

Indiana Social-Emotional Learning Competencies: Middle School (6-8 grade)

Note on grade level ranges:

Because the brain develops from the bottom up—from the brain stem to the limbic system and then to the cortex—children and adolescents who have been affected by chronic adversity may enter our classrooms with varying levels of brain activation and development. While students are intended to reach mastery in the benchmark by the end of the grade range, educators may want to revisit the earlier skills periodically. Students impacted by trauma or other life stressors may experience developmental delays that require additional emotional, behavioral, and cognitive supports.

1. Sensory Motor Integration

Sensory motor integration refers to the ability to have body awareness and recognize sensations in the body. Gaining sensory-motor integration is an important skill for managing transitions, changing routines, increasing alertness for learning, and improving regulation.

1A. Students demonstrate an understanding of body awareness and sensations in the body.

"I feel an awareness of my body in comparison to objects. I feel an awareness of my emotions in my body."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are able to identify a sensation in the body through movements, art, focused attention practices and learning about the brain's neuroanatomy. 2. Students describe and list a variety of sensations they experience each day to help life stressors. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a sensation word wall list in classrooms and schools so students can pull from these when needed for written self-awareness and self-expression. These sensations can be drawn and given a size, shape, and a color. 2. Explore various exercises moving our bodies through contraction and release (i.e., progressive muscle relaxation).

		<p>3. Track resting pulse rate (oximeter). Note and discuss how this rhythm changes throughout a class period, morning, evening, or through the week. Graph your results. Identify a sensation and draw what it looks like and how it feels in your body. Give the sensation a color, size, and shape. Share and discuss with others.</p>
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1B. Students manage transitions and changes in routine.

"I feel ready for transitions and can show I am adaptable to change."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
<p>Middle School (6-8 grade)</p>	<p>1. Students identify bodily sensations and connect to the feeling they are experiencing. (Example: My anger feels hot and needly in my stomach and my hands.)</p> <p>2. Students begin to practice ways to help them be flexible and adaptable as they move from familiar to unfamiliar tasks.</p>	<p>1. Create a sensation word wall list in classrooms and schools so students can pull from these when needed for written self-awareness and self-expression. Students can draw the sensation, giving it a size, a color, a shape, a weight, and where it has landed in the body.</p> <p>2. Practice Guided Imagery Exercises with students (See Social-Emotional Learning Educator Toolkit for additional resources).</p>

2. Insight

Insight refers to the ability to know your emotions and how they affect your thoughts and actions. Gaining insight is an important skill for building self-confidence, self-esteem, and empathy for others. Insight helps students recognize their own strengths and areas of growth.

2A. Students identify a wide range of emotions.

"I am aware of my emotions."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students use "I feel" messages to communicate emotional expression 2. Students continue to build emotional vocabulary. 3. Students continue to learn about their brains and its connection to emotions, learning, and relationships. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of words/pictures on walls as visual reminders for students to build emotional vocabulary. Educators use affective statements to promote emotional language. For example, "I feel excited to hear that you practiced some of the strategies we learned in class." 2. Use of literature, role plays, scenarios, predictive scenarios. (See the Social-Emotional Learning Educator Toolkit for list of books.) 3. Teaching students about their brains and encouraging students to teach a brain lesson to the class. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain Aligned Strategies • Understanding My Teen Brain

2B. Students recognize personal strengths.

"I am aware of my strengths."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students begin to understand how their personal strengths connect to social, emotional, behavioral, and academic learning. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create an acrostic poem asking the students to identify a strength for each letter of the student's name. 2. Brainstorm with students lists of strengths they believe are important for various categories (i.e., What makes a good friend? What makes a good nurse? What makes a good student? etc.).

		<p>A. Are strengths always visible to the eyes? What grows and develops a person's strengths? Discuss these questions and share response.</p> <p>3. Educators use process praise, encouragement, and positive noticing skills in their interactions with students; pointing out specific behaviors and characteristics to assist students in personal strength development as well as enhances self-esteem and self-efficacy (Example: I noticed how you used an I-message. For more examples, click here).</p>
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2C. Students demonstrate self-efficacy.

"I am capable of learning."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<p>1. Students can identify personal strengths and can articulate areas of growth as it relates to their learning and behavior.</p> <p>2. Students demonstrate the ability to use personal strengths in learning goals and understands that failure is only a part of learning.</p>	<p>1. Have students take a strength finders assessment; use strengths as a foundation in all goal-setting plans The VIA survey is a free tool and can be found here.</p> <p>2. Create a "ME" Commercial (Details on this strategy can be found in the Appendix section).</p> <p>3. Promote student voice as often as possible--where to do work in the classroom, what materials to use, how to represent what has been learned. Students can create class guidelines sharing their voice and purpose to increase accountability.</p>

3. Regulation

Regulation refers to the ability to recognize and manage one’s emotions. Regulation skills build positive self-control, positive self-discipline, and impulse control.

3A. Students demonstrate self-control.

