

# School-Family Partnership Strategies to Enhance Children's Social, Emotional, and Academic Growth



## Overview

Schools and families have essential roles to play in promoting children's positive development and academic performance. When educators and parents work together as partners, they create important opportunities for children to develop social, emotional, and academic competencies.

This brief provides educators with strategies to promote children's social, emotional, and academic development using school-family partnerships. We begin with an overview of social and emotional learning (SEL) and school-family partnerships (SFPs) and a discussion of the important relationship of SFPs and SEL, which we illustrate with examples from an SFP framework. We conclude with suggestions of how educators can immediately begin to apply these strategies to build and nurture successful SFPs.

*Note:* The terms “parent” and “family” are used interchangeably and refer to any adult caregiver or group of caregivers who play a primary role in a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, including grandparents, foster parents, and extended family members. The term “educator” is also broadly used to refer to any school staff member who is involved in children's educational experience, including principals, administrators, teachers, school psychologists, social workers, counselors, nurses, and paraprofessional staff.

## Introduction

Education is increasingly viewed as a shared responsibility of educators and families. Research has demonstrated the importance of SEL to success in school and work, and SEL programs are now widely used in many schools. Research has also shown that SEL programs become more powerful when they extend into the home (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007). As programs to promote SEL gain prominence and are integrated school wide, it becomes increasingly important to reinforce and align these efforts with children's at-home experience.

SEL and SFPs share a common mission: to create an engaging and supportive climate for learning both in school and at home. Establishing effective partnerships between educators and families, and

using complementary strategies to promote learning in school and at home, create optimal conditions to promote children's academic, social, and emotional skill development.

## What Is SEL?

SEL is the process of developing basic social and emotional competencies that serve children (and adults) in all areas of life. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003) has identified five primary skill clusters for SEL:

- *Self-awareness*—having a realistic perception of one's own values, interests, and strengths, and being able to recognize one's own emotions
- *Self-management*—how well one manages emotions, impulses, and stress, and whether one is able to establish and achieve goals and exercise self-discipline
- *Social awareness*—the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with someone else and to appreciate and respect diversity
- *Relationship skills*—the ability to participate in healthy, cooperative, and caring relationships, and effectively resolve conflicts
- *Responsible decision-making*—the ability to recognize and generate good choices, evaluate the likely consequences of actions, and take responsibility for one's decisions

A growing body of research evidence, including a recent meta-analysis of 213 SEL programs, demonstrates that these competencies can be taught and that enhancing social and emotional skills improves children's behavior and academic achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Cultivating these competencies in children requires safe and nurturing environments where SEL is encouraged. This is why the most beneficial and robust SEL programs are coordinated across settings where children spend their time, including home and school; and offer developmentally appropriate instruction across grade levels, from preschool through high school (Elias et al., 1997; Zins & Elias, 2006). Effective programs are also supported by ongoing professional development (CASEL, 2003).

## What Are SFPs?

SFPs have gained national prominence as a way of enhancing children's learning and achievement. Why? Because research has shown that children whose parents are more involved in their education have higher rates of attendance, homework completion, and school completion, as well as elevated grades and test scores (Barnard, 2004; Henderson & Berla, 1987; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005). Family involvement also facilitates children's cognitive, social, and emotional functioning and has been linked to increased self-esteem, improved behavior, and more positive attitudes toward school (Christenson & Havsy, 2004; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding, & Walberg, 2005).

### Creating Shared Leadership

**NCLB mandates “the participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including ensuring that (a) parents play an integral role in assisting their child’s learning; (b) parents are encouraged to be actively involved in their child’s education at school; and (c) parents are full partners in their child’s education and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child” (NCLB, 2002, § 9101, [32] “Parental Involvement”).**

Parental involvement continues to be important even as children mature. For example, research has shown that adolescents are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors when they perceive a strong connection between their home and school (Resnick et al., 1997). More and more local, state, and federal educational policies reflect the importance of school-family partnerships. For example, the 2002 *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires every school district receiving Title I, Part A, funds to implement

programs, activities, and procedures designed to involve parents.

