

Social-emotional intelligence is inbuilt in children. Social and emotional competencies aid us in expressing ourselves, understanding others, adapting to change and coping with daily demands, challenges, and pressures. Introducing social-emotional learning strategies in the school has a long-term impact on children’s moral values and ethics, at the same time, it passively boosts their academic progress.

Raising resilient and socially and emotionally intelligent children is a challenge for parents. The years from birth to five are crucial for a child’s brain to develop socio-emotional skills. A child’s lifelong progress and success largely depend on nature (genetics) and nurture (care, nutrition, stimulation, surrounding and teaching) during this period of time. The school where a child spends almost 15

years of their early life must provide the child with ample support and opportunities for social and emotional development.

Socio-emotional learning includes various aspects such as self-awareness (who am I?), self-management (what I should do? How should I do it?), responsible decision-making (what is right? What is wrong? What is good or bad?), social awareness (self-identity, others’ identity), relationship skills (care, consideration, sympathy and empathy). Mastering these aspects allows students to be rational and ethical. Hence, in a school, the teachers have to collaborate and work together in understanding each child and helping them with these. There are other stakeholders that play an important role in this, as Urie Bronfenbrenner mentions in the ecological model.

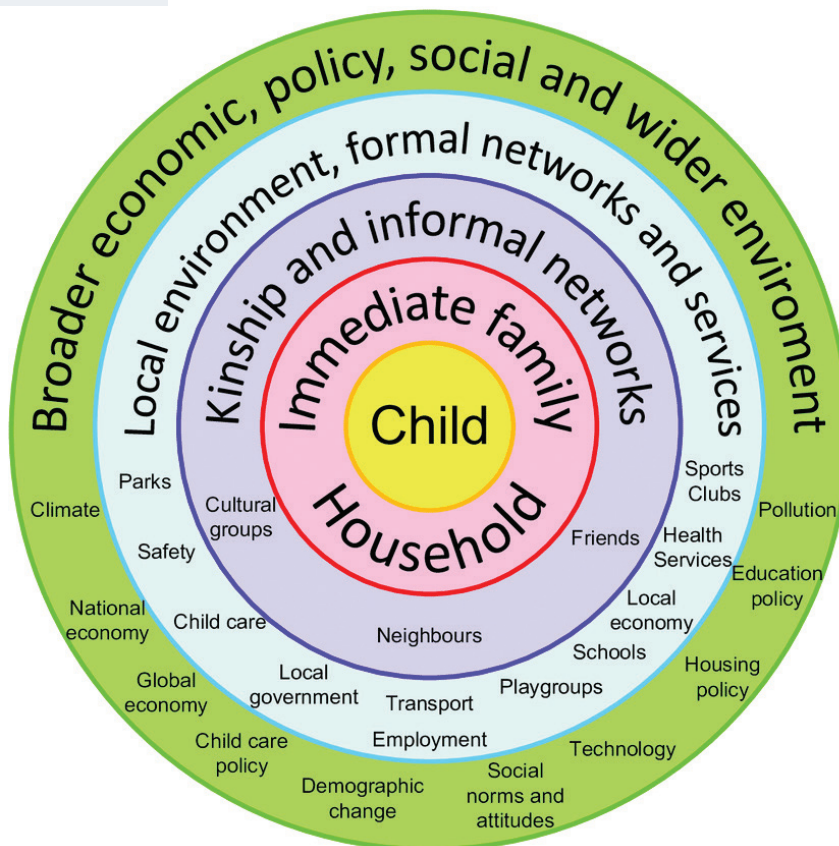


Figure 1. Diagram by Joel Gibbs based on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.<sup>1</sup>

The school is a mini-society. In our school, we teachers bring into the children's routine various activities to encourage socio-emotional learning and development. In a classroom children complain, cry, tease, fight and disturb each other. Social-emotional learning helps them to identify and manage their emotions. As teachers, we help them achieve positive goals that are founded on important socio-emotional values of showing empathy, maintaining positive relationships with others, and taking responsible decisions.

We encourage the sharing of experiences, incidents and life events. Instead of just reading stories of great personalities, we share stories from our own lives. We try and provide care and physical and emotional comfort by creating a safe and secure environment for children to express their thoughts and opinions and share their difficulties and troubles. We have dialogues with each student based on their needs or situation. We practise secularism inside the school campus, treating everyone equally and giving equal opportunity to all.

