



## Raising Caring Kids

EQUIPPING PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND SCHOOLS WITH THE TOOLS TO FOSTER CHILDREN'S SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

### Situation

Social and emotional learning (SEL) skills help people to calm down when upset, make (and keep) friends, positively participate in community, and make fair, safe choices. These skills are key to establishing and maintaining relationships and emotions over a lifetime and support lifelong learning and positive self-identity.

Good communication, being able to express values, healthy processing of emotions, and working well with others are all part of positive social and emotional development. Research increasingly points to the crucial role SEL skills play in ensuring school success, decreasing conduct problems, and developing a more positive sense of self. SEL skills such as self-control, empathy, and conflict resolution are also important to parents and caregivers. Therefore, the teaching of SEL skills represents a unique opportunity for positive school-family engagement.

### Response

Recognizing the need for family resources that teach SEL skills, the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension Human Development and Relationship Institute partnered to create a free social and emotional learning (SEL) resource for families called [Raising Caring Kids](#).

Launched in October 2018, the purpose of Raising Caring Kids is to provide parents and caregivers of children in grades 1-5 with the knowledge and tools to teach and support SEL skills at home. Raising Caring Kids equips parents and caregivers with activities, books, and animated videos to use with

*“We pay more attention to the behavior we model for our kids.”*

*- Parent who received Raising Caring Kids*



children to develop and foster lifelong social and emotional learning skills to support their success at home, school, and in the community.

Parents and caregivers can receive Raising Caring Kids resources by email from a school or family-serving organization. The emails typically arrive weekly to provide four months (18 weeks) of SEL materials for families. Administrators, counselors and other school or organizational professionals can sign up to receive an instructional document outlining the weekly emails that they share with parents and caregivers. The emails link to the Raising Caring Kids website, establishing a streamlined way for schools and organizations to engage families in implementing social and emotional learning.

### Strategies

**Articles** - 16 articles based on core social-emotional learning competencies with information and practical ideas for parents of elementary aged children to try at home.

**Videos** – Five, one to four-minute videos illustrating the skills of [mindfulness](#), [persistence](#), [perspective](#), [problem solving](#), and [responsibility](#).

**School Relationships** - Raising Caring Kids promotes family engagement with schools and is delivered by schools to parents for 18 weeks — parents receive an email per week from their schools with Raising Caring Kids content.

### Results

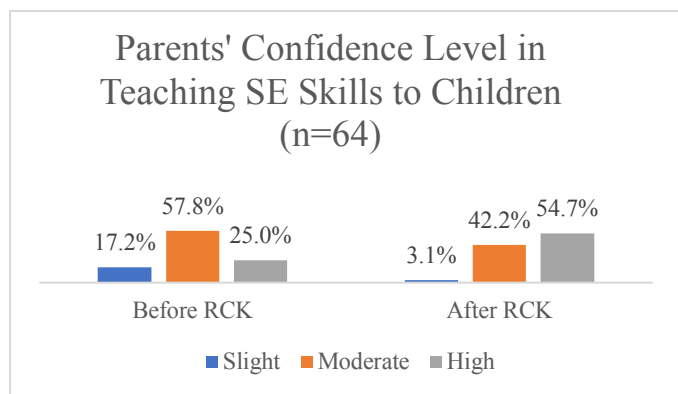
In 2019, every Raising Caring Kids article reached an average of 450 parents. 91 parents and 15 elementary school staff also provided feedback through questionnaires and interviews about Raising Caring Kids.

Parents receiving Raising Caring Kids reported gaining new knowledge, confidence, and behaviors related to social

emotional learning skills. The concepts they learned mapped onto the eight-core social-emotional learning competencies on which Raising Caring Kids was created:

- Civic responsibility
- Empathy
- Lifelong learner
- Personal emotions
- Positive self-identity
- Respect others
- Responsible choices
- Social skills

Parents reported significant gains in confidence in teaching social and emotional learning skills to their children after receiving Raising Caring Kids ( $p < .05$ ).



Respondents were asked to share a tip they learned from Raising Caring Kids that they intended to practice with their children. 70% of the parents reported having tried a new parenting idea from Raising Caring Kids and among these parents 85% shared they had tried 1-4 ideas and 15% tried 5 or more new ideas. These tips or ideas illustrate the types of behavior changes that Raising Caring Kids encourages. One respondent recalled a specific activity from Raising Caring Kids: “We read books showing how the characters reached goals and speak to our kids about solutions to reach their goals.” Another parent named the titles of two articles “Using values to guide good decisions, Keep calm and carry on” to illustrate ideas they learned.

School staff found Raising Caring Kids “so simple” and “short, concise, and easy” to send out. Families benefitted, in



particular, when classroom teachers delivered Raising Caring Kids. Parents report more engagement with Raising Caring Kids and teachers also noted the value of incorporating SEL content from Raising Caring Kids in their classroom.

Teachers distributing Raising Caring Kids also mentioned that they learned or facilitated learning from the content. One teacher used Raising Caring Kids as a discussion topic in her classroom: “each week that I sent it home, we would take the blurb/idea at top and take one of our morning meeting times to talk about it and whip around the circle and have kids share their thoughts on that concept.”

### Conclusion

Building a strong social-emotional foundation requires parents and caregivers who provide children with responsive, nurturing care in addition to positive modeling and skill development. Children, parents, and school staff gained social-emotional knowledge, confidence, and skills through Raising Caring Kids especially around the competencies related to social skills and personal emotions. RCK also promoted positive school-family engagement and shows how Wisconsin’s DPI and University Extension together can promote children’s social and emotional skills in a low-cost, user-friendly, and promising way.

### Raising Caring Kids Team:

Susan Allen, Brook Berg, Pattie Carroll, Anne Clarkson, Mary Huser, Maggie Kerr, Lori Zierl  
 (To learn more, contact: [anne.clarkson@wisc.edu](mailto:anne.clarkson@wisc.edu))

*“I’d read the email paragraph and it would be a positive mindset reminder for me throughout the day.”*

- Elementary teacher who delivered Raising Caring Kids