

Let's Talk!

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Clear Verbal Communication

Knowing how to have a conversation comes naturally, doesn't it? For some students, it does. But for many, clear communication is a skill that requires practice. That practice can yield lifelong benefits.



Why It Matters

Teaching students how to communicate clearly is an important step in preparing them for success. Not only is the ability to listen, talk and understand necessary for relationships, it's also how teachers teach and children learn. Here are a few other reasons why knowing how to communicate well matters:

- Children with good communication skills are better able to express themselves clearly and confidently.
- Having good communication skills helps a child feel more comfortable in social settings. That confidence will help a child start conversations with peers and make new friends.
- Children who struggle with communication are more likely to have problems with reading, writing and spelling. They are also at a higher risk of having problems with behavior.

- All children want to make and keep friends. A child with poor communication skills can have problems with both.
- Communication helps kids resolve conflicts, an important skill for children and adults alike.
- Children who struggle with communication skills often feel less confident and believe they are less popular than their peers.
- In a recent study, employers said that clear verbal communication is the No. 1 skill they seek in new hires.

Bottom line: Knowing how to have a productive conversation is a life skill every student needs. Here's how to get started.

Goal for the lesson: Show your class how to carry on a conversation that yields new information and insights.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 45 minutes

Materials for each student: copies of the printables, colored pencils, large sticky note

Additional materials: copy of each printable (for display), chart paper and marker, class supply of small index cards



Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write the information below on the board.

communicate: to share or exchange information, news or ideas

2. As students enter the room, ask each child to read the definition on the board and make a list of all of the ways he or she has communicated since waking up.
3. If time allows, have each student share his or her list with a classmate.

Whole-Group Activity

1. Below the definition you wrote on the board for the Bell-Ringer activity, write the following sentence: "Communication requires talking."
2. Ask students if they think the statement on the board is true. If some answer "yes," smile and wave hello. Ask students if you just communicated, and, if so, what your message was. Point out that communication can be verbal or nonverbal, as in your smile and wave. Explain that in this activity students will talk about how to communicate verbally in a conversation.
3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of situations that might require them to have a conversation (working on a group project, playing a game at recess, meeting someone new, etc.). Then display the "Let's Talk! How to Have a Conversation" mini-poster and discuss it with the class.

4. Ask a student volunteer to come to the front of the room. Model a short conversation with the student about your favorite way to exercise. At the end of the conversation, ask the class to comment on how you and the student followed the guidelines on the poster. If time allows, repeat with a different student and topic.
5. Give each student a copy of the poster. Instruct students to use colored pencils to fill in each box with a picture or symbol that will help them remember the step.
For younger students: Talk about each step together and choose a symbol or picture for everyone to draw in each box.

Whole-Group and Partner Activity

1. Ask students to name the topics you and the student volunteers talked about in Step 4 of the previous activity.
2. Write *soccer* (or another game students have played in PE recently) on the board. Ask students to raise their hands if they have had an experience with soccer. Point out that it's easier to have a conversation with someone if the topic is one of which both people have knowledge.
3. Label a large sheet of chart paper "Terrific Talk Topics." Divide the class into pairs and give each duo two large sticky notes. Instruct students to label each of their notes with a different topic that would be good for a conversation with a classmate. Direct twosomes to place their notes on the class chart. Discuss the conversation topics on the class chart. **For younger students:** Give each twosome one note to label with a drawing that represents a favorite animal, sport, color or toy.



4. Revisit the “Let’s Talk! How to Have a Conversation” mini-poster and reread together the step about asking questions. Then display a copy of the “Let’s Talk!” graphic organizer. Have students help you complete the organizer with questions about one of the topics listed on the “Terrific Talk Topics” chart.
5. Provide time for each twosome to use the completed organizer to have a short conversation about its topic. (You may wish to select one student in each pair to start the conversation.)
6. If time allows, give each twosome a copy of the graphic organizer to fill out with a different topic. Then have students use the organizer to help them have a conversation about the topic.

Exit Activity

1. Ask each student to tell one thing he or she will do the next time he or she has a conversation with another person. Then ask the student to label an index card with a topic in which he or she is interested.
2. Store students’ cards in an envelope. Periodically, pull a card from the envelope and announce its topic. Then have each student turn to a partner and have a short conversation about the topic.

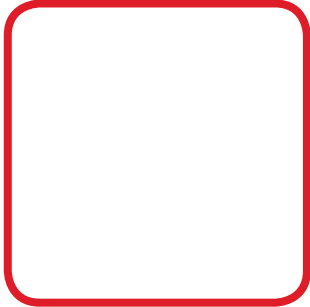
Take-Home Task: Send each student home with a copy of the Take-Home Task assignment. Remind students that they don’t have to sit still to have a good conversation; they can converse while walking the dog or weeding the garden. They’ll find that talking while being active can help spur thoughts and ideas. The next day have students pair up and have a conversation about the assignment.

Teacher Notes



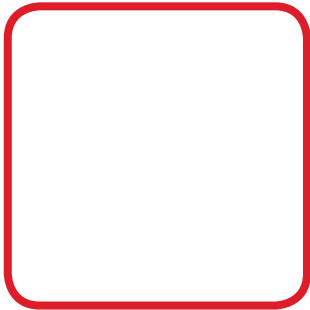
Let's Talk!

How To Have a Conversation

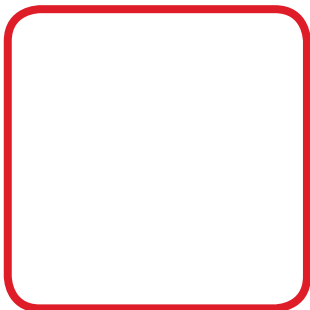


Start with a greeting:

- “How’s it going?”
- “Hey, what’s new?”
- “Hi there!”

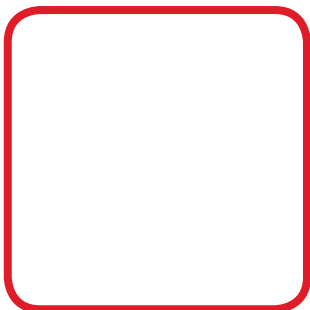


Ask a question or make a statement about a topic.



Take turns listening, asking questions and making comments.

- ✓ Ask questions that include *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* or *how*?
- ✓ Look the other person in the face when you talk or listen.
- ✓ Occasionally smile or nod your head to let the person know you are interested.



End the conversation with a short farewell, such as “I had better go now. See you later!”

?
Question

?
Question

Let's Talk!
Conversation Topic:

?
Question

?
Question

Let's Talk!



Have a short conversation with a family member.

Then fill in the blanks.

