cozy corner with soft pillows and stuffed animals. Afterward, Emily is ready to explore and play in the classroom. Judy complains that no one wants to play with her at the tactile table. Ms. Carnes sits at the table and plays with Judy until another child joins the play. In addition, Ms. Carnes spends quality time with individual children by putting aside other work, moving to the child's level, and conversing openly with the child. Ms. Carnes keeps track to ensure that she speaks with each child regularly, which deepens their relationship and builds trust. Ms. Carnes finds time for these conversations throughout the day, especially during greeting, free play, snack, lunch, and departure time.

# TEACHING WITH INTENTION

- Helping children develop social and emotional skills is the heart and soul of any good program for young children. Teachers (and all caregivers) play key roles in helping children develop social and emotional competence. Teachers can intentionally support children's social and emotional health by using children's books, planning activities, coaching on the spot, giving effective praise, modeling appropriate behaviors, and providing cues.
- Remember that warmth and affection, even on bad days and when children are misbehaving are critical to children's well-being in early education.



"The more that you  
read, the more things  
you will know. The  
more that you learn,  
the more places you'll  
go." -Dr Seuss

# COACHING ON THE SPOT

- When you coach children on the spot, teachers help children realize what they are doing, understand how their actions affect others, and choose positive alternatives.

For example, when Ryan and Ethan build a firehouse in the block area, Ethan grabs the fire truck from Ryan, and Ryan cries. Ms. Coz crouches down at Ethan's level to look into his eyes; calmly and warmly, she says, "Ryan was still using the truck. When you took it away from him, he got upset. What could you do to make Ryan feel better?" After Ethan says he is sorry and gives back the fire truck, Ms. Coz says, "Next time if you want to play with the toy Ryan is using, could you ask if he will share?" Ms. Coz follows up by observing Ethan and providing immediate positive feedback on his desirable behavior.

# MODELING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

- Children learn by observing other people, getting ideas about how new behaviors are formed, and using the ideas to guide their actions. Many studies have found that modeling or demonstrating appropriate behaviors that teach and enhance children's social and emotional skills.
- This research-based conclusion is evidenced in Ms. Coz's and Ms. Carnes's classes. Both teachers implement several noninvasive strategies, including modeling that their center administrators created to support teachers in promoting socially and emotionally healthy behaviors.



# EFFECTIVE PRAISE

Meaningful feedback is pertinent to the task at hand in the form of effective praise is a powerful strategy for fostering children's social and emotional development.

- To make praise effective, teachers describe specifically what they see without generalizing, evaluating, or making comparisons. When Emily finishes her drawing, Ms. Coz notices her picture and her smile. Ms. Coz says, "I see a blue sky, a yellow sun, and green grass around the big brown tree. This picture makes you happy, doesn't it?" This praise is effective because Ms. Coz offers detailed, positive comments immediately after desirable behavior occurs. Noticing Ethan asking Ryan politely for a policewoman figure, Ms. Coz says, "Ethan, you used the magic words *May I please?* to ask for that policewoman while you and Ryan were building the firehouse together. Great job!" Smiling, Ethan responds, "We are friends and we can share things."

# MODELING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL BEHAVIOR

- In addition to being role models, teachers use the child's appropriate behaviors to model social and emotional skills.
- They carefully observe and record details about how children apply the target skills, and they share their observations with the children through puppet shows during circle time.



# PROVIDING CUES

Providing cues to engage children in appropriate social behavior has been shown over time to improve their social behavior with their peers.

- Ms. Coz and Ms. Carnes often provide verbal cues to help some children participate in activities. Before playtime, for example, Ms. Carnes asks, “James, who are you going to ask to play with you at center time?” During playtime, she suggests, “Logan, can you ask Anna to build an airplane with you?” To teach sharing and turn taking, Ms. Coz asks Steven, who has been waiting to play with a toy dolphin for a while, “What magic words could you use to have a turn with the dolphin John is using?”



# CONCLUSION

- Teachers and caregivers promote children's social and emotional health by establishing trusting relationships. These are created when teachers express warmth, affection, and respect.
- Teachers can intentionally teach and enhance these skills using evidence based strategies to teach, model, and reinforce positive behaviors. Teachers who prioritize developing children's social and emotional health are richly rewarded with happy, engaged children who learn to avoid and resolve conflicts, share and take turns, and express their emotions in productive ways.



# QUESTIONS

Amy Reyes, MBA

Early Learning Specialist

GEERS Program Manager

TANF, ECCG, and ECCPG Preschool Grants Administrator

Wyoming Department of Education

[amy.reyes@wyo.gov](mailto:amy.reyes@wyo.gov)

307-777-7708

"In times of stress, the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."

-Mr. Rogers