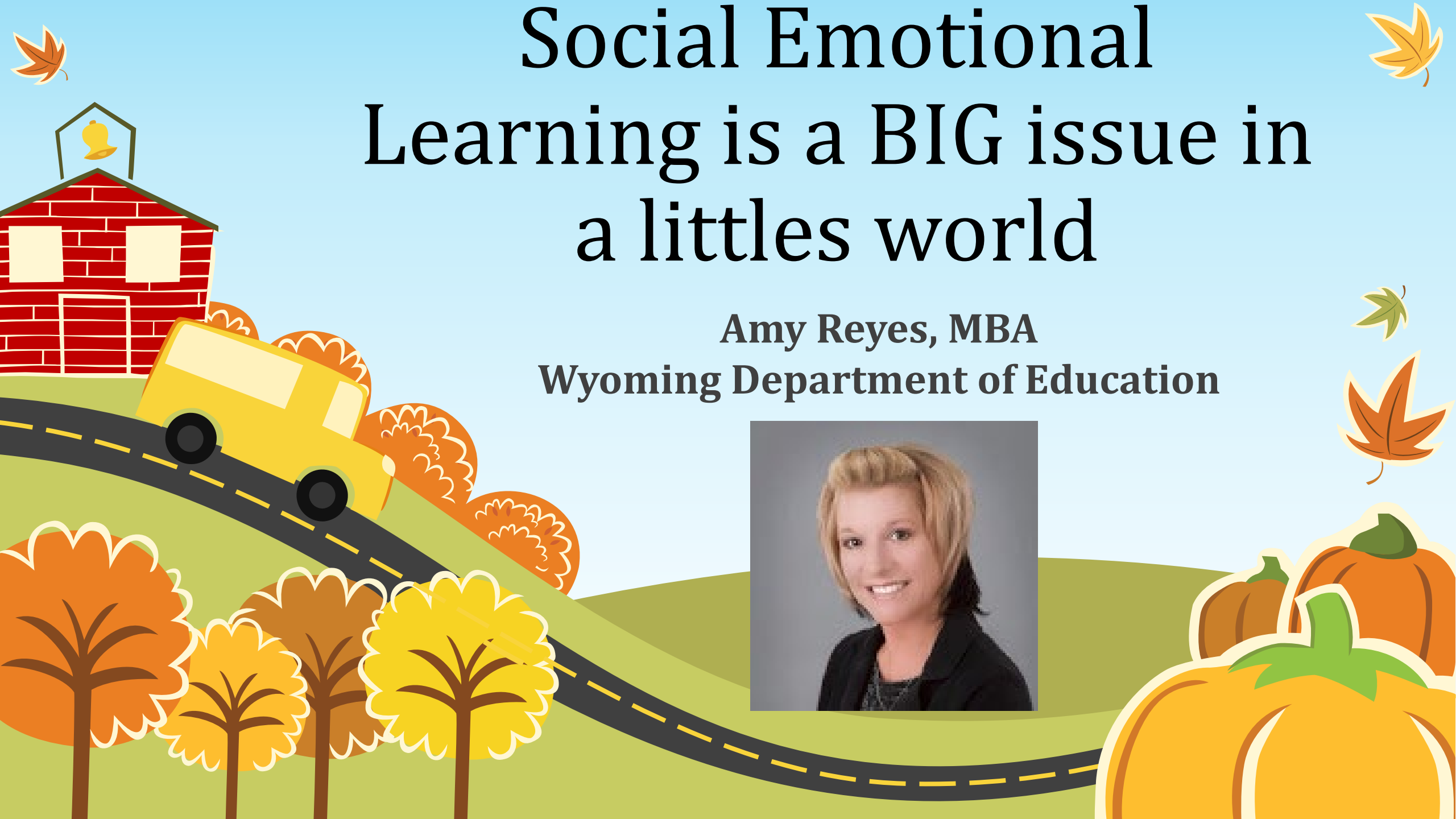






# Social Emotional Learning is a BIG issue in a little's world

Amy Reyes, MBA  
Wyoming Department of Education







# Recalculating

- Lately I feel like an old GPS system. The kind that announces it is “recalculating” every time you miss a turn, as it tries to find a new route. Because each time preschools gets a bit of traction, like with a new routine or plan, something seems to throw us off course. And then it’s time to recalculate. Do you guys feel that way too?
  - Yep, all those little shifts are causing BIG feelings!
  - I can report that not only are these enormous emotions and behavior responses still around, they speak a secret language. If my years of work in early childhood education and personal parenting experience have taught me anything, it’s that this type of behavior or response to seemingly small situations is a cover for the feelings that are really happening.
- 
- 
- 
- 





# Is it a Secret Language?

- Sometimes kids can translate the secret language and tell you what's going on. In the first case general frustration with a bad day of remote learning was the culprit. In the other two cases, it wasn't just one thing but the culmination of everything presenting as anger in one and despair in the other.
  - As we all continue to “recalculate” and make do in the time of COVID, we all need to acknowledge the added stress it places on everyone. Whether the stress is economic, social, or physical. With the holidays, winter weather (for some) and diminishing daylight, the little course-corrections can feel even more challenging for most – including littles.
- 
- 









