

Know Thyself

Research reveals that teachers' own social and emotional competencies influence the quality of the learning experiences they offer their students. (Jennings, P., Greenberg, M., 2009)

The tables below are designed to help the evaluator help the educator develop social and emotional skills. However, **evaluators will be much more effective at helping the educator if they spend some time evaluating and improving their own skills in these areas** for two reasons. First, evaluating your own skills will give you a better idea of how you can develop the skills in the educator. Second, the educator will learn as much from what they see you do as from what they hear you say.

Five Areas of Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

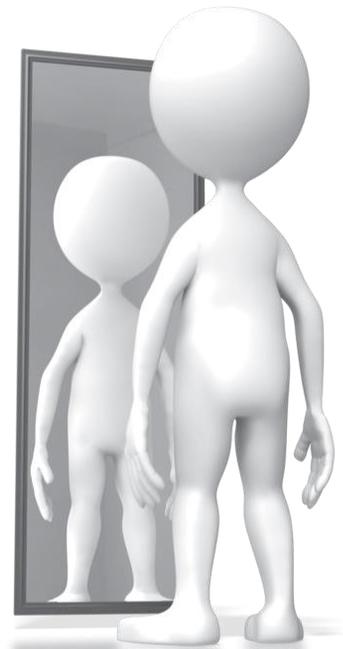
Self-Awareness

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Self-awareness is the ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values, and how they influence behavior. It is the ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism when addressing new and difficult tasks." Table 2.1 lists specific self-awareness behaviors exhibited by educators when they master the skill areas listed below. The right-hand column lists specific strategies evaluators can use to assist the educators they supervise with the development of their own self-awareness.

SELF-AWARENESS SKILLS

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy
- Goal Setting



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Table 2.1 Self-Awareness Connected to Educator and Evaluator Practices

Skills Related to SEL Competencies for Educators	Ways Evaluators Can Deal With Deficits in Educators or Their Own Self-Awareness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recognize and label your own and others' emotions as they relate to your students, colleagues, and supervisors. ● Identify situations that trigger your own emotions. We each have different triggers that cause the fight, flight, or freeze responses. Know your triggers and the situations in which they are most likely to occur, so you can anticipate when your counterproductive responses may occur. ● Recognize your own counterproductive impulse responses associated with each trigger so you can use cognitive override to avoid them. Create (or ask others) for a repertoire of alternative responses. ● Recognize your thinking strategies (a.k.a. metacognition) when confronted with a difficult-to-solve interaction or upsetting situation. Step back and analyze the situation and evaluate various responses so you can choose the most productive. ● Accurately recognize your own strengths and limitations. Know when you have the skill set to resolve the issue yourself and when you need to get assistance. ● Identify your own needs and values. Understand when your needs and values are counter to those of the other people in the interaction. ● Develop self-efficacy and self-esteem, as they relate to resolving these situations. Initially, your skills may be limited. However, trust that you can acquire new skills through analysis and assistance when needed. ● Be able to apply a growth mindset to difficult tasks. All interactions in the school setting are manageable. Often, others are managing them effectively when you are not. Regard your lack of ability in this area as skills not yet acquired, rather than as something you cannot do. With effort and acquisition of new skills, you will master tasks you previously thought you were incapable of mastering. 	<p>Active listening (described in Chapter 7) requires that we listen to both the words and the emotions behind the words. Evaluators with strong, active listening skills are able to assist the educator with identifying his/her own emotional reactions to triggers in the work space. For example, it is not uncommon for female teachers raised in middle-class homes to have negative emotional reactions to boys who act out in class. They become frustrated with the acting-out behaviors, and these behaviors can trigger an impulsive punitive response from the teacher. For some of these boys, this negative attention reinforces rather than extinguishes the behaviors. The evaluator is in a position to help the teacher understand this trigger and her counterproductive impulse response. Once identified, options for more productive responses can be discussed.</p> <p>It is important that the evaluator remember—and remind the educator—that impulse responses are deeply ingrained. It will require that the educator be vigilant in identifying the triggers when these responses occur, be aware of and resist the impulse response, and use cognitive override to identify and execute more productive responses.</p> <p>When first provided with feedback about their triggers and counterproductive impulse responses, the educator may be resistant or defensive. It is important for the evaluator to understand the reason for the resistance (e.g., fear by the educator that s/he will fail at implementing the recommendation, skepticism that the students who fit this profile are capable of modifying their behaviors). Once the evaluator understands the emotions behind the resistance, it is important to examine the reasons for them with the educator.</p> <p>If the resistance is a fear of failure, then the evaluator must assure the educator that ongoing support will be provided until the new behaviors are mastered. It is also important to let the educator know that s/he will be given time to master the new behaviors and is not expected to demonstrate mastery immediately.</p> <p>When working with an educator who believes the strategies are futile because his/her students are incapable of changing their behavior, it may be helpful to have the educator observe—with the evaluator—educators who use these strategies successfully with the same students or students with similar behavior histories. We recommend that the evaluator (or another knowledgeable coach) observe with the educator because the educator may not recognize the successful strategies s/he observes without guidance.</p>

