



# Social and Emotional Learning in Practice

**A TOOLKIT OF PRACTICAL  
STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**EXTENSION**

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# Introduction + Acknowledgements

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## About the Toolkit

Social and emotional learning (SEL) includes learning to be aware of and manage emotions, work well with others, and persevere when faced with challenges. Youth programs develop SEL skills by creating opportunities for young people to engage in real-world projects, work in teams, take on meaningful roles, face challenges, and experience the accompanying emotional ups and downs along the way.

This toolkit is a flexible set of practical tools, templates and activities that can be used with staff and youth to increase intentional practices that support social and emotional learning. It includes resources to:

- 1) enhance staff knowledge of SEL, how their program supports SEL, and their own emotional intelligence;
- 2) establish expectations, give feedback and integrate reflection;
- 3) infuse SEL into program activities; and
- 4) collect SEL data for improvement.

While the toolkit is designed primarily for those working with middle-school-aged youth, with slight modifications the activities are appropriate for other age groups.

The toolkit was developed as a companion to the 3-hour training, *Social and Emotional Learning in Practice*, which recognizes that while there are no cookie cutter methods that work with every young person, youth workers can influence how social and emotional skills are caught and taught within their program. The workshop results in participants 1) feeling comfortable explaining SEL to co-workers, 2) understanding how their program content can support SEL, and 3) having strategies to infuse SEL into their program content. We developed this toolkit to extend the training and support its application.

## Research-Based, Practice-Informed

Two issue briefs provide the foundation for the training and toolkit:

- *Ways of Being: A Model for Social & Emotional Learning* (Blyth, Olson & Walker, 2017) was developed out of conversations with thought leaders who recognized the need for a jargon-free teaching tool for practitioners, youth and families to deepen their understanding of social and emotional learning.
- *Intentional Practices to Support Social & Emotional Learning* (Blyth, Olson & Walker, 2017) outlines four strategies that serve as the organizational framework for our SEL trainings and toolkit. Research shows that the integration of specific strategies is likely more effective than implementing a new curriculum (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010).

An SEL Community Design Team of practitioners informed the toolkit development by providing feedback on the materials as well as sharing existing activities to use with staff or youth. Finally, practitioner perspectives were also gathered as part of the peer-review process.

## Culturally Responsive

Cultural values and identity are inextricably linked to social and emotional learning. Our Ways of Being model does not prescribe a definition of social and emotional success. Instead, the toolkit's resources are designed to engage youth's cultural values and identity in order to support a variety of SEL skills, and they encourage staff to collaborate with youth to determine which SEL skills are most important.



# Introduction + Acknowledgements

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## About The Authors

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Under the direction of Dr. Dorothy McCargo Freeman, associate dean of the Extension Center for Youth Development and state 4-H leader, this work was part of a multi-year initiative dedicated to understanding and supporting social and emotional learning in practice with curriculum resources. Dr. McCargo Freeman's long-standing commitment to young people's social and emotional development dates back to her Ph.D. in human development from Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech).

The Social and Emotional Learning initiative was created by Dr. Dale Blyth, as Howland Endowed Chair in Youth Leadership Development, who led the work from 2013-2015. Dr. Blyth's career has focused on how we understand, improve, and support youth development. He continues to champion social and emotional skills as measurable outcomes for youth programs.

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## Community Design Team

An SEL Community Design Team was created to help shape and inform our professional development efforts to increase intentionality around building SEL skills in youth programs. Members met monthly for six months to consult on and contribute to the toolkit development. In particular, the activities in the Designing Impactful Learning Experiences section are credited to members of this team. Their insights, perspectives and expertise were critical to the toolkit development process.

- Sam Olson of Banyan Community
- Poppy Potter of Voyageur Outward Bound School
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- Jason Brown of Project SUCCESS

# Introduction + Acknowledgements

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## Reviewers

The following youth program practitioners and professional development providers served as peer reviewers of this toolkit.

- Erin Buchanan, Youth Program Coordinator, CommonBond Communities
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- Martha Grave, Neighborhood Program Coordinator, Interfaith Outreach & Community Partners
- Barbara Hillaker Research Specialist, Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality
- Sam Olson, Program Director, Banyan Community
- Joyce Strand, Program Coordinator, University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development
- Sara Zanussi, Founder and Executive Programming Director, ComMUSICation

# How to Get Started

This toolkit is a flexible and practical resource, created to support youth program leaders who are invested in supporting social and emotional learning. It is designed to complement the strategies and recommendations in the 3-hour training, *Social and Emotional Learning in Practice* and related issue briefs. See the Introduction for an overview of how the toolkit was developed.

While you can certainly read the toolkit from start to finish, it is NOT intended to be used as a sequential SEL curriculum. Instead, we anticipate users will select activities that meet their current needs and fit best within their program design. You'll get the most out of it if you take the **Readiness Inventory** first. Your responses will help identify sections of the toolkit that you may find most helpful.

## Strategies

This toolkit is organized around four strategies that youth programs can implement to increase their intentional support of social and emotional learning:

- 1) Equipping Staff,
- 2) Creating the Learning Environment,
- 3) Designing Impactful Learning Experiences, and
- 4) Using Data for Improvement.

Resources in the Equipping Staff and Using Data for Improvement sections are primarily designed for use with staff. Resources and activities in the Creating the Learning Environment and the Designing Impactful Learning Experiences sections are for use with youth.

## Resources

Throughout the toolkit, you'll find three types of resources:

- **Activities** - Activities are designed to fit in a single session and can be integrated into existing program plans. Each activity indicates the intended audience, time recommendations, required materials, and instructions for the facilitator. Use the activities in any order and modify them to meet your needs.

- **Tools** - Tools include questionnaires, guides, and other resources that can be used to spark reflection and conversation or gather feedback. Each tool includes background information and suggestions for discussion.
- **Templates** - Templates are ready-to-use forms, plans, and resources that can be tailored for your program context. Each template includes suggestions for use.

## Features

Additionally, there are key features that will support your use of the toolkit:

- **Questions** - Thoughtful questions and the resulting conversations are essential components of social and emotional learning. Throughout the activities, tools, and templates, we include suggestions for conversation starters and reflective activities.
- **Culturally Responsive Design** - Cultural values and identity are inextricably linked to social and emotional learning. The toolkit resources do not prescribe a definition of success in SEL. The resources are designed to engage youth's cultural values and identity in order to support a variety of SEL skills, and they encourage staff to collaborate with youth to determine which SEL skills are most important.

Ready to go? Take the **Readiness Inventory** now.

# Readiness Inventory

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This is an informal inventory designed to help programs evaluate how well their current practices support social and emotional learning. The inventory will help identify program practice strengths as well as areas for improvement. While all four strategies do not need to develop sequentially within your program, all areas are important components of programs that are intentionally supporting social and emotional learning in youth.

## Why This Matters

- Program practices can greatly influence how youth develop social and emotional skills.
- The inventory will help customize users' experience of the toolkit by identifying sections that may be of greatest benefit.

## Getting Started

- Ask several people within your program to complete the inventory.
- Materials: A copy of the Readiness Inventory for each person
- Time: 60-90 minutes

## How To Use It

- 1) Get together to compare your responses.
- 2) Use the following conversation starters to begin a reflective discussion on your program practices.
  - Where did our team have consensus in our responses? Where did we diverge?

- Are your YES items primarily in one strategy area or are they spread out?
- Looking at the items we scored SOMETIMES, is there one in particular that we could easily move into a YES? What could we do to create more consistency in these areas?

## Take It Further

- Make a list of your relative strengths (items with YES responses). Make a list of all of the environmental actions and programmatic elements that are currently in place to support your SEL strengths. These strategies are part of your SEL toolbox that you can use as a foundation to build additional practices into your program.
- Identify one area to target for improvement. Read the corresponding section of the toolkit and mark items that might help you improve your program practices in this area. Pick one strategy to focus on first, and make a plan to measure its effectiveness.



# Tool: Readiness Inventory

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EQUIPPING STAFF	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
Do we comfortably talk about the components of social and emotional learning and why it matters?			
Can we identify the specific SEL skills our program is designed to support?			
Do we spend time exploring our own social and emotional skills as staff?			
Are we explicit about how the cultural experiences + values of staff and youth influence social and emotional learning?			

CREATING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
Do we regularly have feedback conversations with youth about their social and emotional skills?			
Do we communicate with parents about their child's social and emotional skill growth?			
Do we integrate SEL opportunities into our routines and behavior expectations?			
Do we integrate SEL into our conflict resolution and behavior management practices?			

# Tool: Readiness Inventory

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LEARNING EXPERIENCES	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
Do we have a planned set of activities that progressively challenge youth to build social and emotional skills?			
Do we incorporate active opportunities for youth to engage in SEL?			
Do we create opportunities for youth to reflect on their social and emotional learning?			
Do we integrate young people's cultural values around SEL into our activities?			

DATA FOR IMPROVEMENT	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
Do we have tools and strategies in place to track youths' progress in social and emotional skill development?			
Do we use data to improve our social and emotional learning practices?			
Do we incorporate SEL-related data into our dashboard and data review processes?			
Do we have formal tools to measure social and emotional learning outcomes in our program?			

# Equipping Staff

Effective staff need to be fluent in the concepts and language of social and emotional learning. The toolkit activities can enhance staff knowledge of their own social and emotional skills and those of youth.