I had a conversation with _____.
family member

We talked about _____.
conversation topic

This is how I started the conversation: _____

This is how I ended the conversation: _____

This is what we were doing during the conversation: _____

I drew a star (★) beside every step I remembered to do.

____ I started the conversation with a greeting.

____ I asked questions or made a statement about the topic.

____ I took turns talking and listening.

____ I looked the other person in the face when I talked and listened.

____ I ended the conversation with a short farewell.

Name _____

Quick Tip

You don't have to sit still to have a conversation. Take a walk together and get your thoughts flowing.

Dealing With Disagreements

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Conflict Resolution

Just like in life, conflict in a classroom is inevitable. Teach students a process for resolving their disagreements with this ready-to-use lesson.



Why It Matters

Whether we like it or not, conflict is a part of life — and learning how to resolve conflict is a critical life skill for children. Learning effective conflict resolution techniques benefits children in many ways:

- Children can become empowered to assert their feelings while respecting the feelings of others.
- Conflict resolution helps students develop empathy and learn to see things from the perspective of someone else.
- Learning how to manage conflict along with your own strong emotions results in more fulfilling friendships and social success.

- Strong conflict resolution skills improve a student's resiliency and build confidence.
- Students take responsibility for resolving conflicts peacefully.
- Becoming more proficient in conflict resolution enhances a student's leadership capabilities.
- Helping students hone their conflict resolution skills creates a classroom environment that is more conducive to learning.

Bottom line: Knowing how to resolve conflict gives students a powerful social and emotional tool they can carry with them into adulthood.

Goal for the lesson: Provide practice with using conflict resolution techniques and give students the vocabulary they need to express their feelings during a conflict.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 50 minutes

Materials for each student: chart paper and marker; copy of “A Conflict Can Make Me Feel...” mini poster; copy of the “Conflict Scenario Cards,” cut apart and stored in a small paper lunch bag; class supply of small index cards

Additional materials: large sheet of chart paper labeled as shown on the next page

Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write the word *conflict* on the board.
2. Ask each student who enters to think of a quick pose that comes to mind when they hear the word *conflict*. When the bell rings, ask everyone to strike their pose for a few seconds or have groups of students take turns doing their pose. If desired, snap a few photos of different groups holding their poses. **For younger students**, explain that the word on the board is another word for a disagreement. Then demonstrate how to strike a pose and hold it for a few seconds.
3. Discuss students' poses as a class. What are common themes? Then write this definition of *conflict* on the board: *a strong disagreement between people*. Ask students, "Why is it important to resolve conflicts?" (*Unresolved conflicts can cause resentment, the problem can get worse, other people can end up taking sides in the dispute, it can end up resulting in more conflicts, etc.*) Explain that the class will explore ways to deal with conflicts in a responsible way.

Whole-Group Activity


1. Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever had a disagreement with someone. (Of course everyone has!) Point out that conflict is part of life because people don't always agree with one another. Share a conflict you have experienced, how it made you feel, and how you and the other person resolved it.
2. Explain to students that there are steps they can take to resolve conflicts in positive ways. Display the chart you prepared to look like the one at the top of the next column.

Sample Chart

1. *Calm down and cool off.*
2. *Explain why you are upset: "When you (state the problem), I feel (explain your feelings) because (share the reason), so what I would like is (suggest a solution)."*
3. *Ask the other person to tell you what he or she heard you say.*
4. *Come up with a resolution you both are satisfied with.*

As you go over the conflict resolution steps with students, ask these questions:

- What are some things you can do to calm down and cool off? (*take deep breaths, walk away, draw a picture, get a drink of water, count to 10, etc.*)
- What types of information do you share when you follow Step 2? (*the problem, your feelings and reasons for them, what needs to happen to move forward*)
- Why is Step 3 important? (*It ensures that both parties understand the conflict.*)
- Why is it important that both people agree with the resolution? (*Without an agreement, the conflict is not really resolved, running the risk that it may come up again in the future.*)

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3. To demonstrate how to use the conflict resolution steps, ask two students to help you act out a conflict from a familiar fairy tale, “The Three Little Pigs.” Assign one student to be one of the three little pigs and the other to be the Big Bad Wolf. The pig is upset because the wolf just tried to blow his house down. Explain that Mother Goose (you) has agreed to help the two characters resolve their conflict. As you and the students role play the scenario, encourage the rest of the class to offer suggestions if the pig and wolf struggle with any of the steps.
 4. Repeat Step 3 with two other students, one acting as Cinderella (who wants to go to the prince’s ball) and the other student acting as the Wicked Stepmother (who wants Cinderella to stay home).

Partner Activity

1. Reread Step 2 on the conflict resolution chart with students. Explain that sometimes it can be hard to identify your feelings during a conflict. Display a copy of the mini poster “A Conflict Can Make Me Feel...” and discuss it with students. Point out that students can use the list to identify exactly how a conflict makes them feel.
2. Divide the class into pairs. Have each pair draw one of the conflict scenario cards from the bag. Direct each pair to complete an “I feel...” statement for their scenario, using the list of feelings to help them.

3. Provide time for partners to share their scenarios and “I feel...” statements with the class.
4. Post a copy of the feelings list beside the conflict resolution chart for ongoing use. Tell students to come to you with their “I feel...” statements whenever they want to resolve a conflict. Then meet with the two students and help them work through the steps. (As students become more comfortable with this process, they should be able to hold the meetings without your involvement.)

Exit Activity

Ask each student to copy and complete this sentence starter on a small index card: Resolving conflicts is important because _____. Post the cards around the conflict resolution chart in your classroom.

Take-Home Task: Modeling “The Three Little Pigs” activity, have each student write a “mini-play” that describes a recent conflict he or she was involved in, including how (or if) it was resolved. Then have the student write a paragraph to explain how he or she could have used the conflict resolution steps to resolve the conflict. Review the mini-plays in advance; then anytime you have a few minutes to spare in class, invite small groups of students to act out the mini-plays and discuss the resolutions. These Conflict Resolution Theater mini-performances will be a popular sponge activity that will also keep conflict resolution top of mind.

