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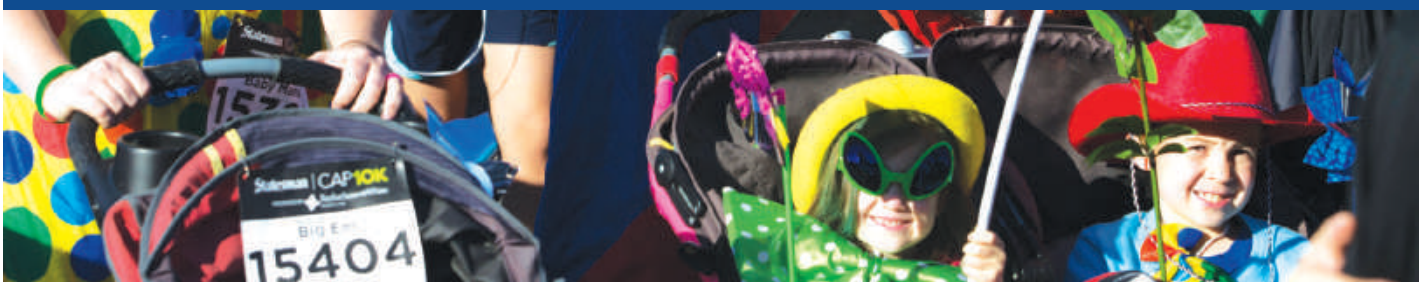


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A 2022 cover kid winner, Karis enjoys painting, baking, swimming and dancing as well as collecting rocks and gems. She is 5 years old. Photograph taken by Karen Andrews at Jordon Ashley Photography.



# 8

## Birthday Party Fun, Austin-Style



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

*Lucksinger is a mom of two and author of the guidebook and app "Exploring Austin With Kids."*

Two Marches ago, just at the time that COVID-19 appeared, my family planned a spring break trip that never happened. Since then, it has felt as if we have been living in an extended hibernation. Yet, this spring, things seem to be waking up. Just as flowers and new shoots are starting to pop their way up into the sun, we are starting to peek our heads out into the world and share experiences with others.

Birthday parties can move from car parades into backyards and parks again. The March feature offers original, Austin-centric ways to celebrate that special day for the birthday girl or boy. It

is filled with creative ideas, so even if you don't have a party to plan, it's a fun read.

We also see signs of waking up with a robust calendar of events, a camp guide and our "Places To Go & Things To Do" column. This month, hop aboard a miniature train!

Our education column also focuses on the skills that students have continued to hone through Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs being implemented in many of our schools. These programs focus on teaching kids empathy, self-awareness and confidence. So when they face challenging situations, they are able to handle them with a sense of perspective and calmness that leads to good decision-making, a sense of well-being and connection with others.

Keep connecting, Austin! See you out there,

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QR Scan to see "the funnest thing in the history of funnest things!"

# Play it safe

product recalls

## Government Recalls

Aoskera is recalling about 1,000 **children's nightgowns** that fail to meet the federal flammability standards for children's sleepwear. The long-sleeved, 100% cotton nightgowns were sold in children's sizes 3-4T to 13-14 in three strawberry-themed prints. They were sold on Amazon from October 2020 through May 2021 for between \$16 and \$25. Consumers should take the recalled nightgowns away from children and contact Amazon or Aoskera to request a prepaid mailer to return the item for a full refund.

Mushi & Co has issued a recall for about 333,725 **FRIGG silicone pacifiers**. The base of the silicone nipple has a fine slit that can cause the nipple to detach from the plastic shield and pose a choking hazard. The pacifiers came in two designs - Classic and Daisy - and in two different sizes: 0-6 months and 6-18 months. The name "FRIGG" is printed on the handle of each pacifier shield in raised letters. The pacifiers were sold nationwide at Spearmint Love, TJ Maxx, Lil' Tulips and Olivia & Jade Company from April 2021 through December 2021. The products were also sold online at mushie.com and amazon.com. Consumers should stop using the pacifiers immediately and contact mushie.com/pages/recalls for a refund.

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# Loveable, Old Grover

## SMART SCREEN TIME

BENJAMIN KRAMER

*Kramer, PhD, is the director of education for Austin PBS.*

**Helllooo, everybodyeee!** This column is presumably about screens, but I'm going to talk mostly about books. One book in particular: "The Monster at the End of This Book." It's a remarkable creation from the early days of Sesame Street that remains as fresh and entertaining as it was when I first encountered it 50 years ago. It is funny and surprising, but in my advanced years, I can see what really makes it magical. Through the hand-drawn illustrations, it gives you page-by-page instructions on how to read the book aloud. I defy anyone to try to read it without following those cues to get loud or soft, and I encourage you to try on your best Grover voice.