This section contains resources to help staff build their understanding and fluency of SEL, attend to their own SEL (or EQ) and cultural values, consider how their program sequence supports SEL skill building, and how their program aligns with the features of high quality youth programs that support SEL skills.

# Ways of Being Model

Use this simple teaching tool to guide conversations about social and emotional learning, regardless of the specific framework or set of SEL skills your program is using. This model is designed to facilitate discussions that deepen understanding of what social and emotional skills look like in action.

## Why This Matters

- The lingo of social and emotional learning can be confusing and intimidating to youth, parents, and practitioners who are unfamiliar with the concepts.
- Multiple frameworks exist to describe social and emotional skills. The Ways of Being model is a flexible way to explain social and emotional learning.
- The Ways of Being model describes identity (Ways I Am) as central to the development of social and emotional skills. Most frameworks do not account for the role of identity. By including Ways I Am, the model is able to account for diverse interpretations of social and emotional success based on culture, beliefs, and life experiences (see [Mapping Cultural Values](#)). Yet the focus on the individual has implications and gives privilege to western values. To open up the conversation, we intentionally use “we” instead of “I” for the Ways We Are Aware, and Ways We Navigate.

## Getting Started

- Materials: A copy of the Ways of Being model for each participant.
- Time: 30 minutes

## How To Do It

- 1) Make a list of SEL skills that are a natural fit for your program (or see your [SEL + Program Map](#)).
- 2) Pass out a copy of the Ways of Being model for every person in the group. Write the skills from your list on the areas of the model that seem to be the best fit. (For example, the skill of identifying one's emotions might be written in the Ways of Feeling area).
- 3) Staff share their models with the group. Compare and contrast the results. Note that there is no right or wrong place to put a skill. It's often in the areas where people disagree that the most insightful discussions occur.
- 4) If your team is having difficulty identifying specific skills or is stuck talking about broad clusters of skills (like leadership), consider sharing the [SEL Skill Bank](#) to jumpstart the discussion.
- 5) Use the following conversation starters to debrief the activity:
  - What part of your model was most full or sparse?
  - What area of skills (Ways I Am, Ways of Feelings, Ways of Relating, Ways of Doing) is our program strongest?
  - What skills were difficult to place? Why?
  - What happens if you change “we” to “I”: Ways I am Aware, and Ways I Navigate?

# Ways of Being Model

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## Take It Further

- Get more practical and concrete with your team by breaking down a cluster skill set into all of the component skills. (Example: Conflict Resolution is a cluster of skills such as self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, etc.)
- Use this model to spark a conversation with youth. See [Meet the Wobblers](#).
- See the [\*Ways of Being Factsheet\*](#) for an overview of what SEL is, why it matters for youth programs, how adults can support SEL in youth program, and four strategies for incorporating SEL in youth programs.



# Tool: Ways of Being Model



## Tool: SEL Skill Bank

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Self-awareness  
Self-regulation  
Self-control  
Emotional competence  
Emotional intelligence  
Emotion management  
Coping  
Social awareness  
Relationship skills  
Social skills  
Empathy  
Teamwork  
Connection  
Cooperation  
Collaboration  
Communication skills  
Active listening  
Conflict resolution  
Getting along with others  
Understanding others' feelings  
Accepting others  
Self-confidence  
Self-efficacy  
Self-reliance  
Responsible decision-making

Grit  
Perseverance  
Persistence  
Tenacity  
Leadership  
Autonomy  
Advocacy  
Attention  
Critical thinking  
Goal setting  
Time management  
Planning for success  
Resilience  
Problem solving  
Focus  
Drive  
Assertiveness  
Motivation  
Initiative  
Responsibility  
Determination  
Agency  
Flexibility  
Contribution  
Strategic Thinking

Note: This is not a complete list of skills — just common ones intended to spark your thinking.

# Ways of Being Quick Guides

Use the Quick Guides to teach staff about SEL and spark a discussion about social and emotional learning in your program. Quick Guides provides a concise summary of one dimension of the Ways of Being (WOB) model. Each Quick Guide contains a short description of the WOB, social and emotional skills associated with that WOB, discussion questions to guide staff, and practices to support youth.

## Why This Matters

- Staff awareness of social and emotional learning is important when effectively supporting social and emotional development with youth.
- Learning about the Ways of Being can give staff helpful language and skills to improve their conversations with youth.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of the Ways of Being Quick Guides
- Time: 20 minutes for each Quick Guide
- As a facilitator, consider reading *Ways of Being: A Model for Social & Emotional Learning*, an issue brief about the Ways of Being model, ahead of time to enhance your own understanding of the Ways of Being model.

## How To Use It

- 1) Focus on a single Quick Guide at a time.
- 2) Have staff read over the sheet and then use the discussion questions to reflect on each Ways of Being within your program.
- 3) To expand on the discussion, use the conversation starters below.
  - What other SEL skills would you add to [you're your specific Ways of Being area]?
  - How do we support youth in this area? What other strategies might we use to support youth in in this area?
  - Once all Ways of Being have been reviewed, Which Ways of Being do you see as strongest in the program? Which Ways of Being do you see as in greatest need for improvement?

## Take It Further

- Consider sharing the Ways of Being Quick Guides with youth or parents in your program to spark a conversation about SEL.
- For an activity with youth, try adding in the characters from [Meet the Wobbies](#) as examples of each Ways of Being.

# WAYS OF FEELING



Ways of Feeling includes all the skills, experiences, and capacities a person has to identify and make sense of their emotions.

## Skills include:

- Self-control
- Emotional intelligence
- Emotional awareness
- Self-regulation
- Coping skills

## Questions to guide staff

- In what ways does your program culture or activities encourage or discourage the expression of youth and adult feelings?
- To what extent is the culture of your program emotionally safe for youth express their feelings?

## Practices to support youth

- Develop routines for youth to practice naming and expressing emotions (i.e. daily check-ins or reflection).
- Create program expectations to facilitate a safe, non-judgmental space.
- Model naming and expressing your own emotions.

# WAYS OF RELATING



Ways of Relating includes the skills youth need to understand and navigate their interactions and relationships with others.

## **Skills include:**

- Social skills
- Teamwork
- Cooperation
- Communication/  
Active listening
- Conflict resolution

## **Questions to guide staff**

- How do youth get to know each other in your program?
- In what ways do you ensure the emotional safety of your participants and foster healthy interactions?
- How do youth in your program handle conflict?
- What processes are in place to support peaceful conflict resolution?

## **Practices to support youth**

- Provide structured time for youth to get to know each other and work together.
- Develop consistent practices for resolving conflict.
- Incorporate teambuilding games with reflection.



# WAYS OF DOING



Ways of doing includes skills to approach tasks and achieve goals.

## Skills include:

- Grit
- Perseverance
- Goal setting
- Problem solving
- Focus
- Motivation

## Questions to guide staff

- In what ways do you give youth opportunities to set goals, make plans, and follow through?
- Do program staff take time to offer meaningful feedback to youth regarding their social and emotional skill development? If not, how could you create opportunities for these conversations to happen?

## Practices to support youth

- Provide activities for youth to practice goal-setting.
- Incorporate appropriate challenges to encourage persistence and determination.
- Organize your program activities around youth voice and choice.

# WAYS I AM



Ways I Am includes the attitudes and beliefs youth have about themselves in relation to their feelings, relationships, and goals.

## **Skills include:**

- Self-efficacy
- Agency
- Hope
- Sense of self
- Cultural identity

## **Questions to guide staff**

- In what ways does your program allow youth to express and share their identity?
- To what extent do staff engage in discussions about culture?

## **Practices to support youth**

- Provide time for youth to share important aspects of their lives.
- Engage in a discussion about culture with youth.
- Create activities that allow youth to teach others about their background, culture and interests.

# Tool: Ways of Being Scenarios

Use this activity with a group of staff to start a conversation about the Ways of Being (WOB) model and youth. Each scenario describes the story of an individual youth (Wobbie) with discussion questions about best practices for working with that youth. This activity will strengthen staff understanding of the Ways of Being model and SEL skills. The Wobbies were created in partnership with a team of diverse young people as part of the Youth Voice Project on Youth Ways of Being (YWOB).

## Why This Matters

- Thinking about how to support the SEL skills of youth allows staff to reflect on their past practices and plan for the future.
- A group discussion allows staff to exchange best practices and learn from each other.

## Getting Started

- This activity is most effective after staff already have a shared understanding of the [Ways of Being Model](#). Try starting with the [Ways of Being Quick Guides](#) as a way to introduce the Ways of Being model.
- Time: Plan for at least 30 minutes for each scenario. Discuss all Wobbies in one activity or split up the discussions over several sessions.

## How To Use It

- 1) Make copies of the individual scenarios or read aloud among a group of staff.
- 2) Use the discussion questions under each scenario to begin a conversation about the Wobbie.

## Take It Further

- Have staff think about a particular youth that they are working with and discuss their areas of strength and growth in the Ways of Being model.
- After you have discussed each Wobbie, consider the following questions:
  - Is there a Ways of Being that you feel most comfortable supporting youth in?
  - Which Ways of Being are you strongest in? Which Ways of Being are you working to improve?
  - How do your own social and emotional skills affect how you work with youth?

