

# Supporting Social-Emotional Learning Through Testimony



## Overview

This prep guide will focus on aiding the educator in connecting the important themes that are the focus of The Willesden Project activities with social-emotional learning competencies. Relying on the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a framework, the guide pairs reflection questions with each competency to help guide conversations and shape student learning experiences when discussing stories of refugees today and in historical contexts. Exploring these stories with students using first-hand accounts, or testimonies, and a social-emotional lens can help amplify and connect—for students—the themes of resilience, injustice, perseverance, and identity.

## Understanding Social-Emotional Learning

The CASEL competencies, viewed through the lens of equity and justice, can play an important part in engaging students in understanding how their social, emotional, and academic learning connect with the social and historical contexts in their communities and larger society. This lens of SEL, sometimes labeled “transformative” SEL positions students as co-creators in their own learning and encourages students to use their own lived experiences to connect with themes of resilience, empathy, injustice, and identity.

Paired with either the *Hold On to Your Music* (K-2) text or *Lisa of Willesden Lane* (3-5), the competency descriptions below provide support for connecting young students’ own experiences with the protagonist of the story, Lisa Jura, as she navigates life as a refugee through the Kindertransport.

## CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness** concentrates on understanding your emotions and thoughts and how they influence your behavior. Skills include self-perception, self-confidence, and self-efficacy.
- **Self-Management** emphasizes your ability to regulate your emotions and behaviors in different situations, as well as how to set and work toward goals. Skills include impulse control, executive function, stress-management, and self-discipline.
- **Responsible Decision-Making** is the ability to make positive choices and take responsibility for positive and negative outcomes. Skills include identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, and reflection.
- **Social Awareness** focuses on your ability to empathize with others. Skills include empathy, appreciating differences, and respect.
- **Relationship Skills** revolve around your ability to relate well to others. Skills include communicating clearly, listening, cooperation, resisting negative pressure, resolving conflicts, and supporting one another.

## Lisa Jura, Testimony, and Social-Emotional Learning

Lisa's story of resilience while enduring great distress, along with other survivor stories of the Kindertransport, serves as a form of testimony for students to learn from and connect to important themes that can help empower them.

Testimony can be an effective primary source that contextualizes historical events for students and allows them to consider the human experience in a different form. Testimony provides:

- a human face sharing emotions and giving voice to historic events;
- authentic stories that promote civic engagement and critical thinking;
- a reminder of our responsibility to remember, react, and understand all forms of injustice.

Integrating testimony, like Lisa Jura's, across the curriculum is a compelling way to engage students of all ages with important social-emotional learning skills that include promoting ethical values, empathy and understanding, and engaging in perspective taking while considering your own individual identity. One visual testimony that highlights these important themes is from [Lynn Orne](#) (2:08). In this short clip, Lynn shares her story of leaving her family for England as a young child.

**Note:** *It is advised to preview all clips of testimony before sharing with students. In this short clip, Lynn discusses knowing that she will never see her family again after leaving on the Kindertransport. This topic may be sensitive for students and need additional scaffolding before viewing.*

For more resources on using testimony in your classroom, please visit:  
[www.teachingwithtestimony.com](http://www.teachingwithtestimony.com)

Using the social-emotional learning reflection questions below, consider how they might apply to your students and then consider how you might use the same questions as you introduce the story of Lisa Jura to your students.

## Self-Awareness:

- In what ways can your classroom be a place where students lead with their identity and funds of knowledge?
- How can testimony, like Lisa's, highlight for students the importance of using their own story to understand emotions and feelings?

## Self-Management:

- How can you increase the opportunity for students to have more agency and efficacy in the classroom?
- How can you use Lisa's story to expand students' window of tolerance when working through a variety of emotions and experiences?

## Responsible Decision-Making:

- How does your classroom amplify student voice and choice to encourage an environment that fosters students as responsible decision makers?
- How does Lisa's story highlight responsible decision-making framed in a way that is mutually supportive of others?

## Social Awareness:

- How do you create opportunities for learning more about current events, their historical background, and directly apply learning for a greater good?
- What points in Lisa's story can you highlight to show students examples of expanding a person's circle of human concern by authentically learning more about others or the world around them?

## Relationship Skills:

- How does your classroom support collaboration, understanding, and discourse between students?
- Lisa's story highlights the importance of relationship skills. How can you use her story to help students navigate peer relationships?

**The Willesden Project** is a global initiative that expands the reach of Lisa Jura's story of survival, resilience, and triumph as she struggles to come of age separated from her family during World War II, as originally shared by her daughter, author and concert pianist Mona Golabek, in *The Children of Willesden Lane* books and musical performances. [Learn more at The Willesden Project.](#)

## Lisa of Willesden Lane:

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