Once you read this book in all its (and your) glory, your path is set to throw yourself into all future read-alouds. Your kids will love those experiences deeply until they start to get embarrassed by you. At that point, go even more into character. They'll say, "Fine, I'll just read it myself." Then you can take a bow and say, "My work is done. I have created an independent reader."

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# Austin IN ACTION

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## SpaceX Internship Winner

Cedar Park native Shane Cullen, a senior in the mechanical engineering program at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, has been chosen to intern at SpaceX. He was selected to the Matthew Isakowitz Fellowship Program, an executive mentorship program designed to develop the next generation of commercial spaceflight leaders. Cullen was one of 30 individuals selected from a pool of more than 200 applicants.

"This fellowship is an incredibly prestigious program," Cullen said. "It will offer incredible connections as well as a mentor that will help me grow in this industry. Also, being at a company like SpaceX will open the door to future career pathways."

Cullen will graduate this December after three years of study. At Embry-Riddle's Prescott Campus, he led the Rocket Development Lab and has interned at Firefly Aerospace as a design intern, Agile Space Industries as a propulsion design and analysis intern, and Blue Origin as a propulsion test intern. After graduation, he hopes to land a job performing rocket engine analysis. Congratulations, Shane!



Cedar Park native Shane Cullen has won an internship with SpaceX. Photo: Shane Cullen

## Kids Heart Challenge

Redeemer School raised \$25,000 in two weeks for the Kids Heart Challenge through the American Heart Association. Students completed fun,

heart-healthy activities in P.E. while learning to take care of their hearts. They also made videos and asked for donations from friends and family.

Over the years of participating in the Kids Heart Challenge, Redeemer has contributed over \$213,000 to the American Heart Association. Students' and donors' hearts were big! Redeemer School students raised the most money of any school in the region.



## New Family Health Clinic

A new family health clinic has opened in Georgetown. Seton Primary Care Sedro Crossing offers care for children and adults, including health physicals and screenings, treatments for existing health conditions and urgent care.

Patients can schedule immunizations, newborn and child well-checks, annual or sports physicals, teenage check-ups, women's wellness exams and COVID-19 screenings, among other services.

The clinic is part of the larger Ascension Medical Group, which includes Dell Children's Medical Center and a partnership with Dell Medical School at The University of Texas. A faith-based health organization, Ascension has offered care to Texans for over 120 years, with special attention to persons living in poverty and those who are most vulnerable.



## by the numbers



**63.1%**  
of Texans age 5+ are fully vaccinated

source: [dshs.texas.gov](http://dshs.texas.gov)



**417,400**  
number of people who attend SXSW

source: [explore.sxsw.com](http://explore.sxsw.com)



**70**  
countries around the world observe daylight saving time

source: [factretriever.com](http://factretriever.com)

**TIP: Don't forget to set your clocks ahead on March 13!**

## Things To Celebrate

### March 5

It's My Park Day  
[austinparks.org/impd](http://austinparks.org/impd)

### March 12-26

Rodeo Austin  
Travis County Expo Center

### March 17

Wear green!  
St. Patrick's Day



## Bike Benefit Ride

The French way of saying “all on your bike,” Tous à Vélo is a non-competitive benefit ride at the famed Circuit of the Americas, with 100% of proceeds benefiting Dell Children’s Medical Center. In what is planned to be an annual event, 2,000 riders will be able to participate in this uniquely-Austin experience that includes live music, food and beverages.

Ascension Seton will host the one-day, European-style cycling event on April 3, in collaboration with Circuit of the Americas and Scott Sports. Participation in Tous à Vélo through entry fees or philanthropic support directly contributes to Dell Children’s Medical Center’s ability to ensure that no children go without the life-saving care they need. With 70% of patients under-or uninsured, community support allows Dell Children’s to continue to provide specialty care to all children regardless of ability to pay.

Entry fees start at \$50, and registration for the event is now open at [supportdellchildrens.org/tous-a-velo-ride](http://supportdellchildrens.org/tous-a-velo-ride).



Elementary students practice meditation. Photo courtesy of Mind Oasis and Unscripted Heart.

## Mindful Schools

Two Austin-based businesses, Mind Oasis and Unscripted Heart, announced a partnership to bring a mindfulness curriculum to local schools to reduce the effects of stress in students and faculty. The program provides children, teachers and parents simple tools that can increase learning, deepen understanding and foster well-being. The partnership plans to implement school-wide programs in 10 local elementary schools this year.

Kathy Goecke, a principal of one of the participating elementary schools, explains, “This mindfulness program has changed the fabric of our school. It has gifted students who could not regulate their behavior a valuable tool to calm their brains and gain control over their actions.”

Mindfulness helps the brain become more resilient to stress, which promotes a sense of well-being. When practiced schoolwide, it creates environments that are more conducive to learning. Details about the program can be found at [mindoasis.org/mindfulness](http://mindoasis.org/mindfulness).