Despite a compelling rationale for partnerships between schools and families, policymakers, researchers, educators, and families have yet to reach consensus on a universal definition of, or the best recipe for creating a successful SFP. Educators have conceptualized and cultivated involvement in diverse ways, and families participate to varying degrees and with varying effectiveness. However, common across all the theories and frameworks is a focus on the importance of communication between parents and teachers, as evidenced in the NCLB description. Moreover, regardless of the frequency and form of participation, experts agree that perceptions about partnerships influence to a great degree how much parents participate in their child's education (Eccles & Harold, 1996; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Successful SFPs are based on the underlying beliefs that *all* families (regardless of parents' level of education, socioeconomic status, and race or ethnicity) can contribute to children's learning and development and that parents and teachers share responsibility for nurturing and educating children. Moreover, successful SFPs are flexible and diverse, reflecting and incorporating the needs and characteristics of the particular school community in which they are based (Christenson & Havsey, 2004). While the nature of an SFP changes across the educational and developmental spectrum, particularly in terms of the types of communication and involvement that are appropriate and effective, these partnerships continue to be critically important as children progress through school (Patrikakou, 2008).

## Connecting SEL and SFPs

Embedding SEL programs within an SFP framework reinforces the complementary roles of families and educators, and extends opportunities for learning across the key developmental contexts of home and family (Albright & Weissberg, 2010). Skill sets (whether social, emotional, or academic) are enhanced when they are mutually supported and reinforced at home and at school. For example, social-emotional skills develop every time a child interacts with parents, peers, teachers, and others. Enhancing parents' and teachers' social and emotional knowledge, skills, and dispositions empowers them

to effectively model and apply the skills children need to learn. Moreover, when parents and teachers use similar strategies to foster SEL, it eases the transition between home and school and creates consistency and continuity in expectations for behavior, which enhances not only children's developing skill sets, but also the relationships between children and their parents, teachers, siblings, and peers. Using an SFP framework to promote SEL helps infuse core tenets regarding communication and relationship skills throughout the school community and provides a standard regarding how adults relate to each other and to students. Thus, the emotional and learning climate of home and school improves as children and adults gain self- and social awareness, empathy, and communication and problem-solving skills (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007).

Research in the past few years has attempted to identify exemplary SEL programs as well as essential ingredients of these efforts (see, for example, CASEL, 2003). In addition, (Durlak et al., 2011) found that school-family SEL programming positively affects students. Their meta-analysis identified a variety of ways that programs involve parents including parent training, engaging parents in school decision-making, and promoting parent-child interaction in learning activities. While fewer than a third of the 213 programs included in the meta-analysis used at least one strategy for building the school-family connection, analyses on this subset of programs revealed positive outcomes on children's social skills, attitudes, and school performance.

The hallmark of a successful SFP is the creation of a trusting relationship between families and schools, one that recognizes and respects each other's diverse styles, skills, and strengths. Trust and respect are also key SEL competencies that relate to self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Three types of SFP activities can be helpful in categorizing program initiatives and can serve as a continual reminder of the range of actions that make up a successful SFP:

- *Two-way school-home communication*, which informs, educates, and empowers families to be actively and effectively involved in children's education. It's important to be flexible and creative with these communications to find what works for

different families. Some families may respond to written or electronic communications. Other families may have literacy or language barriers, or may not have access to a computer, so in-person modes will be more effective.

- *Family involvement at home*, which helps families establish a home environment that extends and reinforces school-based learning. This may include talking with their children about education, ensuring the presence of materials that are cognitively stimulating as well as necessary educational supplies, and actively participating in reading, homework, or other interactive learning activities. Teachers or schools can offer guidance to parents on strategies and activities that extend and reinforce what happens at school.
- *Family involvement in school*, which encourages families to participate in classroom- and school-based activities and events as volunteers, attendees, or members of school leadership or governing committees.