Conflict Scenario Cards

<p>You set your tray down on a table in the cafeteria. A classmate at the table says, "You can't sit there. I'm saving that seat for someone else."</p>	<p>Another student cuts in front of you while you are waiting at a water fountain. When you tell the student to go to the end of the line, the person ignores you.</p>
<p>A classmate asks to copy your homework. When you say no, the classmate calls you a mean name.</p>	<p>You loaned your favorite pen to a friend. When you ask for it back, the friend tells you that she lost it.</p>
<p>Your friend who always plays with you on the playground is playing with someone else.</p>	<p>The student who sits next to you keeps trying to talk to you during a lesson. You want to pay attention, but this student is making that almost impossible.</p>
<p>A classmate accidentally spills water on your art project.</p>	<p>You catch a classmate looking in your backpack without your permission.</p>
<p>You just found out that someone who you thought was your friend has been saying hurtful things about you behind your back.</p>	<p>A friend tells you that he will walk to the library with you. Later, you see that your friend is walking with someone else.</p>
<p>A classmate has made up a nickname for you that you don't like. The classmate is encouraging others to call you by this nickname.</p>	<p>When you get to class, you wave at your friend. Your friend frowns and turns her back to you.</p>
<p>You and several classmates are brainstorming ideas for a group project. A fellow group member tells you your idea is "stupid."</p>	<p>You tell your friend a secret, asking her not to tell anyone else. Before the day is over, you find out your friend has shared the secret with two other people.</p>

A Conflict Can Make Me Feel...

angry	hurt	stressed
annoyed	ignored	threatened
anxious	insulted	unaccepted
awful	irritated	uncomfortable
confused	lonely	uneasy
disappointed	mad	unhappy
discouraged	nervous	upset
disgusted	resentful	worried
embarrassed	sad	
frustrated	scared	



Not “Me,” But “We”

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Teamwork and Cooperation

Top sports organizations know this truth about cooperation: a team of people working together toward a common goal is more powerful than a single superstar. Help your students learn how to be effective team members and collaborators with the following lesson.



Why It Matters

In a world where celebrities and sports stars seem to dominate the news, it's become even more important to teach children the value of teamwork. The benefits of learning to cooperate and collaborate extend to both school and home:

- Students who regularly work on a team improve their communication and listening skills.
- Children who learn how to be part of a team learn to respect others' abilities, opinions and ideas. They also learn to appreciate their teammates for what they contribute.
- Cooperating with others helps children feel like they are part of a community, improves relationships and widens their circle of friends.
- Being a contributing member of a team builds a child's self-esteem and confidence.

- Working on a team improves students' abilities to resolve conflict, manage their emotions, negotiate and compromise, and take turns.
- Cooperative learning can increase retention and on-task behavior, as well as improve attitudes toward school.
- Research shows that classes where cooperative learning is employed achieve higher test scores than traditional classes.
- Today's employers are looking for employees who can work with others to achieve results.

Bottom line: Knowing how to be an effective team member is critical to being successful at school and in life. Time spent helping students cultivate a teamwork mindset will always be time well spent.

Goal for the lesson: Teach students strategies to use in fostering teamwork and cooperation in school, at home, and in social situations.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 60 minutes

Materials: large sheet of chart paper for each

group of four or five students, markers, paper, class supply of the self-evaluation form

Advance preparation: Label each large sheet of chart paper at the top with, “What does a cooperative person look like?”

Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write the word *cooperate* on the board before class starts.
2. As students enter the classroom, ask them to write a definition in their notebooks of what they think the word on the board means. **For younger students**, ask them to draw a picture that illustrates someone who is cooperating with another person.
3. Provide time for students to share their definitions as you list their ideas on the board. Then let students know they're going to get active to show if they feel the definition is a good one. If students feel the definition is accurate, have them stand and do three jumping jacks. If they think the definition needs work, have them do three deep knee bends. (Depending on the class and the age of the students, you can decide if the definition is a good one as a group or let each student decide individually.) End the activity by sharing that a good definition for *cooperate* is "to work together with others in order to get something done."

Whole-Group and Small-Group Activity

1. Share with students examples of tasks that require you to cooperate with others. For example, perhaps you plan lessons with other teachers on your grade level or take turns walking laps around the playground to supervise students. Ask students to suggest why it might be important for you to cooperate with people you work with. List their ideas on the board.
2. Divide the class into groups of three. Direct one student in each group to

make a T-chart like the one shown.

Then give groups five minutes to fill in the chart with examples of things that require cooperation to accomplish.

Designate the student who drew the chart as that group's recorder, who will fill in the chart once group members agree on examples.

3. Provide time for groups to share their charts as you compile their ideas on a T-chart you've drawn on the board. When the list is complete, point out to students that it is important to learn how to be cooperative because so much of life requires us to work with others. Then ask students, "So, what does a cooperative person look like?"
4. Divide the class into new groups of four or five students each. Give each group a sheet of chart paper you prepared earlier and a marker. Designate one student as the group's recorder. Then challenge each group to fill their paper with actions or characteristics of a cooperative person.
5. After all groups share their completed posters with the class, tape the posters to a class wall. With student input, create a class list of traits that you and your students can refer to whenever they participate in cooperative learning activities.

Things That Require Cooperation

At School	At Home

Small-Group Activity

1. Organize students into groups of three to four children.
2. Direct each group to plan a short skit that shows an example of cooperation at school. Encourage originality and efforts to include each group member in the skit.
3. Provide time for groups to practice their skits; then have each group perform its skit for the class. After each skit, have an audience member explain how the skit illustrated cooperation.
4. Wrap up the activity by having each student complete a copy of the “Pulling Together” self-evaluation form provided. Collect the evaluations; then return them

to students after the next cooperative group activity so they can check their progress on the goals they noted on their evaluations.

Exit Activity

Ask each student to share one way he or she will cooperate with another person during the next 24 hours. See how many different examples the students can share before dismissal.

Take-Home Task: Have each student write a journal entry to respond to this writing prompt: *Describe a time when you had difficulty cooperating with another person. What did you do? What would you do differently if this happened to you today?*

Quick Tip

Throughout the school year, work in team-building games such as the Human Knot, Two-Person Tag (student pairs are “it” and both students have to tag the same child), or parachute games to keep team-building top of mind. (Hint: Students too old for parachute games? Cut holes in an old tarp. Drop a ball on the tarp and challenge students to work together to keep the ball from dropping through the holes.) Use those games as opportunities to remind students about the cooperative skills they’ve developed.



Teacher Notes

Pulling Together

Cooperative Group Self-Evaluation

How did you do in terms of cooperating with your group members during the activity?

Write a symbol from the code in each box.

Then answer the question.



- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed on task | <input type="checkbox"/> Communicated well with my group members |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shared my ideas | <input type="checkbox"/> Showed appreciation to my group members for what they contributed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shared in the work | <input type="checkbox"/> Took turns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Helped others | <input type="checkbox"/> Helped my group complete the assignment on time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Showed respect for the ideas, abilities and opinions of my group members | |

CODE

- + Good job!
- ✓ Satisfactory
- Needs improvement

How can you improve your cooperation skills? _____

signed _____

date _____

Can You Hear Me Now?

