

Social and emotional learning topics

School/classroom applications and possible responses

Topic/Theme	Relevant ATL skill categories	IB learner profile connections	Context/Issue	Possible SEL responses
<i>Improving focus and attention</i>	Self-management: affective skills (mindful awareness)	Inquirers	Classwork/ homework: students are easily distracted and have difficulty attending to and completing assignments/activities/formative assessments/projects	<p>A student could have difficulty focusing in class for a number of reasons. If problems persist and the student's learning is being impacted, it is very important that the teacher and/or school counsellor have a conversation with the student's parents to share their concerns. Parents may seek professional medical or mental health evaluations. Schools may respond with access arrangementsⁱ or other accommodations for students with learning support requirementsⁱⁱ.</p> <p>Typical classroom strategies that can benefit students who are having difficulty focusing in may include, but are not limited to: preferential seating (away from distractions and/or close to the teacher); frequent movement breaks to allow the student to use up energy, thereby allowing him/her to focus when returning to the classroom; use of sensory tools (such as fidgets); Velcro under his/her desk; checking for understanding; redirection cues; restating directions; and use of headphones/white noise to eliminate sound distractions.</p> <p>For some students, a course in mindfulness or biofeedback can help develop somatic awareness and self-regulation.</p> <p>Students with attention difficulties may also have lower levels of executive function, which can lead to challenges with organization, time management, goal setting and other necessary tools for school success.</p> <p>Students may also have trouble focusing in the classroom if they have a lot going on in their life outside of school that is preventing them from being available for learning. If a teacher is made aware of something that their student is dealing with, it could be beneficial to notify the school counsellor and to</p>

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				possibly arrange for a team meeting with the parents, teachers and any other important people who can help support the student at school and in extracurricular and community activities.
<i>Managing academic workload</i>	Self-management: organization skills Self-management: affective skills (self-motivation and perseverance)	Reflective	Classwork/ homework: overload, feeling overwhelmed, understanding and re-framing and procrastination	Developing a student's executive functioning skills is essential for organization and workload management. Organization and time management are very individualized skills that should be modelled for students by adults in their lives (both at home and in the academic setting). Some students value organization and have support at home, while others do not. In-school coaching on the use of a student planner, calendar system, and effective routines can help students learn how to manage for themselves homework and other after-school activities. These skills are especially important for students who are easily distracted or overwhelmed by online activities, communities and distractions.
<i>Performance anxiety (academic, artistic, sports)</i>	Self-management: affective skills (emotional management, mindfulness)	Risk-takers	Speeches, presentations, concerts, competitions, tournaments, sporting matches/games Try-outs and auditions	It is very common for students to feel anxious before and during a presentation or performance. A teacher or counsellor can help their student with this by using mindfulness exercises, guided relaxation, breathing, and imagery. Providing students with a fidget or stress ball can also help with stress management and anxiety. Counsellors can also meet with the student to identify the source of the anxiety and to process the student's perception of the situation. Careful preparation, meaningful feedback and lots of practice can help, and any opportunity to rehearse the anxiety-provoking situation reduces stress. The result is higher confidence, self-satisfaction and cause for celebration!

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<i>Setting challenging and manageable goals; developing strategies that promote meaningful reflection</i>	Self-management: organization skills	Reflective Principled	Academic progress through self-assessment and goal setting	Goal setting is a skill that students should be taught early on and reinforced throughout their academic career. Setting goals at the beginning of the school year, tracking progress and reassessing the goals are great ways to remain focused. Ongoing monitoring of progress allows students to make adjustments to their goals and the changes they must make in order to attain them. When students practise this kind of self-assessment, they increase their self-awareness and are empowered to take charge of their own learning. Students can set personal and academic goals that have benefits at school and beyond.
<i>Deep listening; group dynamics (roles, interactions and process)</i>	Social: collaboration skills Communication: communication skills	Open-minded Communicators	Working collaboratively in a group is an important skill for all students/people/workers/citizens to learn. Collaborative skills are required throughout academic and professional careers. Students are typically exposed to group dynamics in a social environment and begin to practise collaboration to achieve a common goal or outcome when they are at school.	Teachers can support students as they practise and refine their skills for working in small groups: identifying group norms, offering potential strategies for avoiding and managing conflict, creating a positive ethos of participation and achievement, establishing procedures to follow when things are not going well or as planned, sharing leadership, and giving and receiving feedback. Developing deep listening skills can be particularly effective in promoting positive collaboration. Listening skills can be taught in isolation or in practical applications. Students can identify explicit attitudes and skills to self-monitor and on which to seek feedback from peers and trusted adults.
<i>Exam stress or test anxiety</i>	Self-management: affective skills (emotional management, mindfulness)	Balanced Reflective	The student will begin to panic and feel overwhelmed, possibly losing the ability to keep things in perspective. This will lead to a lack of balance in their personal life as more time is given to study. However, due to the panic and anxiety, this increased	If students are stressed about examinations, they may place excessive demands on teachers for support and assistance. Teachers can help to reduce anxiety with a calm, reassuring presence that encourages students and helps them take responsibility for their success. Effective strategies and responses can include:

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	Self-management: organization skills		study time will not be helpful as the student will not be in a position to absorb the learning. This could potentially affect sleep patterns, impact well-being, increase inattention, or hamper performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that students have effective study and/or revision plans. Ensure that the study schedule is proportionate to the importance of the assessment, and that students can accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses. Encourage mental and physical balance, nutrition and exercise, and rest and relaxation. • Educate parents about the need for the students to be well-rested and maintain health and a well-balanced diet. Discourage “cramming” by promoting effective learning strategies like spaced repetition, active note-taking and self-quizzing. • Teach breathing techniques and body-mind awareness and control strategies. • Help students keep examinations in perspective, focusing on longer-term goals and broader purposes for learning. • Counsellors can help review study skills and help students establish personalized pre-examination routines to manage anxiety and improve performance, including positive self-talk. • Develop a culture of healthy reflection about examinations, reviewing stress management strategies and revising as needed. Encourage students to share their experiences, successes and next steps. • Consider ways to help students develop a pre-exam routine for calming and grounding themselves before high-stakes assessments, and provide invigilators/proctors with instructions that allow (or promote) these routines.

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<i>Coping with change</i>	<p>Communication: communication skills</p> <p>Social: collaboration skills</p> <p>Self-management: affective skills</p>	<p>Open-minded</p> <p>Risk-takers</p> <p>Communicators</p>	<p>Starting in a new school</p> <p>The impact of changing schools varies developmentally, culturally and personally. Experience, expectations, family dynamics and the circumstances around the change have important impacts on students' health and well-being.</p> <p>Students may have to cope with transferring between educational systems while living in an unfamiliar culture. They may be grieving the loss of family connections and friends. Sometimes language is an additional barrier, and the uncertainty of new surroundings can be very unsettling; students may not yet have a permanent place to live or store their belongings. Many students report feelings of being lost, insecure, uprooted, judged and frightened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relationships matter; new students need opportunities to build friendships and to establish meaningful connections with teachers and school leaders. Mentors, guides and language partners can provide support for entry into social networks. Major transitions like changing schools provoke a range of emotions to which teachers must attend, building a shared vocabulary and safe forums for discussing emotional responses to stress. Teachers can find out as much about the student and their previous life by reading admission documents and speaking with school counsellors or admission teams. Consider a "getting to know you" survey prior to the student starting the school. Create a student-friendly welcome video to welcome new students to the school. Provide a student-friendly welcome booklet with FAQs, a map, and a "what do I do if" section that the student can keep accessible in his or her first few days. Set up an early meeting with both the student and the parents to see how the transition has gone and to address any problems. Talk about the hidden curriculum of classroom expectations, policies and procedures; provide feedback and opportunities to practise in which students can grow in their ability to manage themselves and the learning process. Engage additional support to ensure that new students have adequate housing, food and clothing; lacking in

