Dear Family,

Now that we’re well into our social-emotional learning (SEL) activities from the American Heart Association, I’d like to update you on what your child has been learning.

The program includes the following units. I’ve checked off the ones we’ve completed so far:

- Clear communication
- Resolving conflict
- Teamwork and collaboration
- Being an active listener
- Standing up for yourself
- Fairness and compromise

We’ve been doing activities as a whole group and in smaller groups as well, giving students lots of opportunities to talk about and reflect on these topics. We’ve even done a little theater to act out the conflict between the three little pigs and the wolf that wants to blow their house down!

Remember, just like students need to practice reading and math to sharpen their skills, they need to practice managing emotions, setting and achieving goals, working well with others, and making good decisions. These skills will help them achieve the thing we want for them, more than anything: living successful and fulfilling lives.

I look forward to continuing to work with you as we teach important life skills that address the whole child.

Sincerely,

________________________________

Your child’s teacher

PS: I hope your family has been doing its SEL homework. If not, there are more assignments to come. I think you’ll find them beneficial—and fun—for everyone.

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Research recap

On average, each dollar invested in SEL programs yields $11 in long-term benefits such as improved mental and physical health, reductions in crime, and higher earnings.

Calming conflicts at home

Families experience conflict on a daily—and some days even hourly—basis. From “he took my football” to “she gets all the attention,” conflicts can turn a good day upside down.

Try these tips to address issues and keep communication flowing:

• **Stay calm.** Don’t get pulled into the argument.

• **Start by listening.** Try not to jump to conclusions, suggest remedies, or dole out punishments before you’ve gotten the full story.

• **Rephrase what you hear.** Show empathy by saying, “I see what you’re saying” and “I understand how you feel.” Through your words demonstrate that you really do hear and understand.

• **Set the tone.** Listen to how you handle conflicts with other adults. Work to demonstrate the way you want children to handle conflicts.

Just for fun

Families are a type of team. To keep your team going strong, try these fun ideas:

• **Come up with a team name.** It might be cheesy but kids enjoy knowing they’re part of the Grady Brigade, the Stauff-iteers, or Team Taylor.

• **Consider code words.** Give your child a simple way to let you know that he or she needs your help or attention in a social situation. For example, saying “Mom, I need to go to the library tonight” is a lot nicer than “Mom, that lady keeps blathering on and I’m about to have a meltdown.”

• **Play team building games.** They’re not just for offices and clubs. A game of Human Knot, Twister, or even 20 Questions while you’re walking the dog keeps kids unplugged and engaged. Plus look for active hobbies your whole family can participate in such as geocaching or playing kickball or volleyball.

• **Set and monitor family goals.** Whether the goal is to minimize conflict, be on time, or save for a vacation, everyone should contribute.

• **Laugh together.** Did you hear a silly joke? Share it! Even when kids groan because the joke’s so bad they’re still laughing inside.

Quick quotes

“10% of conflicts are due to difference in opinion. 90% are due to wrong tone of voice.”

—Unknown

“An apology is the super glue of life. It can repair just about anything.”

—Lynn Johnston

“An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.”

— Mahatma Gandhi