

# Creating Connections

Social-Emotional Learning: Extending the Learning from Paddington Station to Home!



Social-Emotional learning (S.E.L.) happens everywhere, every day, and in every way!

## S.E.L. in the Classroom

One of Paddington Station's goals is to provide a dynamic and integrated curriculum in an engaging and experiential environment. We strive to ensure Paddington Station is a place for children to learn how to be a part of a community in which they are known, valued, and cherished.

Our youngest learners are exploring empathy, resiliency, collaboration, and self-awareness while attending Paddington Station. Every classroom has a unique dynamic and the social-emotional learning environment looks a little different for each age group and cohort. S.E.L. content is also being scaffolded from year to year. This document details examples of social-emotional learning happening in classrooms alongside some ideas of how families can extend that learning at home. You are welcome to take these concepts and tweak/adapt to your family's needs – we recognize the need for different skills and structures depending on your household's expectations. You are your child's primary teacher and it's an honor to partner with you!

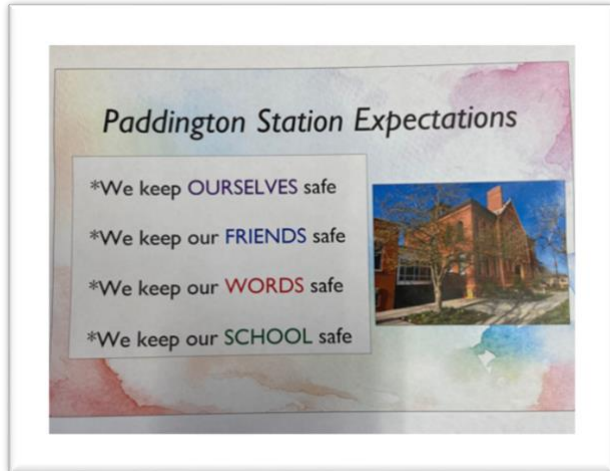
When educating the minds of our youth, we must not forget to educate their hearts. ~ Dalai Lama



## Choices versus expectations (or rules)

If your child is having a challenging time following direction it is a great opportunity to use the prompt, “Is this a choice or a rule?”

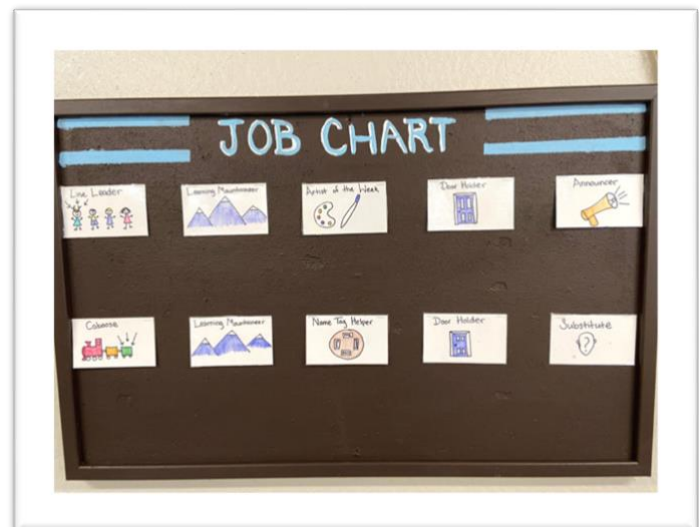
- Alternate language idea: use the word *expectation* instead of the word *rule*.
- Define it! A choice is something we decide, a rule (or expectation) is something someone else has decided.
- Rules exist for everyone - adults included!
- Talk about examples of rules & expectations that adults (at school and at home) have to follow.
- Make a chart of “choices” and “rules/expectations” at home.
- Reiterate that part of a caregiver (and a teacher’s) job is to keep kids safe – we keep people safe because we care!



## Keep it positive!

As a classroom community we identify examples of expectations that all members can follow - these are always framed in the positive (E.g. *keep friends safe* rather than *no hitting*)

- Use language that indicates what behavior is desired (E.g. *use walking feet* inside versus *stop running!*)
- Create a list of “home” expectations with visuals. These can be expectations for your house (*we use gentle hands, we keep our silverware on the table*, etc.) or could be expectations specifically for a transition or tricky time (E.g. bedtime).
- Acknowledge when your child is following expectations without reminders – *You must feel so proud of yourself - you are using safe hands!*
- Kids love their job charts at school - create a family job chart with visuals.





