

# LANDMARK LEARNS

Parent  
Education

**SUBJECT**

SEL: MANAGING RELATIONSHIP SKILLS &  
SOCIAL AWARENESS

**DATE**

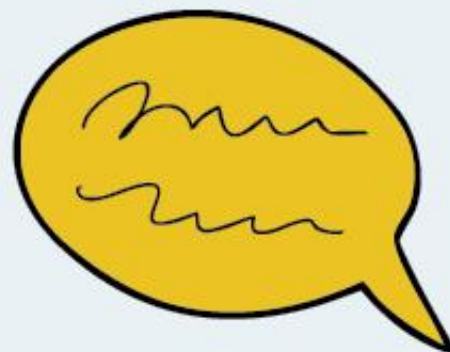
MARCH 25, 2026

**TIME**

7:00-8:00 P.M.

**PRESENTERS**

LAURA POLVINEN (HOST), CHRISTINA SCANLON,  
AND MORGAN TALBOT



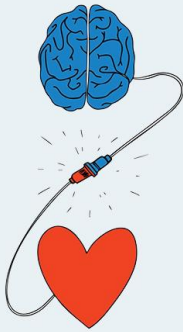
# LANDMARK LEARNS Parent Education

**SUBJECT**  
WHAT IS SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)?  
SUPPORTING STRUGGLING LEARNERS

**DATE**  
JANUARY 28, 2026

**TIME**  
7:00-8:00 P.M.

**PRESENTERS**  
LAURA POLVINEN (HOST) AND CHRISTINE VANDER WERT



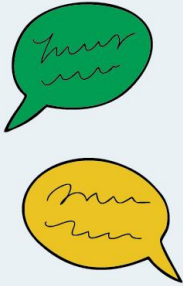
# LANDMARK LEARNS Parent Education

**SUBJECT**  
SEL: MANAGING RELATIONSHIP SKILLS &  
SOCIAL AWARENESS

**DATE**  
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AND MORGAN TALBOT



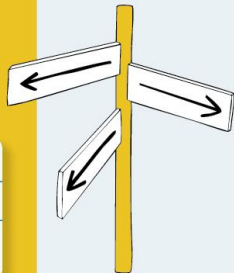
# LANDMARK LEARNS Parent Education

**SUBJECT**  
SEL: RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

**DATE**  
APRIL 14, 2026

**TIME**  
7:00-8:00 P.M.

**PRESENTERS**  
LAURA POLVINEN (HOST), ROBB GENETELLI, AND  
TARA JOLY-LOWDERMILK



# Landmark Learns Recordings and Resources



[www.landmarkschool.org/landmark-learns](http://www.landmarkschool.org/landmark-learns)

# Logistics



**Recording and Resources:** We will send a recording and resources from this webinar to all registrants in the next few days.



**Questions?** Please use the Q&A to submit questions tonight.

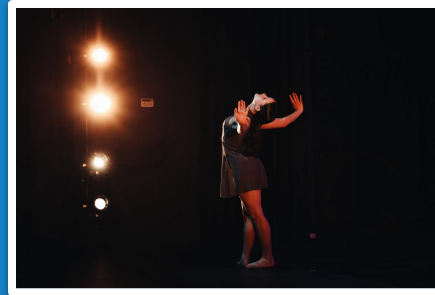


**Closed Captioning:** You can turn on closed captioning by clicking on the “CC or live transcript button” and choosing “show subtitle”.



# LANDMARK SCHOOL

- Grades 2-12
- Dyslexia and other LBLD
- Boarding Program
- Small Classes
- Individualized Tutorial
- Robust Activities
- Summer too!





