



ADVANCING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) TO CREATE SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

SEL Guidance in Response to the 2020 Election and Violent Attack on January 6th

Before the 2020 U.S. Presidential election, CASEL released curated guidance to help educators and young people work through big questions about our nation and continue their civic participation. In response to the violent attack on January 6th at the U.S. Capitol, we continue our commitment to support educators, schools, and young people in leveraging social and emotional learning to create safe, supportive, and equitable learning environments where all people can heal and thrive.

We have an opportunity to continue learning and working alongside young people to support the well-being of all individuals and of our communities. By focusing on SEL, we can reinforce our democratic principles by developing self-awareness of our emotions and identities, self-management and a sense of agency to take action when there is injustice, build social awareness and stronger relationships, and make responsible decisions that contribute to a more caring and just nation.

CASEL invites educators and leaders to use the curated guidance below to reflect on their social and emotional competencies and foster a learning environment that supports all students and adults in their community.

ADULT SELF-REFLECTION

Reflect on your own SEL. Our social and emotional competencies help us work through big questions, process emotions, listen to each other, and engage in civic action. As you prepare to engage others in conversations about the election and subsequent violent attack on January 6th, take a moment to reflect on your own SEL:

Reflect on your own SELF-AWARENESS with questions such as...

- How do I feel and how have I been impacted?
- How might my emotions impact the things I do, say, and write?
- How does my identity shape the way I view people and events and the way I am seen by others?

Reflect on your own SELF-MANAGEMENT with questions such as...

- How will I stop and think before I act?
- How do I manage stress and work through these complex emotions?
- How can I counteract my biases?

Reflect on your own SOCIAL AWARENESS with questions such as...

- What are others thinking and feeling?
- How might my words impact others?



- Why do others have different views than me?

Reflect on your own **RELATIONSHIP SKILLS** with questions such as...

- How can I get along with people I disagree with so strongly?
- How will I listen to and understand the experience of others?
- How can I communicate my views authentically and respectfully?

Reflect on your own **RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING** with questions such as...

- What sources of news are reliable and okay to share?
- How can I take action to make this community/this country a better place?
- What has been the impact of my decisions so far?

FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Create a Supportive Learning Environment for Discussing the Election and Violent Attack on January 6th. A supportive and equitable learning environment will provide a place for young people and adults to process what is happening, recognize their location within the historical moment, and understand the views of others.

Whether you lead a district, a school, a classroom, an afterschool program, or another workplace, you can cultivate a supportive environment post-election by: 1) preparing the space for SEL, 2) opening space for sharing and listening, and 3) expanding the space to promote collective well-being.

1. **Preparing the space for SEL.** Ensure the learning environment is one where all people feel connected and accepted.
 - **Co-create shared agreements** or ground rules about how all members of the learning community will interact with empathy and the desire to understand other perspectives. Establish that it is good to share opposing views, but views that are hateful, dehumanizing, or disrespectful to others' history, identity, or experience are not acceptable.
 - **Recognize power dynamics in play.** Some will feel uneasy about sharing their views, especially if they perceive that they are in the minority or that group leaders disagree with them. Leaders do not need to pretend to be neutral but should model interest and a welcoming attitude toward opposing views.
 - **Allow for independent processing.** Give time for people to think and write independently and/or practice a calming strategy before and after a group discussion.



RESOURCES TO GET STARTED: Preparing the space for SEL.

[Sample Lesson Plan: Generating Classroom Shared Agreements](#) (CASEL *Guide to Schoolwide SEL*). A process to co-create agreements as a class community, reflecting how students want to be treated and how they plan to treat others.



[Discussing Crucial Issues with Youth](#) (*America's Promise Alliance*). A supplemental guide for engaging young people around top-of-mind issues in 2021, including navigating a pandemic and their role in fighting for racial justice.

