

Social-emotional learning (SEL) has become a priority in many schools because research shows it is critical for academic and lifelong success. When kids are upset (sad, angry, worried), it is much harder for them to access the thinking parts of their brains to learn or to manage their behavior. The COVID-19 crisis brings this need for SEL support to the forefront, both for students and families. With anxiety and uncertainty at a global level, SEL may be even more important right now than academic learning—we need to help kids manage their big feelings and feel as emotionally and physically secure as we can. Teachers can help students catch up on missed math content in the months to come, but they need connection and emotional support *now!*

To help you think about ways to support SEL from a distance, we have compiled our favorite ideas and resources in the list below.

1. **Connection and Relationships!** Perhaps the most important part of any SEL has to be taking time to form relationships and make positive, supportive connections with students. Let them know you care about them, find new and creative ways to communicate, and take time to check in on them outside of the academic work time. Consider writing them a letter or creating fun videos of yourself with messages about missing your students that you can post for them to see.
2. Send home short SEL lessons or create online SEL lessons, just like teachers are doing for academic content. If your school is using a curriculum like Second Step or Sanford Harmony, keep the lessons coming! If not, here are some places with great ideas for lessons you can share with your students:
  - a. [CASEL](#): Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a national leader in SEL
  - b. [Second Step](#): Research-based SEL curriculum with specific lessons to use at home
  - c. [Conscious Discipline](#): an evidence-based, trauma-informed behavior management program that promotes many SEL skills
3. Host or create content for kids to do morning meetings at home - either with their families or virtually with the class. [Responsive Classroom](#) gives a good explanation of what morning meetings are and resources to provide ideas for content.
4. Do virtual “emotion check-ins” with students to see how they are feeling when you connect with them. Here are a few ideas or tools you can use:
  - a. Feelings thermometer for emotion check-ins: [Feelings Thermometer Samples](#)
  - b. [Zones of Regulation](#): A set of tools to help kids identify and express feelings
5. Share with parents and caregivers ideas for setting up a “calm-down space” in their house that is similar to what many schools have in classrooms. This is a designated space with different fidget toys, comforting items like stuffed animals, and self-regulation activities they know their child likes. Keep this simple! A small space with a pillow



The **ZONES** of Regulation®

			
			
			
			
			
<b>BLUE ZONE</b> Sad Sick Tired Bored Moving Slowly	<b>GREEN ZONE</b> Happy Calm Feeling Okay Focused Ready to Learn	<b>YELLOW ZONE</b> Frustrated Worried Silly/Wiggly Excited Loss of Some Control	<b>RED ZONE</b> Mad/Angry Terrified Yelling/Hitting Elated Out of Control

and a couple of these items is all that is needed. The key is encouraging parents and caregivers to take time to talk about and introduce the space to their child or get their child's input in setting it up. This can be done for older kids (or adults!) too. **Important caveat:** this is NOT a place for punishment or consequences. It is a place where children can have some space to take deep breaths, calm down, and feel in control.



6. Explore and teach specific calm-down skills. These are things that can be included in an at-home calm-down space. Ideas and tools may include:

- a. Send home instructions on how to make a [homemade sensory glitter bottle](#)
- b. Send home instructions on how to make a [homemade stress ball](#)
- c. Allow kids to use putty or play-doh to squeeze for calming down
- d. Practice grounding - this can include facing the wall and pushing your hands as hard as you can against the wall or sitting in a chair and pushing your hands down on the base of the seat as hard as you can
- e. Make your own [pinwheel](#) or use bubbles to practice breathing exercises
- f. Activate the 5 senses by naming 5 colors you see around the room, 4 sounds you hear in the room, 3 items you can touch and feel nearby, 2 smells you may notice, and 1 thing to describe the current taste in your mouth
- g. Ask students what they like to do that helps them calm down and encourage them to practice



7. Send home online mindfulness resources that have simple, already-created videos specifically for students to practice mindfulness skills. Many of these are free right now, and available as phone apps or online. Encourage students to practice short mindfulness exercises with their families!

- a. [GoNoodle](#)
- b. [Headspace](#)
- c. [Smiling Mind](#)
- d. [Stop, Breathe & Think](#)
- e. [Mindful Schools](#)



8. Incorporate SEL into other work such as art projects, using music, or writing prompts that give students a chance to express their thoughts and feelings.
9. Share ideas on books that have themes around sharing and managing feelings or calm-down strategies for kids and youth. For younger kids, host a virtual story time with these books and for older kids, use these books for reading assignments. A few elementary age books include:
  - a. [My Hero is You: How Kids Can Fight COVID-19](#) (free PDF version linked here)
  - b. [The Bell in the Bridge](#) (Children dealing with loneliness)
  - c. [The Rhino Who Swallowed a Storm](#) (Healing feelings after disaster)
  - d. [My Many Colored Days by Dr. Seuss](#)
  - e. [Subert and Sophie Stay Home](#) (from Conscious Discipline), also in [Spanish](#)