**LANDMARK**  
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**For:**

- Educators
- Schools
- Districts
- Universities



**LANDMARK**  
SCHOOL

**For:**

- Students
- Families
- Advocates
- Ed Consultants

Learn More  
About Landmark



**HELLO**  
my name is

**Laura Polvinen, LICSW**

- Director of EMS  
Counseling and  
Community Engagement



**HELLO**  
my name is

**Christina Scanlon, MEd**  
**(she/her/hers)**

- Program Director for Expressive Language



**HELLO**  
my name is

**Morgan Talbot, LCSW**  
**(he/him/his)**

- Elementary Middle School Counselor

# Our Objectives Tonight

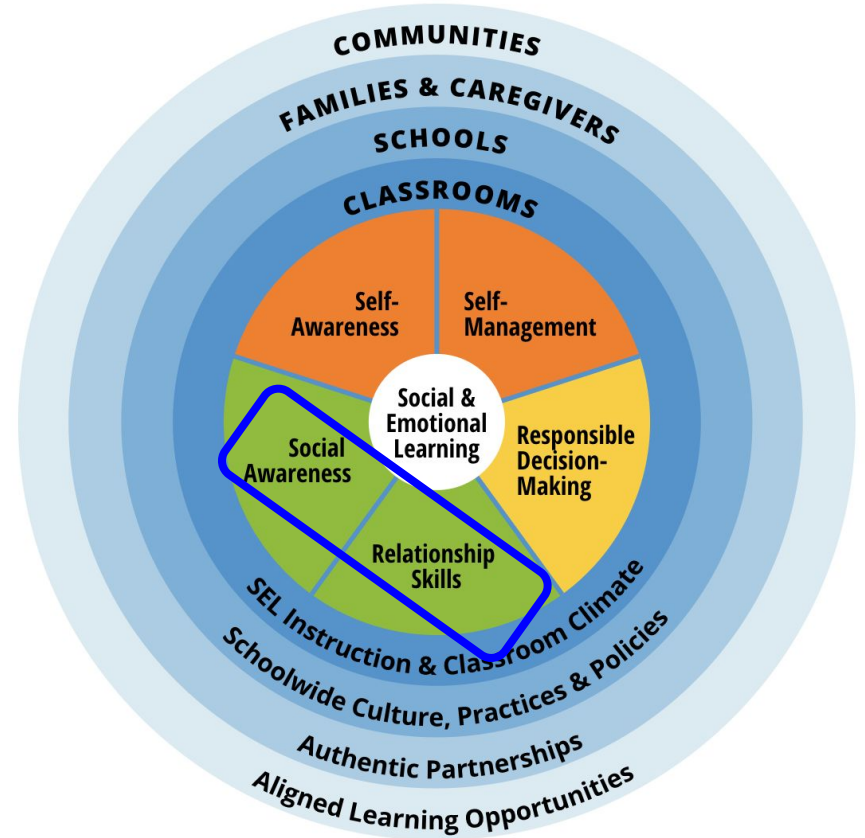
1. Understand social awareness and relationship skills in the social-emotional learning (SEL) framework.
2. Recognize the Importance of Explicit Instruction
3. Consider strategies for the classroom and home.

# Agenda

1. SEL Framework Overview
2. Social Awareness
3. Relationship Skills
4. Explicit Instruction
5. Strategies for classroom and home
6. Wrap-up/Questions

