



As the country and world respond to the new coronavirus (COVID-19), CASEL urges continued focus on the social and emotional needs of children and adults. Because children spend the majority of their time in schools, educators play a significant role in shaping how they understand and experience what's going on in the world.

Both children and adults may feel a range of emotions -- fear, anxiety, stress, curiosity, uncertainty, etc. -- as they hear or read about new cases, school closures, and potential changes to their daily routines. Schools and districts can continue fostering safe, supportive learning environments and positive adult-student relationships that help them reflect on and process these emotions, discuss and evaluate the news, and learn about and develop strategies for keeping themselves and their communities healthy.

Below, we offer a few suggestions for addressing social and emotional needs as part of your district's response plan:

- Acknowledge that both children and adults may feel worried or [stressed](#) as they're going through the school and work day. Provide opportunities for them to share and process their emotions, as well as structures that allow them to take individual time to reflect and gather their thoughts. Use existing SEL programs to help provide these opportunities and promote empathy for one another and those most impacted by the virus.
- Support teachers in engaging students in developmentally-appropriate [conversations](#) and [lessons](#) to discuss the news around COVID-19. This can include assessing facts from misinformation, as well as opportunities for students to develop and suggest strategies for their school or community to prevent the spread of disease.
- Use developmentally-appropriate conversations and lessons to discuss the impact, history, and context around biased or stigmatizing comments and behaviors related to the disease. See examples of how to have conversations about [racism](#), [stereotyping](#), and [bias](#) related to the virus.
- Whenever possible, provide consistency in daily school routines. While school closures or changes in schedules may be inevitable, consistent routines and procedures in the meantime help reduce stress and facilitate learning for all students. This is also an opportunity to create new routines that promote healthy practices, such as adding favorite classroom [songs](#) to handwashing routines.

- Continue SEL and community-building practices, which help maintain a sense of emotional safety and support. Provide fun alternatives to minimize the spread of germs. For example, if students and teachers typically greet one another with handshakes and high-fives, switch to [elbow bumps or footshakes](#). If classrooms pass around shared “[talking pieces](#)” to engage in circles, create individualized ones. Or if classes or staff meetings are held virtually, provide time for verbal or written “check-ins” with one another.
- Provide families with [consistent communication](#), as well as guidance and support in [talking with their children about coronavirus](#).
- Consider the different needs of students and families when making response plans, and connect them to necessary resources. This includes ensuring that response plans will fully meet the needs of students and families who are homeless or in transitional living situations, may not have easy access to computers or internet, receive free or reduced price meals through school, or rely on support services at their schools.

Here are some additional resources:

- [EdWeek: Coronavirus and Schools](#)
- [NEA Today: Schools and Coronavirus: What You Should Know](#)
- [Association of California School Administrators: Coronavirus Resources for Schools](#)

Talking to students in classrooms about coronavirus:

- [Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility: Guidelines for Talking with Students About the Coronavirus](#)
- [Teaching Tolerance: Speaking Up Against Racism Around the New Coronavirus](#)
- [Facing History & Ourselves: Protect Yourself & Stand Against Racism](#)
- [ADL: The Coronavirus Surfaces Fear, Stereotypes & Scapegoating](#)
- [AFT Share My Lesson: Coronavirus Lesson Plans & Resources](#)

Talking to children at home about coronavirus:

- [National Association of School Psychologists: Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
- [New York Times: How to Talk to Kids about Coronavirus](#)

Supporting staff:

- [SAMHSA: Coping with Stress During an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#)

Communications planning:

- [EdWeek: A Coronavirus Outreach Plan: 5 Steps for District Leaders](#)
- [WETA: Coronavirus: Multilingual Resources for Schools](#)