# austinfamily<sup>®</sup> 2022 online guide to Summer Camp

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# ⑥ Birthday Party Fun

## ⑥ Austin Style



Those darn birthdays—they keep coming around year after year. As the years go by, planning a birthday party for your child that is unique and different can be a challenge. Unless your kid is like one of mine who demands the same annual birthday event (I'm not gonna lie — it has been a wonderful phase), you are probably on the lookout for new ideas.

Fortunately, here in the Austin area, there is no shortage of venues to help your children celebrate their big day. There are perennial favorites such as skating rinks (both roller and ice), bouncy houses, bowling alleys, museums and miniature golf to name a few.

But sometimes we want to mix things up a bit. Austin has much about it that makes it special — why not take inspiration from our delightful city? From Austin City Limits to Barton Springs, to miles of bike lanes, there's plenty that distinguishes our fair metropolis. What follows are three Austin-inspired birthday themes to make your child's next birthday celebration a lasting memory.

*Jacqueline, an AFM cover kid winner.  
Photo by Jordan Ashley Photography.*

**Austin has much about it that makes it special — why not take inspiration from our delightful city?**

CAROL KIM

*Carol Kim is an Austin-based children's book author and freelance writer. Her latest book is "King Sejong Invents an Alphabet." Learn more at [CarolKimBooks.com](http://CarolKimBooks.com) and [MadeLivinginKidlit.com](http://MadeLivinginKidlit.com).*



## Music Festival Party

Since Austin has claimed the title of Live Music Capital of the World, of course we had to kick things off with a tunes-inspired event. Take inspiration from Austin City Limits and organize your own musical extravaganza with the guests serving as both the musical entertainment and enthusiastic fans. Provide them with wristbands when they arrive to give them VIP access to the “stage.” Hang up a shiny backdrop on a wall or fence, then use lights or festive strings to rope off a small area in front to indicate the performance area. Offer cardboard or blow-up guitars so kids can really ham it up on stage. Divide kids into bands and have them take turns performing. Add a karaoke machine or just set up a music system and let them sing along.

**Food:** Create your own “food truck” serving station by setting up a table with signs for different food offerings. Bonus points for serving festival mainstays such as tacos, nachos, barbeque and ice cream.

**Favors:** Send kids home with temporary tattoos, sunglasses or glow sticks to keep that festival vibe going long after the guitar or drum-shaped cake is devoured.



## Get a Move On

Get ready for a ride on the wild side with this birthday party theme that celebrates Austin’s bike and scooter culture. With its many parks and bike-friendly environment, Austin provides the perfect backdrop for a wheels-themed event. Festivities for the party can easily take place in your yard or a nearby park. Start out with a bike and scooter decorating activity. Hand out streamers and stickers for guests to deck out their bikes and helmets. Lay out playing cards and clothespins. Kids can attach the cards to the spokes of their wheels and make a fun tat-a-tat-a-tat-a-tat sound as they ride. Organize a parade. Line up the guests behind the birthday child and ride up and down the street (if it’s safe in your neighborhood) or around the park. Encourage lots of whooping and hollering from both parade riders and spectators. Set up an obstacle course with cones, and if the weather is warm, add some sprinkler

stations to help cool off riders. If you want to take the party off-site, many local parks feature kid-friendly bike trails. Dick Nichols Park has a 1-mile paved loop trail great for young riders and Walnut Creek Metropolitan Park has several trails for all skill levels. Mueller Lake Park has an easy loop around a lake.

**Food:** With wheels as your theme, you can serve a variety of round food items. Pizza and bagels can be decorated to look like tires with spokes. Make a pasta salad with wagon wheel pasta. Add some fruit to the mix with orange, kiwi or tomato slices. For a sweet treat, make edible scooters with pretzels stuck into large-sized marshmallows.

**Favors:** All that riding is sure to make everyone thirsty. Gift each guest with a reusable water bottle and attach a note: Hope you had a wheelie good time!



## Backyard Barton Springs

If you are planning an event during the warmer months (which conveniently in Austin can mean anytime between May and November), you can’t go wrong with a pool party. There’s no more famous pool in Austin than Barton Springs. But what about bringing Barton Springs to your own backyard? One of the major traits we all know and love about Barton Springs is that chilly 68-degree water. Recreate the goosebump-inducing experience by filling a large kiddie pool or two in your yard with water...and ice! Toss in a few plastic salamanders in honor of the Barton Springs salamander, and you’ve got your very own Austin swimming hole. Kids will get a kick out of seeing if they are bold enough to wade and play in the icy water. You’ll need to keep replenishing the ice to keep things cold, so have a few ice-filled chests in reserve. Plus, with kiddie pools, kids will stay cool and even non-swimmers can fully join in the fun.

**Food:** The best food options for a pool party are those that won’t suffer from being too close to some vigorous splashing. Cheese and veggie platters, watermelon slices, sandwich kabobs (without the bread) and pasta salad should satisfy even the hungriest – and dampest – guests.

