14 Social-Emotional Learning Interventions
for School and District Teams

About This Resource

This resource includes a set of social-emotional learning (SEL) intervention ideas to help district and school teams meet the social and emotional needs of each and every student.

These low-lift, actionable strategies are designed to build relationships, students' sense of belonging, and a positive emotional climate in school communities.

This resource is perfect for:

- **District Leaders:** Explore ways to improve your district-wide SEL action plan and share these intervention ideas with your school teams.

- **School Leaders:** Bring these interventions to PLCs, staff meetings, or Student Support team meetings to embed social-emotional learning into the fabric of your school.

- **Teachers and Counselors:** Try these interventions with your students (in-person or virtually) to strengthen relationships and support student well-being.
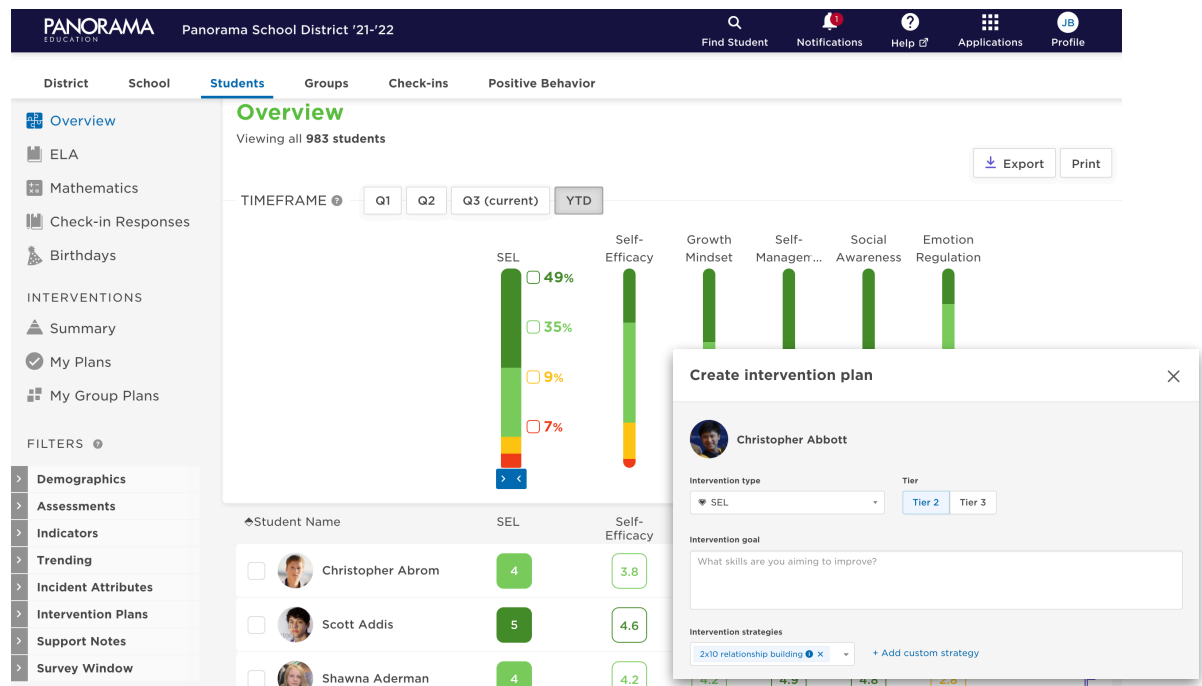
Do you have questions about this resource or about Panorama?
Please get in touch with us at contact@panoramaed.com.

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About Panorama for Social-Emotional Learning

[Panorama for Social-Emotional Learning](#) helps districts support SEL with research-backed surveys and actionable data reports. Panorama's leading analytics platform makes it easy for educators to collaboratively explore survey data, identify and communicate about at-risk students, build and track intervention plans, and access interventions to build students' SEL skills.