Case Study

We once worked with an administrator who had difficulty changing the behavior of a struggling teacher. The teacher's classroom management skills were poor, resulting in disruptive behaviors in class. His impulse response was believing that the misbehaving students *couldn't* behave. He blamed administrators for not using enough punishment with students referred for discipline, blamed the parents for not teaching their children proper behavior, and blamed the students themselves for not caring and being disrespectful.

The evaluator had a dilemma: the teacher didn't implement the recommended strategies because he believed they wouldn't have any impact. The teacher was convinced that no one could make these students behave. The evaluator then shifted her work from solely providing technical skills to helping the teacher develop the SEL skill of self-awareness (described above). She did this by first identifying for the teacher that he seemed very frustrated with the students who acted out. He was able to explain that he was frustrated *and worried* that he wouldn't be able to teach enough of the curriculum for his class to do well on state tests.

The evaluator then moved onto explaining strategies the teacher could use that were already used successfully by other teachers. The evaluator scheduled times when the teacher could see the skills in use as both of them observed other teachers who were teaching the same students effectively using the recommended skills.⁶ The evaluator met with the teacher before each observation and identified the skills they would focus on during their joint observation.

After the observation, the evaluator and teacher debriefed about what they had observed. The evaluator helped the teacher understand how he could transfer what he observed to his own work with students. The evaluator then gave the teacher one to two skill areas on which to focus, and observed as the teacher implemented these skills in his classroom. After each observation, they debriefed about the skills and their impact on the students. In those meetings the evaluator focused the discussion on both the technical skills and the effect of the teacher on students when implementing the skills. For example, the evaluator noticed that the teacher implemented the skill early in the period, but unconsciously reverted back to previous practices as the lesson progressed. The evaluator identified when this regression happened and the interactions that took place when the teacher regressed. They then problem-solved and found ways the teacher could identify the times when he tended to regress, how to avoid an impulse response, and to respond to these situations using his new skills.

6 In situations when the evaluator wants an educator to observe another educator to learn new skills, the educator should always be accompanied by a coach or the evaluator during the observation. Classrooms and clinical sessions contain very complex dynamics that have multiple strategies being implemented simultaneously. Often, an educator observing alone does not fully understand everything that is occurring and leading to the effective practice they are observing. S/he needs a knowledgeable person to observe with them and then debrief them about what took place in the lesson or clinical session.

Eventually, the teacher saw that his new skills did have an impact. He made himself believe they would work and could identify those situations in which he regressed. Once he had this self-awareness, he was able to kick in his cognitive override and push himself to continue implementing the newly acquired skills. The process was repeated several times before the teacher could internalize the technical skills and had the self-awareness needed to succeed.

As you continue to discuss the educator's SEL skills, it is important for the evaluator to realize that this change is usually a "two-steps-forward, one-step-back process." *Expect the teacher to regress, catch that regression early, and intervene early.* It takes time for the new behaviors to become a natural part of the teacher's daily practice.

Self-Management

Self-management is the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various situations—effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. This includes the ability to set and work toward personal, academic, and work goals. Table 2.2 lists specific self-management behaviors exhibited by educators when they master the skill areas listed below. The right-hand column lists specific strategies evaluators can use to assist the educators they supervise with the development of their own self-management.

Self-management is the ability to successfully regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in various situations.