Effective efforts to promote home-school communication and family involvement at home and in school comprise four key ingredients:

- *Child-centered communication* that is specific to the child; this type of communication is most likely to engage parents, due to its personalized nature and individual relevance.
- *Constructive communication*—information that is meaningful and useful because it provides families with practical suggestions.
- *Clear and concrete guidelines and strategies*, which are most beneficial to families in supporting children's actual learning.
- *Continual, ongoing communication*, which keeps families informed about and in sync with classroom practices and policies, and children's performance and skill development.

These key characteristics are consistent with critically important SEL competencies, such as the ability to develop an accurate self-perception, effectively communicate wants and needs, engage in perspective-taking, and experience empathy.

## Strategies for Implementation and Integration

The following strategies and resources, which are based on guiding theory and research findings (Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Christenson & Reschly, 2010), can assist administrators and educators in applying an SFP framework to SEL programming. They highlight the importance of child- and family-centered approaches, and emphasize creating structures to support an ongoing SFP that promotes children's social, emotional, and academic learning.

### *Learn more about the children and families in your classroom*

There are a variety of ways to learn about the children and families in your classroom. Some teachers distribute surveys, conduct interviews or home visits, or use ice-breakers and related activities to learn more about students and their families. Teachers might ask students and families about likes and dislikes, special talents and skills, family composition, and concerns or areas for improvement. Children might be asked to share one "fun fact" with other students, play "Who Am I?" by writing down three descriptors on an index card or below a self-portrait, or match fun facts with pictures of students on a bulletin board. Families and school staff can be invited to participate as well. These activities provide students and staff with opportunities to get to know each other and to interact in positive ways, and they promote cohesion among students and their peers by facilitating mutual respect and appreciation of diversity.

### *Have children and their families generate SEL goals for the year*

Schools may have their own SEL goals, which may even be part of their mission statement. But it can also be helpful for students and families to generate individual SEL goals for the school year. Teachers might ask children to identify their own defining characteristics, as well as qualities they admire in others and would like to emulate. Parents might be asked to identify goals for children's SEL and to describe the qualities they would like their children to personify. To assist children with this process, teachers can use worksheets or journals to help children identify a goal, strategies to achieve it, potential challenges or sources of interference, and

resources to assist in the process. Many schools use compacts, contracts, or pledges that specify how children, staff, and families will collaborate to achieve these goals; these documents may even consist of parallel versions outlining the role of each participant. Identifying specific individual goals can help focus both teachers and parents on children's strengths and areas for improvement; it also helps to generate benchmarks to assess progress throughout the year. The ability to establish a goal and evaluate one's progress toward achieving it is an important SEL skill and promotes self-awareness, self-management, and problem-solving.

### *Create positions within the school that are specifically focused on SEL and SFP*

An SEL or SFP coordinator can oversee program development, implementation, and evaluation. These key staff can assist in providing consultation and technical assistance on implementing program initiatives and can also serve as a liaison between educators and families. Hiring staff who have a primary role related to SEL and/or SFP demonstrates the importance of these programming efforts within the school and community. The visible commitment of money, resources, and personnel provides further validation.

### *Create a school-wide team, committee, or advisory board that is focused on SEL*

Creating such a group also demonstrates commitment to making SEL a priority and serves to promote communication and involvement. The membership of this group should be representative of the school community—for example, it might include the principal, assistant principal, school psychologist, social worker, SEL-SFP coordinator, teachers and parents (and, if developmentally appropriate, students), and representatives from different grade levels. This group should be involved in any planning, decision-making, or program evaluation related to SEL or SFPs.

### *Provide professional development training for administrators, teachers, and student-support staff*

Although many principals and teachers are effective in establishing SFPs and delivering SEL programs, they should have professional training to develop specific family-engagement strategies and to identify tools and resources that effectively promote

children's social and emotional skill development. Experts agree that administrators, teachers, and student-support staff need more specialized training in enhancing children's social and emotional skills, classroom behavior management, and family involvement as part of their graduate education. Putting SEL on the professional development agenda further signifies that it is a priority deserving of attention, time, and economic resources. In addition to participating in professionally led seminars and workshops, teachers and school staff may benefit from supplementary school-based networking and interaction. Establishing a monthly SEL luncheon or breakfast meeting where teachers share successful strategies or challenges with each other may help to engage and empower staff, which contributes to a more cohesive and supportive school climate.