## Tool: Ways of Being Scenarios

### DREW

You work in an after-school program that offers digital media production tools and space for teens. Drew started coming to the program at the beginning of his freshman year in high school, and has become a daily visitor over the last two years. Drew is very focused on his music, and many other musicians in the space value his advice and his assistance with their projects. For a little while, Drew brought a couple of his friends with him to the program when he came every week. You encouraged his friends to try activities and hang out with other teens while they waited for Drew, but they never seemed to want to engage with anything in the space. During one of Drew's sessions in the studio, you saw Eddie passing joints to one of Drew's other friends. You asked Eddie to leave for the day, and he and Drew's other friends haven't returned since. You often see Eddie out on the street corner with a group of older teens. That particular street corner has become a target for law enforcement as they crack down on truancy and youth crime in the city. In the last few weeks, Drew has asked if you could hold the studio for him while he takes a break during his reserved time block. Because of the demand for studio time, the policy the teens in the program agreed on states that during your 2-hour time block you should only leave for short bathroom breaks or you'll forfeit the rest of your time.

Last week, you noticed that Drew was gone for 30 minutes. Today, when you check in with Drew, you remind him of the break policy. While you're talking to Drew, he gets a text. He reads the text and looks anxious, then hesitantly asks to take a break. When you ask him to affirm that he'll only be gone for a few minutes, he hesitates. He begins telling you about Eddie, whom he's known most of his life. Eddie always wants to hang out with him when he's at the teen center. Drew's parents have told him to stay away from Eddie and his friends because they think he's a bad influence. Drew knows that Eddie is mixed up in some bad stuff, but he's not really sure what to do. He's known Eddie for a long time, and being Eddie's friend confers some degree of protection. At the same time, Drew doesn't want to necessarily be identified as one of Eddie's crew. His dream is to become a professional musician, and he's worried that any trouble he might get into as a result of being associated with Eddie might prevent or delay his plans for his future.



### Discussion Questions

- What Ways of Being skills is Drew using?
- What are the issues that Drew is grappling with right now? (identity, relationships, priorities, etc) What conflict is Drew experiencing?
- When have you been in Drew's position? What factors affected your decisions in this situation?
- In what ways can you support Drew's decision-making process? What questions could you ask Drew?

## Tool: Ways of Being Scenarios

### NIKKI

You are the dance team coach at Green Valley High School. Every fall, a new group of excited freshmen joins the school's dance team, where they are welcomed with open arms by the upperclassmen. Friendships form quickly on the school's dance team, and there is a lot of camaraderie among the dancers as they support each other to improve their skills and work together as a team in competitions. Nikki joins this year's crop of freshman dancers. She quickly finds her place in the team and looks happy and engaged during practices, suggesting ideas and helping others when they struggle with routines. She is talented and is liked and respected by her teammates. In early October, Nikki uncharacteristically begins showing up late for practice a couple times a week. You pull her aside to ask her about it, and she apologizes but offers no explanation. As the school year goes on, you notice that she is becoming withdrawn during practices. You overhear some of the girls invite her to a team gathering at another team member's house, and when she declines, one of the dancers says "you never come to anything anymore. Is everything okay?" Nikki mumbles something and quickly leaves. In the next few weeks she misses two practices. If she misses another practice, she will not be allowed to participate in an upcoming competition.

One day after practice, while you're finishing paperwork in the office, you see Nikki go by with her head down. You call her into the office and ask her how things are going. She bursts into tears. After she calms down, she explains that everything is going wrong in her life. She's failing geometry, she missed deadlines for the literary magazine and now the other students no longer trust her with projects. Her parents are disappointed in how she's doing in school, and told her that she needs to raise her grades or else she'll need to drop the dance team. Nikki has always been "the smart one" in her group of friends, and while she's frustrated with how unsuccessful she feels, she's also embarrassed that others might find out how poorly she's doing. You can tell that she feels overwhelmed, and doesn't know where to start to begin addressing her situation. You know that the school has an after-school tutoring program—a couple girls on the dance team get help with their assignments there.



### Discussion Questions

- What Ways of Being is Nikki demonstrating?
- What are some of the barriers to her success? Which ones are barriers she has made for herself?
- What are some concrete issues that you could help Nikki address?
- What are some questions you could ask Nikki?
- What strategies could you suggest to Nikki? What are some first steps she could take?
- What are some of the positive SEL skills that she could start developing?



# SEL + Program Map

Use this template to consider how your program sequence supports social and emotional skill development. A SEL + Program Map can be used to identify natural opportunities throughout your program to intentionally support social and emotional learning.

## Why This Matters

- Youth programs are ideally suited to support social and emotional learning alongside other program activities. Programs that are intentional about supporting social and emotional skill development are able to articulate how their program activities support specific social and emotional skills.
- Visual tools help communicate with staff, families, and stakeholders how the program design supports SEL.

## Getting Started

- Programs of any length can be designed to support SEL. The SEL + Program Map is flexible and can describe any length of time, as long as there is a clear beginning and end. For example, a drop-in homework help program will likely have the same adults and youth for a few hours on any given day, even though the adults and youth will vary from session to session. This program's map would encompass a single homework help session—beginning with the check-in procedure, ending with the check-out practice. Alternatively, the SEL + Program Map of a middle school support group that meets weekly during the school year could cover nine months.
- This template is best completed with a small group of people familiar with your program.
- Make your own version of the template if you need to include more than four key experiences.
- Time: at least 60 minutes

## How To Use It

- 1) Use the conversation starters below to fill in the template.
  - What is the primary content of your program? How would youth describe what they do in your program (e.g., leadership skills, science projects, art classes, homework help, service projects)?
  - What are the key activities or experiences that make up your primary program content? How do you usually start your program cycle? What is the next key activity? And next? How does the program cycle usually end?

*Example of key activities for a drop-in homework program:* Check-in, homework assistance, snack, gym time, check-out

*Example of key activities for a year-long leadership development program:* Team retreat (September), Service project planning (October-November), Implement projects (December-April), Project Showcase (May)

- 2) For each key activity, consider what SEL skills youth have the opportunity to practice. Another way to think about it is to consider what SEL skills youth need to be successful in each key activity or experience. Write the primary skills below the corresponding activity. You will likely have multiple skills for each activity and some skills may repeat throughout your program cycle. Refer to the [SEL Skill Bank](#) if you need examples of specific skills.
- 3) Identify areas of strength
  - Which key experiences are most intentionally designed to support aligned SEL skills?
  - When are youth most successfully developing SEL skills in the program?
- 4) Identify areas of growth
  - How can key experiences be modified to increase intentional support of social and emotional learning?

## SEL + Program Map

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### Take It Further

- Explore different visual shapes to describe your program cycle. Get creative with your map. SEL + Program maps do not have to be sequential or linear.
- Attend the 6-hour *Mapping SEL in Youth Programs* workshop offered by the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development. Participants have the opportunity to develop in-depth maps to describe how their programs support social and emotional learning. Participants walk away with visual tools to use for program development, staff training, and communication with funders.

## Tool: SEL Skill Bank

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Self-awareness  
Self-regulation  
Self-control  
Emotional competence  
Emotional intelligence  
Emotion management  
Coping  
Social awareness  
Relationship skills  
Social skills  
Empathy  
Teamwork  
Connection  
Cooperation  
Collaboration  
Communication skills  
Active listening  
Conflict resolution  
Getting along with others  
Understanding others' feelings  
Accepting others  
Self-confidence  
Self-efficacy  
Self-reliance  
Responsible decision-making

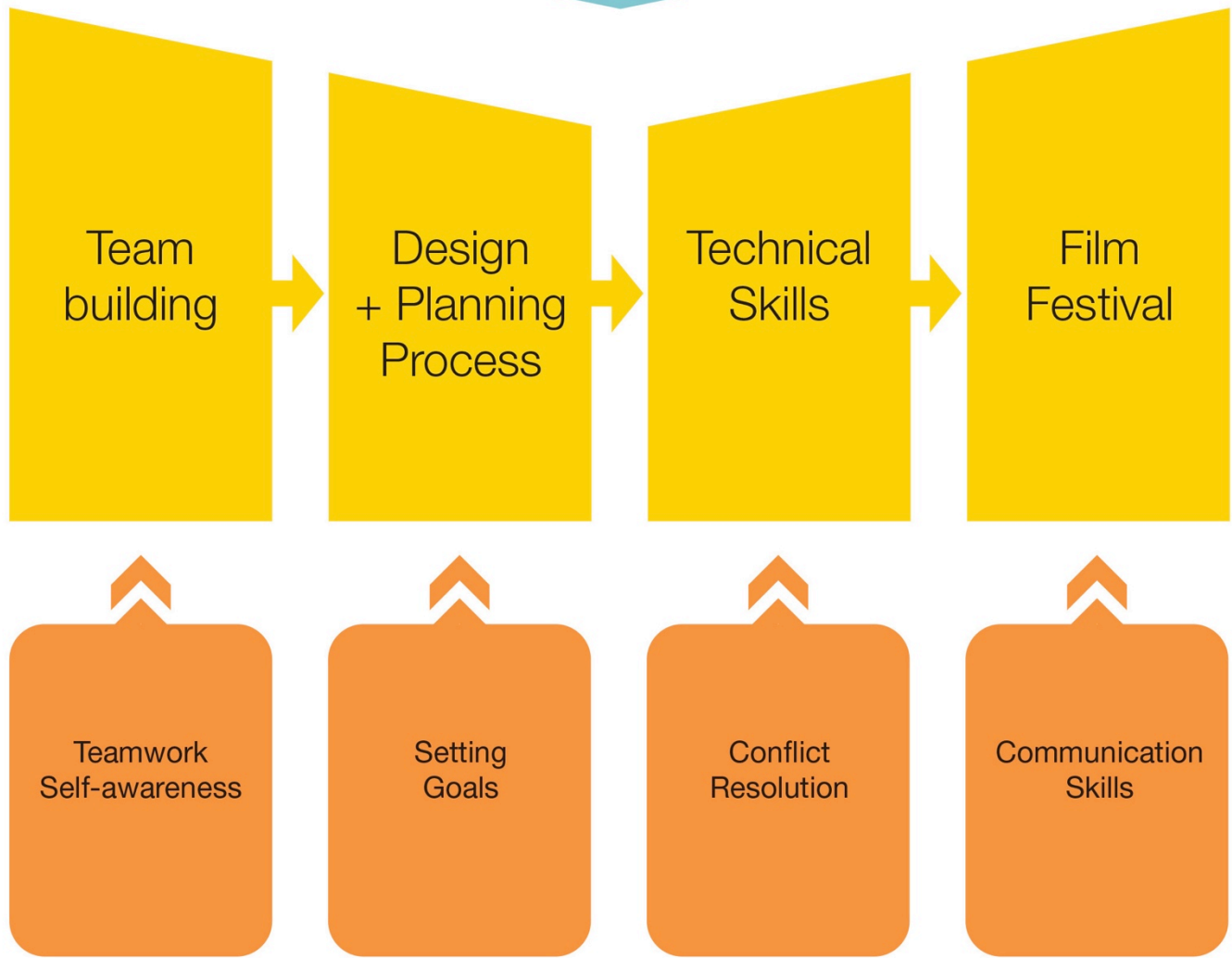
Grit  
Perseverance  
Persistence  
Tenacity  
Leadership  
Autonomy  
Advocacy  
Attention  
Critical thinking  
Goal setting  
Time management  
Planning for success  
Resilience  
Problem solving  
Focus  
Drive  
Assertiveness  
Motivation  
Initiative  
Responsibility  
Determination  
Agency  
Flexibility  
Contribution  
Strategic Thinking