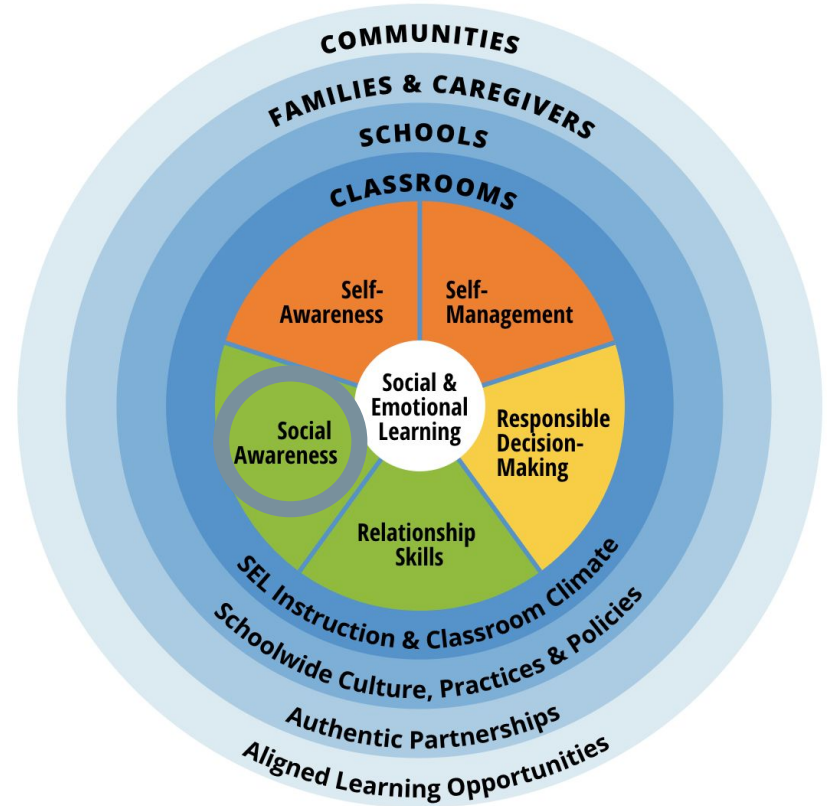
# SEL: The 5 Pillars

1. Self-awareness
2. Self-management
3. Social awareness
4. Relationship skills
5. Responsible decision-making



# Social Awareness

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures

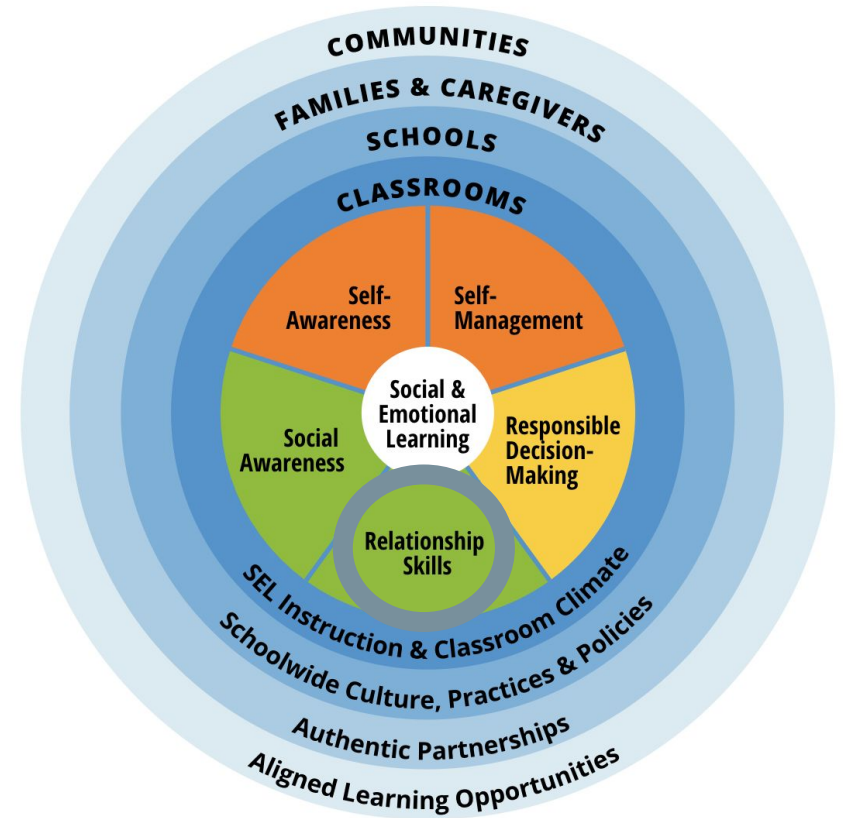


# Social Awareness



# Relationship Skills

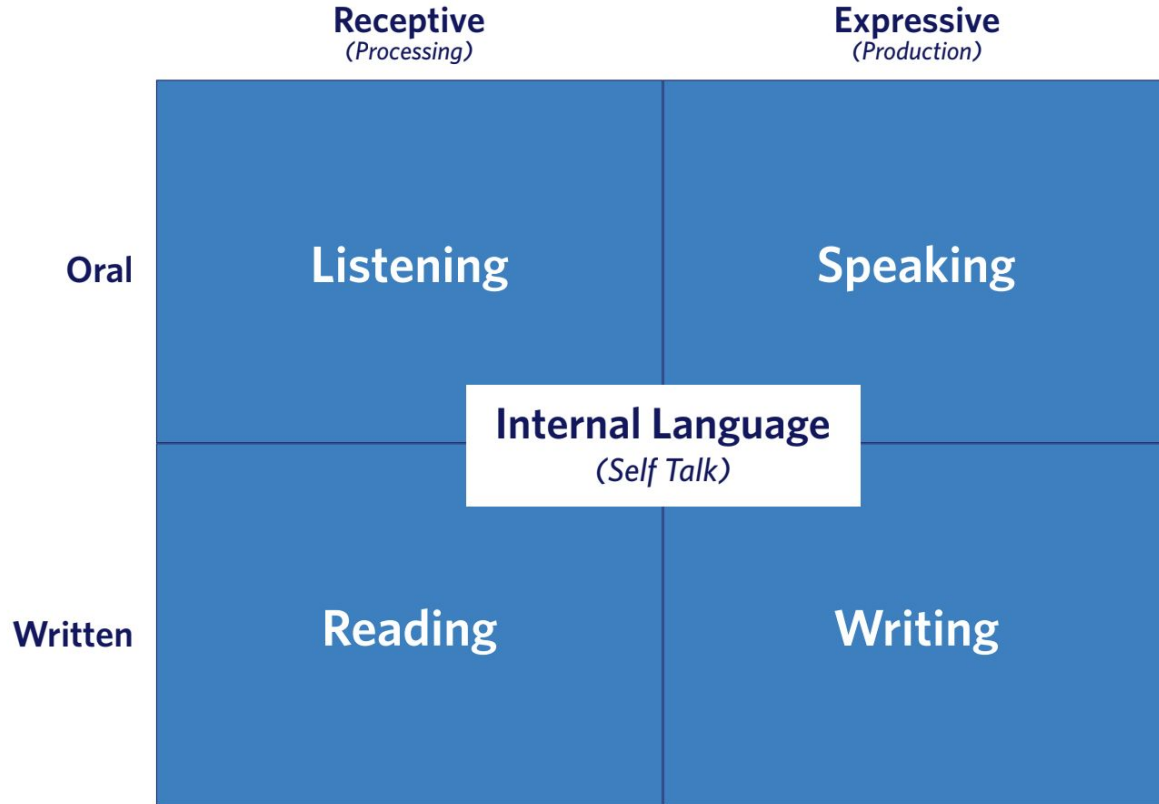
The ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with different people and groups



## Relationship Skills



# The Language Box



# Landmark's Six Core Principles

1. Provide opportunities for our students to experience success.
2. Use multisensory approaches to teach.
3. Use micro-units and structured tasks for every student.
4. Ensure automatization through practice and review.
5. Provide models for our students to use as guides.
6. Include our students in the learning process.

# Research



- 75% of LBLD students show some difficulties in social skills
  - support to communicate & make sense of their social world
- MRI studies show that social brain areas are not as “lit up” in children/adults with LDs
- Social competencies need to be taught directly

# How can social needs present?

- Challenges with processing/expression
- Difficulty recalling and sequencing
- Difficulty with social & non-verbal perception
- Difficulty with pragmatics
- Weakness with executive function skills



# Strong Social Thinkers

adjust their words and actions based on:



**WHO**

they are with



**WHERE**

they are



**WHAT IS  
EXPECTED**

for the  
situation

# Explicit Language: Expected Behavior

If our actions in a situation help others feel comfortable or happy around us, we say those behaviors are **EXPECTED** for the situation.