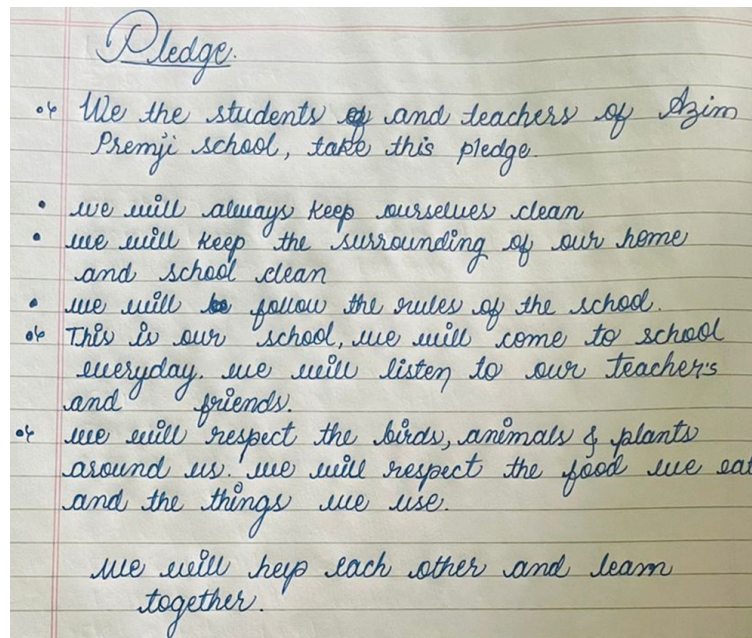


Figure 2. Teachers and students together taking the pledge in the morning to respect everyone and everything around them

### Self-awareness and social awareness

To create a joyful atmosphere, teachers engage with students in fun activities, like dancing, action play and circle time. We keep the atmosphere lively by greeting the students with hugs, high-fives and other gestures of welcome that they choose from a given set. We try to understand how their day is going, how they are feeling, why they are feeling certain emotions, etc. This also helps the children to understand themselves. To orient them towards self-realisation and self-motivation, when tests are conducted, the papers were given back to them so that they get a clear idea of their performance, what they could do and what they need to learn better, which helps them set goals for themselves for upcoming tests.



Figure 3. A teacher greeting children joyfully as they enter the classroom

### Self-management

Managing emotions means not suppressing emotions, which is a sign of good emotional health. A girl from class II lost her bottle in the classroom and was crying loudly. It was her manner of expressing herself that she had learnt. Now, it was for the teacher to deal with this situation. In such situations, the teacher must help the child to learn to regulate her emotions and find a solution to the problem at hand. In this case, the teacher first helped the child to stop crying and then they began to search for the bottle and found it. In doing this, the teacher indicated to this child and all the other children in her class that when faced with a problem, instead of crying, they must think of how to find a solution to the problem.

### Sense of responsibility

The students of classes VI and VII have learned to work collaboratively and cooperatively in conducting various activities and programmes without the support of their teachers. On September 5, Teachers' Day, the students organised a cultural programme for the teachers. When they got to know that there was not enough time left to complete all the events planned, they did not panic but handled the situation intelligently by cutting down various activities and they managed to complete the programme as per the schedule. This was indicative of the maturity and calmness they have developed over a period of time through practice and participation.

Student-led committees that have discussions and meetings where students express their thoughts, opinions, and ideas also foster their sense of responsibility besides creating a sense of belonging and engagement among them. This is particularly important for developing a positive school culture, where students feel valued and respected.

### Responsible decision-making

There are various committees and groups in the school and students are encouraged to bring in suggestions to make these vibrant and lively. A boy named Arvind who is in the Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) group was doing well in maths but not so well in English. When he scored less in English, his English teacher asked him to bring the class teacher's signature on the test paper. The class

teacher had a chat with him and discussed how he could do well in English too. A heart-to-heart talk with children also helps them to understand and take responsible decisions. The boy has taken the teacher's talk positively and is now participating well in the English class too.

### Conclusion

In our school, we create a safe and fear-free environment that enables students and teachers to interact comfortably with each other and with other support staff. We play together, share our happiness and sorrows, express our emotions, and support each other.

*\*Names have been changed to protect children's identities.*

It is important to note that socio-emotional learning is not only critical for students to lead successful and fulfilling lives, but it is also essential for their academic success. By fostering a positive and supportive learning environment and providing the necessary resources and support, our school is consistently trying to ensure that students have the socio-emotional skills they need to succeed in life.

### Endnotes

- i Housing Children: South Auckland, The Housing Pathways Longitudinal Study - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Bronfenbrenners-ecological-model-Diagram-by-Joel-Gibbs-based-on-Bronfenbrenners-1979\\_fig1\\_311843438](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Bronfenbrenners-ecological-model-Diagram-by-Joel-Gibbs-based-on-Bronfenbrenners-1979_fig1_311843438)



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