Today, 21,000 schools and 1,500 districts serving 15 million students trust Panorama, including the New York City Department of Education, Dallas Independent School District, and San Francisco Unified School District.

Get a Demo

Intervention #1
2x10 Relationship Building

Support students by spending 2 minutes per day (for 10 days in a row) connecting with a student individually and offer extra social-emotional support.

Introduction:

Educators (or school leaders) select a student and set a goal to engage in a brief conversation with that same student for **2 minutes a day on 10 consecutive days**. In this way, we seek to build students' social awareness, self-awareness and relationship skills by modeling empathy and active listening while conveying care.

Instructions:

- Choose one student who you would like to strengthen your relationship with.
- Find this student and start a conversation with them. To build a productive relationship with a student, adults will likely have to initiate the connection.
- The focus of these conversations should be about:
  - *Brevity.* These conversations should last two minutes or under.
  - *Student Voice.* Invite them to share something non-academic with you about their day or life.
  - *Honesty.* Model transparency and authenticity by sharing something personal/non-academic with the student.
- The content of your conversation should not relate to the student's schoolwork or behavior.

This intervention was inspired by:

Wlodkowski, R. J. (1983). Motivational opportunities for successful teaching [Leader's Guide].

Phoenix, AZ: Universal Dimensions.

Intervention #2:
Rose, Bud, Thorn

"Rose, Bud, Thorn" is a protocol that prompts students to describe their emotions, promoting empathy, social awareness, and gratitude. Participants share a "Rose" (positive in their lives), a "Bud" (something they are looking forward to), and a "Thorn" (something they feel they need support with).

Instructions:

1. Prompt students to reflect on a "Rose," "Bud," and "Thorn" for either the day so far, the last week, or the month.
2. Ask students to jot down their reflections and prepare to share their answers with the group.
3. Have students "turn and talk" in small groups, or share out to the whole group, in a whip-around style.

Other Tips:

"Rose, Bud, Thorn" can integrate seamlessly into academic instruction. Students might complete a "Rose, Bud, Thorn" as a bell ringer or exit ticket to foster metacognition about their own learning process. This protocol is also a great conversation starter in 1-1 interactions with students.

For example, while a middle schooler might respond "Good" to a standard "How are you?" asking them to identify their highs, lows, and in-betweens might engender a more authentic reflection. Finally, through the lens of restorative practice, "Rose, Bud, Thorn" is an excellent prompt for classroom and community circles.

Access a Rose, Bud, Thorn journaling guide from Panorama's Teaching and Learning team.

Intervention #3:
"Superstar" Icebreaker Game

Courtesy of Playworks (via Panorama's Playbook)

Icebreaker games promote respect, encourage playfulness, promote inclusion, and build a sense of community.

Introduction:

Icebreakers are an effective and fun way to help students explore and deepen relationships. Some ice breaker games focus on learning each others' names while others encourage students to share information about themselves or simply be silly in front of others. Participation in these icebreakers also helps students feel more comfortable engaging in further games and activities, and are a great tool for new groups of students at the start of the year. Superstar is a simple, quick, and equipment-less game to try.

Instructions:

1. *Pre-Game:* Watch this overview video explaining how to facilitate "Superstar."

2. *Pre-Game:* Explain the purpose of the game and the rules. Demonstrate together with another student what to do (find a commonality not previously known).

3. *Practice:* Announcing the practice round, watch for how students are pairing together. Are they partnering with a student they know less well? What are the topics they are sharing? Do they need help thinking through more examples? Pause the practice round after several minutes and reflect on examples that the students are offering.

4. *Play:* Play the game for real!

5. *Post-Game:* Conclude with some reflection questions, such as: how many of you found somebody who also likes ____? Was there something you discovered that you have in common with one partner but not another?

About Playworks. Playworks helps kids to stay active and build valuable social and emotional life skills through the power of play. Playworks is the leading national nonprofit leveraging the power of play to transform children's emotional health.

