

Talking with Your Student About the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Screener

This guide will help you prepare for a conversation with your student about the results of the [SEL Screener](#). You are your student's first teacher and an important partner to schools. Together we work to build the social and emotional skills our students need to be successful in the classroom and beyond.

Students participate in the screener twice per school year to reflect on their own SEL skills and how well their school community helps them feel valued, included and supported. The results are based on your student's experiences and feelings at *a particular moment in time*. It is not a stand alone assessment. The SEL screener provides another source of information, in addition to what you already know about your student. You may be in touch with your child's school to partner on next steps as needed. Schools can help support the growth of SEL skills and wellness for all students.

Starting a conversation: All students have different learning strengths and areas of need. Consider how your student learns best as you plan to talk about the results.

- Start with a strength on the report or one you notice at home
- Ask questions about their school experiences or how their school supports them in an area or two
- Use pictures, symbols or words that your student is familiar with to support understanding (Ex: Let your child pick from emojis that show feelings. Let your child point to pictures of friends or adults they trust.)
- Offer choices if needed (Ex: Did you feel happy or sad? Were you mad or were you frustrated?)
- Use examples from books, movies or personal experiences to discuss new ideas

Topic-Based Conversations & Skill Building Strategies: The SEL Screener includes six topics for students in grades 3-5 and seven topics for students in grades 6-12. Below are some ideas for talking about the skills in each topic and ways to continue to support skills at home.

Self-Management & Responsible Decision-Making: How well my school and community help me ... form decisions that help me to be successful at my goals, cope with my thoughts and feelings, and behave in ways that help me manage different situations successfully

For younger students:

- Ask, "What helps you get work done at school?"
- Ask, "How can you or other kids be polite to others?"
- Set up routines for daily activities. Consider adding pictures for younger kids.
- Provide opportunities for everyday choice making. For example, picking an activity during family time, a book, or an outfit. Model your decision making process.

For older students:

- Ask your student, "What helps you stay focused when you're working?"
- Ask, "When have you handled a challenging problem?" "How did you make your decision?"
- Create family goals. Set a goal for the end of the week and another for the end of the month or year. Write down the steps needed to achieve the goal. Reflect on your progress together.
- Share examples of real life problem solving. Share a problem you have had and solutions you considered and why you choose the solution over others.

Belonging: How well my school and community help me...feel that I am a valued member of my school community

For younger students:

- Ask your student, "Who are your friends?", "Who did you play with today?", or "Who makes you feel happy? loved? safe?"
- Ask, "Is there someone at school who can help you when you need it?"
- Playing with others fosters a sense of belonging and connection. Encourage your child to join playdates, team sports or other activities with children their age.

For older students:

- Ask your student about their connections with others at school and in the community. Ask, "What do you value in your connections with others?"
- Ask "Who are the people at school that you enjoy spending time with?"
- Spend time with your student doing something they enjoy or learn something new together.

Supportive Relationships: How well my school and community help me...feel supported in my relationships with my peers and teachers

For younger students:

- Talk about what makes a good friend. Point out examples of healthy relationship skills in real life, books or television.
- Ask your student which adults they can ask for help when they are at school and/or in the community.

For older students:

- Ask your student, "Who can you ask for help? " or "Who is in your support system?"
- Take time to check in as a family. Sharing daily highs and lows is a quick and meaningful way to connect even when schedules are busy.

Social Awareness & Relationship Skills: How well my school and community help me... understand the viewpoints of others and consider how people with different experiences than me, or in different situations than me, might feel; build and keep strong and healthy relationships with adults and peers; know how to "agree or disagree"

For younger students:

- Ask, "What do you like most about working with others at school?" "What is hard or challenging about working with others? Working in a group?"
- Use real life opportunities for perspective-taking. For example, when in the community or when watching a movie, talk about what others might be feeling or thinking.

For older students:

- Ask, "What qualities does a good relationship with friends or adults have? What strengths do you bring to relationships with others?"

- Ask, “What does it mean to care for someone else?” “How can you show someone you care about them?” “How can others show you they care?”

Emotion Regulation: How well my school and community help me...respond to a variety of emotions in a productive way

For younger students:

- Ask, “What does your body feel like when you are sad, frustrated, or mad?”
- Ask, “What do you do to feel better when you are sad, frustrated, or mad (at home, at school, when you’re somewhere else, etc.)?”
- Read books and discuss what the characters do when they feel different emotions.
- Tell and show your student what you do to feel better in the moment (e.g., “I’m feeling frustrated so I’m going to take a few deep breaths.”)

For older students:

- Ask, “What helps you feel better when you are overwhelmed or angry?”
- Ask, “Can you think of a time you were able to stay calm when things felt overwhelming?”
- Share what you do to manage stress as an adult or what helped when you were a kid (e.g., exercise, listening to music, talking with someone).

When watching a movie or TV, discuss how the characters responded to stressful situations. Talk about what they did that worked well and what they might do differently.

Cultural Awareness and Action (grades 6-12 only): How well my school and community help me learn about, discuss, and confront issues of race, ethnicity, and culture with my peers in school

For older students (grades 6-12 only):

- Ask, “What opportunities do you have to learn about and honor the experiences of people from different races, ethnicities, and cultures (Ex: books about people from many different backgrounds, heritage and international day celebrations)? How did those opportunities help you to better understand the experiences of others?”
- Ask, “Has there been a time when you felt uncomfortable in your school because of your race, ethnicity, or culture? What caused you to feel this way? Who could you discuss this with at school? At home?”
- Ask, “Has there been a time when you felt comfortable talking with other students about your race, ethnicity, or culture? What made you feel comfortable enough to share?”

Encourage your student and family to learn more about others by exposing them to a variety of experiences, such as:

- Cooking foods from another culture
- Reading books, watching television programs/documentaries, visiting museums, and attending cultural events
- Talking with and learning more about peers of different races or cultures
- Talking openly about your thoughts and experiences as a family

Challenging Feelings: How often I feel...challenging emotions like worry or sadness

For younger students:

- Describe how emotions might feel in your body and show in your facial expressions. For example, “When I’m happy, I smile and sometimes I laugh. When I’m mad, my heart beats fast and my face feels hot.”
- Ask your student, “What makes you feel happy, calm, sad or frustrated?” or “How do you let others know what you are feeling?”
- Consider asking, “Who can you go to for help when you need it (at home, at school, in our neighborhood etc.)?”

For older students:

- Allow for space and time to share experiences and feelings. Acknowledge your student’s experience and feelings in a situation.
- Ask, “How do you know when you need help? Who can you ask for support (at home, at school, in our neighborhood etc.)?”
- Ask: “What strategies have you used to cope with hard feelings?” Consider sharing what has worked for you as an adult.

Additional Resources and Supports

For more information about Social Emotional Learning in FCPS check out the [SEL in FCPS website](#).

All schools have school-based mental health staff who can support your child. Please contact your school’s social worker, school psychologist, or school counselor if you have questions about the screener. If you have concerns about your student’s safety and/or believe that they are in crisis, immediate support is available. Please use the emergency resources below.

[Mental Health and Emergency Services Information](#)

- Call **911** in case of a life threatening emergency; TTY dial 711
- **CrisisLink Regional Hotline:** 703-527-4077 CrisisLink is a hotline for individuals in crisis or family/friends seeking guidance for how to help a loved one.
- Crisis Text: Text NEEDHELP to 85511