Note: This is not a complete list of skills — just common ones intended to spark your thinking.

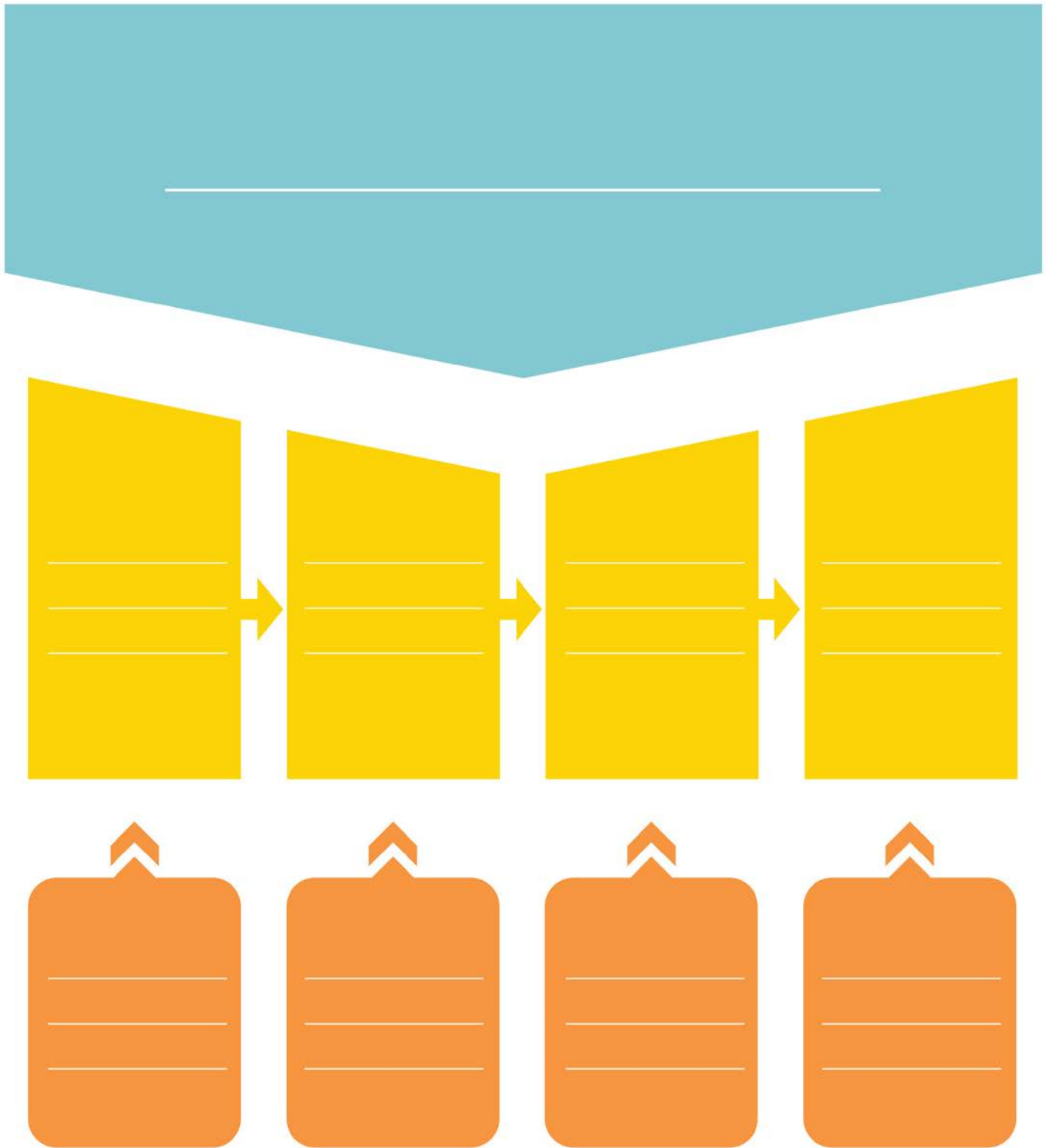
## Example: SEL + Program Map

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# Youth-designed films



# Tool: SEL + Program Map





# Mapping Cultural Values

Culture and identity are at the heart of the Ways of Being model. The relationship between cultural values and SEL skills is complex. Cultural values will often determine which social and emotional skills are most important for individual youth. Use this activity with staff to identify personal cultural values and preferences that influence social and emotional learning. This activity was developed with contributions from the SEL Community Design Team.

## Why This Matters

- Cultural beliefs, values, and personal identity shape how each person defines success and quality of life.
- The social and emotional skills that are most important for youth to develop will vary based on their own understanding of success.
- Understanding how your own cultural background, values, and identity shape your social and emotional learning lens will equip you to identify SEL goals that may or may not be appropriate for youth in your program.

## Getting Started

- **Materials:** Copies of Mapping Cultural Values
- **Time:** Allow at least 45 minutes to complete the Mapping Cultural Values activity and have a discussion.
- If you have a large group (more than 8 people), divide into small groups for discussion.

## How To Use It

- 1) Give everyone 5-10 minutes to complete the Mapping Cultural Values activity. Reinforce that there are no right or wrong answers. Encourage participants to answer based on their own personal preferences, not the values of the program.
- 2) Once everyone has completed the map, lead a discussion using some of the questions below.
  - How are your cultural values and preferences similar or different from your peers?
  - How do your own SEL skills + your cultural values and preferences help you in life? How do they hold you back?
  - How might your cultural values and preferences be similar or different from the youth you work with?
  - How do your cultural values influence your definition of success in social and emotional learning?
- 3) Reflecting on just one cultural dimension at a time, discuss what SEL skills are most helpful on each end of the spectrum? Write these skills next to each dimension.
- 4) Consider how the cultural values and preferences of the staff impact your program.
  - What can you do to be more culturally responsive as you support social and emotional learning in your program?