Intervention #4:
Behavior Contract
Courtesy of IM4 (via Panorama's Playbook)

Increase student voice, buy-in, and engagement by negotiating an agreement to display a positive behavior.

Introduction:

The goal of this Tier II intervention is to practice the process of negotiating an agreement between staff and a student so each party receives some benefit or payoff. The teacher benefits by improved student behavior, and the student benefits by earning something based on meeting goals for expected behavior.

Best Practices:

- Schedule a meeting with the student to create the contract; frame it as an exciting opportunity rather than a punitive interaction.
- When implementing a contract, focus on positive behaviors that teachers want to see in the classroom (i.e., those behaviors that are incompatible with problem behavior)
- Provide positive reinforcement for meeting the behavior goal
- Follow-up daily with pre-correction and prompting
- Use the contract as a way to remind the student of the behavior and reward to be earned. Teachers can pre-correct and prompt student on a daily basis using the behavior contract.
- At the first warning signs of problem behavior, prompt the student with the contract.
- Clearly identify the reward(s) to be earned (i.e., the pay-off).
- Gather signatures from all parties involved (e.g., student, caregivers, teacher).

About IM4. IM4 provides an evidence-informed solution to improve intervention programming for students with social, emotional, and behavioral needs that go beyond Tier 1 universal supports alone.

Intervention #5:
Cooldown Process

Courtesy of the EASEL Lab at Harvard

Providing students with a step-by-step process to de-escalate when experiencing high intensity emotions.

Instructions:

- Lead students through the step-by-step process:
    - **(1) Pause.**
    - **(2) Identify feeling(s).**
    - **(3) Choose something that helps you cool down.**
    - **(4) Go!**
- Consider hanging-up a [Cooldown Poster](#) somewhere visible in school buildings or classrooms to offer it as a tool for students (as needed).

Virtual Adaptation:

- Screen-share a Cooldown Process visual (see below) as you review each step with the class via Zoom, GoToMeeting, or Google Hangouts. If desired, have students create their own short videos or audio-recordings explaining what the Cooldown Process looks like or feels like for them.

1 Pause. Take a moment to pause, take a deep breath, and gather yourself.

2 Identify feeling(s). Describe what you are experiencing and try your best to label it with an emotion or even a color.

3 Choose something that helps you calm down. Think of different activities or pauses that can help you re-center and calm down.

4 Go! Go for a walk, take a few deep breaths, listen to your favorite song... whatever helps you!

About the EASEL Lab at Harvard. The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory, led by Dr. Stephanie Jones of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, explores the effects of high-quality social-emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities.

Intervention #6:
Self-Talk Superhero

Courtesy of the EASEL Lab at Harvard

Providing students with opportunities to practice using positive self-talk during challenging situations.

Instructions:

1. Explain what self-talk is (e.g., the way we speak to ourselves in our own mind).
2. Model for students what self-talk looks like by sharing an example of your own internal dialogue during a difficult situation. Consider including examples of positive versus negative self-talk Explain how negative self-talk can decrease one's confidence and dampen one's mood, while positive self-talk can do the opposite.
3. Ask students to share times when their self-talk has helped them persevere.
4. Have students close their eyes and imagine their own tiny little hero sitting on their shoulder, always ready to encourage them.
5. Allow students to share what their **self-talk superhero's** favorite words or phrases are. (Share a few examples from your own self-talk superhero to model it!)

Virtual Adaptation:

- Provide online spaces for students to share affirmations or words of encouragement to one another. Consider using virtual chat rooms, video conferencing tools, or creating a notes of gratitude and appreciation submission form online. Challenge students to practice this exercise regularly on their own & have them track this practice on a calendar or checklist.

About the EASEL Lab at Harvard. The Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning (EASEL) Laboratory, led by Dr. Stephanie Jones of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, explores the effects of high-quality social-emotional interventions on the development and achievement of children, youth, teachers, parents, and communities.