**Favors:** You can’t go wrong with pool-themed party gifts such as beach balls, swim goggles, pool noodles and beach towels. Connect it to Barton Springs by adding a cute plastic salamander toy.

So there you have it – birthday party fun, Austin-style. Each of these themes can be modified to fit the age range of your child and their guests. Put your own unique stamp on each event through the invitations and decorations. Who knows? Your kids may love their Austin-themed party so much, they’ll ask you to recreate it again and again for years to come!



# “NO” Means “NO”



## FAMILY MATTERS

BETTY RICHARDSON

*Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.*

**Q** We're parents of four children ages 3 to 14. Together and separately, there are times my husband and I have to tell one or more of the kids “No.” This response is sometimes met with begging and pleading, whining and other forms of resistance. What advice can you share about saying “no,” and how we can get our kids to respond better when they hear it?

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Asuntos Familiares.  
'No' Significa 'No'

**A** Sometimes when I'm out shopping I catch parents doing something so well that I want to share it with readers. A mother was behind me in line at a store, with a toddler in a stroller and a preschool daughter beside her. The mother said to the daughter, “Don't give your brother candy when I said no. No means no.”

I'll give you some suggestions for saying “no” more effectively. First, let me point out that saying “no” to toddlers differs from saying it to teens. Even two teens may need different approaches. So, use the suggestions that work for you.

1. Say “yes” as often as you can. Kids tire of hearing the word “no.” Save it for when you really mean it, not when you mean maybe.
2. Be nice and calm in your approach. When you are yelling or demanding, kids don't respond as well.
3. Explain why you are saying “no.”
4. Offer other choices. For example, when a child wants sweets before dinner, instead of saying “no,” you can use “yes.” Try it this way: “Yes, you can have it after dinner. I can give you a healthy snack now.” Or you might say: “Yes, I'll put this cookie on a plate with your name on it and put it up where we can find it after supper.”
5. It's hard to deal with teens after you say “no” to something they were excited about like a party at a friend's

house. Your teen may respond by whining, moping, being angry or using intimidation. On the other hand, he might respond by being super sweet or trying any number of behaviors to get you to change your mind. If you said “no,” hopefully it makes sense to stick to it. Otherwise, you must explain why you are changing your mind and suggest that it will not happen often or without exceptional reasons.

6. Be respectful to teens by not talking down to them. When they want something that will involve an answer from you, listen to them and ask questions first. For example, if a teen asks to go to a friend's house party, you can ask such questions as how she will get to the party and back home and whether the parents will be there. You can call the parents to ask questions about the supervision of the kids. You can talk to the teen about a reasonable curfew and the “no alcohol and drug” rule as well as any other rules you have.
7. Teens need a few house rules. You can let the teen get involved in their own “no's” by having them write and sign a contract for themselves.

When you feel your children are pushing too hard to get you to change your mind, remember that you are the one in charge. You and your husband are the parents. Kids need limits to grow up to be able to say “no” to themselves when needed.



# Best Train Rides

Welcome to "Places To Go and Things To Do!" Each month, topics in this column alternate between cool, new places to go and a family-friendly thing to do at home. This month, hop aboard a miniature train!

There is something ageless about riding a miniature train, with a kid on your lap or seated beside you, waiting for that first lurch of the train on the tracks, excitement growing as the whistle blows and the conductor yells, "All aboard!" When my youngest was a toddler and then a preschooler, we rode the Zilker Zephyr (soon to be Zilker Eagle) religiously. An old soul with patience for sitting and a fascination with all things mechanical, he never tired of it. Despite the regular route, in his eyes, it was never the same experience. And for me, there was something magical about sitting on small wooden seats and watching the world pass by, as the rhythm of life slowed to the pace of a miniature train.

So, for this month's article, I jumped at the chance to hop aboard some of Austin's best trains. Here are my favorites:

## Austin Zoo Train

If you want to ride a train surrounded by alpaca, llamas and alligators (oh my!), head to the Austin Zoo. Here, you can make the train ride part of a bigger zoo experience. As you and your crew wait for the train, wander the trails of this

15-acre, non-profit rescue zoo where you can visit and feed some of the animals. A 15-minute train ride will take you winding through a mile of Texas hill country terrain as it chugs along past longhorn, ostriches and deer on the return trip. The train runs daily on the hour and half-hour. Rides cost \$5 (for kids 2 and over) on top of zoo admission. (Ask about birthday parties too.)

## Cedar Rock Train

On the other side of town in Southwest Williamson County Regional Park, you'll find the Cedar Rock Train. This electric train was hand-built by owner Ken Knowles. He and his wife Holly laid the 1.4-mile track that circles through the park, where passengers wave to joggers, fishermen and baseball and cricket players. Kids also love the pre-recorded whistles, train-themed music and chugging sounds that add to the experience. Another highlight is passing through a spooky tunnel on the return trip to the depot at the Shady Oak Junction. The train runs daily at 15 and 45 minutes past the hour, except on weekday afternoons when it runs once an hour at a quarter till. Purchase



tickets for \$3 at the depot (babies ride free). On weekends, this area is hopping with kids enjoying the train-themed playscape and picnic area (that can also be reserved for parties). Look for a miniature-golf course coming soon.

