

Caregiver + Educator Conversation Guide

Explore two sets of questions for caregivers and educators to use when discussing student social-emotional learning and ongoing SEL initiatives.

Overview:

In your school community, how familiar are caregivers with the term “social-emotional learning?” How might a parent define SEL? Are families aware of any ongoing SEL programs or initiatives? Are teachers regularly sharing information about the SEL curricula that they’re implemented in their classroom? How do caregivers think about their child’s social-emotional development in relation to their academic outcomes? Do family members feel equipped to advocate for their child’s social-emotional needs?

When it comes to establishing family-school partnerships that promote children’s social-emotional development, learning about families is the place to start. It is clear that families who both value social-emotional learning and understand what schools are doing to foster student’s social-emotional skills are better equipped to provide consistent supports for their children.

Through [surveys](#), home visits, open houses, or parent-teacher conferences, districts can take steps to learn about:

- Family composition
- Likes and dislikes
- Caregiver attitudes towards (and experiences with) their child’s school
- Hopes and apprehensions
- Understanding of SEL (broadly and within their child’s school)
- Barriers to engagement
- Special skills

Engaging families about district- or school-wide SEL efforts requires district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and counselors to connect the dots by providing guidance through shared expectations, a common language for SEL skills, and context on existing programs and practices being implemented in schools. It also requires administrators to empower caregivers to advocate for their children’s social-emotional needs.

Continue reading to access:

1. [**A curated list of conversation starters to use with families when discussing social-emotional learning initiatives in your district**](#)
2. [**Questions for families to ask educators to discuss their child’s social-emotional needs**](#)

Conversation Starters: Engaging Families About SEL

Use the below list of questions in surveys, during home visits, or at parent-teacher conferences to understand family members' perceptions of social-emotional learning and engage them about ongoing SEL initiatives in your classroom or school.

1. How familiar are you with the term "social-emotional learning" (SEL)?
2. How would you define "social-emotional learning" (SEL)?
3. At your child's school, how aware are you of any ongoing SEL initiatives?
4. Has your child's teacher shared information about the SEL program/curriculum being implemented in their classroom?
5. What types of social and/or emotional skills are you working on with your child at home?
6. What do you think are the most important skills or traits that children must learn to be successful in grade-school? In college?
7. What do you think are the most important skills or traits that children must learn to be successful professionally?
8. How often do you and your child talk about terms/topics such as empathy, kindness, and respect?
9. How often do you think about your child's SEL skill-building in relation to their academic skill-building?
10. How confident are you in your ability to support your child's social-emotional learning at home? How confident are you in your ability to help your child deal with his/her emotions appropriately?
11. Do you feel empowered to advocate for your child's SEL needs?
12. Do you feel confident enough to engage an administrator or teacher about ongoing SEL efforts at your child's school?
13. What recommendation(s) would you make to the school for how to improve communications with parents about social-emotional learning efforts?

Questions for Families to Ask Educators:

Share the below list of questions with families in your school or district and encourage them to use these prompts as a tool to initiate discussions during parent-teacher conferences (or other events/meetings) about their child's social-emotional needs.

1. How are we defining “social-emotional learning” in our school community?
2. What does SEL look like in my child’s classroom? What programs or curricula are being implemented? What skills are being taught currently?
3. How can SEL initiatives help my child grow academically?
4. Have you noticed my child withdrawing in certain situations in the classroom?
5. Do you see my child get upset over schoolwork or social interactions?
6. My child has been upset about some issues at home. Do you see any sign of that manifesting in the classroom?
7. Can we review any SEL data for my child that you have from surveys in addition to academic, attendance, and behavior data?
8. What are some insights or key takeaways from my child’s SEL data that you can share?
9. Based on my child’s latest SEL survey results, it appears that _____ might be a growth area. Are there strategies or activities that we can try (in the classroom and/or at home) to help support him/her?
10. How can I help my child with SEL? What are some ways that I can support the same SEL skills that my child is working in on school while we are at home?
11. How I can learn more about ongoing SEL efforts?
12. Are there ways for me to get involved with SEL initiatives or work with other caregivers to support this?