Intervention #7:
Good News

Courtesy of Wings for Kids (via Panorama's Playbook)

As students share good news, they work to display self-confidence, practice naming and sharing emotions, and take turns listening to each other.

Introduction:

"Good News" is a time for children and adults to share experiences related to a current lesson/unit of study, or to just share exciting news. It is a ritual that can be used to begin or wrap-up time together.

Instructions:

A "Good News" topic is shared with the whole group and then one at a time volunteers take turns standing up and sharing their response. The teacher or adult helps facilitate and asks follow-up questions to the student who is sharing. Some examples of self-awareness topics include:

- Tell us what emotions you felt on the way to school and why you felt that way.
- Tell us something someone did for you this week that made you feel loved.
- Name one thing or situation that makes you feel nervous. Why?
- What part of your day do you feel most excited about? Why?
- Name something unique about you and why you like that about yourself.

Allowing time for students to share and get to know one another helps build a sense of community and belonging. It provides a safe place for students to practice speaking confidently in front of a group and to practice active listening.

About Wings for Kids. Wings for Kids uses an early and comprehensive approach grounded in the principles of positive youth development and evidence-based social emotional learning practices to foster the mindsets, skills, and confidence within each child.

Intervention #8:
Positive and Constructive Feedback

Courtesy of Wings for Kids (via Panorama's Playbook)

This method is used to increase positive behaviors and/or handle more negative behaviors in a quick & effective manner.
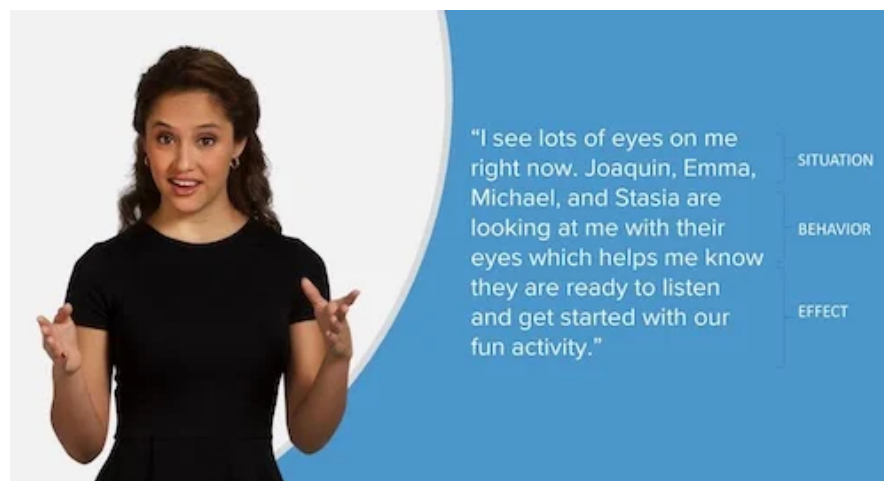

Introduction:

This simple technique can be used to give both positive as well as constructive feedback to help shape behaviors and reinforce the ones we wish to continue. This technique encourages adults to use self-awareness and self-management to give attention towards students in a helpful way.

Instructions:

When a situation arises, share feedback with the student(s) involved.

- *Describe the situation* ➜ name exactly when and where the behavior occurred
- *Describe the behavior* ➜ tell the student(s) exactly what they did
- *Describe the effect* ➜ say what specifically happened as a result of the behavior

"I see lots of eyes on me right now. Joaquin, Emma, Michael, and Stasia are looking at me with their eyes which helps me know they are ready to listen and get started with our fun activity."

SITUATION
BEHAVIOR
EFFECT

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Intervention #9:
Support Systems

Courtesy of Better Kids (via Panorama's Playbook)

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Students are able to identify their support systems and recognize how they feel supported by those individuals.