# Explicit Language: Unexpected Behavior

When we do not do what is expected for the situation, these actions are called **UNEXPECTED**.

These unexpected behaviors can make others feel uncomfortable, sad, mad or confused.



# Explicit Language: Reading the Room (Situational Awareness)

- **Extracts** info (Space, Time, Objects, People) from environment and *integrates* with internal knowledge (involves visual, “episodic memory”)
- **Determines purpose:** recognizes roles/status
- **Predicts** anticipates others expected behaviors
- **Shifts flexibly** - according to the changing demands

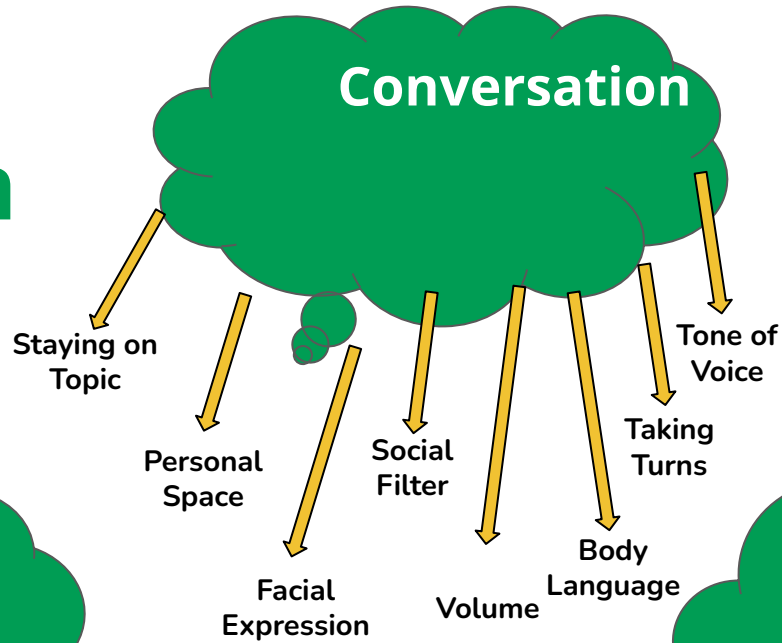
(Ward, S. and Jacobsen, K., 2014)

# Explicit Instruction



**Hidden Expectations**

# Explicit Instruction



**Size of the Problem**

**Flexible vs. Stuck Thinking**

# Social Skills Lesson Plan

- 1) Spiral back
- 2) New social skill
- 3) Model social skill
- 4) Practice social skill
- 5) Wrap Up/Takeaway

# Giving Non-judgemental Feedback

[Link for STOP Printout](#)

## S-T-O-P to Increase Situational Awareness

The STOP acronym was conceived by Sarah Ward and Kristen Jacobsen of Cognitive Connections as a way of referring to "a student's ability to observe, orient, decide, and act upon the features of Space, Time, Objects, and People" (Ward & Jacobsen, 2014).



- ◉ Reads the room
- ◉ Understands the function of the space
- ◉ Demonstrates awareness of personal space
- ◉ Navigates space efficiently
- ◉ Shifts and transitions easily between spaces



- ◉ Demonstrates expected activity in specific time
- ◉ Aware of units of time, time available, and passage of time
- ◉ Uses "if-then" reasoning to envision future moment in time
- ◉ Anticipates what is coming up, can flexibly shift pace



- ◉ Gathers expected materials for situation
- ◉ Organizes materials within personal space
- ◉ Recognizes how "same but different" objects can be
- ◉ Sees relevance of materials needed to meet a goal and inhibits use of irrelevant objects



- ◉ Understands role/other's roles
- ◉ Recognizes purpose of communication (discussion, lecture)
- ◉ Makes inferences or predicts changes based on others' verbal/nonverbal communication
- ◉ Regulates/modifies behavior based on awareness of others' behaviors and communication (prompts)

## Giving Non-Judgmental Feedback... Sentence Starters for Observations

The S.T.O.P. acronym was developed by Sarah Ward and Kristen Jacobsen of Cognitive Connections. The definitions and sentence starters of each component were written by Landmark School faculty members.