## Zilker Eagle

Also on its way is the much-anticipated, all-electric Zilker Eagle. It takes its name from the original miniature train that chugged through Zilker Park from 1961-1996. It was later replaced by the Zilker Zephyr that made its last run three years ago, leaving a whole generation of babies to toddlers waiting to ride this well-loved route through the park and along the lake. The depot has been spruced up with a new loading platform; a new mural has been painted beneath the Barton Springs bridge; and tracks have been re-laid. As soon as testing, training and inspections are finished this spring, look for the Zilker Eagle to be coursing down the tracks.



ANNETTE LUCKSINGER

*Lucksinger is a mom of two who always enjoys a good train ride. She is editor of Austin Family magazine and author of the local family guidebook, "Exploring Austin with Kids."*



# 9 Tips for Coping With Childhood Sleep Challenges



**LIFELINES**

BRENDA SCHOOLFIELD

*Schoolfield is a freelance medical writer based in Austin.*

## Not all babies and toddlers are alike when it comes to sleep.

Some children go to sleep easily but wake up during the night several times. Others have a tough time going to sleep but sleep all night long. Babies can experience sleep regression – a period of time when they go from sleeping relatively well to having problems going to sleep or staying asleep. Childhood sleep challenges take a heavy toll on parents. Here are some tips that might help your child (and you) get a restful night's sleep:

### Tip #1

#### Don't despair.

Just as adults have nights when they don't sleep very well, kids do too. Don't interpret sleep regression as a "setback" but as a sign. Sleep regression is often related to developmental milestones, such as pulling up, crawling or walking. Sleep challenges may be caused by something else. Has your toddler played with a device too close to bedtime or watched a scary cartoon with an older sibling? Could your baby be teething or have an ear infection? Has the sleep schedule been erratic? Consider contributing factors that may be within your control.

### Tip #2

#### Maintain a consistent naptime and bedtime routine.

Put your baby down for naps and to bed at the same times, even on the weekends. As your baby grows older, develop a pattern of activities to help prepare the body and mind for sleep. (This works for adults too.) Your child's

routine might be to have a bedtime snack, take a bath, brush teeth, read a story and tuck in.

### Tip #3

#### Establish a daily schedule.

Babies and toddlers thrive on a daily schedule. Provide nutritious snacks and meals at consistent times. Make sure they get enough age-appropriate exercise. For a baby, adequate "tummy time" is important. When possible, take your child outside for play or a stroller ride. Spend a block of time interacting with your child. Talk, sing, play with toys or read a story. Give your child your full attention. A strong parent-child bond improves a child's sense of security and well-being.

### Tip #4

#### Set the stage for sleep.

Try to maintain a calm environment as a prelude to bedtime. Turn on lamps instead of harsh overhead lighting. Play calming music. Avoid stimulating activities in the evening before bed. Don't be surprised if your toddler can't

fall asleep within 15 minutes of a rousing game of hide-and-go seek. Avoid screentime before bedtime. Monitor media that your child is exposed to – young children may become upset when watching programming intended for older children.

## Tip #5

### Don't sabotage good sleep habits.

Be intentional in your response to sleep transitions. Do you really want to train your child that the only way to fall asleep is to be rocked for an hour? The goal is to help establish sleep behaviors that your children can use to fall asleep on their own. Babies who are awake, put into the crib at bedtime and allowed to fall asleep on their own are more likely to fall back asleep on their own when they wake up during the night. Babies who are put in their cribs when they are asleep and are picked up when they are awake are more likely to wake up during the night. So, put your baby in his own crib when he is sleepy but still awake.

## Tip #6

### Don't share your bed.

It's okay to take your baby into your bed to nurse or comfort her. But put her back in her own crib for sleep. To reduce the risk of sleep-related death, babies should never sleep in an adult bed.

## Tip #7

### Be alert to your child's cues.

You can tell if your child's cry means that he is hungry, soiled, sick or overtired. When a child gets overtired, chemicals are released that help the child stay awake. This makes it hard for the child to fall asleep and stay asleep.

## Tip #8

### Take a deep breath.

When your baby awakes at night crying, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises to give her a little time. Don't rush in. She may fall back to sleep on her own. If the crying continues, check on your baby, but don't pick her up or turn on the light. If your baby continues to fuss, consider what might be bothering her. Perhaps she is hungry, wet, soiled or sick.