"I can control my actions and manage my feelings."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students identify and describe the role of the amygdala in anxiety, aggression and fear. 2. Students identify, describe, and draw how emotions affect how they feel and behave, connecting the feelings to the corresponding brain parts. To find additional information on the role of the amygdala, please visit this site. 3. Students practice mindfulness, focused breathing, focused attention practices and other regulation strategies when they begin to notice a heightened emotional response (sometimes with an adult prompt) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. List, diagram, and discuss the relationship between four emotions and four sensations. What do they look like, smell like, taste like and sound like? How are they connected, and how are they different? Where do you feel and experience these in your body? To help with this activity, an example of the emotion wheel can be found here. 2. Apply the "Name It To Tame It" or use the "Flipping Your Lid" hand signal (tools from Dr. Dan Siegel, more information in the Social-Emotional Educator Toolkit). Video of Dr. Dan Siegel explaining "Flipping Your Lid"

3B. Students recognize life stressors and have strategies to manage them.

"I can recognize situations that make me feel stressed and take appropriate steps to change them."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students apply various stress-reducing coping strategies when faced with challenging situations (and may or may not need support and/or reminder from an adult). 2. Students are able to recognize the different stressors and common stress responses. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coping strategies include focused attention practices, pacing, or artwork. (Mindfulness practices and focused breathing practices). 2. Teach students about the three different types of stress responses (See SEL Glossary) and provide scenarios and activities for practice/application (positive, tolerable, & toxic).

3C. Students practice personal responsibility.

"I can take responsibility for my actions."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students take an active participation in the learning process. 2. Students demonstrate the ability to reflect on their behavior and discuss a restorative plan with peers and/or adult educator. 	<p>1. Use Thinking Sheets/ Dual Brain Sheets in classroom or other environments to assist in the process of reflecting on student's behavior, actions, and feelings It Is Important that teachers model the behaviors they want to see so we encourage educators to fill these dual brain sheets out along with the students even If you feel you disciplined perfectly. Here is an example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is our challenge? • What led up to our challenge? • How did we handle this challenge? • What are two adjustments we will make the next time?

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will we do this? <p>Thinking Sheet templates available in Social-Emotional Learning Educator Toolkit.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Offer student choice activities; provide students multiple opportunities to answer questions and lead class discussions. 3. Employ Restorative Practices.
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4. Collaboration

Collaboration refers to the ability to work well with others, including in the group and teamwork environment. Collaboration works to build positive communication and conflict management skills.

4A. Students demonstrate communication skills.

"I will develop positive and healthy relationships with others."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students engage in reciprocal conversations, practicing face-to-face communication and on-line communication. 2. Students work on empathic listening skills to enhance the understanding of what the other person is saying. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practice building empathic listening skills by using Empathy Map. 2. Implement peer to peer interview exercises or other interview activities that require reciprocal conversation skills. 3. Connect with a classroom in another location; assign students a virtual pen pal that they email or Skype/Zoom (or some other web-based tool) to practice 'safe' online conversation skills.

4B. Students understand teamwork and works with others.

"I will use active listening skills to communicate with others."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students participate with team/group members to problem-solve and contribute to group outcomes. 2. Students practice use of active listening skills. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide time to develop Group Agreements/Rules/Norms; encourage students to take ownership of the process. 2. Be intentional about infusing cooperative group work into the classroom.

4C. Students apply conflict management skills.

"I will use assertive communication to resolve conflicts cooperatively."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students practice "I-messages" to address conflict when it arises and can speak up for themselves using assertive language. 2. Students demonstrate a plan for addressing conflict when it arises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop and implement a peer mediation program. 2. Practice Restorative Practices. 3. Teach the difference between assertive, aggressive, and passive communication; apply knowledge/skills through case study, scenarios, role plays, etc.

5. Connection

Connection refers to the ability to have strong social awareness, giving students the ability to take the perspectives of others, and empathize with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures.

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5A. Students treat others fairly and respectfully, is able to see multiple perspectives and is open-minded.

"I build respectful and positive relationships with others, showing that I value diverse perspectives."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students demonstrate an increasing awareness of the needs and rights of others. 2. Students demonstrate an understanding of different cultural practices and others' worldviews. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Infuse cooperative learning activities. This list provides some examples of cooperative learning strategies. 2. Use real-life investigations and explorations. 3. Provide mentoring programs.

5B. Students demonstrate care and concern for others.

"I build relationships showing care and concern for others."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students work to understand another's emotions and how to best respond to their needs. 2. Students develop nonverbal and verbal skills to respond to another's emotional response. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mirror/Mirror Activity to help students understand impact of mirror neurons (See Appendix for full description). 2. Empathy Mapping activity. Empathy map resource can be found here.

3. Students understand the impact of mirror neurons, both the potential for positive effect as well as negative effects.

6. Critical Thinking

Critical thinking refers to the ability to make constructive choices and understand metacognitive strategies to enhance learning. Critical thinking skills build responsible decision-making, analytical, and critical inquiry skills which are necessary to approach learning from an innovative, creative, multicultural, and ethical lens.

