



PEDALS Tip Sheet: Observing SEL in Action in PreK Classrooms

(Connection , Reciprocity , Inclusion , Opportunities to Grow )

What to Notice During Observations

Connection: Building Emotional Safety and Trust

Between Teachers and Children:

- Genuinely warm greetings, checking in on how children feel
- Attuned responses to emotional needs (comforting upset, celebrating success)
- Offering physical closeness when welcomed (sitting nearby, sharing materials)
- Storytelling, play, or conversations that deepen emotional bonds

Between Adults:

- Positive tone and support between staff members
- Consistent modeling of kindness, patience, and shared joy

With Families:

- Sharing successes and challenges authentically with families
- Creating moments of connection during arrival, dismissal, or communication

Reciprocity: Encouraging Meaningful Two-Way Interaction

Between Teachers and Children:

- Asking open-ended questions and truly listening to children's ideas
- Expanding on children's comments during play or circle time
- Encouraging peer dialogue, negotiation, and collaborative play

Between Adults:

- Co-constructing ideas and plans for classroom activities
- Reflecting together on children's strengths and next steps

With Families:

- Inviting two-way conversation about children's experiences and growth
- Listening with curiosity to family perspectives and honoring their insights

Inclusion: Ensuring Every Child Feels They Belong

Between Teachers and Children:

- Encouraging participation in multiple ways (movement, language, art)
- Adapting group activities for different sensory, language, or developmental needs
- Affirming individual identities, cultures, and languages during group activities

Between Adults:

- Inclusive collaboration during planning meetings
- Celebrating different teaching and learning styles within the team

With Families:

- Welcoming family input and involvement in varied, accessible ways
- Respecting cultural and linguistic diversity in classroom practices

Opportunities to Grow: Fostering Emerging SEL and Academic Skills

Between Teachers and Children:

- Supporting perseverance through mistakes or challenges ("It's okay to keep trying!")
- Modeling emotional regulation and flexible thinking
- Encouraging leadership, problem-solving, and peer mentoring opportunities

Between Adults:

- Encouraging professional growth, shared learning, and peer mentorship
- Affirming efforts to deepen reflective practice within the team

With Families:

- Sharing strengths-based observations about children's resilience, creativity, and empathy
 - Inviting families into conversations about next steps in growth and learning
-

Reflection Prompts for Leaders

🌀 Where did I see Connection , Reciprocity , Inclusion , or Opportunities to Grow  today — between children, staff, and families?

🌀 How did adults model the social-emotional skills they hope to nurture in children?

🌀 Were small, unscripted moments of belonging, encouragement, or emotional learning noticed and celebrated?

Important Reminders for PreK Rooms

- SEL in PreK is **embedded in every interaction**—not just during "SEL time" or curriculum blocks.
- Authentic peer interactions (negotiating a turn, solving a block tower collapse) are *where the real learning happens*.
- Inclusion means recognizing and valuing the **many ways** children show competence, leadership, and emotional growth.
- Adult emotional tone and collaboration are foundational to the emotional climate children experience daily.

"In PreK, play, friendship, resilience, and reflection *are* the curriculum."