If your toddler keeps calling you back to his room, the AAP recommends delaying your response a little longer each time. If your child doesn't fall back asleep, reassure him but don't stay too

long. Don't turn on the light, read a story or play. Each time you go in, position yourself farther away from the child's bed until you are reassuring him verbally from the doorway. Each time, remind your child that it's time to go to sleep.

## Tip #9

### Talk to your pediatrician about persistent sleep challenges.

If your child is still having sleep challenges after you implement these tips, talk to your pediatrician. There may be underlying medical causes. Silent acid reflux, breathing problems, anemia or other conditions can interfere with sleep. In some cases, evaluation at a pediatric sleep center may be needed to help improve your child's sleep.



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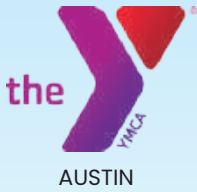


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# Social Emotional Learning: Another Kind of Intelligence



## THE Learning curve

ALISON BOGLE

*Bogle is a writer living in Austin with her husband and three children. A former fourth grade teacher, she now enjoys writing about children and education. You can also catch her talking about articles from Austin Family magazine each Thursday morning on FOX 7 Austin.*

Social-emotional learning, or SEL, is an education practice that aims to teach both social and emotional skills within the school setting. It equips children with lifelong skills, helping them to develop compassion, thoughtfulness and healthy attitudes, as well as to engage in supportive relationships, both inside and outside of the classroom. SEL also teaches students to become more aware of their own emotions and how to regulate those emotions.

Conceptually, SEL has been around for a very long time. In 1968, Dr. James Comer and his colleagues at Yale University's Child Study Center created

a program called the Comer School Development Program, which focused on increasing academic performance and decreasing behavioral issues at two poor, low-achieving elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. Dr. Comer created a team of parents, educators and a mental health professional charged with recommending changes to aspects of the schools' academic and social programs that seemed to be fueling students' problems. By the early 1980s, academic performance at the two schools exceeded the national average while behavior problems and absenteeism both declined.

New Haven became a hotbed of SEL research, and many researchers who would become important figures in the movement worked to publish papers and try various SEL programs there. In 1994, an organization known as the Collaborative to Advance Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was established and held its first conference of researchers, child advocates, educators and others in the field with the goal of advocating for children's social and emotional needs in school. The term "social and emotional learning" was born. To this day, CASEL's mission remains essentially the same – "to help make evidence-based social and

emotional learning an integral part of education from preschool through high school."

CASEL has developed an SEL framework known as the CASEL wheel. At its center are five core social and emotional competencies. The wheel visually depicts these competencies being important in all of the settings where children live and grow – the classroom, at school, within the family and with caregivers, and in the community as a whole.

### The five, core social and emotional competencies of the CASEL wheel are:

**1. Self-awareness** helps a child better understand his emotions, thoughts and values and how they might be influencing his behavior. Self-awareness includes recognizing strengths and limitations, demonstrating honesty and integrity, and developing confidence and optimism, among other things.

**2. Social awareness** can lead to understanding the perspectives of others and to empathize with them, including those from different racial and socioeconomic groups, as well as those of different genders and physical or mental abilities.



**3. Relationship skills** are taught so children can learn to initiate and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with a range of people. Having good relationship skills includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, negotiating conflict, navigating social demands in a healthy manner, and being able to not only give support to others, but also to be able to request and receive support for one's self.

**4. Self-management** practices can help kids manage their thoughts, emotions and behaviors in a variety of settings and situations. Self-management includes the ability to manage stress, delay gratification to achieve a goal and exhibit self-motivation.

**5. Responsible decision-making** skills increase a child's ability to make good choices about personal behavior and social interactions in a variety of situations. A responsible decision-maker knows how to take ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, natural

consequences, and the health and well-being of one's self and others into account when making decisions.

**SEL Outside of the Classroom**

A child's SEL competency has a significant impact on his or her success later in life. A recent study found that kindergarten teachers' ratings of their students' social and emotional skills were predictive of adolescent and adult outcomes 13 to 19 years later. Those students with more developed SEL skills were associated with an increased likelihood of graduating from college and holding a full-time job by age 25, as well as a decreased likelihood of being arrested. This doesn't mean that without these skills, a child won't graduate college or will end up being arrested, rather that developing children's SEL skills increases their chances of success throughout their lives.

**SEL in School**

School districts are recognizing the value of incorporating SEL into the curriculum, as it leads to better classroom behavior,

better attitudes towards school and improved academic performance. This is important, especially now when campus staff are reporting increased behavior issues due to many factors such as disruptions to in-person learning, an inability to attend preschool where children learn how to relate socially to peers and follow classroom rules, and increased stress and anxiety from the wide-ranging impacts of living through a pandemic.

SEL concepts can be taught directly or incorporated within other subjects; however, most good SEL programs aim to do both. The SEL lesson becomes a recurring theme throughout the day to help students absorb the lesson. Teachers can also work with students to set goals in certain competencies and help them chart their progress, giving them a sense of accomplishment and pride.