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				these essential needs can severely interfere with learning.
<i>Bullying (student to student)</i>	Self-management: affective skills (resilience, emotional management)	Reflective Principled	Students who have experienced bullying may have been humiliated, belittled, isolated and/or abused. The bullying may be physical, verbal, covert (hidden), or online (cyberbullying). The severity of the bullying and the nature of the bullying will have different impacts on the student involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers should not make any early judgments on what they believe may have happened. They should keep an open mind and direct the students to an appropriate process for handling complaints or observed problematic behaviour. • When appropriate, a meeting between the students involved could be arranged with the school counsellor. The point of the meeting would be to share perspectives, listen to all sides, and find a fair and reasonable resolution to the problem at hand. • From the meetings and discussions that will have taken place, it may become clear that further action is necessary for one or both parties (for example, counselling or coaching on friendships), including sanctions or disciplinary actions as indicated. • Consider solutions that involve approaches like restorative justice. • Approach bullying and unproductive relationships holistically, understanding the whole person and the situational contexts for students' beliefs and actions. • Refer students with longterm, more significant issues through support systems at school or in the community. Do not compromise student safety or create policies that have or may have unintended effects (for example, a zero-tolerance policy with stringent penalties, which may make students less likely to report problem behaviour).

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that lessons on appropriate interactions, peer pressure and bullying are aspects of the advisory curriculum so that students and teachers can discuss prevention and understand school processes and supports. • Include all parents and students in a dialogue about bullying prior to the start of the school year to create a partnership with families and to encourage kindness. It is also beneficial to educate families on the definition of bullying and the process of reporting and investigating it. • Protect students' personal and legal rights; make the creation of a safe and healthy learning environment a responsibility that is shared by all.
<p><i>Unrealistic or overly demanding/unhealthy expectations of students</i></p>	<p>Communication: communication skills</p> <p>Social: collaboration skills</p> <p>Self-management: affective skills</p>	<p>Reflective</p> <p>Balanced</p> <p>Communicators</p>	<p>In some cultures, the success of children directly correlates with the esteem with which families are held in society. The consequence of this is often that parents want their children to be academically successful in order to secure their social standing. In some cases, parents may have unrealistic expectations, and students can feel pressure as they try to meet these expectations. This can lead to anxiety and depression. The expectations of a competitive society can also filter down into the school itself; students can put pressure on each other to be successful or to be the “best” in their peer group.</p>	<p>Competitive academic environments, at many levels, can impose pressure to perform and succeed to the extent that students and their families develop unrealistic academic expectations for themselves and for school personnel.</p> <p>Teachers are responsible for providing fair, clear and consistent feedback that reflects demonstrated accomplishments. Some strategies to promote healthy conversations about academic achievement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular meetings between school, parents and students to communicate students' progress and their current goals • sessions designed to explain grading systems, entrance procedures for subsequent admission procedures, and how to support students in stressful academic situations

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				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating robust student support teams • developing a culture of concern for the whole child that recognizes the unique strengths and areas for improvement of each student • publically celebrating a range of successes and personal excellence; sending a clear message that there are many ways to set and achieve challenging goals.
<i>Collaboration gone wrong</i>	Social: collaboration skills Communication: communication skills Self-management: affective skills (emotional management, perseverance, resilience)	Open-minded Communicators Caring	Students say that they find collaboration difficult because they have to learn about how to deal with rejection, other people not listening to or liking their ideas, being excluded from a group, their ideas being openly derided and losing face in front of their peers. This has a direct impact on self-confidence, engagement in the learning process and relationships with peers outside of the classroom.	Ineffective collaboration can distract groups from their learning objectives, and teachers often must focus on helping individual students manage hurt feelings or damaged egos. By teaching collaboration strategies, including protocols to use when collaboration is failing, teachers can regain valuable class time and help students practise essential life skills. Group agreements, assigned roles/functions, regular reflection, and role play can enable more effective collaboration. Students need multiple opportunities to practise listening, asking questions, negotiating, and organizing and conducting meetings. Advisory groups, counselling groups, and conversations between teachers and counsellors provide opportunities to explore incidents of difficult collaboration and plan changes in behaviour and thinking.
<i>Friendships</i>	Social: collaboration skills Self-management: affective skills	Caring Reflective	Friends and friendship groups change as students mature and develop as individuals. Peer relationships form the backdrop and context for school learning environments, and navigating friendships is a necessary and	Helping students manage friendship is very context-dependent. For example, many small-scale situations are best left to play out naturally and without adult intervention. (Sometimes the involvement of a teacher can complicate or exacerbate a friendship problem.) Here are some general guidelines for social and emotional learning about friendship:

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			important aspect of adolescent development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a student has come to ask for help from a teacher, sometimes active listening and sympathetic support is the best response. • Helping students to identify a range of solutions and affirming students' ownership and agency can be very empowering. • Sometimes teachers can facilitate informal discussions or mediations in which friends can share their perspectives, thoughts and feelings in search of mutual solutions. Peer mediation programmes are also an option. • When friendships change or end, trusted adults can help students understand the process of grief, loss and change; cope with emotional responses; and build resilience by exploring opportunities and plans for making new friends. • Using the advisory programme to talk about these issues in a proactive way can be helpful, as students know to expect friendship issues and have already been equipped with skills and strategies for how to deal with the situation. It is important for students to understand that there are different types of friends (best friend, acquaintance, etc) and that roles in friendships naturally change over time. When students are younger they often create friendships based on who is in their class. As they grow older and change classes throughout the school day, they begin to identify possible friends with whom they have things in common and enjoy spending time. • Students may need special support with the development of romantic relationships and the emergence of sexual maturity. Culturally sensitive responses can include sexual and relationship

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				education programmes in which social and emotional learning is a key component.
<i>Cultural conflicts</i>	Self-management affective skills	Open-minded	Students can become angry, frustrated and upset when confronted with behaviours that they do not understand or that represent something in particular in their own culture. Often, in a situation like this, they might respond negatively first—rather than taking a moment to reflect—and then communicate what it is that is upsetting them. This emotional response can amplify the conflict, disrupt relationships and interfere with effective learning.	<p>Ensure that dealing with conflict is an aspect of the advisory programme so that students have an opportunity to role play situations, reflect on their own experiences and consider strategies that might work for them in the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the student. Repeat back to ensure you understand what the student is trying to communicate and validate their feelings. Once the student feels that their feelings have been heard, they can then take a much more objective viewpoint and begin to understand why they reacted the way they did. It is important to wait until the student concerned has cooled down. There will be no progress made while the student is feeling angry and hurt. A counsellor can help the student pick apart the incident, try to understand the different perspectives involved and consider different alternatives. • Having an authentic emphasis on international mindedness throughout the curriculum will help the student to be in a position to consider that different students have different perspectives, backgrounds and ways of doing things. • It is important to bring attention to these cultural differences and celebrate them regularly so that there is multicultural awareness and understanding within the classroom. This also allows students to feel appreciated and important.

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<i>Peer pressure</i>	Social: collaboration skills Self-management: affective skills	Open-minded Thinkers Principled	Central to any teenager's esteem and happiness is the need to belong and be accepted by peers. Students can engage in unproductive, unhealthy or dangerous behaviour in order to "fit in". As peer relationships grow in importance, students develop new frames of reference for making decisions. As students explore and construct their own identities, they naturally compare themselves with others (in many degrees of acquaintance—from close friends, to acquaintances, to various explicit or implicit media presentations of what is "normal" or expected).	<p>Students, families and cultures have a wide range of understanding about peer pressure and how to respond to it. As social beings, humans at every developmental stage are interested in—and can profit from—what other people in similar circumstances and with similar interests think. Important strategies to teach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning to be assertive (for example, how to say "no") and when to seek help • being mindful of your own feelings and developing a sense of self and self-reliance • gracefully extricating yourself from dangerous or pressure-filled situations • choosing friends, looking for positive examples • seeking feedback and advice. <p>Good student–teacher relationships and good parent–teen communications can help students face difficult situation. Since middle years students often fear being an outcast or different, It is important to build the confidence and self-esteem necessary to deal with peer pressure.</p>
<i>Coping with a crisis or trauma</i>			The types of crisis or trauma that students may experience vary greatly, and appropriate responses must take into account many personal, situational and institutional factors.	<p>Responses to personal or shared crises often require specialist intervention and coordinated efforts that affect a wide range of relationships. A caring environment, trusted adults and holistic learning environments can help teachers and student manage traumatic events.</p> <p>Social and emotional skills are helpful for managing the impact of crisis situations. Students may want or find it helpful to share their feelings and have them validated by others.</p>