Introduction:

During times of uncertainty, when routines are disrupted, it is important to identify who we feel most supported by. Looking at the essential parts of a flower can be a tangible way for students to identify their support systems.

Instructions:

- Download and distribute this worksheet to students.
- Explain what a support system is (e.g., a group of people including friends, family members, and other caring adults).
- Elaborate that each part of the flower represents someone in their support system.
- Complete your own worksheet to model what a support system looks like. Consider including individuals that students will know (e.g., other teachers or caring adults in your school community, parents, or friends).
- After students complete their own worksheet, discuss how each child feels supported by the various people in their support system.
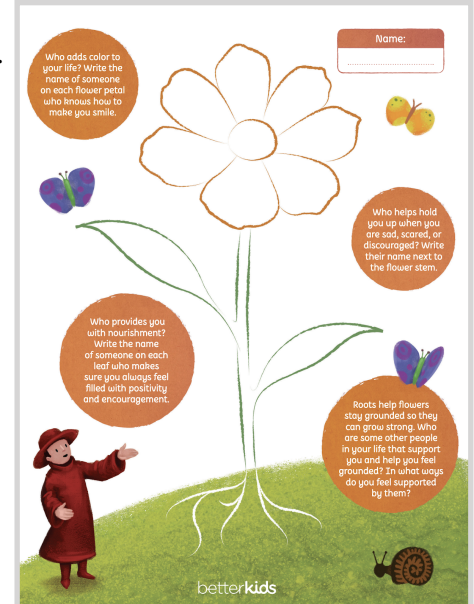
About Better Kids. Better Kids helps educators and families support children's emotional well being through digital and hands-on social emotional learning games.

Intervention #10:
Temperature Check

Courtesy of CharacterStrong (via Panorama's Playbook)

To provide teachers an insight into students' lives so they can act upon the information they share in an intentional manner.

Instructions:

Choose a day of the week to conduct a **Temperature Check** with your students. This could be something they do at the beginning of class or when they are about to exit the classroom. Instruct students to take out a piece of paper and write down:

- *Their name*
- *How they are feeling (on a scale of 1-5)*
- *Why they chose this number and why they are feeling this way*

Virtual Adaptation:

- This check-in activity can be recreated for virtual use to ensure that students are still supported while learning from home and have opportunities to label how they feel while school buildings are closed.

- Send out a Google Form ([you can adapt/customize this one from our team Panorama Education](#)) as an asynchronous way to learn how students are feeling and what supports they need.

About CharacterStrong. CharacterStrong is an organization that provides curricula and trainings for schools internationally to help educators infuse character and SEL into the daily fabric of any classroom or campus.

Intervention #11:
4 at the Door + 1 More

Courtesy of CharacterStrong (via Panorama's Playbook)

This intentional way to greet students builds relationships and increases student engagement.

Instructions:

Any time students enter your classroom, stand outside your door to greet them using the following protocols:

Eye to Eye: Intentionally look students in the eye as they are entering class. There is not an expectation that students make eye contact back, as we need to be sensitive to various cultures/comfort levels. The purpose is to articulate: "I see you and you matter."

Name to Name: Learn the names of your students and use their names as they enter. Greet every student who enters your room by their name. If you don't know it, ask them and make it a priority to remember it. Once you have all of their names down start learning the names of others who are in the hallway. The role modeling of asking for someone's name demonstrates humility.

Elbow to Elbow: As much as possible, connect with students using elbow bumps (if allowed in your school). Remember that relationships are crucial and offering this kindness might be the only unconditional, caring contact that your student receives all day. One tip is to offer students the choice of how they would like to be greeted.

Heart to Heart: Connect with your students as human beings each day before they enter as students. Ask questions asking about their weekend, their hobbies, or how their day is going. This is a great opportunity to notice haircuts, celebrate birthdays, or congratulate about other successes.