[Can We Talk? Tips for Respectful Conversations in Schools, Workplaces and Communities](#) (*ADL*). Guidance on setting ground rules, listening and communicating effectively, paying attention to issues of power, and focusing on relationships.

[Bridging Differences Playbook](#) (*Greater Good Science Center*). A guide to the key evidence-based skills and strategies to practice on your own and with others and to bring people together to foster positive dialogue and understanding.

[Caring for Students in the Wake of a Traumatic News Event](#) (*Education Week*). This article promotes student well-being with strategies for seizing teachable moments after difficult events.

2. Opening space for sharing and listening. Provide opportunities to share and listen to how members of the group are feeling and experiencing the reactions to the election and violent attack on January 6th.

- **Use structured discussions** to promote equity of voice and allow different views to be expressed. Begin with lower-risk prompts, small-group discussion, or anonymous sharing and affirmation to build trust. Consider using restorative prompts like these in a [circle](#), smallgroup, or writing:
 - When you heard the news of the attack, what did you think and how did you feel?
 - How have you been/how do you expect to be impacted as a result of the January 6th attack?
 - What has been the hardest thing for you?
 - What can you commit to doing to move forward?
 - Who is one person you can share your thoughts and feelings with comfortably? (*based on the work of IIRP*)
- **Investigate the social, cultural, and historical influences behind different views.** Whether or not there is strong disagreement within your group, learning more about those with opposing views can build empathy and improve communication.
- **Debrief the discussion** to process emotions, summarize insights, and get feedback about how to improve.



RESOURCES TO GET STARTED: Opening Spaces for Sharing and Listening

[Responding to the Insurrection at the Capitol](#). (*Facing History and Ourselves*).

This article can serve as a guide for an initial classroom reflection on the violent attacks that occurred on January 6th.

[We can't gaslight students about the Capitol riot. We can use it as a teaching tool](#). (*Chalkbeat*). This article gives educators advice for talking to young people about the attack on January 6th, elevating facts and emphasizing critical thinking.

[How To Talk To Kids About The Riots At The U.S. Capitol](#) (*NPR*). This article advises parents, caregivers and teachers to help children make sense of the news and calm anxieties.

[Responding to the 2020 US Presidential Election](#). (*Facing History and Ourselves*). A guide for student reflection on the election both before and after the results are announced. This Teaching Idea was written before the results of the 2020 presidential election were known.

[Using the Election as a Teaching Tool](#) (*Silva, via Edutopia*). Guidance on teaching across content areas including math, reading, writing, and social studies to advance students' understanding of politics and history while also supporting their social and emotional needs.

[Where Do We Go from Here? Resources to Help Classrooms Process the 2020 Election](#) (*DuPage Regional Office of Education and Illinois Civic Mission Coalition*). A communication and toolkit as an example of how district leaders, coaches, or partners can support schools and promote a common experience for all students.

3. **Expanding the space to promote collective well-being.** Help people channel their energy and ideas productively and make their voices heard beyond the classroom or workplace.

- **Identify a next step.** Discuss and show examples of ways to learn more, speak out, demonstrate, and hold elected officials accountable.
- **Promote collective well-being.** Ask group members to write and/or share about something they can do for their personal well-being and for the well-being of the larger community



RESOURCES TO GET STARTED: Expanding the Space to Promote Collective Well-Being

[Digital Civics Toolkit](#) (*MacArthur Research Network on Youth and Participatory Politics*). A five-part process that begins with exploring identity and issues, and then moves into analyzing information, perspective-taking and exchanging ideas, and generating solutions. Easy to use virtually.

[Let's Talk About Election 2020](#) (*KQED Learn*). A media challenge for young people in grades 6-12 to create a podcast, video, narrated slideshow or animation to share their opinion on national issues. Visit the site to see the work produced by others, access a curriculum toolbox, or submit an entry.

[The Election is Over... Now What?](#) (*ADL*). A three-step process to continue the conversation about the election in a way that helps students process what they and others are experiencing and keep elected officials accountable.