*Create a family room, lending library, or resource center*

Providing this type of space shows that parents are welcome in the school and always have a place (literally!) to congregate. It's important to make the space warm and inviting by decorating it with comfortable furnishings so that parents will enjoy spending time there and be more likely to visit and linger. A bookshelf is all that's needed to create a lending library or resource center; including some SEL materials, resources, and information targeted to families, as well as copies of materials being used with children, and will help educate and familiarize parents. Books highlighting SEL skill development can be showcased monthly, or the school librarian can create suggested book lists according to SEL skills and topics. Having a suggestion box or note pad asking for requests further conveys genuine interest in responding to parents and a commitment to providing helpful resources.

*Plan ongoing SEL initiatives that coordinate with the school calendar*

Coordinating SEL efforts with the school calendar ensures that they become part of school policy and practice. Highlighting events and activities on the school's calendar (and website, if applicable) gives parents adequate time to plan and prepare. Further, coordinating these initiatives with other school events (such as back-to-school night, report-card pick-up, holiday celebrations, and grade-level presentations) will increase attendance and participation. Proactive efforts to welcome families,

share priorities and policies, and invite involvement can begin even before children set foot in school. Summer updates and welcome back letters can be used to remind students and families about SEL goals and ways that parents can promote learning and skill development at home. Frequent workshops, meetings, and presentations (such as a monthly speaker or seminar series) promote social interaction between staff and families, and allow parents and teachers to simultaneously learn and apply SEL skills. End-of-year celebrations and gatherings can also be a good way to promote reflection and closure and to encourage students and their families to consider what they have learned and accomplished during the year.

## Specific Strategies for Two-Way Home-School Communication

*Assess the different preferences, perceptions, and practices of the children and families you work with*

Teachers can distribute surveys (conducted in person or via mail, e-mail, or phone) to learn about parents' preferences for communication and involvement and their perceptions and practices related to SEL. Experts recommend conducting such assessments at the beginning of the year to reach out and open the channel for communication. These assessments also send a message that school staff are committed to gathering parental input and feedback. Teachers can ask about parent preferences for home-school communication (such as whether parents want to be notified via e-mail or phone) and scheduling of classroom events and activities. Initial efforts to clarify communication preferences and practices can reduce potential interference and barriers to involvement, as well as minimize the frustration that occurs as a result of inaccurate perceptions or crossed signals. Gathering information on parent perceptions and practices regarding SEL, as well as students' beliefs and skills, will aid teachers in implementing strategies, resources, and materials that match the needs and characteristics of their students and families.

*Involve or highlight children in information shared with families*

Although parents benefit from general information about skill development and performance, they are often most interested in information that is specific

to their own child. As much as possible, use detailed examples of children's behavior to illustrate SEL skills when sharing information with families—whether in written or in-person communication. For example, a teacher might describe how a child coped with frustration when speaking with a parent by saying, “Lilly did a great job with turn-taking this week; she got a little frustrated that Maya was taking so long to wash her hands before snack, but she counted to 10 and calmly asked Maya if she could please move a little faster since the line was so long.” Teachers might also include a “Good Deed” the child did in the weekly newsletter. Having children decorate forms of written communication, such as newsletters or invitations to classroom events, makes children more excited about sharing materials with their families, which can help to ensure that delivery will occur. Furthermore, personalized communication is more appealing to families and increases the likelihood that parents will actually read and review materials that are sent home.

***Be positive and communicate respect, support, and appreciation***

School staff, teachers, and parents should be positive and respectful in their communication and interaction with each other (and with students). Sadly, many parents feel like they only hear from teachers or schools when their children are in trouble. It's understandable, then, that they may develop negative attitudes or misperceptions about communicating with teachers. Adults and children alike benefit from encouragement, positive reinforcement, and praise. Teachers can use “Good News Notes” or “Skill Stars” to share positive information with families and about specific SEL skills or behaviors. Sending “thank you cards” (which children help create) is another good way to engage families and express respect and appreciation.