+ One More: Engagement happens by having something purposeful for students to engage with right when they enter the room. This should quickly become an expectation and habit! Right when I walk into this class, students can use journal or notebook to reflect on a question or quote on the board. This should be a task related to the content of the day or something intentional to see how they are all emotionally entering the space. This content should feel engaging and relevant.

About CharacterStrong. CharacterStrong is an organization that provides curricula and trainings for schools internationally to help educators infuse character and SEL into the daily fabric of any classroom or campus.

Intervention #12:
Staying Calm When I'm Angry

Courtesy of Everyday Speech (via Panorama's Playbook)

Teach students how to use calming strategies to manage feelings of anger.

Introduction:

Learning to deal with feelings of anger when they arise is crucial to self-regulation. Students will learn how to use strategies like taking deep breaths, counting to 10, taking a break, and positive thinking to keep control of their minds and bodies next time they feel angry.

Instructions:

1. Say: "We all feel angry or mad sometimes. Today, we're learning about how we can try our best to keep our minds and bodies calm when we feel angry."
2. Play the "Staying Calm When I'm Angry" video.
3. Use the pause button during the video to encourage student engagement and to incorporate class discussion.

About Everday Speech. Everyday Speech is a leading provider of social skills materials for speech therapists, special educators, and diverse learning professionals.

Intervention #13:
Two Word Check-In

Take stock of where everyone in your community is at during the start or end of class, or during a community circle.

Introduction:

This simple yet powerful exercise enhances emotional awareness, promotes authenticity and builds community. Before starting this activity, brainstorm a list of feelings with students and draw/label them with facial expressions on the board.

Instructions:

1. Invite students to find a comfortable seat, either at their desk, on the floor, or together in a circle (if space allows). Make sure your own body language is relaxed and inviting.
2. Put both hands over your heart and take a few deep breaths. Ask students to do the same. Invite them to keep a soft gaze or close their eyes, whichever feels more comfortable and safe.
3. As you continue to breathe together, ask students to notice how they are feeling. Remind them that all emotions are welcome. Invite them to take a few moments to connect with their feelings and choose two words to describe them.
4. When the students have two words in mind, invite them to softly open their eyes and return their focus to the classroom.
5. Educators can start by sharing their two-word check-in. Students can take turns sharing their two words, or may pass if they are not comfortable.

Explore more **implementation tips and guidance** for the Two Word Check-In.

Intervention #14:
Home Visits

Increase student success by building trust and authentic relationships between families, educators, and students.

Introduction:

A parent-teacher home visit program can be very effective in engaging with caregivers as true partners in their child's education. Research points to many benefits when teachers visit the homes of their students—including increased connection between teachers and parents, more parental engagement in a child's academics, and increased trust and communication.

Best Practices:

- Visits should be voluntary for educators and families, but administrators should seek at least 50 percent participation from a school's staff.
- Home visits should always be arranged in advance. It's helpful for schools to decide if they want educators to visit families once or twice per year and whether that first visit will take place before the school year begins. Some districts also follow up home visits with family dinners at the school to continue deepening school-family ties.
- Educators should visit in teams of two. In some cases, teachers partner with other teachers, social workers or the school nurse to help address a student's well-being in a more comprehensive manner.
- The goal of the first home visit is to build relationships. Educators should talk about families' hopes and aspirations for their students.

This intervention was inspired by *the Parent Teacher Home Visits program. Learn more at:* *the Parent-Teacher Home Visits Project*.

About Panorama Education

Panorama Education is an education technology company founded in 2012 that helps students achieve academic success and well-being, and gives schools and school districts a platform to hear what families, students and teachers need in the classroom. Educators use Panorama's software platform to understand and support students across academics, attendance, behavior, and life skills development. District leaders use the same platform to track progress toward strategic goals, such as literacy, graduation, and school safety. Panorama is proud that its platform is used to support 15 million students in 25,000 schools and 2,000 districts across the United States. For more information, visit www.panoramaed.com.

Get in Touch

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