SELF-MANAGEMENT SKILLS

- Set plans and work toward goals
- Overcome obstacles and create strategies for addressing longer-term goals
- Seek help when needed
- Manage personal and interpersonal stress



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Table 2.2 Self-Management Connected to Educator and Evaluator Practices**Skills Related to SEL Competencies for Educators**

- Set plans to achieve your goal. The first step to achieving it is to know the outcome you desire. Goal-setting should start with the outcome and then work backward, figuring out the steps you need to follow to reach the goal.
- Create a sequence of implementation strategies and a plan to follow them to get you to your goal.
- Accurately assess your progress toward your goal and adjust your strategies as needed.
- Anticipate situations that lead to counterproductive behavior and impulses. (E.g., when faced with a student's misbehavior, I tend to blame the student or others, rather than analyzing the situation and developing alternate strategies. When receiving constructive feedback on my performance, I become anxious and defensive.)
- Generate alternatives to counterproductive behaviors that are impulse reactions. (E.g., when receiving constructive feedback, I use "self-talk" and take a deep breath to calm myself.)
- Overcome obstacles to success by identifying resources (e.g., people, information, etc.) that will help you overcome the obstacles, or seek help when needed. Remember, pushing the problem onto someone else is not a strategy. Getting someone to help you improve your skill set will lead to long-term success.
- Identify those situations that cause you personal and interpersonal stress, and understand how you react to stress.
- Create strategies to manage stress, as well as strategies for addressing a situation that causes the stress. (E.g., I find parent curriculum night presentations stressful because I'm uncomfortable speaking in front of adults. I find it relieves the stress if I prepare well and use notes when I speak.)
- Accept and learn from failures. View failures as learning experiences and don't be preoccupied with a setback. After a failure or mistake, identify it and stop blaming yourself. Instead, try to look back at the circumstances objectively and ask yourself how you might handle a similar situation differently. If you don't have a good answer, then seek out someone else for the answer.
- Motivate yourself by pushing through the tendency to give up when something is difficult. Try to get yourself to look at difficult situations as challenges, rather than road blocks.

Ways Evaluators Can Deal With Deficits in Educators or Their Own Self-Management

Dealing with disorganized thinking. Self-management issues are often the result of disorganized thinking. The educator operates "in the moment," without considering the longer-term implications of their actions. One task for the evaluator is to teach the educator to be more proactive and less reactive. This involves teaching them to do short- and long-term planning and organizing. For those of us who have well-established strategies for short- and long-term planning, the lack of those skills in others can frustrate us. Our impulse reaction to this lack is that they are lazy and don't want to put the time into organizing their thinking. For some this is true. For most, however, we have found it is a lack of skills that can be taught in the same way as other teaching skills. The best way to build their thinking and planning organization is to walk the educator through the steps in the left-hand column for specific tasks.

The process begins by helping the educator break larger tasks into specific tasks. For many, this is difficult to do; they need help breaking larger tasks down. Once the specific tasks are identified, each task is taken through the steps on the left. It may take many repetitions of guided practice before the educator has embedded the habits of mind that result in more organized thinking and planning.

Dealing with counterproductive impulse reactions.

As noted in Table 2.1 above, the first role of the evaluator in assisting with self-management is helping the educator understand the work stimuli that evoke counterproductive impulse reactions. Once the stimulus and counterproductive response are identified, we provide the educator with productive strategies to replace the impulse responses. This also requires frequent coaching and practice before the replacement responses becomes a natural part of the educator's response system.

Developing a growth mindset toward improving performance.

In the initial stages of "fixing" disorganized thinking or negative impulse reactions, the educator often feels powerless to make the change. We must remember that this is an adult who has operated with these counterproductive, self-management deficits for many years—within and outside of the workplace. The educator might believe that s/he is unable to change such long-established behaviors. It is important that we bolster confidence with frequent specific praise and by helping the educator focus on the growth they have already made, rather than the distance they must travel before they are fully successful.

Case Study

There were significant parental concerns about the safety of students in a kindergarten teacher's classroom. The principal made several observations and figured out that the following issues existed.

1. The teacher had taught in the same room for 34 years. The room had a large storage closet for all the materials typical to a kindergarten classroom. However, when the principal opened the closet door he saw that the closet was filled from floor to ceiling. It was not possible for the teacher (or anyone else) to walk into the closet. After looking at some of the materials in the closet, it was clear to the principal that many were outdated.
2. Once the closet was filled, the teacher had started storing materials on the back and side counters and on tables in the classroom. This practice had reached a point in which more than a third of the classroom was now being used for storage. This limited the teacher to using two-thirds of classroom floor space for teaching. The result was that students' seating tables and activity center tables were bunched together in the only space available.
3. The physical disorganization in the room led parents to believe that the teacher was unable keep track of all students and, therefore, that the classroom was a safety hazard.