# Mapping Cultural Values

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## Take It Further

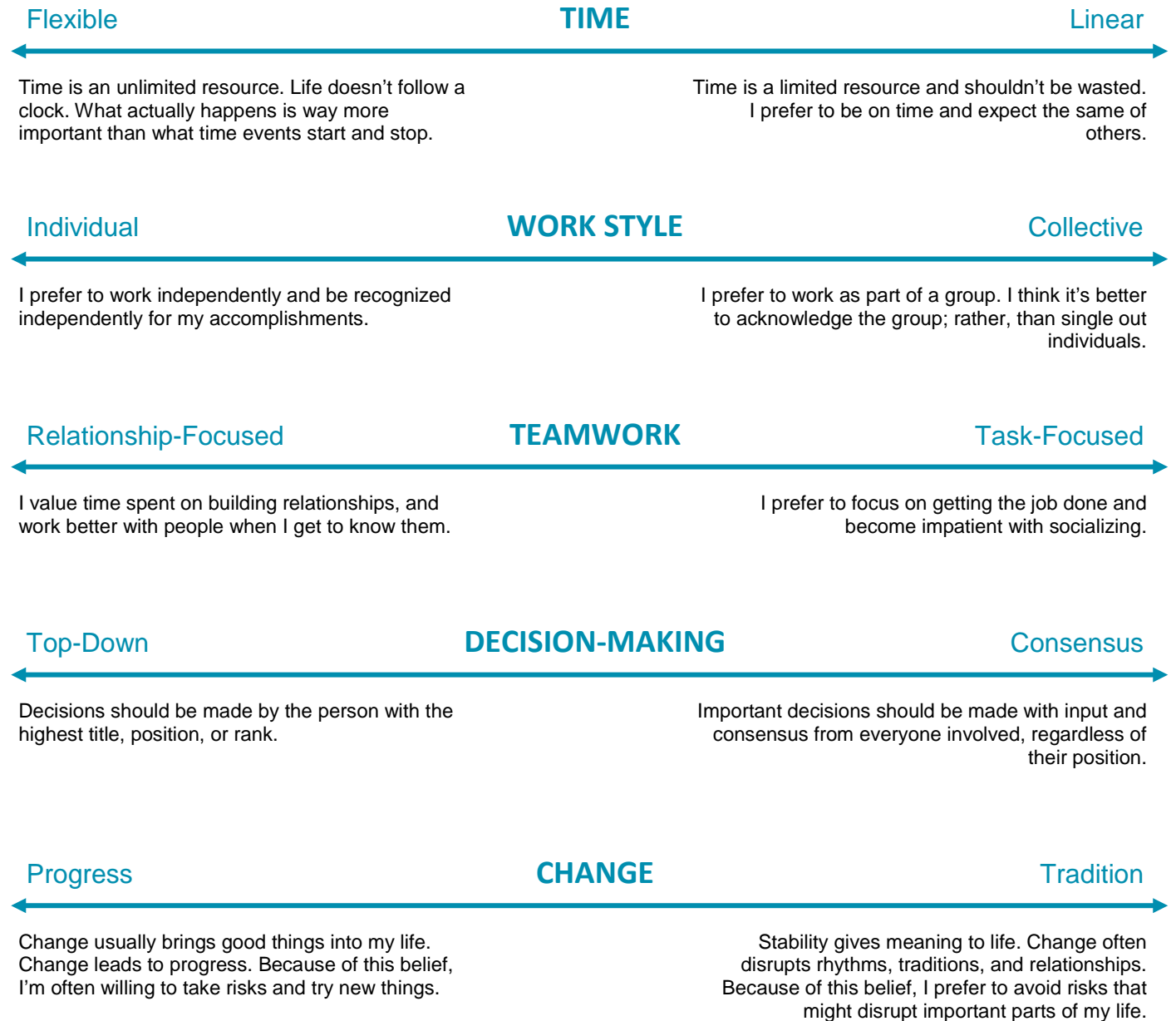
- As a group, complete the Mapping Cultural Values activity from the perspective of your program's values. Consider how staff and youths' personal cultural values are similar or different from program values.
- Review your [SEL+ Program Map](#) (or complete it for the first time). What cultural values are reflected in your SEL+ Program Map? How can you make changes to integrate the cultural values and preferences of youth into your program design?
- Have youth complete the Mapping Cultural Values activity. Invite them to consider what SEL skills are most important to them, given their values and definition of success.

The diagram illustrates five dimensions of culture, each represented by a horizontal double-headed arrow. The central label for each dimension is in bold blue text. The two contrasting cultural perspectives at the ends of each arrow are in blue text. The descriptions of each perspective are in black text.

Dimension	Left Perspective	Right Perspective
<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>Being</b> I derive more of my identity from who I am and who my family is. When I meet new people, I usually ask about who their family is and where they are from.	<b>Doing</b> I derive more of my identity from what I do for work, my hobbies, and my accomplishments. When I meet new people, I usually ask about their job and activities.
<b>CONTROL</b>	<b>Internal</b> What I do in life will shape my destiny. I can control my future. I don't understand why some people have a fatalistic attitude about their lives.	<b>External</b> My destiny is beyond my control. My fate is in the hands of others, such as my family, government, or a higher being. I don't understand why some people behave as if they can control destiny.
<b>EMOTIONS</b>	<b>Private</b> It's better to restrain strong emotions.	<b>Expressive</b> It's better to express emotions openly.
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>Low context</b> Good communication is sophisticated, nuanced, and layered. Some expectations are understood by everyone, so it's not necessary to spell everything out or put it in writing.	<b>High Context</b> Good communication is precise, simple, and explicit. All expectations should be clear, detailed, and put in writing.
<b>CONFLICT</b>	<b>Direct</b> I bring up issues directly so problems can be solved quickly.	<b>Indirect</b> I prefer to address differences indirectly to avoid upsetting anyone.

# Tool: Mapping Cultural Values

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Adapted from:  
Meyer, E. (2014). The culture map: breaking through the invisible boundaries of global business. First edition. New York: PublicAffairs.  
University of Washington Bothell. (n.d.). Mapping your cultural orientation. In Intercultural competence toolkit. Retrieved from  
[http://www.uwb.edu/getattachment/globalinitiatives/resources/intercultural-competency-tool-kit-\(1\)/mapping-your-cultural-orientation.pdf](http://www.uwb.edu/getattachment/globalinitiatives/resources/intercultural-competency-tool-kit-(1)/mapping-your-cultural-orientation.pdf)

# Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment

Adults as well as youth need to be able to identify their emotions. One way to equip staff is to help them become more aware of their own emotions. Emotional Intelligence (sometimes referred to as EQ) is defined as the ability to be aware of, understand, and manage one's emotions. This quick self-assessment can help adults feel grounded in some of the language we use in supporting SEL with youth.

## Why This Matters

- In order for adults to best support youth learning SEL skills, they need to have a sense of their own emotions. This activity will help build self-awareness through completing and reflecting on the assessment tool. The four skill domains addressed by this assessment are:
  - Emotional Awareness
  - Emotional Management
  - Social Emotional Awareness
  - Relationship Management

## Getting Started

- Audience: Adult youth workers who will be focusing on SEL skills with youth
- Materials: Copies of the Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment adapted for the San Diego City College MESA program.
- Time: Plan for 30-40 minutes; 10 to complete the assessment, and 20-30 for discussion.

## How To Use It

- 1) Pass out an assessment for each staff. Complete and score the assessment individually and then debrief in a small group using the conversation starters below. Allow for 20-30 minutes of de-briefing time to enrich the understanding about the 4 domains assessed
  - What was your strongest domain?
  - How does this help your daily and work life?
  - What was your weakest domain?
  - What ideas do you have for how you might strengthen your understanding of this domain, and take some action to improve it?
  - Were there questions in the assessment that were difficult for you to answer? Why?

## Take It Further

- Anyone interested in going further can reference the book Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves. This book describes EQ research and includes an online assessment that produces an individualized report that can be printed.
- Have staff develop SMART goals related to improving their EQ. Track these goals in 1:1 meets or do team check-ins throughout the year.

# Tool: Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment

## *The Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment\**

\*Adapted for the San Diego City College MESA Program from a model by Paul Mohapel (paul.mohapel@shaw.ca)

Emotional intelligence (*referred to as EQ*) is your ability to **be aware of, understand and manage your emotions**. *Why is EQ important?* While intelligence (*referred to as IQ*) is important, success in life depends more on EQ. Take the assessment below to learn your EQ strengths!

Rank each statement as follows:    **0 (Never)**    **1 (Rarely)**    **2 (Sometimes)**    **3 (Often)**    **4 (Always)**

### **Emotional Awareness – Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

0	1	2	3	4	My feelings are clear to me at any given moment
0	1	2	3	4	Emotions play an important part in my life
0	1	2	3	4	My moods impact the people around me
0	1	2	3	4	I find it easy to put words to my feelings
0	1	2	3	4	My moods are easily affected by external events
0	1	2	3	4	I can easily sense when I'm going to be angry
0	1	2	3	4	I readily tell others my true feelings
0	1	2	3	4	I find it easy to describe my feelings
0	1	2	3	4	Even when I'm upset, I'm aware of what's happening to me
0	1	2	3	4	I am able to stand apart from my thoughts and feelings and examine them

### **Emotional Management – Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

0	1	2	3	4	I accept responsibility for my reactions
0	1	2	3	4	I find it easy to make goals and stick with them
0	1	2	3	4	I am an emotionally balanced person
0	1	2	3	4	I am a very patient person
0	1	2	3	4	I can accept critical comments from others without becoming angry
0	1	2	3	4	I maintain my composure, even during stressful times
0	1	2	3	4	If an issue does not affect me directly, I don't let it bother me
0	1	2	3	4	I can restrain myself when I feel anger towards someone
0	1	2	3	4	I control urges to overindulge in things that could damage my well being
0	1	2	3	4	I direct my energy into creative work or hobbies

### **Social Emotional Awareness – Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

0	1	2	3	4	I consider the impact of my decisions on other people
0	1	2	3	4	I can tell easily tell if the people around me are becoming annoyed
0	1	2	3	4	I sense it when a person's mood changes
0	1	2	3	4	I am able to be supportive when giving bad news to others
0	1	2	3	4	I am generally able to understand the way other people feel
0	1	2	3	4	My friends can tell me intimate things about themselves
0	1	2	3	4	It genuinely bothers me to see other people suffer
0	1	2	3	4	I usually know when to speak and when to be silent
0	1	2	3	4	I care what happens to other people
0	1	2	3	4	I understand when people's plans change



# Tool: Quick Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment

## Relationship Management – Total: \_\_\_\_\_

0	1	2	3	4	I am able to show affection
0	1	2	3	4	My relationships are safe places for me
0	1	2	3	4	I find it easy to share my deep feelings with others
0	1	2	3	4	I am good at motivating others
0	1	2	3	4	I am a fairly cheerful person
0	1	2	3	4	It is easy for me to make friends
0	1	2	3	4	People tell me I am sociable and fun
0	1	2	3	4	I like helping people
0	1	2	3	4	Others can depend on me
0	1	2	3	4	I am able to talk someone down if they are very upset

**My EQ strengths!** Mark your EQ total scores to assess your strengths and areas for improvement.

Domain	Score
Emotional Awareness	0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40
Emotional Management	0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40
Social Emotional Awareness	0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40
Relationship Management	0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24 26 28 30 32 34 36 38 40
Measure your effectiveness in each domain using the following key: <b>0 – 24</b> Area for Enrichment: <b>Requires</b> attention and development <b>25 – 34</b> Effective Functioning: Consider <b>strengthening</b> <b>35 – 40</b> Enhanced Skills: Use as <b>leverage</b> to develop weaker areas	

**Using your EQ strength** – for your strongest EQ domain, give an example of how you demonstrate your strength in your daily life or work: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Effects of your EQ strength** – for your weakest EQ domain, give an example of how this affects you AND others in your daily life or work: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Improving your EQ strength** – for your weakest EQ domain, what steps can you take to strengthen yourself in this area? How will this benefit you in your daily life or work? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

For help in developing your EQ strengths, visit the City College Mental Health Counseling Center (Room A-221)



# SAFE-R Corners

This activity helps staff explore and share the ways that their programs are supporting SEL and brainstorm strategies for improvement. This activity is based on the SAFE features identified in research (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). We added R for Reflection, another important characteristic of social and emotional learning cycles.

