

Social Emotional Field Day



Grades 4–12



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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
What, When, Why, and How?	7
What is SEL?	9
BLOCK 1 — MOVEMENT GAMES	11
Blob Tag	12
Capture The Flag	13
Elbow Tag	15
Giants / Elves / Wizards	17
Go	19
“It” Tag	21
Keep It Alive	23
Odds and Evens	25
Three-Legged Race	27
Trust Walk	29
BLOCK 2 — GROUP CHALLENGES	31
Group Juggling	32
Group Knot	35
Reversal	36
Group Freeze	38
Team Rock, Paper, Scissors	39
BLOCK 3 — NATURE WALK	41
Curiosity Walk	42
Mindful Walk	45
About the Author	47

INTRODUCTION

A Social Emotional Field Day is designed to integrate social emotional learning (SEL) principles into every aspect of a field day experience. Students engage in experiential learning that promotes teamwork, empathy, communication, and problem-solving. This intentional blend of fun and skill-building activities builds a foundation for inner and outer awareness that fosters a positive and supportive school environment, where academics can flourish, and students will grow personally, emotionally, and socially.

Normal field days are also great. You are outside, you break the academic routine, and you can play games or just hang out. There is great social emotional value in just having this experience and it pays dividends in the classroom as relationships strengthen and students feel better about their experience in school and often life in general. However, a Social Emotional Field Day is more intentional about developing social emotional skills. How?

1. Team building games develop communication skills, encourage collaboration and cooperation, promote teamwork, and practice resilience.
2. Students are given space to become aware of their inner experience. This consciousness is the first step toward developing agency and making responsible decisions.
3. Students are given space to notice their social experience. There are many social dynamics that offer a rich opportunity for developing social skills in a positive supportive environment.
4. Reflection is an essential component and tool at the end of every activity. This time allows students to process what happened, emotionally regulate, and apply their learning experiences to other areas of their lives.
5. Assessment allows teachers to evaluate intended learning outcomes and creates accountability for students.

Typical Field Day	Social Emotional Field Day
Traditional competitive games	Team building games
Lack of articulation or attention to inner experience	Focus on emotional experiences, thoughts, and mindset
Lack of consideration of social relationships	Consideration and mindful attention to social relationships
Lack of reflection	Every activity has a moment for reflection to assess learning experiences and application to other situations
Emergency accountability only	Assessment for every activity

Social Emotional Field Day provides you with a blueprint to create an extraordinary social emotional experience with your school community. The activities were all tested by my students over the course of two decades for effectiveness and fun. I guarantee that you will transform in many ways and have a profound and lasting impact on your students and classrooms. Enjoy what will be an unforgettable social emotional experience.

All of the activities are adapted from the book *50 Social Emotional Learning Lessons Vol. 1 and Community Building Games Vol. 1-4* with permission from the author and publisher.

WHAT, WHEN, WHY, AND HOW?

What should the schedule look like?

1. Block one—Movement Games
2. Block two—Group Problem Solving
3. Block three—Curiosity Nature Walk

What themes can be a part of Social Emotional Field Day?

1. Values. Have students identify their guiding values and reflect upon how their values influenced their decisions and actions.
2. Growth Mindset. Have students reflect upon applying a growth mindset to each activity.
3. Life lessons. Ask students to reflect upon what life lessons were learned in each activity and how to apply those lessons in the future.
4. Mindfulness. Have students connect to their inner and outer curiosity in each activity.
5. Kindness. Ask students to commit to one act of kindness in each activity and notice the inner and outer affect this act has on them and the community.

When should you have a Social Emotional Field Day?

1. Ideally, at the beginning of the year, so that students can bring their learning into the classroom. However, it's never too late to start.
2. Social Emotional Field Day can also be a monthly event by changing the themes and activities to match the needs of the students and community.

Why should you have a Social Emotional Field Day?

1. A Social Emotional Field Day promotes teamwork and collaboration, enhances self-awareness, fosters social awareness and empathy, develops responsible decision-making skills, and cultivates positive relationships.
2. Devoting a day to social emotional learning signifies its importance to the community and provides a focused opportunity to enhance social emotional skills.

3. Having a Social Emotional Field Day outside means you can do team building activities that need space as well as share in the healing benefits of being in nature.

How does the size of your group affect the day?

1. If the event is for the entire school, divide the community into four groups and rotate activities between the different blocks of time.

WHAT IS SEL?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) describes SEL as “The process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.”

They divide SEL into five standards with corresponding learning objectives:

Self-Awareness:

- Identifying emotions
- Self-perception
- Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets
- Body-mind awareness

Self-Management:

- Regulation of emotions, thoughts, and behaviors
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Growth mindset

Social Awareness:

- Empathy
- Perspective-taking
- Respect for others
- Understanding one’s role and contribution within a community

Relationships Skills:

- Communication
- Negotiating conflict constructively
- Teamwork
- Relationship building

Responsible Decision-Making:

- Ethical Responsibility
- The ability to use values to guide actions
- Consideration of self and others
- Analyzing problems and brainstorming solutions

If you are new to SEL, the standards and learning objectives can be overwhelming. How do you address these crucial concepts and skills in addition to everything else you do? No worries! That is why I wrote the book. You do not need a master's degree in SEL to meet SEL standards. Simply implement the SEL-based lessons in this book and these standards will be met organically.

If you are familiar with these standards and learning objectives, name them at the end of every lesson. SEL language allows students to become intentional about implementing SEL into their lives. The discussion of SEL communicates their importance, which will translate into students valuing them as well.



BLOCK 1 – MOVEMENT GAMES



BLOB TAG

SEL Standards:

- Self-Management
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

Time:

20 mins

Instructions:

1. The game starts with one student who is “It.”
2. Whenever that student tags someone else, they link elbows or hands and chase other students.
3. The Blob must stay linked as it grows and chases other students.

Variations:

- Increase the number of Blobs that start each round and have the Blobs compete against each other to capture other students.
- Change movement style from running to shuffling, skipping, or side-stepping.

Reflections:

- How did you work as a team to achieve a bigger Blob?
- How does this activity relate to respect?
- When you were not in the Blob, what strategies did you use to elude the Blob?

Teacher Notes:

- Students will sometimes break apart from their Blob to capture students. If this happens, add a rule that if a Blob separates, the Blob must freeze for 30 seconds.
- The first round should be timed and short-lived. It gets far more interesting when there are multiple blobs competing against each other.