

Using Emotional Intelligence in the Classroom

by Beth Hammett

What is emotional intelligence? My definition is “the emotional and physical skills needed to survive the day.” Emotional Intelligence (EI) experts Dr. Low and Dr. Nelson, Texas A & M—Kingsville campus, give a more detailed explanation:

The EI system has five steps:

Step A: (Self Assessment: Explore) requires you develop an intentional self-assessment habit: inquiring discovering, and questioning.

Step B: (Self-Awareness: Identify) involves the process of identifying your experience as either a thought or a feeling.

Step C: (Self-Knowledge: Understand) involves “insight” and an understanding that allows you to make choices about how to behave.

Step D: (Self-Development: Learn) involves learning various ways to improve your behavior.

Step E: (Self-Improvement: Apply and Model) requires you apply and model emotionally intelligent behavior to achieve personal, career, and academic goals. (Low and Nelson, 2003)

Below is a sample of the EI skills most often related to academic success: assertion, drive strength, commitment ethic, time management, and stress management:

Assertion- the ability to clearly and honestly communicate your thoughts and feelings to others in a straightforward and direct manner.

Drive Strength- the ability to complete meaningful goals that give you personal satisfaction and positive feelings.

Time Management- the ability to organize tasks into a personally productive time schedule and use time effectively to complete the tasks.

Commitment Ethic- the ability to finish what you start with pride and excitement, not fatigue and sacrifice.

Stress Management- the ability to choose and exercise healthy self-control in response to stressful events. (Nelson & Low, 2003)

Using EI in the classroom means students start with planning and scheduling skills. Ask students to fill out a time management sheet. This should look like the face of a clock, and students shade in the areas according to what they are doing and when they are doing it. For example, if a student spends from four o'clock to six o'clock studying for their Biology exam then four to six should be shaded and labeled as such. It is an eye-opener for students to see the actual amount of time spent on outside activities versus the time spent on academics. Have students fill out their planners by helping them schedule when assignments are due. This takes care of the "I didn't know it was due" syndrome.

The next step is to make sure students have contact numbers for after school tutors. If your school has no formal tutoring then find the expert person in each class who is willing to help others. If possible, set-up after school tutoring with peer tutors. Have students record the names and numbers of those in their study groups. Your school district may offer community service hours for middle/high school students. National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) students are required to do service projects, so consider contacting the NJHS sponsor to set-up a tutoring program.

Making sure students turn in assignments on time means you must help students set goals by doing assignments in steps or stages: grade each step or stage of the process as well as assessing the final product. Scoring rubrics should have students input and should reflect the skills taught in class. Students should know how to receive the top grade on every assignment. Open communication between teacher and students is important. And the old saying, “If one person has a question then another person probably has the same question” holds true.

Anticipate questions by explaining concepts in a variety of ways. Addressing different learning styles is the key. Verbally explain the concept using a visual such as a graph or Power Point presentation. Point out and reiterate important information, offer tape recorders for student use, and videotape your classroom lectures if possible. The most important revelation for me came when I began taping my classroom. I could see who was “getting it” and who was off-task. This meant readjusting my teaching style to meet all learning styles. Give students a learning styles assessment test either online or by paper/pencil. An excellent resource is *Handbook on Differentiated Instruction for Middle and High School* by Northey which contains a variety of learning styles assessments.

Stress relievers are needed by teachers as well as students. Remember students need to move every fifteen to twenty minutes. After a mini-lesson, have students do an active learning activity. If this is not possible, use [Brain Gym](#) to get students up and moving. Try the “Three S” technique: stand, stretch, and smile. Laughter is also a great stress buster, as is a quick walk down the hallway or around the campus. Give students a map of your campus and take them on a Prepositional Walk. As they walk they write down the “physical” prepositions they use in their movements: “I went down the stairs,

around the corner, and behind the cafeteria”. Students may use each preposition only once (Developmental Writing Workshop, www.kendallhunt.com). Go outdoors for creative writing or build human sentences using Grammar Theater.

To help students work through anger management or conflict situations, try such books as *You Be the Judge* or *Teens on Trial*. Have students write their own scenarios then reenact the scenes in front of the class. Be sure to include a question/answer session after each scenario. Opening the floor for discussion helps students problem solve verbally. This will also reduce the number of conflicts within your classroom.

Strategies for developing Emotional Intelligence helps students succeed. Role playing conflict situations, using active learning methods, taking time for stress relievers, and helping students map out their lives will increase academic successes. For more information: Nelson, Darwin B. and Low, Gary R. (2003). *Emotional Intelligence: Achieving Academic and Career and Excellence*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall. Texas A & M. Kingsville, Texas.