## Why This Matters

- Youth programs are a great environment to support SEL, but it's not a given.
- Recent research found that after-school programs that follow four key practices are effective at promoting social and emotional development (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010). The four practices form the acronym SAFE (Sequenced, Active, Focused, and Explicit).
- In other words, programs that guide young people through a sequential series of engaging activities focused on the development of specific social and emotional skills were shown to be most effective.
- We added R for Reflection, because integrating reflection activities as part of the learning process helps youth internalize social and emotional skills. Much of the effort put into designing SAFE learning experiences is wasted if youth don't have the opportunity to process their experience through reflection.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of the SAFE-R Corners Worksheet for each staff.
- Time: 20-30 minutes

## How To Use It

- 1) Pass out the SAFE-R Corners Worksheet and explain that each corner of the room represents one SAFE feature, and the center of the room represents Reflection:

**S - Sequenced:** a series of steps or small skills that build upon each other. New skills cannot be acquired immediately; it takes time and effort and skills must be broken down into smaller steps and sequentially mastered. Staff should develop a coordinated sequence of activities that links the learning steps and provides youth with opportunities to connect these steps. Is there a planned set of activities that progressively challenges youth to build social and emotional skills?

**A - Active:** hands-on, project-based, real-life, or experiential. Young people often learn best by doing. After youth receive some basic instruction they should then have the opportunity to practice new behaviors and receive feedback on their performance. Do you use active forms of learning (e.g., youth lead discussions, contribute ideas, work together, take on leadership roles)?

**F - Focused:** time, resources, and a plan. Staff should designate time that is primarily directed at skill development. Do you devote sufficient time and attention exclusively to SEL goals?

**E - Explicit:** goals and SEL skills are named. Youth need to know what they are expected to learn. Staff should identify explicitly what skills youth are expected to learn (e.g., self-control, problem-solving, empathy). Does your program define and target specific SEL skills?

**R - Reflection:** skills are internalized. Opportunities for youth to evaluate what they have just experienced, consider their feelings about the experience, and connect what they are learning to their lives. Do you create opportunities for youth to process their experience through reflection?

## SAFE-R Corners

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- 2) Ask participants to think about the SAFE-R features and go to the area that their program is strongest in. At each corner (or center), have the group share an effective strategy that they use. After 5-10 minutes, bring the large group together and have participants share several strategies from each corner.
- 3) Next, ask participants to go to the corner (or center) that their program is weakest in. With the group at that area, have them brainstorm ideas for how they could improve. After 5-10 minutes, bring the large group together and have participants share several ideas from each corner.

### Take It Further

- For more on the SAFE-R features, see the *Intentional Practices to Support Social & Emotional Learning* issue brief.
- Read the research review which indicated that after-school programs that follow four evidence-based practices are successful in promoting young people's personal and social development (Durlak, Weissberg & Pachan, 2010).

## Tool: SAFE-R Corners Worksheet

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### SEQUENCED

Is there a set of activities that progressively challenges youth to build social emotional skills?

#### Strategies

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### ACTIVE

Do youth use hands-on, project-based or other active forms of learning to practice SEL skills?

#### Strategies

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### REFLECTION

Do you create opportunities for youth to process their experience through reflection?

#### Strategies

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### EXPLICIT

Does your program define and target specific SEL skills?

#### Strategies

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### FOCUSED

Do you devote sufficient time exclusively to SEL goals?

#### Strategies

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# Quality Learning Environment

By investing in quality learning environments, youth programs are well poised for effectively supporting social and emotional skill development. This activity explores how elements of the Youth Program Quality Pyramid align with supporting social and emotional skills.

## Why This Matters

- A high quality youth program provides the setting and experiences conducive to developing many positive outcomes, including positive social and emotional skills and beliefs.
- Improving youth program quality is essentially about creating better processes and conditions for learning to occur, including the learning environment for SEL.
- Program staff play a key role in cultivating the right environment for growing social and emotional skills and creating strategies for change.

## Getting Started

- Read the issue brief *The Relationship between Youth Program Quality and Social & Emotional Learning*, especially pages 5-6 that outline which SEL skills are supported by each of the program quality domains.
- This activity will be easiest to use for staff groups that are familiar with the Weikart Center's Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPOA) tool (see the issue brief and the Quality Indicators Worksheet).
- While the Safe Environment domain of the YPOA tool is fundamental to youth program quality and it is an important domain to address in quality learning environments, this activity focuses on the other domains of the pyramid.
- Materials: Copies of Quality Indicators Worksheet for each person
- Time: 45 minutes

## How To Use It

- 1) Before a staff meeting, share copies of the Issues Brief for staff to read. Ask them to come to the meeting with 1-2 highlights from the issue brief.
- 2) Start the staff meeting asking for general reactions to the issue brief. Take at least 5-6 responses to get the conversation started.
- 3) Next: provide 10-15 minutes for staff to read and fill out the Quality Indicators Worksheet. Specifically fill in the sentences in each of the three text boxes.
- 4) Open up discussion (approximately 20-30 minutes) for people to share how they responded to the SEL Skill box for each of the domains:
  - Start with Supportive Environment. Share ways that your program does this well. Discuss which SEL skills young people can learn and apply in a supportive environment (e.g., critical thinking, communication, problem-solving, emotion management).
  - Move on to Interaction. Share ways that your program does this well. Discuss which SEL skills young people can learn and apply when Interaction is present (e.g., teamwork, empathy, responsibility).
  - Finally, look at Engagement. Share ways that your program does this well. Discuss which SEL skills young people can learn and apply when Engagement is present (e.g., goal-setting, decision-making, planning, perseverance).
- 5) Based on the input, take time as a group to set 2-3 goals for strategies that bring an SEL lens to the quality learning environment and intentionally support social and emotional skill development. Fill these in at the bottom of the Worksheet. For example, Reflection can foster the SEL skill of self-awareness. Connect quality and SEL skills as reflection time is designed into the program. How can you set a goal to build reflection into each day of programming?
- 6) Post the goals that are decided and check in at the next staff meeting to discuss whether staff believe they are making progress toward the goal.

# Quality Learning Environment

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## Take It Further

- Review the SEL/Quality crosswalk on page 209 of the field guide [Preparing Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices in Social & Emotional Learning](#). This includes Youth Program Quality Assessment domains (YPOA) and eight SEL domains (emotion management, empathy, teamwork, responsibility, initiative, problem-solving).
- The guide [Measuring Quality: Assessment Tools to Evaluate Your Social-Emotional Learning Practices](#) helps identify tools to assess the quality of staff practices in relation to SEL (safe and supportive environment; active and engaged learning; skill building; youth voice and leadership; diversity, access, and equity).

# Tool: Quality Indicators Worksheet

The Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality Pyramid outlines four domains of a quality learning environment (Safe Environment, Supportive Environment, Interaction, and Engagement) with key indicators listed for each.

Circle the indicator descriptions below under each domain that your program does well. Consider how SEL is supported in supportive environments with high levels of interaction and engagement. Use the box under each domain to pick a focus on quality and tie it to a specific SEL skill.



## Supportive Environment

In programs that provide a supportive environment, youth feel welcome and engaged, they are encouraged to develop new skills and conflict is constructively reframed.

- **Warm Welcome** (youth are greeted, program leader uses warm/respectful language, and friendly gestures)
- **Session Flow** (session starts on time, materials and supplies ready, enough supplies, all activities explained clearly, appropriate amount of time for activities)
- **Active Engagement** (youth engage with materials, improve a skill, balance concrete and abstract, activities lead to tangible products or performances, difficult tasks broken into smaller steps)
- **Skill Building** (specific learning or skill focus stated, try new skills or higher level of performance, program leader models skills, difficult task broken into smaller steps, encouragement or support provided to struggling youth)
- **Encouragement** (program leader support youth with specific/non-evaluative language, frequent use of open ended questions, program leader actively involved with youth)
- **Reframing Conflict** (program leader approaches conflict calmly, program leader seeks youth input, program leader follows up with youth after a conflict, address bullying)

If \_\_\_\_\_ is present, youth can learn \_\_\_\_\_ .  
 (Supportive Environment indicator) (SEL skill)



High quality interaction happens when youth are able to collaborate effectively; learn, then practice leadership skills; and share control and ideas.