As parents, we can educate ourselves as to how our child's school and teacher are addressing SEL concepts. We can also be aware of the core social and emotional competencies and can help our children to become stronger in those areas at home, setting them up for greater success and well-being in life.

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# March 2022

## calendar

Go to [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) for expanded listings.

Any family-friendly events can be posted at [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

### Tue 1

**Homeschool Adventures.** Homeschool children ages 6-11 meet weekly for a variety of topics including author/illustrator studies, improv, art, science and more. 2-3 p.m. Buda Library, 405 E. Loop St., Buda. FREE. [budalibrary.org](http://budalibrary.org).

### Wed 2

**Buda BLAST (ages 5-7).** Join the Buda Public Library for weekly programs that provide enrichment and enjoyment for school-aged children and teens. 4-5 p.m. Buda Library, 405 E. Loop St., Buda. FREE.

### Thu 3

**Kids 5-8 Club: Wooden Rocket.** Families with children 5 to 8 may register to participate in an in-person craft activity. 3:30-4 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**Buda Kids (ages 8-11).** Join the Buda Public Library for weekly programs that provide enrichment and enjoyment for school-aged children and teens. 4:30-5:30 p.m. Buda Library, 405 E. Loop St., Buda. FREE. [budalibrary.org](http://budalibrary.org).

**BuzzFest.** Each day of the three-day festival touts a unique lineup of musical talent from artists such as Shigeto, Baths, Suzi Analogue and Graham Reynolds. 6-10 p.m. Hill Country Galleria Central Plaza, Highways 71 and 620. FREE. [beecavebuzzfest.com](http://beecavebuzzfest.com).

**Meet Porter the Opossum.** Learn about these helpful creatures with a Q&A and meet and greet with Porter. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

### Fri 4

**Cowboy Breakfast.** The Cowboy Breakfast is a free Texas-sized breakfast held at the Long Center for the Performing Arts to celebrate the opening of the Austin Rodeo. 6 a.m. Long Center, 701 W. Riverside Dr. FREE. [rodeoaustin.com](http://rodeoaustin.com).

**Teen Musician Jam Sessions.** Teens 13-18 are invited to use our guitars (electric, acoustic and bass) and keyboard (or bring your own instruments) and play. 4:30-6 p.m. Central Library Teen Center, 710 W. César Chávez St. FREE. [library.austintexas.gov](http://library.austintexas.gov).

**CONTINUED:** BuzzFest, see Thu 3.

### Sat 5

**Birding With a Ranger.** Learn helpful tips on how to identify birds by sight and sound with Ranger Sean who has been birding at the park since he was 10 years old. 8-10 a.m. McKinney Falls State Park, 5808 McKinney Falls Parkway. FREE. [tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/mckinney-falls/park\\_events](http://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/mckinney-falls/park_events).

**It's My Park Day.** Join the Austin Park Foundation for the biggest volunteer event of the year - It's My Park Day Spring. Register for a project in a park, trail or green space in your neighborhood. 9 a.m. to noon. FREE. [austinparks.org/impd](http://austinparks.org/impd).

**Fly Fishing Event for Kids.** Bring the whole family out to learn about fly fishing from TPWD certified volunteer angler education instructors. 9:30 a.m. Living Waters Fly Fishing, 103 N. Brown St., Round Rock. FREE. [tpwd.texas.gov](http://tpwd.texas.gov).

**CONTINUED:** BuzzFest, see Thu 3.

### Sun 6

**Rock and Roll Music Playhouse for Kids: Grateful Dead.** Children can enjoy the music and kid-friendly menu. Doors open at 11 a.m., concert at noon. Antone's Night Club, 305 E. 5th St. \$12-\$15. [bit.ly/3syQ2ZK](http://bit.ly/3syQ2ZK).

### Mon 7

**Storytime Craft To Go Kit.** Crafts for young children up to age 5 will be available to pick up first come, first served each Monday morning in the Kids Room or curbside. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

### Tue 8

**Homeschool Club: Write Your Own Mystery.** Homeschool families with kids and teens ages 5-18 are invited to write their own mystery story together at the library. 2-3 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Homeschool Adventures, see Tue 1.

### Wed 9

**Dungeons and Dragons.** Join the adventure with the library's D&D campaign. New members are welcome at any time. 6-7 p.m. Buda Library, 405 E. Loop St., Buda. FREE. [budalibrary.org](http://budalibrary.org).

**CONTINUED:** Tween Graphic Novel Book Club, see Wed 2.

### Thu 10

**Kids 5-8 Club: Butterfly Puzzle.** Families with children ages 5 to 8 may register to participate in an in-person craft activity. 3:30-4 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Buda Kids, see Thu 3.