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				<p>Structure and routine help students affirm and rebuild the safe and secure learning environment that they need to develop their routine. The longer students are out of their routine, the more difficult it is for them to return to it. The structure of what to expect and keeping things as they were prior to the traumatic event offers students a feeling of safety that helps them to develop resiliency.</p> <p>Students may benefit from a deeper understanding of how mind, body and emotions function together; many programmes offer strategies for developing greater self-awareness and self-compassion.</p>
<i>Sick family member or friend</i>	Self-management: affective skills (emotional management)	Caring Balanced	When family or friends are seriously ill (acutely or chronically), students are often impacted at school—both in terms of their social and emotional well-being and their academic achievement.	<p>Every student and every situation have unique characteristics, but young people are often stronger and more resilient than adults may think. Helping students navigate the serious illness of family members or friends requires great sensitivity and respect for privacy, family relationships and cultural norms. Experts advise active listening and honest communication as important aspects of responsible care from concerned friends and adults at school.</p> <p>Students facing family stress because sick parents or siblings may require extra support and often rely on teachers to help maintain a sense of order and responsibility in school at a time when life at home may be unsettled. Teachers, students and family members can learn about the emotional reactions that people often have to serious illness and recovery. Adults should be aware of signs that students need professional support or the intervention of mental health specialists.</p> <p>Coping with illness, and even death, is a natural part of life, and teachers should be aware of the social and emotional reactions of class mates whose own experiences may be a source of</p>

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				<p>ongoing concern—and a source of empathy for students who have sick family or friends.</p> <p>Teachers can help by acknowledging feelings, providing opportunities to express concern, and modelling kindness and compassion, and facilitating appropriate concrete expressions of care. Students sometimes find difficult times to be significant periods of personal growth.</p>
<i>Cyberbullying</i>	Research: media literacy skills	Knowledgeable Principled	Social media and other forms of technology can provide students with an easy way to connect with peers, but also carries the possibility of negative consequences. The internet offers what can be a less personal—even anonymous—platform from which to tease, frighten, insult harass or intimidate others. Using social media to spread rumours, send mean messages, impersonate others, or share unauthorized images are acts of electronic aggression that are not only harmful but potentially illegal.	<p>Cyberbullying can have emotionally damaging outcomes and, in some circumstances, devastating consequences. Schools can work collaboratively with families and communities to develop policies that promote safe online environments and foster responsible digital citizenship.</p> <p>Sometimes, cyberbullies are motivated by their own feelings inadequacy, revenge or anger. Victims of cyberbullying also often have strong emotional reactions.</p> <p>How to be safe and socially responsible online should be a topic of frequent reflection and dialogue. Students can learn how to protect each other, agreeing not to stand by when bullies inflict pain on others and refusing to join in or share in cyberbullying begun by someone else. Managing emotions in online settings is also important.</p> <p>Simple strategies can be very effective for de-escalating emotionally charged online interactions. For example it can be helpful to “count to 10” or “take a break” before responding to a communication that generates a strong emotional response.</p>
<i>Dealing with emotions</i>	Self-management: affective skills	Reflective Balanced	Identifying and acknowledging emotions that can interfere with learning	Emotions are a powerful reality in teaching and learning. Students need to be emotionally ready to learn, and teachers need to be very aware of their own emotional state and

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				<p>responses throughout the learning process, as well as in their relationships with students and colleagues.</p> <p>Classroom routines can help structure transitions and support students as they “check in”, centre, settle down, and attend to their emotions. Practices that develop self-awareness can promote ownership, responsibility and agency that support classroom learning.</p> <p>Students who are emotionally ready to learn have heightened awareness, interest, attention, and a relaxed but eager anticipation of what will happen as the day’s learning engagements unfold.</p> <p>Some good reminders about emotions and learning include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • help students learn how and when to use rational processes to deal with emotions, and how to express emotions honestly and responsibly • develop a shared vocabulary of words, definitions, metaphors and images that communicate feelings and describe relationships • look for ways to explore, understand and describe emotional dimensions of the people and ideas being studied in school • plan social interactions and holistic activities that engage students’ bodies and emotions • design learning engagements that engage students emotionally—role plays, simulations and projects establish emotional and contextual memories that help students recall information and deepen learning

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				<p>http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct94/vol52/num02/How-Emotions-Affect-Learning.aspx</p> <p>It can be difficult for students with high emotionality or challenges in regulating emotions to be available for learning. Often, these students may appear as though they are fine, but may be struggling internally. Teachers who observe or are concerned about a student's emotional health may refer him/her to a school counsellor. With parental permission, school counsellors may work with external care providers to support students in school settings.</p>

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