The principal's conclusion after the observation was that children did not have adequate personal or group work space, due to the reduction in teaching space caused by the clutter of materials. This led to students inadvertently coming into contact with one another. On some occasions, this contact led to conflicts between students that could have been easily avoided had there been proper spacing between the tables. The parents' perception was partly correct, since more conflicts were occurring than would be typical in a kindergarten class.

The teacher needed to sort through myriad materials and decide what was necessary and what could be discarded. While sitting with the teacher, the principal realized the teacher was unable to determine which materials were valuable to keep and which could be discarded. As a result, the teacher kept almost everything she had acquired during the 34 years!

The principal began by telling the teacher she needed to keep only those materials she would use this year or next year in the classroom. Materials she would use only *after* the two year period should be placed in the basement storage area of the school. All other materials needed to be discarded. He watched as the teacher looked through the materials. She seemed frozen and unable to decide in which category each material fit. It was clear that she lacked the self-management skills to make these decisions on her own. After 15 minutes, she turned to him and said "I can't do this. It all seems valuable."

Clearly, the principal needed to take an active role in "training" her to manage

the materials and make decisions about what to keep. He thought about how to break the task down and make it more concrete. He called the custodian on the walkie talkie and asked him to bring down two large trash cans. The principal began with the materials in the closet. He asked the teacher when was the last time she used anything in the closet. The teacher answered that she had not used those materials in many years. The principal proceeded to hold up the materials one-at-a-time and asked, "When is the next time you may possibly use this and how will you use it?" If the teacher could give a concrete answer, the principal placed it in one pile. If the teacher could not give a concrete answer the principal placed it in the trash can. They continued to do this for an hour, after which the principal had to leave for a meeting. He told the teacher he would return the next day after the children left, and they would continue.

The next day, with empty trash cans again in the room, he repeated the previous day's activity for 15 minutes. He then moved out of the closet and told the teacher to pick up each item and state when and how she would use the material. He did not allow her to decide in her head. She had to voice the statement so he could hear her response. For the next 45 minutes, she verbally answered the question about each item, placing some in the save pile and some in the trash. Since there were several hours of this type of work ahead, the principal asked the teacher if she was willing to have another teacher help her with the process. The teacher agreed, and one of the union representatives from the building assisted her. The principal's final instruction was that they let him know when everything that could be discarded was in the rubbish.

This left a pile of materials that had been identified with when and how the teacher would use it next. The principal now told the teacher to divide that pile into two piles: one contained materials that would be used this year or next year; the other included materials that probably would not be used this year or next year. The principal left the room as the teacher verbalized the category for each material to her colleague and placed it in the appropriate pile. After each material was categorized and placed in one of the two piles, the principal returned with the custodian. The custodian moved the materials that would not be used this year or next into the basement. The teacher moved the other materials into the closet. At this point all the counters were clear, all the tables were clear, and the closet was 75% full.

The final step was to have the director of early childhood education meet with the teacher and help her set up the room, now that it had 33% more space for instruction. The additional room allowed for adequate personal and group space for students' learning.

The principal was aware that teaching social-emotional skills, like the self-management skill he helped this teacher develop was always a "two-steps-forward-one-step-back process." He knew it would take time for the teacher's impulse reaction of saving everything to change to making decisions about the value of the material and taking the correct action. He would periodically visit the room and find materials on

the back or side counter. He would then repeat the process with the teacher, and she would determine whether the material would go in the closet (she could state how it would be used that year or next), in the basement (she could state how and when it would be used in a subsequent year), and in the trash (could not indicate how and when it would be used in the future).

As the teacher became more adept at managing her materials, she became more confident in her ability to do so. This confidence led to greater job satisfaction and a high sense of confidence in her ability to create a classroom environment that maximized students' academic and social-emotional learning.

Social Awareness

Social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and to empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and ideas. It encompasses the ability to understand the social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports. Patterns of immigration and access to an extraordinary amount of information have made communities increasingly multi-cultural, multi-religious, and filled with people whose ideas are different from our own. Each year social-awareness skills become more and more important for our success in this environment. Table 2.3 lists specific social-awareness behaviors exhibited by educators when they master the skill areas listed below. The right-hand column lists specific strategies evaluators can use to assist the educators they supervise in developing their own social-awareness.

Social awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and to empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and ideas.

SOCIAL-AWARENESS SKILLS

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others



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