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Active Listening

There's hearing, and then there's true listening. Students may think they're the same — but they're not. In this lesson, students learn what it takes to be an active listener, which is a critical communication skill.



Why It Matters

Even adults know that listening can be hard. For children, often the task is extra difficult, particularly if they don't know what real listening requires. Teaching students how to actively listen yields benefits that extend beyond the classroom:

- The ability to listen is a key to building the communication skills students will need as they move through school into adulthood.
- Students who learn to be active listeners tend also to be better communicators and problem solvers. They also tend to retain information better because they are not as easily distracted.
- Working on listening skills can improve a student's attention span and ability to concentrate.

- Summarizing and paraphrasing skills are stronger when a student practices active listening.
- Being an active listener improves relationships because it makes people feel understood and cared for.
- Active listening results in fewer misunderstandings, improved productivity and more self-reliance.

Bottom line: Without active listening, clear communication simply can't happen. Knowing how to listen to others is a critical life skill that will help students become successful adults.

Goal for the lesson: Equip students with the skills they need to be active, engaged listeners who accurately hear information and act on what they've heard.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 45 minutes

Materials: class supply of both handouts, self-sticking notes, sheet of chart paper labeled "Listen Up!", paper



Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Ask students to list all the sounds they hear in the classroom. Invite them to walk around the room as they compile their lists; challenge them to list as many sounds as possible.
2. Provide time for students to share their lists with the class or in small groups and see how many different sounds careful listening yielded. Then talk about any difficulties they had concentrating or dealing with distractions that impaired their listening.

Whole-Group and Partner Activity

1. Ask each student to turn to a partner and together answer this question: “What is the difference between hearing and listening?”
2. Provide time for students to share their ideas as you write them on the board. Point out that just hearing the words someone says is not the same as listening. Active listening means the listener not only hears what the speaker says, but also understands what the speaker is trying to communicate.
3. Distribute copies of the “Can You Hear Me Now?” handout of active listening techniques. Go over the information with students. Then ask a student to come to the front of the room. Ask him or her to describe a favorite memory. As he or she talks, model active listening by making eye contact, repeating points back to the speaker, asking questions for clarification, etc.

4. After several minutes, end the conversation with the student and ask the class to identify how you modeled active listening. If necessary, ask the student volunteer to describe how she knew you were really listening and understood what she was saying.
5. Divide the class into pairs and give each twosome the “Question Challenge” handout. Go over the directions with the class. Then have the student pairs complete the activity. **For younger students**, ask a student volunteer the questions on the handout. Then challenge the rest of the class to repeat his or her answers after you have finished asking the questions.

Partner Activity

1. List the conversation topics below on the board and divide students into pairs.
 - fun physical activities to do on the weekend
 - the first day of school
 - the best pet to have
 - how to make friends
 - favorite sports
 - ways to make yourself feel better when you're sad
 - favorite things to do on a rainy or snowy day



2. Direct each twosome to choose a topic from the board and write a short conversation about it. Explain to students that when one child is speaking, the partner will write down what he or she hears, and vice versa.
3. When students have completed the conversation, have them check each other's work to see if they heard each other correctly. Then have them practice reading their conversation aloud, combining the information they both wrote down. Students will see that if they don't listen carefully, they can easily mishear or misunderstand important information.

4. Group each twosome with another duo and have them share their dialogues.

Exit Activity

Have each student label a sticky note with one thing he or she heard about active listening during the lesson. Post the students' notes on a large class chart labeled "Listen Up!" Refer to the chart throughout the year to review how to be an active listener.

Take-Home Task: Challenge each student to practice active listening at home. The next time an adult gives instructions, challenge the child to listen carefully and understand the message correctly the first time. Listening is a skill that both adults and children need to practice.

Teacher Notes



Can You Hear Me Now?

Ways to Be an Active Listener

- ✓ Make eye contact with the speaker.
- ✓ Show the speaker you are listening by nodding, smiling and focusing on what he or she is saying.
- ✓ Ask questions if you are confused.
- ✓ Don't interrupt the speaker.
- ✓ Repeat what the speaker said in your own words to make sure you understand the complete message.



Name _____

Date _____

Question Challenge



Directions for two students:

1. Student A asks Student B each of the questions in the box, using active listening techniques.
2. Student B asks Student A to repeat back his or her answers to the questions.
3. Students switch roles and repeat Steps 1 and 2.
4. Each student completes the information at the bottom of the page to gauge his or her active listening skills.

Questions to ask:

- What is your favorite physical activity and why is it your favorite?
- What did you wear to school yesterday?
- What healthy habit do you practice every day or almost every day?
- What would you like to do as a career when you are an adult?
- If you could change your first name, what name would you choose?
- Who are three famous people you'd like to meet?
- What is your favorite musical group or singer?
- What movie would you see again if you could?

So how did you do?

1. Rank how well you were able to remember your partner's answers to the questions. Use this code: 1=not well at all; 2=satisfactory; 3=excellent. _____
2. What active listening steps did you use while listening to your partner? _____

3. What active listening steps do you think you need to improve on? _____

Speak Up and Stand Up!

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Assertiveness

Standing up for oneself without being unkind to another person is difficult, but it's a skill today's kids particularly need. Teach your students the differences between aggressive, passive and assertive responses with this engaging lesson.



Why It Matters

Bullying can be anywhere — at school, on the playground, at home, or online. Learning how to be assertive is a life skill with invaluable, and even lifesaving, benefits.

- With assertiveness training, students learn how to have their needs met without being unkind to others. They are also more likely to share their thinking openly and ask questions.
- When students learn to be assertive, they are more likely to stand up to a bully.
- Learning how to be assertive can help children identify their feelings and express themselves.
- Children who have been taught assertiveness are more likely to value and trust themselves and believe they have rights.

- Assertiveness instruction helps children learn the right way to say no, which can help them feel more in control.
- Students become more responsible for their actions when they understand they can choose how to respond to a situation.
- Responding assertively in uncomfortable situations can foster positive interactions and enhance peer relationships.
- Teachers and students who are assertive help create a more positive classroom environment for learning.

Bottom line: Learning how to be assertive is a must for healthy social-emotional learning and living. When children learn to speak up and stand up, they embrace their own value and the value of others.