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### Fri 11

**CONTINUED:** Teen Musician Jam Sessions, see Fri 4.

### Sat 12

**Free Outdoor Screenings Presented by Disney+.** 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. The Long Center - Hartman Concert Lawn (outdoor), 701 W. Riverside Drive. FREE. [schedule.sxsw.com](http://schedule.sxsw.com).

### Sun 13

#### Daylight Saving Time

**Sunday Funday.** The Neill-Cochran House Museum welcomes children of all ages to a traditional activity on the lawn. Join us as we make decorative paper using flower petals and seeds. 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The Neill-Cochran House Museum, 2310 San Gabriel St. FREE. [nchmuseum.org](http://nchmuseum.org).

### Mon 14

**CONTINUED:** Storytime Craft To Go, see Mon 7.

### Tue 15

**CONTINUED:** Homeschool Adventures, see Tue 1.

### Wed 16

**CONTINUED:** Buda BLAST, see Wed 2.

### Thu 17 - St. Patrick's Day

**Kids 5-8 Club: Magic Color Scratch Tropical Shapes.** Families with children

ages 5 to 8 may register to participate in an in-person craft activity. 3:30-4 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. library. FREE. [pflugervilletx.gov](http://pflugervilletx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Buda Kids, see Thu 3.

### Sat 19

**Open House: Camp Heart O' the Hills and Camp Stewart.** Make the nice drive to Hunt to visit Heart O' the Hills for Girls and next to it Camp Stewart for Boys. Hunt, Texas. FREE. [campshoh.com](http://campshoh.com) and [campstewart.com](http://campstewart.com).

**CONTINUED:** Story & Play, see Sat 5.

### Mon 21

**CONTINUED:** Storytime Craft To Go Kit, see Mon 7; Monday Mix-Up, see Mon 7.

### Tue 22

**CONTINUED:** Homeschool Adventures, see Tue 1.

### Wed 23

**CONTINUED:** Buda BLAST (ages 5-7), see Wed 2; Dungeons and Dragons, see Wed 9.

### Thu 24

**Science Thursday.** Join us to discover the science of the story of Texas through demonstrations and hands-on activities with STEM experts. 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. FREE. [thestoryoftexas.com](http://thestoryoftexas.com).

**Kids 5-8 Club: Origami.** Families with children 5 to 8 may register to participate in an in-person origami craft activity. 3:30-4 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**Spring Book Buzz.** Join our librarians for a review of new and upcoming fiction, non-fiction and graphic novels for adults. 6:30-7:30 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Buda Kids, see Thu 3; Story & Play, see Thu 3.

### Mon 28

**CONTINUED:** Storytime, see Mon 7.

### Tue 29

**CONTINUED:** Homeschool Adventures, see Tue 1.

### Wed 30

**CONTINUED:** Buda BLAST, see Wed 2.

### Thu 31

**Kids 5-8 Club: Sticker Dot Flower.** Families with children 5 to 8 may register to participate in an in-person craft activity. 3:30-4 p.m. Pflugerville Public Library, 1008 W. Pfluger St. FREE. [library.pflugervilletx.gov](http://library.pflugervilletx.gov).

**CONTINUED:** Buda Kids, see Thu 3; Teen Musician Jam Sessions, see Fri 4.

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# Loose Lips



## JUST FOR GRINS

CATE BERRY

*Berry is an Austin-based children's book author and mother of two. She also teaches writing workshops for young people at cateberry.com.*

Not to toot my own horn but I'm the best mom in the world. I know this because I surprised my child with ice cream after a grueling week of high school application deadlines. Why our children must apply for anything before college is ample fodder for another time. But I digress.

Walking into our city's finest ice cream shop always charms me. It comes with high schoolers that hurl scoops right into your cup. We tip enthusiastically as one does for fancy flinging. On this particular afternoon, I find four lonely teen servers mucking about, sitting on freezers. No customers. I'm often particularly loose-lipped when released from my writing

cave so I inquired about business. Slow. The flavors. Bizarre but intriguing. Their hair. Solo-dyed in bonny hues of blues and greens.

But my jabber jaw couldn't stop. I have a hidden, deep-seated affection for adolescence. It's simply so horrid. Something in life you forget, immediately, once past. Like taxes. Yet here they were, these kids. Bearing it with good cheer. Offering tastes and compliments (my glasses! my boots!). And as someone who will never know the pleasures of tight skin again, I loved them even more. They bundled up my ice cream cake and I turned to exit. Yes, I bought an entire

cake. Hard deadlines, teen courage and a moment of existential joy had gotten the better of me.

"Have a nice day!" They chimed goodbye, along with the doorbells. "Bye," I answered. "Love you!"

It had escaped without consent. This awkward "Love you!" hung in the air, my back turned, two steps to freedom. Time slowed. I debated. Explain? Could dig a bigger hole. Pretend I've had a stroke? Dignity prevailed. Run? Oh, come on.

"Love you, too," said a young male voice. I let it hang in the air as I left. Speechless. For once!

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