## Thorns and Roses

**As a family, make it part of your day to share thorns and roses.**

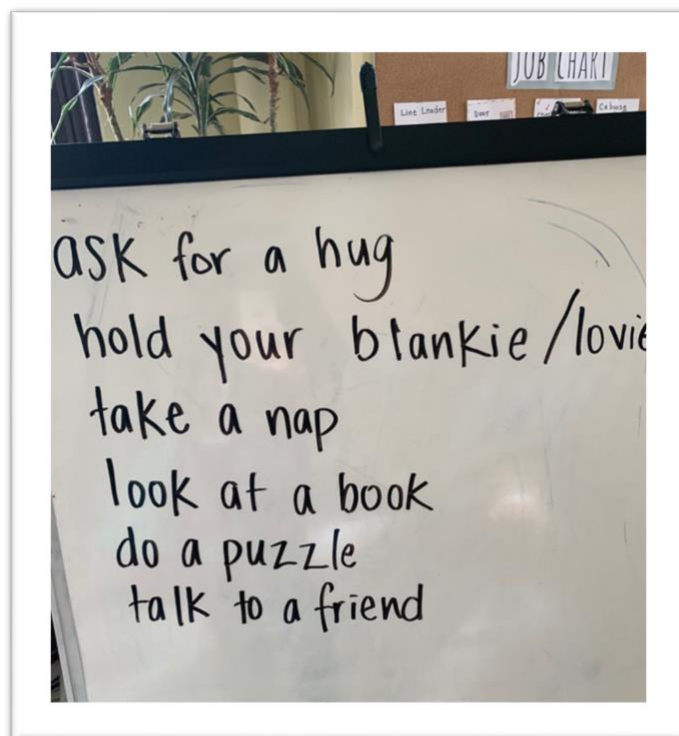
- Every day is composed of both roses and thorns. The roses are the “positive” parts of the day and the thorns are the “prickly/harder” parts of the day.
- Make it part of a routine to discuss both (this helps our brain from becoming “stuck” on the negative aspect of the day).
- Great conversation for car ride home, dinner, bath time, and before bed.
- Ending on the “rose” (the positive) can be beneficial for gratitude practices.
- You can even add in a “sunshine” – a part of the day where you felt proud/a time for a spotlight. *My sunshine was that I shared my toy with a friend, even though it was hard.*

## Coping Skills

**Many classrooms at Paddington have created a list of “coping skills” that can be used during challenging moments.**

These skills include things like deep breathing, dancing, drawing a picture, hugging a stuffed animal, thinking of something that makes us feel happy, etc.

- Create a list of coping skills that can be used at home. Make a visual of these skills and post them near a “cozy area” or “calm down space”.
- Model examples of coping skills that family members use - can include taking a break, deep breaths, moving body. As adults, we tend to internally go through this process but it really helps kids to see it modeled so it helps to really verbalize these skills when they are being used.
- Narrate what is happening as you process various feelings. “My body is feeling really hot and I’m feeling frustrated. I am going to take five deep breaths.”

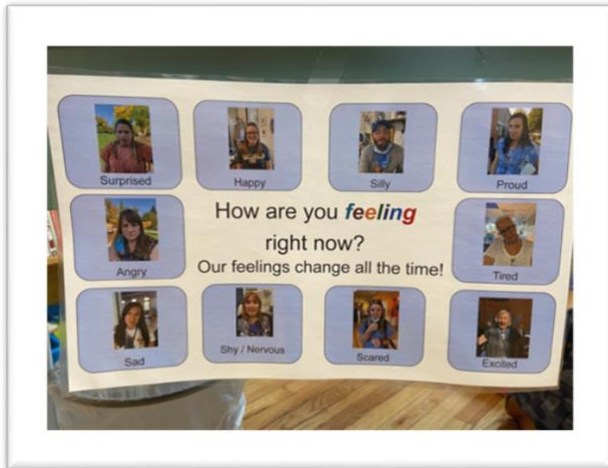




## Identify Feelings & Emotions

When we are able to identify or define an emotion/feeling, we are better able to process feelings and find the necessary coping skill!

- At Paddington Station we use a “Feelings Detectives” story and feelings chart. This story challenges students to be detectives and observe the emotions of themselves and other people around them.
- Make a feelings chart at home with the members of your family as visuals – take pictures of different facial expressions and allow your child to reflect back on those images when necessary.
- Have a mirror at eye level of children.
- Acknowledge that ALL feelings are valid, even “big” feelings and emotions.
- Books provide beautiful opportunities to talk about the feelings/emotions of characters! Ask your child to identify what characters in books might be feeling based on their facial expressions.



## I-Statements

I feel \_\_\_\_\_ emotion \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_ incident description \_\_\_\_\_.

- We are trying to steer away from “you” statements (i.e. *You took it! You are mean!*)
- Use this same language prompt at home - you can simplify this with toddlers to be “I feel \_\_\_\_\_” or take it to “I feel \_\_\_\_\_ when \_\_\_\_\_. I need to \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “I need \_\_\_\_\_” is another great I-statement prompt.
- We have visual language prompts available for students to use – this helps cue language recollection.
- This is a great time to talk about all different emotions/feelings. A printed visual chart can be helpful, as the visual can often help kids to identify what they are feeling.