Goal for the lesson: Show students how to be strong and to stand up for themselves and others.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 45 minutes

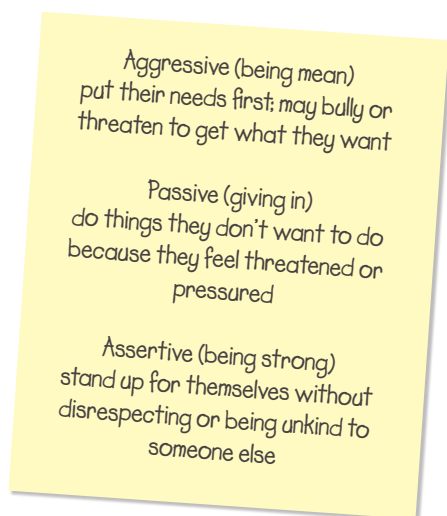
Materials for each student: copies of the mini booklet pages, scissors, access to a stapler

Additional materials: three sheets of construction paper, marker, large sheet of chart paper, two copies of the “Sample Scenarios” page, student journals, paper

Teacher Directions

In advance:

1. Label each sheet of construction paper “Aggressive,” “Passive” or “Assertive.” Post each sign in a different corner of your classroom. For younger students, use the terms “Be Mean,” “Give In” and “Be Strong.”
2. Prepare a class chart like the one shown below.
3. Cut apart the scenarios from one copy of the “Sample Scenarios” handout.



Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Share the following with students: A classmate teases you, then calls you a name. What do you do? Direct each student to answer the question in his or her journal. For younger students, ask them to draw a picture that shows what they would do.
2. Provide time for students to share their responses. Explain that the lesson today will explore different ways students can choose to respond in situations that make them uncomfortable.

Whole-Group Activity

1. Ask students to raise their hands if they have ever been in a situation with another person that made them uncomfortable. Invite a few students to share (including how they responded), cautioning them not to use any names.
2. Explain to students that people respond in one of three different ways when they are in uncomfortable situations. Display the chart you prepared and go over the definitions with students. Emphasize that there is no right way to respond to every situation and that students have a right to stand up for themselves.
3. After pointing out the signs in the corners of your classroom, read or display the first scenario on the “Sample Scenarios” handout. At your signal, direct students to go to the corner that names the type of response illustrated in the scenario. For extra fun, direct students to move to the corner in a certain manner, such as by skipping, marching, walking like an Egyptian, doing the Twist, etc. Then ask a volunteer in each corner to explain his or her choice. Repeat with the other scenarios on the handout.

Whole-Group and Partner Activity

1. Review with students what it means to be assertive. Then explain that students can use different techniques to be assertive.
2. Distribute copies of the “Be Assertive, Be Strong!” mini booklet pages. Guide students to cut out the pages, stack them, and staple them together to make a booklet.



3. Read and discuss the techniques in the booklet as a class.
4. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group one of the passive or aggressive scenarios cut from a copy of the "Sample Scenarios" handout. Challenge each group to use two different techniques from their booklets to rewrite the scenario and include an assertive response. Provide time for groups to share their responses.

Exit Activity: Ask each student to write an assertive response to this scenario: *A friend is always borrowing money from you and not paying you back. Now he has asked you for*

money again. Have volunteers share their responses. For younger students, have each child tell you a way to respond that is not mean or giving in.

Take-Home Task: Instruct each student to discuss the following scenario with a family member and decide together how to respond in an assertive way: *The zipper on the jacket you bought two weeks ago is already starting to fall apart. You take the jacket back to the store where you bought it to ask for your money back. What will you say to the store manager?*

Teacher Notes



Sample Scenarios

1. Heather and Maria pull Sheena aside and tell her they're going to steal some money from Cory's backpack. They want Sheena to be the lookout. Sheena nervously says, "I don't think it's right, but OK."
2. Sean wants to hang out with Ian, but Ian wants to be alone. Sean tells Ian, "You are a terrible friend. It'll be a long time before I ask you to do anything with me again!"
3. On the bus, Jayden starts teasing Mario, and then he asks his friend J.T. to join in. J.T. says to Jayden, "Hey, man, I don't really want to be a part of this. Let's look at your new comic book instead."
4. During the math test, Noah whispers to Luke, "What did you get for number 7?" Luke doesn't want to cheat, but he's afraid Noah will get mad at him if he says no. With a sigh, Luke tells Noah the answer.
5. LaKeisha is hurt when her friend Allie ignores her during the soccer game. Later in the day, LaKeisha tells Allie, "I feel really sad when you won't talk to me because I thought we were friends."
6. Cinda gets mad at Julia for not sitting with her at lunch. The next day, Cinda corners Julia in the hallway. She says that if Julia doesn't hand over her snack from home they are no longer friends.

Answer Key: 1. passive 2. aggressive 3. assertive 4. passive 5. assertive 6. aggressive

Name _____

Be Assertive, Be Strong!

①

When you are assertive, you communicate your feelings or thoughts without being mean and without giving in.

Hey, let me copy your homework.

I'm not comfortable with that.

②

You can be assertive by...
...saying "no" nicely.

Let's go outside to play.

No, thanks. I need to work on my science project.

③

You can be assertive by...
...asking for time to think.

Can I borrow your bike on Saturday?

I'm not sure. Can I get back to you after lunch?

④

You can be assertive by...

...saying what you need.

Hand over that book. I want to read it.

I need another day to finish it, then I'll pass it to you.

5

You can be assertive by...

...setting a boundary.

Let's tell Maria she can't sit with us.

No, I am not going to be mean to her.

6

You can be assertive by...

...using an "I feel" message.

I don't want to go to the movies with you.

I feel sad when you change plans with me because I like hanging out with you.

Use this sentence starter to help you give an "I feel" message.

I feel _____ when
you _____ because
I _____.

7

If you are assertive and the other person responds in a mean way, you can

- Calmly walk away.
- Speak assertively to the other person.

Remember to do the following:

- Look the person in the eye.
- Keep your voice calm.
- Stand an appropriate distance from the person.
- Use the person's name when speaking to him or her.

8

“That’s Not Fair!”

Social-Emotional Learning Objective: Fairness

Children often equate “fair” with “equal,” but as this lesson shows the two concepts don’t always mean the same thing.



Why It Matters

We live in an age where cries of “That’s not fair!” are all around us, from children and adults alike. For this reason, it’s imperative to teach kids about fairness, particularly focusing on the idea that fairness doesn’t always mean everyone gets the same thing. Understanding what fairness looks like in different situations is a life skill everyone — including children — needs in our complex world.

- Children who understand fairness develop more compassion for others and an appreciation for each person’s uniqueness.
- Learning about fairness helps children become more able to resolve frustrations they may have over issues of fairness.
- A child who values fairness is more likely to be a team player who does his or her share of the work.

- Children who are taught about fairness learn to evaluate situations critically and respond appropriately.
- Developing a mindset of fairness helps children become more open-minded.
- Children who seek to be fair are less likely to judge others without knowing the whole situation. They are also more likely to treat others with honesty and respect.
- A classroom where fairness is taught provides children with a safer, more positive place to learn.