- **Belonging** (youth provided structured ‘get to know you’ opportunities, youth identify with program offering, program leader provides structured opportunities to recognize youth)
- **Collaboration** (program leader provides opportunities for youth to work collaboratively, activities allow for interdependent roles, youth work toward shared goals)
- **Leadership** (youth participate in large & small group conversation, youth assigned leadership roles)
- **Adult Partners** (program leader shares control with youth, program leader talks with youth about their lives outside the program)

If \_\_\_\_\_ is present, youth can learn \_\_\_\_\_

(Interaction indicator) (SEL skill)

Engagement refers to a specific set of activities: planning, choice, and reflection. Programs with high levels of engagement give youth opportunities to set goals, make choices and plans, and reflect on what they've done.

- **Planning** (youth make plans, identifiable planning strategies used, youth encouraged to set project/program-related goals)
- **Choice** (open ended content choice, open ended process choice)
- **Reflection** (youth provided intentional opportunities for reflection, use multiple reflection strategies, youth provided structured opportunities to give feedback)

If \_\_\_\_\_ is present, youth can learn \_\_\_\_\_  
(Engagement indicator) (SEL skill)

## Quality Improvement Goals To Support SEL

What strategies could staff use to build on the quality learning environment to more intentionally support social and emotional skill development?

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_

# Creating the Learning Environment

The environment and culture of your program play an important part in social and emotional learning. You can influence the culture of your program by paying attention to the ways that routines, behavior expectations, and conflict resolution processes within your program support social and emotional learning.

This section includes tools and templates to help staff establish group and individual level expectations, give effective feedback, and integrate reflection.

# Skill Building Plan

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Use during a one-on-one conversation with a youth to discuss a specific social and emotional skill. This tool is helpful for youth who are having difficulty meeting behavior expectations. The template can help youth reflect on their social and emotional skill growth, create accountability for their actions, and plan for the future.

## Why This Matters

- One-on-one conversations with youth are crucial for SEL skill development especially after an SEL expectation has been broken.
- Writing down a plan makes it more likely that staff will continue to check in with the youth about their progress.
- Youth-driven accountability creates additional opportunities for SEL skill growth.

## Getting Started

- Program staff should keep track of the Skill Building Plan and follow up with the young person about their progress.

## How To Use It

- 1) Youth and staff fill out the form together. Staff could also ask the youth questions and take notes as they talk.
- 2) Ask some of these conversation starters to have a discussion.
  - How did you feel about completing the form?
  - How can others best support you?
  - What are the benefits of having a plan for the future?
  - How do you feel about the plan?
  - How can you hold yourself accountable to your plan?

## Take It Further

- Program staff can keep track of Skill Building Plans to track behavior over time and to monitor SEL improvement.
- If needed, program staff can involve parents/guardians in the Skill Building Plan.

# Template: Skill Building Plan

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Youth Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## Reflecting on the Situation

What happened?

What was my response? How did others react?

What is the problem? What can I do to fix it?

# Template: Skill Building Plan

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## Planning for the Future

Next time I'm in a similar situation, what could I do differently?

What SEL skills will help me the next time I'm in a similar situation? How will I work on this skill?

What support will I need?

When to check in next:

# Full Value Contract

Use this discussion guide with youth to establish group norms and common expectations. Write the agreement on a piece of paper which youth read, sign, and follow for the duration of the program experience. Depending on the length and location of the program, the contract can be large and posted at the location or small and mobile. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

## Why This Matters

- Setting clear expectations is an important step to create a positive social and emotional learning environment.
- Youth input fosters youth ownership and engenders a greater sense of commitment to the ground rules and shared values.
- Establishing norms and agreements that are grounded in a group's own words and experiences helps create a safe and inclusive environment.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Paper and writing utensils (pens or markers). You may want additional paper for a rough draft during brainstorming.
- Time: 30-60 minutes
- As a facilitator, think in advance about what rules you want to have in the agreement. These might be policies like no cell phones or swear words. Also, know what the group goals are so that the expectations in the agreement support those goals. As you reflect on values and expectations that are important to you as a leader, consider how your own identity, culture, and past experiences are shaping

your values. The required expectations that you bring to the contract should be minimal so that there is ample room for youth to add the values and expectations that are most important to them.

- The content can be general or specific. One group might have "I will keep my electronics put away" while another group may need more explicit guidelines "I will only use my cell phone if I am communicating with a parent or guardian." The group could take a different approach by naming social and emotional skills that are important to the group experience "I will try things I have not done before" or "I will pay attention."
- Pick a discussion location that is comfortable and will be free from distractions.

## How To Do It

- 1) Introduce the contract as a way to be clear about what is expected from everyone. Both youth and facilitators will be committing to the contract.
- 2) Facilitate a conversation using some of the following questions.
  - When have you been part of a group that felt really supportive? (This could be any type of group experience—at home, school, church, camp, in your program, etc.).
  - What did you like about the group? What made it feel supportive for you?
  - What did the people in the group (including the adults) do to make it feel that way?
  - What did you do in the group to make it feel supportive for others?
  - When have you been part of a group that was not supportive?
  - What happened in that experience that you didn't like? What did the people in the group (including the adults) do to make it feel that way? How did your actions contribute to the negative group dynamics?



# Full Value Contract

- 3) Begin taking notes (in a way that is visible to everyone) when you turn the conversation to the current group experience.
  - What is important to you about this group experience? (Identify that answers to this question are a way to talk about values.)
  - What expectations do you have for others? Yourself? Your instructors?
  - If the group is struggling to address values and expectations, name specifically that safety and relationships are going to be group values. Ask,
    - What can we do to ensure safety?
    - What can we do to build relationships?
- 4) Ask youth to identify their top 2-3 expectations for youth, self and staff. Guide the group towards consensus (See **Consensus Building activity** if you want to spend additional time on this process. If the group has trouble reaching consensus, consider how value differences might be influencing the conversation. Questions such as “Why is this important to you?” can be helpful in identifying underlying values.) Explain that we can only control our own actions, not the actions of others. The success of this group is up to each person doing what everyone has agreed is important. Rewrite each expectation in the form of a personal statement like, “I will...” Get input from youth as you talk through revising the priority expectations. Instructors should also explain how they will meet the expectations in the group contract by adding a personal statement, “As an adult, I will...”
- 5) Shift the conversation to accountability.
  - What does accountability mean? Ensure that the group has a common understanding of accountability before moving on.
  - How can we hold each other accountable to the group values and expectations?
  - If your group is mature enough, consider talking about instructor accountability as well.
  - How will the instructors be accountable to the group values and expectations? What is an appropriate way for youth to raise questions or concerns about instructors?

- 6) After youth have verbally agreed to a set of rules for their full value contract, have youth rewrite the contract. Ensure that there is space available for everyone to sign the contract.
- 7) Have youth each read and sign the contract.
- 8) If youth participants are unwilling to sign the contract at the end, don't push it. Talk to youth in a 1:1 setting to better understand their reasons. If satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, consider having a parent meeting to weigh the youth's continued involvement in the program.

## Take It Further

- If it is a multi-session experience, revisit the contract at regular intervals (at least weekly to start). Any of the following questions can be used to reflect on the full value contract, as a group discussion or for an individual journaling activity:
  - How do you feel about the group experience we've been having lately? Is it matching the values we set in our contract?
  - Is the contract working to make this the group experience we said we wanted? Why or why not? How could the contract be more effective?
  - What is an example of a way that you have lived up to the expectations in the contract?
  - We had a great session, what's an example of someone else who you observed making choices to honor the contract?
  - I've noticed that \_\_\_\_\_ has been happening a lot (name a breakdown in the expectation). Has anyone else observed this? It seems to be in conflict with these values (name specific contract values). What can we do to get back in line with our values?
  - Are there any values that need to be updated?

# SEL Feedback

Use this template to prepare for skill-building conversations with youth. It is designed to help staff present feedback to youth in an intentional way in order to facilitate positive learning and reflection about their SEL skills. This template is adapted from MHA Labs and Grant Wiggins (2012).

## Why This Matters

- It is easy to fall into the trap of giving advice rather than feedback. In contrast to advice, feedback is concrete information shared with the purpose of helping another evaluate their progress towards a goal.
- Feedback is a crucial part of SEL skill growth. Providing feedback in an accepting and non-judgmental manner helps youth understand and explore their strengths and areas of growth.
- Word choice matters in a feedback conversation. Thinking ahead of time about what to say to a young person makes the conversation more intentional and productive.

## Getting Started

- When you try this out for the first time, take the extra minutes to write out exactly what you want to say.
- Skill building conversations are great to use when things are going well and when there is room for improvement.
- The order of the template is less important than making sure that all parts are covered during the course of the conversation.

## How To Use It

- 1) After describing the context of the situation and mentioning the SEL skill expectation, the staff member should ask a question to begin a feedback conversation. The question is dependent on the situation. Some potential ideas include:
  - How did you feel when X was happening?
  - How do you feel now?
  - What would you like to try differently next time?
  - What worked well for you?
  - How did that go from your perspective?
  - Where did you learn (name SEL skill)?

## Take It Further

- Take a look at MHA's website and toolkit for more information on strengths-based storytelling. <http://mhalabs.org/>
- Share this activity with youth so they can learn to give effective feedback to others. You could even create scenarios for youth to practice.

## Template: SEL Feedback

---

1) Context – what happened? What did you observe? Just facts.