## Problem Solvers Vs. Problem Finders

**We want to empower kids to be problem solvers (versus problem finders). It is easy to *find* a problem but we have to work hard to *solve* a problem.**

- When we are problem finders, it is easy to feel like something is happening to us that we have little control over. By empowering children to be problem solvers we are promoting positive self-efficacy and a sense of power.
- We created personalized solution cards at Paddington Station - these are visual examples of things kids can do to solve a problem (E.g. trade, take a turn, ask a grown-up for help, use a timer, etc.). Try making solution cards at home!
- Language idea: *It sounds like you found a problem – do you have an idea of how can we solve it?*
- Sesame Street has great language as well! *I wonder... What if.... Let's try!*

## First, Then...

**Everyone likes to know what to expect – even the youngest of kids!**

- Try implementing the language, “First \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_.”
- This language can help kids learn what to expect. “First we are going to take our coats outside, then we are going to decide if we need to wear it.”
- All kids want to feel like they have input, and incorporating choice in any form is so beneficial. Choice can be as simple as asking kids which item they want to carry, if they want to use the potty now or in one minute, etc.
- Shift to the YES! E.g., *I hear you want more Ipad time. First, we are going to clean up. Then, we will go outside. We can play on the Ipad again tomorrow!*





## WAIT Time

**Before you respond, try counting to 10 in your head!**

- Adults move fast, process rapidly, and respond quickly! Children need a lot more time to process and respond – it can be really beneficial to internally count in order to allow your child enough time to think through how they want to respond. Count to 10!
- If your child is still struggling to respond after allowing them time to process you can provide them with a language prompt. E.g. *At bedtime I'm going to help you pick out pajamas and then you are going to \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Allowing for wait time is especially crucial during open-ended questioning (versus yes/no questions).

## Movement & Mindful Bodies

**Educators are always working on teaching body awareness with students - this skill helps students to hone in on what their body requires in the moment.**

Mindful body has two meanings: 1) being aware of your body— or “*noticing*” -- something that can be difficult for young children—and 2) the traditional sit-up-straight posture used in seated mindfulness practice to encourage attention and deep breathing.

- Use examples of narrating what you see happening when kids appear dysregulated - “Your body seems wiggly right now, do you want to do 10 jumps or 10 toe touches?” This helps kids to cue in and become aware of the sensations happening in their bodies.
- Incorporate heavy work when kids seem dysregulated (pushing objects, pulling objects, jumping, etc.) – this is great for “sensory deposits”.
- Get outside and get moving! Fresh air and sunshine are always mood boosters.





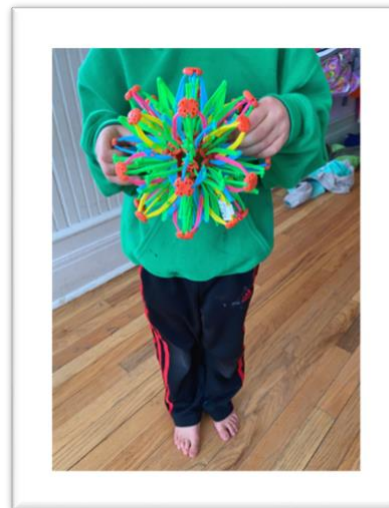
## Visuals, Visuals, Visuals!

### Children respond so well to visual cues!

- Use a timer to indicate transition times (timers can be via phone or physical sand timers).
- Picture schedules can really help ease challenging transitions and times.
- Make a calendar that shows home days versus school days. Time is a challenging concept for many kids (and some adults) and a visual calendar can help kids keep track of days.
- Sing songs with body movements! The addition of visual movements helps with large motor and small motor planning.

## Take a Deep and Full Breath!

- **Flower/Candle Breath:** Imagine smelling a beautiful flower. Breathe in through the nose and out the mouth, releasing any tension. Stop and smell the roses, daffodils, daisies or any other flower you like. When you blow out, pretend to blow out a candle.
- **Hissing [Snake] Breath:** Breathe in the nose, long deep inhale, and out the mouth with a hissing sound, slow and long.
- **Bear Breath (Box Breathing):** Inhale through the nose, pause; exhale out the nose, pause. Breathe in to a count of 3 or 4, pause for a count of 1 or 2; breathe out for a count of 3 or 4, pause for a count of 1 or 2.
- **STAR Breathing:** Smile, take a breath, and relax.
- **Balloon Breathing:** Hands on your stomach. Take a deep breath in and fill up the balloon. Release the breath and let the balloon deflate.
- **Five Finger Breathing:** Trace around your hand/fingers. When you breathe in, trace up. When you breathe out, trace downward.
- **Breathing Ball (see picture).**



*Breathing Ball*