Bottom line: Fairness is a tough issue for children and adults. Taking the time to teach students about the nuances of fairness is critical to helping them become caring, responsible adults.

Goal for the lesson: Demonstrate for students that fairness is a complex topic that requires careful reflection.

Grade levels: Kindergarten–Grade 5

Suggested time needed: 55 minutes

Materials: \$15 in play money (either 15 \$1 bills or three \$5 bills), three same-size adhesive bandages, class supply of the “How Am I Doing With Fairness?” form, student journals

Materials for each small group: copies of the “Fair or Unfair?” handout and the “Being Fair Means You…” handout, scissors, tape



Teacher Directions

Bell-Ringer Activity

1. Write this sentence on the board: "That's not fair!" Draw a speech bubble around the sentence.
2. Ask each student to explain in his or her journal what the sentence means and why someone might say it.
3. Provide time for students to share their answers. Discuss how, in your years of working with children, the sentence "That's not fair!" or "No fair!" is one you've heard again and again for lots of different reasons. (No doubt your students will admit they've said it!)

Whole-Group and Small-Group Activity

1. Ask three students to come to the front of the room. Announce that you are going to pretend that these students are your own children who have asked if they can go rollerskating on Saturday. You have decided to say yes.
2. Announce that tickets are \$5 each, and then count out \$5 of play money to each student. Ask, "Was I fair to my children?" Have students explain why or why not.
3. Ask three other students to come to the front of the room. Tell the class that these students have each been injured: Student 1 has cut his finger, Student 2 has broken her arm, and Student 3 has a concussion.
4. Let the students know that you are going to treat those injuries. Give each of the three students a same-sized bandage, and then say, "There, that will take care of the injury! All better!" Ask the rest of the class, "Was I fair to these three kids?"

Guide students to recognize that giving each the same bandage was equal but not fair since the three injuries varied in severity. Point out that being fair does not always mean that people get the same thing (as they did in your rollerskating scenario). Sometimes the fair thing to do is to consider the needs of the people involved in the situation and then give each person what he or she needs.

5. Divide the class into small groups. Give each group a copy of the "Fair or Unfair?" handout and a pair of scissors. Instruct the groups to cut out the strips, place the two heading cards on a table, and arrange each remaining strip under the "Fair" or "Unfair" label. Give groups five minutes to sort the strips. **For younger students**, complete the activity as a class using only three or four of the strips.
6. Have each group list on the board the strips it sorted under the "Fair" heading card. Discuss any differences between the groups' lists, asking students to give reasons for their decisions.

Small-Group Activity

1. Divide students into small groups. Give each group a copy of the "Being Fair Means You..." worksheet and a pair of scissors.
2. Explain to students that the strips list the traits of a fair person. Direct the groups to cut out the strips and arrange them in order from most important to least important. When all group members are happy with the arrangement, have one student tape the strips to the board in a column with the most important trait at the top.



3. As a class, compare the groups' rankings. Ask groups to share the reasons for their top rankings. End the activity by pointing out that all of the traits are essential to being fair, but we individually value some aspects of fairness over others. Those subjective decisions are part of what makes fairness a difficult concept.

Exit Activity: Ask each student to write in his or her journal about a situation at school or home that he or she thinks is unfair. Have the student suggest a fair way to resolve the issue. Or, as an alternative, challenge the student to create a comic strip showing the situation and possible resolutions.

Take-Home Task: Give each student a copy of the "How Am I Doing With Fairness?" form. Have the student fill out the form and share it with a family member. Then have him or her bring it back to school the next day. Provide time for small groups to discuss their evaluations and suggestions for improvement.

For younger students, write one of the fairness traits at the top of a piece of paper. Make a copy for each child. Read the trait to the student; then have him or her draw a picture to illustrate the trait.

Fairness on the Field

Playing team games on the playground or in the school gym can be a great time to discuss fairness issues. Before starting the game, talk about the rules and how they do (or don't) make the game fair for everyone who is playing. If there are disputes during the game, encourage students to look at all sides of the issue and decide together on a fair way to proceed. Then get back to the game!



Teacher Notes

Fair or Unfair?

Cut out the strips.

Place the heading cards on a table.

Read each situation and place it under the appropriate heading.



Fair

Unfair

① You have to pay a fee for a late library book. The librarian just let your friend turn in his late book without charging him a fee.

② Your older sister gets to stay up one hour later than you do on school nights.

③ Some students get extra time to take the same test you have to take.

④ A child has been out sick from school for several days. The teacher tells her that she does not have to make up all of the homework assignments.

⑤ Two of your team's players are 10 minutes late for practice. The coach makes the entire team stay at practice for an extra hour.

⑥ Only older students are allowed to play on the school's football team.

⑦ Your parents won't let you sign up for soccer because your older sister was badly injured playing soccer last year.

⑧ The kindergarten students are allowed to talk in the school hallways. All other grades are not.

⑨ Your family is moving. Your parents are letting your older sister get first choice of her new bedroom.

⑩ You just let your friend cut in line at the water fountain.

⑪ Your club leader announces that everyone must be at the meeting by 5:30 p.m. She walks into the meeting the next week at 6 p.m.

⑫ Joey wants to be on the baseball team, but the coach says he has to try out. The coach tells Jorge he doesn't need to try out since he was on the team last year.

Being Fair Means You...

...treat people with respect and honesty.

...take turns and share.

...give everyone an equal opportunity to succeed.

...cooperate with one another.

...listen to others.

...don't judge people without knowing the whole situation.

...don't take advantage of others.

...make sure others are not treated badly.

...appreciate everyone's unique traits and abilities.

Name _____ Thinking about fairness

Date _____



How Am I Doing With Fairness?

Fill in the box to show how often you demonstrate each trait of fairness.

Use the key to help you.

KEY

- + Often
- ✓ Sometimes
- Rarely or never

- I treat people with respect and honesty.
- I take turns and share.
- I cooperate with other people.
- I listen to others.
- I don't judge people without knowing the whole situation.
- I don't take advantage of others.
- I make sure others are treated the way I'd like to be treated.
- I appreciate others' unique traits and abilities.

What are two things you can do to become a more fair person?

- _____

- _____

May I have your attention, please?

Get your whole school thinking about social and emotional learning. These morning announcements, designed to be used at the beginning, middle and end of each SEL unit, provide a quick and easy way to build on seeking a common purpose.