When speaking with families—regardless of the type of information you have to share—acknowledge children's strengths as well as areas for improvement. Being positive, respectful, and empathic makes interacting with families easier and more enjoyable, and models key SEL skills for students, staff, and families alike.

***Share information about classroom policies and practices***

Sharing information about classroom rules and guidelines keeps parents informed and minimizes the potential for misunderstandings and miscommunication. In order for families to actively

and effectively reinforce children's SEL at home, they need to know what educators are doing at school and in the classroom. For example, parents who are unaware of a teacher's classroom policies regarding toys may get angry or upset when their son tells them that his teacher took away his ball during reading. However, a parent informed about the toy policy will understand that toys have to remain in children's desks until recess. Learning about classroom routines also increases the likelihood that parents will use complementary strategies to cue and manage behavior at home; teachers can encourage parents to use similar strategies to help children complete tasks, transition between activities, and express their needs and feelings.

***Create a home-school-journal or back-and-forth-folder for parents and teachers***

Two-way home-school communication reflects the reciprocal nature of parent-teacher communication. Open and dynamic communication channels invite and encourage parents to share questions, comments, and feedback with teachers, and ensures that families inform educators in addition to being informed by them. Using a folder or journal specifically designated for transporting information between home and school provides an easy way to consolidate communication and share information—students, teachers, and families know just what to look for and where to look for it. This also contributes to self-management skills, as it helps children (and their parents) stay organized.

## **Specific Strategies for Family Involvement at Home and School**

***Create a skill chart to record how SEL skills are being incorporated at home***

Teachers can assist children and families in creating a skill chart. For example, families may use a “Star Chart” to monitor how often or well children complete household chores, such as brushing their teeth, making the bed, or putting dirty dishes in the sink, using good manners (e.g., saying please and thank you), completing homework, or sharing toys with a brother or sister. This allows children and families to monitor the child's progress, and enables teachers to see how families practice and promote SEL at home. Teachers can also acknowledge families who engage in SEL strategies at home and perhaps even distribute awards

as a means to positively reinforce desired behaviors and involvement in SEL.

***Share strategies, tools, or resources that match children's learning styles and skills***

When possible, teachers should tailor strategies, tools, and materials to match children's learning styles and level of skill development. For example, if a child is having trouble cleaning up her toys at home when she is done playing, the teacher can share the most successful classroom strategies, such as singing the clean-up song, clapping three times, or turning the lights on and off. If a strategy has not been particularly helpful with a student, the teacher can also share this information with the parent, hopefully minimizing frustration and promoting greater self-awareness and problem-solving abilities.

***Use interactive materials to engage children and families***

Activity workbooks, interactive homework assignments, and supplementary worksheets can serve to engage children and families in SEL. Teachers can add a section to homework assignments that facilitates family involvement by encouraging children to share information about the lesson topic or to demonstrate a new skill they have learned. Teachers can also share resources that guide parents on how to support children's SEL at home, such as articles in magazines or newspapers that spotlight SEL, or books for children that illustrate and model healthy and prosocial behaviors and effective coping and problem-solving skills. Such resources provide a broader context for SEL skills and illustrate the relevance of SEL for growth and achievement. (See *Recommended Websites and Resources* for some specific resource suggestions.)

***Distribute regular newsletters to keep parents informed and involved***

Weekly or monthly newsletters allow teachers to share information about ongoing lessons, particular skills that are being targeted, and upcoming events, and provide practical tips on how to promote children's SEL at home. Children and families might participate by submitting articles about their own SEL skill development, suggested activities for promoting SEL, or book reviews. Teachers might also use regular columns, such as "Did you know . . . ?" to spotlight research findings related to SEL, or "Ask me about . . ." to provide families with prompts for engaging children in conversations about SEL. Newsletters can also be

used to highlight a skill of the month and provide corresponding strategies and activities to practice and master. Including pictures of children at school or illustrations created by children will increase a newsletter's appeal for children and families.