6A. Students demonstrate an understanding of metacognition.

"I know how I learn."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<p>1. Students understand how they learn best when completing various tasks (e.g., what types of organization system is best for them, preferred study habits, etc.).</p> <p>2. Students develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-Oriented) goals.</p> <p>3. Students continue to learn about their brain and its functioning.</p>	<p>1. Teach students about SMART goal development and action-planning. See SEL Appendix for SMART goal templates.</p> <p>2. Provide students information and choices on organizational skills and systems for use at school and home.</p> <p>3. <u>Brain lessons</u>: can be used for grades 5-10 and examples can be found here.</p>

6B. Students understand the decision-making process.

"I know my choices and decisions have consequences. I think about how my choices and decisions will impact myself and others."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
<p>Middle School (6-8 grade)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students discuss how their decisions impact other people. 2. Students determine what information is needed to make a decision. 3. Students recognize how values and beliefs impact how people make decisions. 4. Students begin to understand the difference between snap or automatic decisions and thoughtful or reflective decisions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide time for students to reflect and discuss scenarios (real world examples/current events are excellent options) on how a choice/decision impacted another person(s). What was the impact? What other choices were available? What could have been the outcomes? These discussions help students expand their thinking to help broaden perspectives, see multiple options, and increase empathy. 2. Invite students to interview 3-5 people (similar and different from them) about how they make decisions. Have students report back on what they have learned and then facilitate a whole class debrief/group process. 3. Ask students, "If you had one million dollars, what would you do with this money?" Invite the class to discuss. At different points in the discussion, you can add different variables to the discussion (e.g., what if your family member needed a medical procedure, what if this school was going to close and needed \$100,000 to stay open, what if ...). At the end of the discussion, encourage students to think about how their own personal beliefs and values impacted the way they chose to spend the money--reinforcing the way they make decisions is impacted by their values and beliefs (also emphasizing no right/wrong--that everyone has their own values and beliefs.

		<p>4. Teach students about the difference between "snap" or "automatic" decisions and when they take time to engage their thinking brains they have time to engage in "reflective" or "thoughtful" decision-making. This can be done through the use of scenarios or role-plays.</p>
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6C. Students analyze, synthesize, & evaluate the thinking process.

"I know how to identify problems and find creative and positive solutions to them."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
<p>Middle School (6-8 grade)</p>	<p>1. Students begin to develop hypothesis for problems in their learning environment.</p> <p>2. Students regularly challenge current beliefs and mindsets, including their own.</p> <p>3. Students continue to use reflective thinking practice</p>	<p>1. Reflective journaling. See reflective journal prompts here as a guide.</p> <p>2. Learning goals. Teach students to set individual growth mindset/ learning goals. To help students focus on learning goals, explain that these goals are stated positively and typically express one of these three items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I will learn to... • I will be able to... • I will succeed in... <p>3. Utilize the KWL Strategy and use of exit tickets as formative evaluation. (See Appendix for additional details for KWL strategy and see here for exit ticket templates).</p>

7. Mindset

Mindset refers to the ability to demonstrate cognitive flexibility and a willingness to learn. Developing mindset is a critical learning skill for building perseverance, adaptability, self-discovery, resilience, and to be able to receive and give constructive feedback.

7A. Students demonstrate a willingness to learn, especially when faced with challenges or following a failure.

"I believe that if I give effort my abilities and learning will improve and I can learn from challenges and failures."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students understand their brains are malleable and that new neural connections are made when we learn new things from our mistakes (neuroplasticity). 2. Students understand that mistakes are a part of the learning process. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide students multiple opportunities to make mistakes and learn from those mistakes. 2. Create a classroom culture that celebrates mistakes because mistakes/failures only demonstrate an opportunity to learn. 3. Use formative assessments to provide multiple opportunities to give feedback and gain student input. Students can then learn from constructive feedback.

7B. Student practices flexible and innovative thinking.

"I believe it is important to practice different strategies, show willingness to keep trying, and apply creative ideas."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
Middle School (6-8 grade)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students begin to develop hypothesis for problems in their learning environment. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote divergent thinking: Use divergent thinking exercises and practices, such as, take ordinary items in your classroom

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Students regularly challenge current beliefs and mindsets, including their own. 3. Students continue to use reflective thinking practices. 	<p>(paper clips, stapler, etc.) and ask students to come up with other uses for these items.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Encourage students to use "Thought Sheets" when they have made a mistake or hurt another student's feelings (could even be if they have broken a classroom rule). This process encourages reflective thinking.
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7C. Students accept constructive feedback.

"I am trying to learn from the feedback that others give me."

Grade Level	Indicator	Strategies
<p>Middle School (6-8 grade)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students are eager to return to working on project or learning task and apply new strategy/different strategy based on lessons learned from the feedback. 2. Students engage in feedback with peers about feedback to seek growth and learning opportunities from others. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use process praise language in the classroom. (See example here). 2. Provide tools to students for peer processing of feedback.