Clear Communication

- 1** This week we're focusing on clear communication. The easiest way to start a conversation with someone you don't know — or someone you want to know better — is to figure out what you have in common. Is the person wearing a team jersey? Reading a book you've read? Carrying a binder that's your favorite color? Ask about it or give a sincere compliment and see where the conversation goes.
- 2** Communication doesn't happen just with words. Have you ever seen someone wave hello? Pat your back? Make a face? Today, think about the signals you're sending to others through your gestures and facial expressions along with your words.
- 3** Did you know that there are magic words to keep a conversation flowing? They're question words, like *who*, *what*, *where*, *when* and *how*. These words are just what you need to keep a conversation going so you can learn more about another person. The other person will appreciate your curiosity and is likely to want to ask you questions, too.



Conflict Resolution

- 1** This week we're going to talk about resolving conflicts. The best way to resolve a conflict is to cool off first. Counting to 10, getting a drink of water, and taking some deep breaths are the first — and best — steps you can take in a fair and peaceful resolution. Try it!
- 2** Today, I have a question for you. True or false: The best way to resolve a conflict is to ignore it. That's false! Ignoring a conflict means that people can grow resentful, the conflict



gets worse, and others get dragged into it. If you have a misunderstanding or dispute with someone, sorting it out sooner will save lots of problems later. Try that today.

- 3** When I say the word “conflict,” what word comes to mind for you? Conflicts make some people sad, some mad, some stressed and some embarrassed. Being able to explain how a conflict makes you feel is important step in resolving that conflict once and for all.

Teamwork

- 1** Would you rather be on a team that works together well? Or a team with just one superstar? Most of us would like to be on the team that works together. This week we’ll be talking about teamwork. We want all of the members of our school, including students, teachers, staff members and families, to work together well. That way we can all be superstars!
- 2** Think of different types of teams. There are sports teams, of course. But there are also teams of students that work together on projects, teams of teachers who plan field trips and teams of parents who brainstorm ideas. Today, think about how you can be a good team member. Do you need to speak up more? Speak less and listen more? Say thank you? Take turns? Take just one step toward being the best team member you can be.
- 3** To paraphrase basketball superstar Michael Jordan, “Talent wins games. Teamwork wins championships.” Think about that. One of the greatest basketball players of all time, the player LeBron James rooted for when he was growing up, says that it takes a strong team to win championships. Let’s see what you can do today to be part of a great team at our school.



Active Listening

- 1** Listen up, everyone! This week we’re going to learn what it means to really listen to another person. A famous author named Ernest Hemingway once said, “I have learned a great deal from listening carefully.” Listening carefully and really paying attention to what someone says can be hard, but it’s worth it. So let’s all listen carefully this week.

2 Did you know that you don't just listen with your ears? That's right! People who are really good at listening also make eye contact with the person to whom they're talking. They also use their mouths. How? By repeating what they heard to make sure they understood the speaker's message. Try using these two listening techniques this week. The person you're listening to will feel understood, and you'll know you heard the message loud and clear.



3 Has this ever happened to you? Instead of listening to the person who is talking to you, you're busy planning what to say next. This week we've learned how to be an active listener. Now, go out there and do more than just hear someone's words — really listen to them. I bet you'll learn a lot!

Assertiveness

1 What do you do when you are in an uncomfortable situation, such as when someone is mean to you? Are you mean to them, too? Do you give in and let the person keep being mean? Or do you stay calm and speak up? This week we're going to talk about being strong and standing up for yourself and others. It's a lesson from which we can all benefit!

2 It's hard to say no to someone, isn't it? But it's also perfectly OK to do so. This week we've been talking about being assertive. One way you can be assertive is to say no nicely when someone is making you uncomfortable. Whether you say, "No, thanks!" or "No, I don't want to do that," you have a right to stand up for yourself. Practice what you will say to someone the next time they put you in a difficult spot. After you try it a few times, you'll be more confident that you can stand up for yourself when you need to.

3 This week we've spent time learning how to stand up and speak up. When we assertively speak up for ourselves and others, we communicate clearly how we feel and what we need. That's a good thing to do because it helps others treat us with respect. So, remember everyone: at our school we speak up and stand up for what's right!



Fairness

- 1** Have you ever proclaimed, “That’s so unfair?” I bet you have. All of us at some time have felt that we were treated unfairly. This week we’re going to talk about fairness and how to be a fair person. For example, people who are fair take turns and share. When was the last time you had to wait your turn or share something? If you were able to do that, you showed fairness. Today, think about other ways you can treat people fairly in your classroom and at home.
- 2** This week we’ve been learning about fairness. Everyone wants to be treated fairly, so being a fair person is also a great way to be a friend. What can you do today to treat someone fairly in your class? See for yourself how being fair to others can help make your classroom an even better place to learn and grow.
- 3** Have you learned a thing or two this week about fairness? I hope you have! We’ve spent time talking about what it takes to be a fair person and why treating people fairly is so important. The next time you’re tempted to say, “That’s not fair!” remember what you’ve learned this week. Think about whether the situation is really unfair. If it is, speak up! If it’s not, then move on to your next adventure with a smile. That’s the fair thing to do!



Quick Tip

Post these announcements on your school's social media pages or website. That way, families can reinforce the messages at home, too.

Parent Letter 1

Dear Family,

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is a hot topic in many schools these days. You may be wondering, *What is social-emotional learning? How does it benefit my child?*

Just like students need to practice reading and math to sharpen their skills, they need to practice their skills with managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, working well with others, and making good decisions. In short, they're practicing the skills that will help them live successful and fulfilling lives.

Social-emotional learning is taught informally in schools every day. But there's a growing trend to formally practice these skills. The **American Heart Association** is working with schools nationwide to equip students to work well together, treat one another fairly, stand up to bullying, and be their best.

In the weeks to come, your child will be working on these skills and others in class. We will be doing group activities in class and maybe even assigning a little SEL homework, too. Ask your child all about it!

I look forward to working with you to teach important life skills that address the whole child.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher



Research Recap

A lot of research shows that SEL programs provide lifelong benefits to kids:

- SEL programs can lead to immediate improvements in **mental health, social skills and academic achievement**.
- Students who participate in SEL programs have **fewer behavior problems**.
- SEL programs continue to **benefit students more than a decade later**.

Source: casel.org/impact

Grin and Share It

What do you call a reptile with good people skills?

A good communi-gator

Skills for Life

Here's what's included in the new American Heart Association Social-Emotional Learning program that our school is using:

- Clear communication
- Resolving conflict
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Being an active listener
- Standing up for yourself
- Fairness and compromise

Each lesson includes engaging activities with mini-posters, organizers, assessment sheets, and more for students to work on individually or in groups to develop skills that will last a lifetime.



Start the learning at home. Here's how:

Be honest with your child. If you're struggling to get a message across or resolve a conflict at work, tell your child a little about the situation and ask him or her what might help.