***Share specific strategies and practical tips to promote children's SEL***

Home-school communication provides an avenue to inform families about children's progress, skills, and strengths, and to share strategies on how to promote learning and prosocial behavior at home. There are a variety of ways that teachers can share practical tips and tools with families. For example, a "Homework Helper" can accompany homework assignments and provide a simple translation of lesson goals and activities. Teachers might also offer suggestions for how to assist children (particularly if they are having trouble), suggest extension activities, or distribute a "Strategy Spotlight" that highlights easy ways to engage children and promote skill development at home and in the community.

***Invite families into the classroom to observe and actively participate in SEL***

Teachers are influential in creating a classroom climate that supports family involvement. Parents who are invited and feel welcomed are more likely to be actively involved in their children's education both at home and in school. Visiting the classroom increases parents' knowledge of school-based instruction and increases comfort and familiarity with teachers, classroom routines and practices, and the SEL curriculum. Teachers can invite parents to participate in SEL lessons or "side by side" activities, where parents observe how and what children are learning and practice skills together, or to attend class celebrations and events where students showcase SEL skills. Some SEL programs invite families to visit and volunteer within the classroom to observe how lessons are taught. Parents might also observe student presentations as a way to receive information about skills learned.

Acknowledging parents who participate in school-based events communicates appreciation and respect and reinforces their involvement. It is also important to follow up with parents who are unable to attend, for whatever reason. Providing a summary of events and activities for these parents, scheduling future events at different times, and encouraging them to attend may help them remain involved.



### **Hold SEL parenting workshops or group meetings**

Workshops are a common form of increasing parents' involvement in school and promoting two-way communication. Schools or teachers can schedule workshops on specific SEL topics or skills (ideally suggested by parents themselves), such as setting limits, self-management, or dealing with frustration. Parents might be invited to participate in an SEL parenting group or workshop (led by school mental health staff or an SEL coordinator), where they can receive specific strategies or assistance with their children's development and behaviors. Opportunities such as these provide parents with personalized information, social support and interaction, and a venue to practice and apply important SEL skills.

### **Focus on SEL as part of progress reports, report-card sharing, and parent-teacher conferences**

SEL skills should be addressed when reviewing children's progress and skill development during report-card sharing or parent-teacher conferences. SEL skills are as essential as traditional academic skills and contribute to children's behavior and performance in school. In speaking with parents, teachers should identify strengths as well as areas for improvement and give clear and concrete examples of behavior or sample work products or assignments that help to illustrate students' learning. For example, a teacher might comment that John is very energetic and can always motivate and engage other students; however, sometimes he has a little trouble settling down. The teacher could then describe strategies used in the classroom to help John focus and channel his energy. Teachers should ask parents if they notice similar behaviors at home, and discuss strategies parents may have successfully used to manage behavior and promote SEL. Together, the parents and teacher can develop an action plan that addresses concerns and identifies what the teacher can do at school and what the parent can do at home to continue to promote SEL.

Parent-teacher conferences also represent an opportunity for families and educators to engage in collaborative goal-setting and problem-solving and to apply the communication and relationship skills that are a focus of SEL. Many helpful resources exist to help parents, teachers, and students prepare for and participate in parent-teacher conferences (see *Recommended Websites and Resources* for some suggestions).

### **Provide diverse and ongoing involvement opportunities for families**

Parents who feel welcomed and wanted at school are most likely to participate in their children's education. However, parents have different styles, skills, and schedules, so schools need to make a range of opportunities available to accommodate diverse parent interests and availability. Communicating to parents that their involvement is always valued, at whatever level possible, encourages families to participate however, whenever, and wherever they feel comfortable. Teachers should attempt to engage parents and be courteous and inviting in all their interactions—whether they occur in the classroom, hallway, or parking lot. Asking parents how things are going, sharing something their child did in class, or inviting them to join their children in the classroom, library, or lunchroom encourages them to be involved and reminds them of their shared role in educating children. Scheduling a range of events, such as classroom activities, holiday celebrations, side-by-side days, and student performances, that are likely to appeal to parents' interests and coordinate with their schedules will enhance parents' participation at school. Balancing school-wide events with more informal and social activities will also foster greater involvement.