- ◉ I noticed when you entered the classroom you were really loud, which distracted me and the others...
- ◉ I noticed when I asked you to move and get into your group, you started to have a side conversation with X...
- ◉ I noticed you were sitting really close to ...
- ◉ I am noticing that you have your head on the desk...



- ◉ I noticed that you interrupted me to ask to go to the bathroom when I was giving directions...
- ◉ I noticed that everyday you seem unsure of what to do after our warm-up...
- ◉ I noticed that I have now tallied 10 minutes of tardiness for you this week...
- ◉ I am noticing that the due date is Friday and you are only on the draft of your first paragraph...



- ◉ I noticed that your papers are/were all over the place in your backpack...
- ◉ I noticed that you forgot something to write with again today...
- ◉ I noticed your backpack was in her space and she had an annoyed expression...
- ◉ I noticed that you keep getting distracted by the other tabs in your browser while we're working on our papers...



- ◉ I noticed that you interrupted me to ask to go to the bathroom when I was giving directions...
- ◉ I noticed that when you were sniffing really loudly in class today, other kids seemed grossed out...they rolled their eyes and gave each other negative looks...

# What to do at Home: MODEL



# What to do at Home: SCRIPT

“It’s not WHAT you say but HOW you say it”

“Can you say that with a more expected tone?”

“Check your tone and try that again.”



# What to do at Home: OBSERVE



# Important Takeaways

- Start small
- Use consistent vocabulary
- Role play - make it fun!
- Prepare for the “exception”
- Keep it “short & sweet”
- Include students in the learning process
- Social skills training is NOT behavior management

# To Sum Up...



- Social skills are a key part of literacy
- Concise language & common vocabulary are essential
- Regular practice & review of the skills is important
- Repeated exposure grows student independence
- Skill mastery promotes confidence & pride

Questions?

**Thank you!**

# Contact Us!



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**Morgan Talbot, LCSW**  
[mtalbot@landmarkschool.org](mailto:mtalbot@landmarkschool.org)



# Resources



# Social Skill Lessons/Vocabulary

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- **Role of the Student** (Expectations for students; expectations for teachers)
- **Hidden Expectations: Expected and Unexpected** (Doing or saying what is expected for the situation)
- **Body & Brain in The Group/Ready to Learn** (used to be whole body listening, talks about where our thoughts and body are)
- **Thoughts and Feelings** (identifying and expressing feeling words, personal space, thinking about others)
- **The Group Plan: Thinking about the group** (following along with the expectations of the group)
- **Thinking With Your Eyes** (Knowing how to join a situation based on the clues)
- **Flexible vs Stuck Thinking** (accepting unexpected changes)
- **Size of the Problem** (Identifying how big/small a problem really is; generate solutions to problems)
- **Conversation** (body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, speaking volume, staying on topic, waiting your turn, social filter, initiating and closing a conversation, keeping a conversation going, etc.)
- **Making Others Feel Comfortable** (doing or saying what is expected for the situation to make others feel comfortable and have good thoughts about you)

# References

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# References Continued

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## Links:

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<https://ggie.berkeley.edu/student-well-being/sel-for-students-social-awareness-and-relationship-skills/>

<https://www.landmarkschool.org>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11404366/>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC11484989/>

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2773233923000037>

<https://www.learntechlib.org/primary/p/184634/>

Youtube State Farm Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=317vOgEiNRE&t=12s>