

Introduction to Social Awareness

Overview

Social Awareness is the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.ⁱ Social awareness is a crucial component of appropriate classroom behavior, which contributes to an environment conducive to learning. Social awareness is also widely established as an important factor in workforce success. One recent employer survey conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills demonstrates that four of the five most important skills for high school graduates entering the work force are linked to social awareness: professionalism, collaboration, communication, and social responsibility.ⁱⁱ

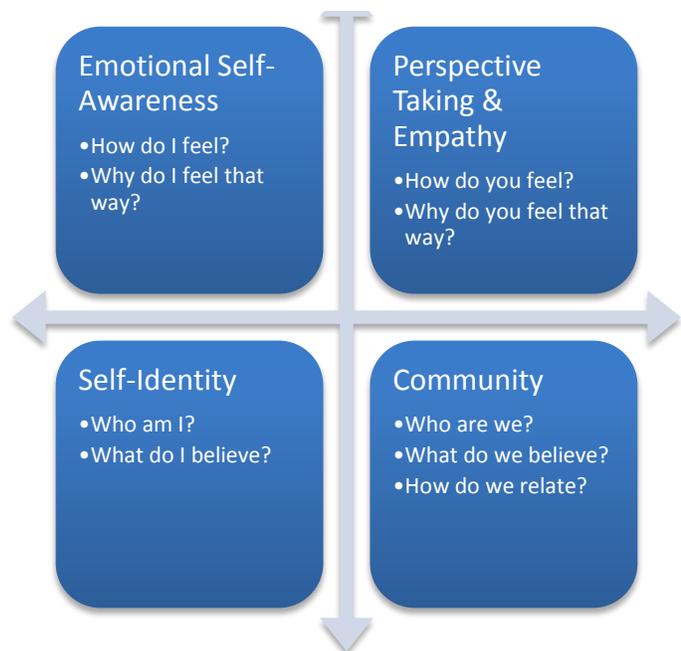
Why This Matters: Social awareness may contribute to better behavior and achievement in school and increased engagement with community and school resources:

Positive Classroom Behavior: Students with strong social awareness can more easily adapt to their environment, empathize with the perspectives of others, and engage in fewer disruptive classroom behaviors. This, in turn, creates an environment where students can focus on learning.ⁱⁱⁱ

Better Relationships: Students who demonstrate strong social awareness are able to engage in constructive communication with their peers and resolve conflicts when they arise. These students benefit from peer learning and know how to take advantage of social supports.^{iv}

Fewer Risky Behaviors: Students who are able to adapt to new environments, understand the needs and perspectives of others, and know where to get support when they need it are less prone to emotional distress and less likely to engage in risk behaviors, such as drug use and aggression, that interfere with school success.^v

Figure 1. Four Facets of Social Awareness



Sample questions we asked students in the Spring 2014 SEL Pilot:

- When others disagree with you, how respectful are you of their views?
- When people are already talking together, how easy is it for you to join the group?
- When you have problems at school, how easily can you find ways to solve them?
- To what extent are you able to stand up for yourself without putting others down

ⁱ CASEL.org (<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/>)

ⁱⁱ Casner-Lotto, J., & Barrington, L. (2006). *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century US Workforce*. Partnership for 21st Century Skills. 1 Massachusetts Avenue NW Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American psychologist*, 58(6-7), 466.

^{iv} Gehlbach, H., Young, L. V., & Roan, L. K. (2012). Teaching social perspective taking: how educators might learn from the Army. *Educational Psychology*, 32(3), 295-309.

^v Greenberg, et al. (2003).