Admit mistakes. If your directions or expectations were unclear, admit that to your child and discuss how to do better.

Focus on conversations with your child. Whenever possible, avoid answering phone calls, sending texts, or checking your phone during a discussion.

Allow your child to **explain a question or situation fully**; don't go off on tangents before your child gets to the main point.

Create and sign a **family pledge** to listen carefully and respectfully, explain differing points of view calmly and to be fair to one another. You'll be glad you did!

Just for Fun

Do you remember the game called Telephone or Whisper Down the Lane?

To play, one person whispers a silly sentence to the next. That person whispers it to the next person until everyone has had a turn. The last person shares the sentence that traveled "down the lane," and the first shares the original sentence. The results can be silly — and also underscore how easily miscommunication happens. After the game, ask your child about the skills he or she has learned for clear communication.

Parent Letter 2

Dear Family,

Now that we're well into our social-emotional learning (SEL) activities from the **American Heart Association**, I'd like to update you on what your child has been learning.

The program includes the following units. I've checked off the ones we've completed so far:

- Clear communication
- Resolving conflict
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Being an active listener
- Standing up for yourself
- Fairness and compromise



We've been doing activities as a whole group and in smaller groups, giving students lots of opportunities to talk about and reflect on these topics. We've even done a little theater to act out the conflict between the three little pigs and the wolf that wants to blow their house down!

Remember, just like students need to practice reading and math to sharpen their skills, they need to practice managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, working well with others and making good decisions. These skills will help them achieve what we want for them more than anything: having successful and fulfilling lives.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we teach important life skills that address the whole child.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher

PS: I hope your family has been doing its SEL homework. If not, more assignments are to come. I think you'll find them beneficial — and fun — for everyone.

Research Recap

On average, **each dollar invested in SEL programs yields \$11 in long-term benefits** such as improved mental and physical health, reductions in crime and higher earnings.

Source: "The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning," Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

11:1
return on
investment

Calming conflicts at home

Families experience conflict on a daily — and sometimes even hourly — basis. From “he took my football” to “she gets all the attention,” conflicts can turn a good day upside down.

Try these tips to address issues and keep communication flowing:

- **Stay calm.** Don’t get pulled into the argument.
- **Start by listening.** Try not to jump to conclusions, suggest remedies or dole out punishments before you’ve gotten the full story.
- **Rephrase what you hear.** Show empathy by saying, “I see what you’re saying” and “I understand how you feel.” Through your words, demonstrate that you really do hear and understand.
- **Set the tone.** Listen to how you handle conflicts with other adults. Work to demonstrate the way you want children to handle conflicts.



Just for Fun

Families are a type of team. To keep your team going strong, try these fun ideas:

- **Come up with a team name.** It might be cheesy, but kids enjoy knowing they’re part of the Grady Brigade, the Stauff-iteers or Team Taylor.
- **Consider code words.** Give your child a simple way to let you know that he or she needs your help or attention in a social situation. For example, saying, “Mom, I need to go to the library tonight” is a lot nicer than “Mom, that lady keeps blathering on and I’m about to have a meltdown.”
- **Play team-building games.** They’re not just for offices and clubs. A game of Human Knot, Twister or even 20 Questions while you’re walking the dog keeps kids engaged. Plus, look for active hobbies in which your whole family can participate, such as geocaching or playing kickball or volleyball.
- **Set and monitor family goals.** Whether the goal is to minimize conflict, be on time or save for a vacation, everyone should contribute.
- **Laugh together.** Did you hear a silly joke? Share it! Even when kids groan because the joke’s bad, they’re still laughing inside.

Quick Quotes

“Ten percent of conflicts are due to difference in opinion. Ninety percent are due to wrong tone of voice.”

—Unknown

“An apology is the super glue of life. It can repair just about anything.”

—Lynn Johnston

“An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

Parent Letter 3

Dear Family,

We're wrapping up our social-emotional learning (SEL) activities from the **American Heart Association**. We have covered a lot! Have you noticed any changes in how your child handles communication or conflicts? A renewed interest in fairness? A willingness to stand up for what's right? I bet you will.

We'll continue revisiting these lessons throughout the rest of the school year:

- ✓ Our activities teaching **clear communication** provide us with concrete steps for how to strike up a conversation and express ourselves clearly.
- ✓ Our study on **resolving conflict** equips us with the vocabulary to talk about how conflicts affect us.
- ✓ Learning about **cooperation** helps us work together more effectively as a class and on group projects.
- ✓ Practicing **active listening** helps us not just listen but truly understand what others are saying.
- ✓ We know that standing up for ourselves means we need to be **assertive**, and we have the skills to do that.
- ✓ Our exploration of **fairness** teaches us to examine situations carefully to determine what's truly fair. It's not always easy!

All of these new skills will go a long way in helping our class work well together and helping your child be confident and successful — at school and in life. Ask your child about these skills and encourage him or her to keep practicing them.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we teach important life skills that address the whole child.

Sincerely,

Your child's teacher



Grin and Share It

What did the eraser say to the pencil?

I see your point!

Does fair mean equal?

“That’s not fair!” How many times have you heard that at your house? In our social-emotional learning activities, we tackled the question of whether being fair always means being equal. Try a variation of this activity at home, too.

Every night this week, play a round of “Fair or No Fair?” with your kids. Give them one of the scenarios below and a few minutes to think about it. Then have them each make a case for why what’s described is fair or not. You’ll have lots of great discussions that you can refer to the next time the cry of “No fair!” arises. (Hint: Once you’ve covered these scenarios, challenge your children to come up with their own scenarios and continue the discussions.)



- Mom just got a parking ticket. However, she saw the parking enforcement officer walk past three other cars with expired meters, and they didn’t get tickets.
- Your older brother gets paid more than you do for doing chores.
- Your parents insisted that your oldest brother wait until he was 18 to get his driver’s license. But now your middle brother is 16 and he’s getting his license right away.
- Your Scout leader insists everyone wear their uniforms to meetings. But the Scout leader doesn’t wear her uniform.
- Your little sister has a bad cold and didn’t do her chores. Your dad tells her that she can skip them this week.

Practice with evaluating what’s fair will benefit your child in lots of different situations and will equip your child to stand up for others when a situation merits it.

Eye-Opening Statistics

- Twenty-eight percent of U.S. students in grades 6–12 experienced bullying.
- About 30 percent of young people admit to bullying others.
- Almost 71 percent of young people say they have seen bullying in their schools.
- More than 70 percent of school staff have seen bullying.

Did You Know?

Infants as young as 12 months old can show a basic understanding of fairness.

Source: Scientific American, August 2017