

Counseling Corner

Whiteford Elementary School

SEL & Summer Fun

Summer break doesn't mean your child has to stop developing and growing their social-emotional skills! In fact, there are numerous activities available for children to engage in during the summer, aiding in the growth and enhancement of these skills when academic work is not the main focus. Social-emotional learning (SEL) consists of five core competencies (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making) that offer plenty of opportunities for learners to practice any time of year. Keep reading to discover how you can support your child on their social-emotional learning adventure this summer!

Incorporating SEL into Your Summer Learning Routine

Read, Read, Read!

Reading is a self-awareness and relationship-building tool that helps children develop cultural and linguistic skills by exploring emotions, values, and interests through stories. It fosters empathy, broadens understanding, and sparks curiosity. Reading together promotes communication, strengthens bonds, and encourages meaningful conversations.

Create a Vision Board

Creating a vision board promotes decision-making and self-awareness. Instruct your child to select images, words, and symbols that resonate with their dreams and goals. Discuss what each image represents and how it aligns with their personal ambitions. This mindful activity also helps with positive thinking, articulating dreams, and planning steps towards achieving their goals. Further, it provides you with insight into their passions!

Visit Museums

Visiting museums is an educational experience that promotes self- and social awareness. Museums encourage positive mindsets, spark curiosity in science and history fields, and develop critical thinking skills. Interactive exhibits and activities make learning fun and memorable, cultivating a lifelong love for discovery. Museums also offer educational programs that can inspire new interests or career paths.

Take Mindful Walks

Taking a mindful walk is a social awareness tool that involves focusing on senses (sight, sound, smell, touch, taste) one at a time, describing observations, and connecting with your surroundings. It enhances attention to detail, coping skills, emotional well-being, and concentration. You can add mindful walks to your daily summer routine to promote relaxation, reflection, and appreciation for nature, which in turn stimulates mental and emotional growth!

Write Creative Stories

Writing creative stories can be a fun relationship skills-building activity. Provide your child with a prompt and ask them to write a short story on that subject, considering the characters' experiences, thoughts, feelings, and actions. This activity can help to enhance their critical thinking, vocabulary, and communication skills. Collaborative storytelling strengthens bonds and fosters creativity. To add another layer of excitement, you can create a storytelling jar filled with various prompts and scenarios. Let your child pick one at random! This not only makes the activity more engaging but also introduces an element of surprise and spontaneity!

Plant a Garden

Gardening encompasses three SEL core competencies: responsible decision-making, self-awareness, and self-management. Giving your child the tasks of planting, watering, and nurturing a flower, herb, or plant enables them to care for something and instills a sense of purpose. Since the plant relies entirely on them, it can create a love for the activity, spark interest, develop a hobby, and serve as a stress-reliever. As an added bonus, it encourages spending time outdoors!

Volunteer

Volunteering helps us develop responsible decision-making and relationship skills. We are all part of a larger community, encompassing our families, classrooms, friend groups, sports teams, and more. Volunteering allows us to reflect on our own roles within these communities. Whether you offer support at a nursing home, participate in a local park cleanup, or visit an animal shelter to walk the pups, volunteering empowers us to identify and offer support where necessary in the many communities to which we belong.

Cook or Bake

Cooking and baking enhance relationship skills, teamwork, collaboration, and problem-solving. Getting active in the kitchen boosts creativity, patience, and perseverance while also encouraging seeking help when it is needed, all of which are crucial skills to develop. Culinary activities create bonding experiences, memories, and traditions while fostering a sense of joy and accomplishment.

For more information on this topic, please visit my **Counseling Corner Newsletters and Resources** section within my **Resources** tab in my Schoology group.