

Three Essential Actions School Psychologists Can Take to Support Mental Health for ALL Students

Kim Gulbrandson, PhD, Research and Evaluation Coordinator; Emilie O'Connor and Stephanie Skolasinski, Behavior Technical Assistance Coordinators

"I get uncomfortable when I don't know what behaviors are okay because I could get embarrassed: If it's not okay, I will get laughed at and yelled at." 11-year-old student

Teaching Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Expectations

Each day, children experience a multitude of environments with different expectations for the bus, classroom, home, lunchroom, movie theatre, recess, virtual learning, and store to name a few. Without clear expectations in each setting, the unpredictability can create lack of structure, confusion, uncertainties, and anxieties.

Teaching social, emotional, and behavioral expectations to ALL students is key to creating safe environments that support wellness; and teaching expectations is a critical element of a strong universal level of support—one of the core features of an equitable, multi-level system of support (e-MLSS).

An e-MLSS ensures mental health is addressed at the systems level. The system organizes our efforts for sustainable, ongoing collaboration and improvement rather than siloed to pupil services personnel, a few classrooms, or a single train-and-hope effort.

In this collaboration, pupil services personnel play a pivotal role by empowering leadership teams and school staff to create and maintain a safe environment by establishing, teaching, and supporting clear expectations so learning can occur.

How School Psychologists Can Support Teaching Expectations

1- Embed Key Social and Emotional Competencies into Your Matrix

With the support of the PBIS tier 1 team, work with your staff to identify the skills students need to be college, career, and life ready. Identify explicit connections between these skills and how they help students meet the broader, school-wide expectations—such as *'be responsible.'* Use the [Wisconsin social and emotional learning \(SEL\) competencies](#) as a guide.

| School-wide Expectation | Class-wide Expectation |
|-------------------------|---|
| Be Responsible | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Arrive to class on time and ready to learn- Stay organized to meet deadlines |
| |  SEL Competency: Regulate emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles |

2 - Provide Teachers with Ways to Give Positive Feedback

Feedback expands teaching and solidifies learning. Create a set of sentence starters for teachers to post in their classrooms, such as:

- "I see you (describe behavior). This will help you_____."
- "I notice you are being responsible by (describe behavior)."
- "Thank you for being safe by (describe behavior)."

3 - Connect Social and Emotional Skills and Academic Learning

Provide resources and ideas for embedding social, emotional, and behavioral expectations and teaching within their daily instructional practices. For example:

- **Literacy:** Share books that reinforce social and emotional competencies such as *When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang (managing strong emotions); *Hey, Little Ant* by Phillip and Hannah Hoose (perspective taking); or *Wonder* by R. J. Palacio (building friendships and overcoming challenges).
- **Math:** Talk with a math teacher about how students' emotions and peer interactions affect their math success. Provide steps on how-to facilitate productive conversation with a challenged math student by talking through disagreements and finding a solution, which in turn helps with math.
- **Standards:** Identify how the standards are linked to social and emotional competencies and expectations. One of the grade five ELA standards is "*analyze multiple accounts of the same event, or topic, noting important similarities and differences in the point of view they represent,*" and how that links to perspective taking, which is a component of empathy.

Resources to support your efforts towards universal teaching of expectations within your e-MLSS:

- [SEL in action](#)
- [SEL in Wisconsin schools](#)
- [Supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development](#)
- [Weaving social and emotional learning into academics](#)

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If your implementation team would like assistance using these resources, or if you have questions about implementing an e-MLSS, [connect](#) with your Regional Technical Assistance Coordinator. [Like us](#) on Facebook, [follow us](#) on Twitter, [subscribe](#) to our YouTube channel, and [sign up](#) for Tips to Your Inbox.