# Why is SEL Important?

- If I had to write a family motto that really represents where we are at, right now, in this very moment in time, it would have to be: “We’ve got BIG feelings!”
  - **FACT:** Little kids have big emotions. When you help your child name their feelings, they’re better able to understand them and manage them too!
  - **GROWTH:** Keep naming emotions! At points in the day, describe children's expressions and ask about their feelings: “You are smiling. Are you feeling happy?”
  - Our big feelings follow us all day. They especially like to make an appearance when we experience setbacks.
  - Feelings **LOVE** to take center stage when we are in transition.
- 
- 









# Social Emotional Health

- Children's social and emotional health affects their overall development and learning. Research indicates that children who are mentally healthy tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, more eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than less mentally healthy peers.
  - Children who exhibit social and emotional difficulties tend to have trouble following directions and participating in learning activities. Compared with healthier peers, they may be more likely to suffer rejection by classmates, have low self-esteem, do poorly in school, and be suspended. Thus, children's social and emotional health is just as important as their physical health, affects their capacity to develop and potential to lead a fulfilling life.
- 
- 
- 
- 





# What is SEL for Littles?

- SEL helps students understand their thoughts and emotions and how to express and feel these emotions. While SEL can increase self-awareness, it can also help individuals show more empathy toward others because they're better able to understand what another individual may be feeling. Social emotional learning can help to improve a student's attitude toward school and other individuals. It can also lead to reduced depression and stress, which can ultimately increase self-esteem and boost performance in school.
  - In our diverse world, it's becoming increasingly important to incorporate SEL into the curriculum. The good news for educators is that social emotional learning does not need to be a single designated subject like math or science. Teachers can leverage SEL strategies to promote learning in everyday classroom activities.
- 
- 
- 
- 



# Virtual Check Ins

- With social distancing, it's more imperative than ever to check in regularly with your students. Whether it's touching base on how they're feeling emotionally or getting a gauge on how they're adapting to their new learning environment, try to schedule recurring time to connect with your students.
  - You may also want to set aside some time to connect with parents who can provide some insight into how their child is doing with stay-at-home measures and remote learning.
- 
- 





# How to incorporate SEL virtually

There are many simple, creative ways to encourage social emotional learning in the classroom. While some lessons and subjects may lend themselves better to this type of learning than others, try some of these activities with your students to see which ones they respond to best.

## **Emotional Check-In for Students**

- Start or end the school day with an SEL check-in. Ask each student how he or she feels. Visual aids that depict various emotions may help younger kids articulate their feelings. Make sure to follow up with any students who express negative emotions like anger, frustration, or sadness.
- It's important to gauge each student's comfort level during these check-ins. If it seems certain students are reluctant to share, you may want to have one-on-one check-ins throughout the day instead doing this in a group setting.

## **Incorporate SEL Into Story Time**

- Whether you're reading aloud to the class or your students read on their own, you can turn story time into a lesson in SEL. Ask the students to describe what happened to the protagonist or another character and how they think this character feels based on their circumstances. You can also delve a little deeper and ask students to put themselves in the character's shoes and think about how they would feel in a similar situation.

**As an added bonus, you'll be able to make sure the students are able to comprehend what they're reading.**





# Feelings Thermometer

## FEELINGS THERMOMETER

	How do you feel?	What can you do about it?
	<b>ANGRY, FURIOUS, EXPLOSIVE</b> ▶ Yelling, Stomping, Meltdown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vigorous physical exercise</li><li>• Breathe deep breaths</li><li>• Take a warm shower or bath</li></ul>
	<b>FRUSTRATED, ANNOYED, IRRITABLE</b> ▶ Arguing, Refusing, Shutting down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meditate/pray</li><li>• Listen to favorite music</li><li>• Take a fast-paced walk</li></ul>
	<b>ANXIOUS, WORRIED, UNSETTLED</b> ▶ Pacing, Avoiding, Clingy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Talk to a family member/friend</li><li>• Pay attention to each of your 5 senses</li><li>• Focus on what you <i>can</i> control</li></ul>
	<b>SAD, NEGATIVE, LONELY</b> ▶ Crying, Withdrawn, Slowed/Disengaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set a positive goal for the day</li><li>• Call a friend or relative</li><li>• Journal about your feelings</li></ul>
	<b>HAPPY, CALM, CONTENT</b> ▶ Smiling, Laughing, Engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Help someone else</li><li>• Notice and enjoy your positive mood</li><li>• Engage in an enjoyable activity</li></ul>





Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health

[children.wi.gov](http://children.wi.gov)



# Feelings Thermometer

- The Feelings Thermometer uses visuals to help kids gauge how they're feeling in that moment. And there are 4 reasons why we think you'll want to share it with your ECE staff.
  - It's easy to use for kids of all ages, with pictures or colors for the younger ones and words for older kids.
  - It builds understanding by offering behaviors that might accompany these emotions, in addition to naming the emotions themselves.
  - It gives a few actionable choices to deal with the feelings.
  - Bonus, it works for adults too!
- 
- 



# Amy Reyes, MBA

Early Learning Specialist

WY BILT Project Manager  
TANF, ECCG, and ECCPG Preschool Grants  
Administrator

Wyoming Department of Education  
[amy.reyes@wyo.gov](mailto:amy.reyes@wyo.gov)