## **Summary**

SEL programs are gaining prominence and are increasingly being integrated into school-wide curricula. However, attempting to teach SEL in isolation is less effective than promoting SEL in the context of SFP programming. To effectively promote SEL across developmental contexts and stages, schools need to partner with families so that opportunities for skill development are continuously available in the two settings where children spend most of their time. When schools use an SFP framework to implement SEL initiatives, this provides a natural extension and application of these skills into the home. SFPs and SEL are both designed to create supportive and nurturing environments for learning and development, and to unite families and educators in fostering children's academic, social, and emotional success. Using an SFP framework promotes core SEL values and competencies and creates a school-community culture of inclusion and mutual respect. When families and educators collaborate, particularly with a focus on SEL, they optimize conditions for learning and create opportunities to model and apply the very

communication, behavior, and relationship skills they aim to teach the children.

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## Recommended Websites and Resources

### Center for Mental Health in Schools

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

The School Mental Health Project was created in 1986 to pursue theory, research, practice, and training related to addressing mental health and psychosocial concerns through school-based interventions. In 1995, the project established its National Center for Mental Health in Schools as part of the federal mental health in schools program. A range of resources and publications are available from the Center, including guides to program development, practice, and policy, policy briefs, toolkits, resource packets, and training and presentation resources.

### Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

[www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)

CASEL is an organization of educators and researchers whose mission is to establish evidence-based SEL programming as an essential part of education from preschool through high school. CASEL offers

a range of resources and publications, including the SEL Exchange (an e-Newsletter), SEL Programming Guides, briefs, reports, articles, book chapters, and a parent packet.

### Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)

[www.hfrp.org/](http://www.hfrp.org/)

HFRP focuses on three components of complementary learning: early care and education, out-of-school time, and family and community involvement in education. HFRP conducts research and evaluations of ongoing programs, and offers professional development for those who work directly with children, youth, and families. In addition to publishing research reports and tools for practice and evaluation each year, HFRP also coordinates the Family Involvement Network of Educators, a national network of people interested in promoting strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities.

HFRP has created tips sheets to guide educators and families in conducting productive, successful parent-teacher conferences (available at [www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/parent-teacher-conference-tip-sheets-for-principals-teachers-and-parents](http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/parent-teacher-conference-tip-sheets-for-principals-teachers-and-parents)).

### Laboratory for Student Success at Temple University

[www.temple.edu/lss/partnerships.htm](http://www.temple.edu/lss/partnerships.htm)

The Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) was established as the mid-Atlantic Regional Educational Laboratory in 1995 and continued to operate at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education until March 2006. This group published a series of "Partnership" brochures aimed at providing teachers and parents with strategies and suggestions to facilitate the academic success and healthy development of children and youth. Titles include "Fostering Children's Motivation to Learn," "Building Healthy Homework Habits," and the "Four L's of Adolescent Identity."

### National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE)

[www.ncpie.org](http://www.ncpie.org)

NCPIE's mission is to advocate for the involvement of parents and families in their children's education and to foster relationships between home, school, and community. NCPIE provides resources and

information for administrators, educators, and families to assist individuals and organizations in promoting parent and family involvement, and conducts and sponsors conferences.

**U.S. Department of Education**

[www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html](http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/hyc.html)

The U.S. Department of Education provides a variety of resources for educators and parents, including the “Helping Your Child” series and information pertaining to NCLB.

## Recommended Readings

Caspe, M., Lopez, M. E., & Wolos, C. (2007). *Family involvement makes a difference: Family involvement in elementary school children's education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

Center for Mental Health in Schools at UCLA. (2007). *Parent and home involvement in schools*. Los Angeles, CA: Author.

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