

## Social-Emotional Learning & Transition

Transitioning from high school to adulthood is a big step for anyone, but it can be incredibly challenging for students with disabilities. Students need to have skills to manage challenges. That's where Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) comes in. SEL helps students build healthy identities, understand emotions, demonstrate empathy, and build healthy relationships.

SEL matters when transition planning for students with disabilities. There are also special considerations when working with court-involved youth. For more detailed information about the five components of SEL, read the [Social-Emotional Learning Fast Fact](#).

### Including Social-Emotional Learning in Transition Planning

SEL helps students learn how to stay calm during stressful situations or work through conflicts. SEL can also help students make good decisions when faced with tough choices, which are key skills that employers value. For students with disabilities, SEL can also help them advocate for themselves. These skills include asking for accommodations at work or explaining their needs to a professor. Transition planning that provides SEL helps prepare students for life's everyday challenges.

### Activities to Enhance Social-Emotional Learning Skills

Families, educators, or community partners can use the following activities to teach SEL skills in various environments.

#### Feelings Check-In

- **What to Do:** Start the day by asking, "How are you feeling today?" and have students or your child choose a word or emoji to describe their emotions.
- **Why it Helps:** This builds self-awareness and teaches that talking about feelings is okay, setting the tone for open communication.

#### Goal-Setting Journal

- **What to Do:** Have students or your child write down one goal for the week and the steps they'll take to achieve it. At the end of the week, reflect on what went well and what could be improved.
- **Why it Helps:** This encourages self-management by helping them plan, stay organized, and feel proud of their progress.

## Empathy in Action

- **What to Do:** Watch a short video or read about someone's experience, then discuss how the person might feel and what you could do to support them.
- **Why it Helps:** This activity boosts social awareness by helping students understand different perspectives and practice empathy.

## Special Considerations for Court-Involved Youth

Youth who are court-involved have often experienced trauma. SEL skills can help these students build confidence and resilience. Students can develop skills like managing emotions, making positive choices, and building healthy relationships. It is especially essential for those working with court-involved youth to consider:

- Educators should be sensitive to the experiences of court-involved youth and their challenges. The learning environment should be safe and supportive.
- Educators should focus on consistency and structure. Clear expectations and routines can help students feel more secure.
- Activities should be engaging, hands-on, and relevant to students' lives. Offering choices in activities can empower students to take control of their learning, which leads to confidence and increased feelings of self-worth.
- Educators should collaborate with other professionals, such as counselors and social workers. Collaboration helps to ensure that SEL activities align with the youth's broader needs. Teamwork can help address barriers, like stress at home or legal challenges.

## Conclusion

When students learn to manage their emotions, set goals, and connect with others, they're better prepared for the real world. Educators and families can prepare students for their next steps and a lifetime of possibilities by integrating SEL into transition planning and daily life.