*I saw/I noticed/I observed....*

2) Name the SEL Skill Expectation

*When we discussed expectations, we agreed....*

*In the past, we have talked about....*

3) Ask a question to start a feedback conversation:

# Emoji Reflection

Use the Emoji Reflection template for regular self-reflection throughout a project. Turn this reflection template into a tool to measure individual and program-level progress over time.

## Why This Matters

- Consistent opportunities for self-reflection contribute to environments that support social and emotional learning because they help youth make meaning out of activities and experiences.
- SEL-focused reflection routines create space for youth to practice important social and emotional awareness skills.

## Getting Started

- To prepare for this activity, review the Emoji Reflection Template, front and back.
- Identify a specific context (working on a film project, participating in the leadership team meetings, during a service learning project).
- Choose an anchor statement that is a good fit for an SEL skill that you are focusing on. The Emoji Reflection Statement Examples offers some suggestions. Write your anchor statement in the shaded box at the top of the Emoji Reflection Template. For example, “While working on your film project this week, did you feel in control of your emotions?”
- This activity is designed to use Emoji in a flexible and contextual way. It will be important to create a common understanding of what each Emoji mean in the context of your group. (See Take It Further for resources on exploring the broader use of Emoji in communication.)

## How To Use It

- 1) When introducing the Emoji Reflection, discuss with youth what each Emoji means and build a common understanding of the Emoji scale. The Emoji choices should correspond to a general scale (for example, all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, a few times, not at all, wildcard), but your group may define a different scale (such as “fantastic to horrible”) to meet your needs. For youth who feel limited by expressing themselves in Emoji, there is room to write more on the back.
- 2) Start a group discussion after completing the reflection with some of the following questions:
  - Do you ever have a hard time naming your emotions or noticing how you are feeling? Why do you think that is?
  - Have you ever experienced more than one emotion at a time? How do you think we should record something like that in this reflection tool?
  - How do you feel about choosing an Emoji instead of a word to describe your feelings? In what ways is that easier or harder for you?
  - Do you think other people in this group would be able to correctly identify which Emoji you will choose by the end of today? Why or why not?

## Take It Further

- Help youth interpret and reflect on their emotions:
  - Have youth look at their Emoji Reflection responses, and ask if they see any trends:
    - Were your emotions impacted by the people around you or by what we were doing that day?
    - Did how you feel impact what you or your group were able to accomplish on a given day?
- Explore how Emoji are used to communicate emotion (<http://emojipedia.org/people/>). Invite youth to select their own set of Emoji to use in the activity.
- Translate this tool into data that can fuel immediate program feedback. See the **Using Data for Improvement** section for more ideas on how to use this tool for measurement.

# Template: Emoji Reflection

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose an anchor statement from the Emoji Reflection Statement Bank and write it here:

WEEK						
1						<input type="text"/>
2						<input type="text"/>
3						<input type="text"/>
4						<input type="text"/>
5						<input type="text"/>
6						<input type="text"/>
7						<input type="text"/>
8						<input type="text"/>
9						<input type="text"/>
10						<input type="text"/>

# Template: Emoji Reflection

---

Emojis are only part of the story. If you have more to add, write it here:

Week 1
Week 2
Week 3
Week 4
Week 5
Week 6
Week 7
Week 8
Week 9
Week 10:



## Examples: Emoji Reflection Statements

---

### Ways I Am

- I think that my project will turn out well.\*
- I made an important contribution to the project.
- The skills I learned will help me succeed in other areas of my life.

### Ways of Feeling

- This is how I felt about my work.\*
- I was in control of my emotions.\*
- I was aware of my emotions.\*
- If I felt stressed, I made myself think about the situation in a way that helped me stay calm.\*\*

### Ways of Relating

- I was able to speak about my personal problems to others\*.
- I showed respect to my teammates.
- I enjoyed working with my friends.\*\*\*
- I got along well with my teammates.
- I think my teammates like working with me.
- My teammates and I were able to work out our disagreements.

### Ways of Doing

- I felt motivated to work hard.
- I was able to find solutions to the problems I had\*.
- I managed my time well.
- I asked questions when I needed help.
- I asked for help when I needed it.
- I accomplished my goals.

\*Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Hall, L. E., Haggerty, D. J., Cooper, J. T., Dornheim, L., & Golden, C. J. (1998). Development and validation of a measure of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25(2), 167-177. Retrieved February 2, 2016, from <http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezp3.lib.umn.edu/science/article/pii/S0191886998000014>

\*\*Gross, J. J., & John, O. P. (2003). Individual differences in two emotion regulation processes: Implications for affect, relationships, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(2), 348-362. Retrieved February 2, 2016, from <http://psycnet.apa.org.ezp1.lib.umn.edu/journals/psp/85/2/348/>

\*\*\*Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(6), 1063-1078. Retrieved February 2, 2016, from <http://psycnet.apa.org.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/journals/psp/67/6/1063/>

# Reflection Bank

Use these ideas to incorporate reflection into your daily program structure.

Reflection activities can be used throughout your program to create a positive social and emotional learning environment.

## Why This Matters

- Reflection activities provide an important time for youth to develop awareness of their emotions and practice expressing those emotions.
- Reflection activities allow youth to think intentionally about their learning experiences.
- Youth responses during reflection opportunities provide crucial feedback to staff about the effectiveness of program activities and insights into youths' personal development.

## Getting Started

- Pick an activity based on the amount of time you have. This is a bank to get you started. Use your own creativity to add to this bank.
- Modify questions to fit your activity or project.
- Each person has a preferred reflection style (group discussions, writing, creative expression, etc.). Be intentional about varying the types of reflection activities to help youth learn what works best for them.
- Provide lots of time for youth to think before you ask them to answer out loud for the group. Some youth need more time to process questions than others, and others will jump to an answer quickly without actually doing much reflection.
- If everyone is going to be asked to share out loud with the group, name that expectation at the beginning. Allow youth to share "popcorn" style rather than a fixed order to give everyone the time they need to prepare a response.

## How To Use It

- 1) Pick an activity or question that is relevant for your program activity, age of youth, and amount of time.
- 2) At the end of a particular activity or at the end of the day, devote time to the reflection activity or question. Practice validating youth feelings and thank participants for sharing.

## Take It Further

- Try using the same reflection activity for an extended period of time. Consider tracking how youth are doing. (See [Emoji Reflection](#) as an example.)
- Many of the reflection activities and questions could also work well as a check-in activity before program begins.
- For more ideas, visit [\*Building your program quality 20 minutes at a time\*](#) from the University of Minnesota Extension Center for Youth Development.

# Tool: Reflection Bank

## If you have a couple minutes...

- **Color check-in:** Have youth pick a color that describes how they are feeling. Ask each youth to explain why they chose that color and what it represents to them.
- **One word:** Ask youth to describe how they are feeling in one word. Youth could also name one adjective to describe their day.
- **Facial Expression Chart:** Print pictures of different facial expressions (e.g., happy, bored, excited, angry). Have youth pick an expression that describes how they are feeling.
- **Group Process Reflection:** Have youth go around and share how they would finish the following sentences.
  - As a group, we are strongest when...
  - As a group, we are weakest when...

## If you have 5 to 10 minutes...

- **Roses and Thorns:** Ask youth to reflect on the highs and lows of their day. Have each youth think about the following questions: what was the high point of your day (your rose)? How did you feel at that point? What was the low point of your day (your thorn)? How did you feel at that point? Allow each youth to share their roses and thorns.
- **Weather Report:** Ask youth to relate how they feel right at the moment, using only weather words; sunny, stormy, partly cloudy, etc. Have youth share their weather word and explain why they might be feeling that way.
- **Pride, Praise, Progress:** Ask youth to think about their day and share one thing they are proud of (Pride), one thing they are working on (Progress), and one thing someone else did well (Praise).
- **String Toss:** Have youth stand in a circle. Ask a reflective question (e.g., who is someone in the group that you learned something cool about today? What is one thing you learned today?). Hold the end of the ball of string. Hand the ball to the first person to answer the question. That person holds on to the

string and then tosses the ball to the next person to answer the question. When everyone has answered, note how interconnected everyone is, that everyone's learning impacts everyone else.

- **Team Reflection:** After a group activity, reflect on the group process with the following questions: What was it like working with a team? What things are easier to do with a team? What things are harder to do with a team? At what point in the day did you feel most connected to others? At what point did you feel the most disconnected from others?

## If you have 15 minutes or more...

- **This is How it Happened:** Have youth work in small groups to create a short skit that portrays what they experienced in the preceding activity. Allow 10 to 15 minutes of planning time and 5 minutes for each group to perform.
- **Be the Leader:** In small groups, invite youth to recreate the experience they just had for a group of younger kids. Each group should identify a learning goal, a learning activity, and a plan for assessing if the participants learned about the goal. Have groups share their activity plans with the whole group. Allow 30 minutes for this. If youth are actually going to implement these plans, give them additional time to revise their plans and add lesson components like a time management plan or needed resources.
- **Individual Reflection:** Have youth spend some individual time writing down their responses to the questions below. Have each youth share at least one of their answers with the group.
  - Which one of your SEL skills helped you most today? How so?
  - What do you think is your most valuable contribution to the project?
  - What did you learn about yourself today?
  - How would describe your attitude today? How did your attitude affect how you felt?

## Tool: Reflection Bank

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- **Ways of Being Debrief:** Have youth reflect about their Ways of Being. Pick at least one question from each of the Ways of Being for youth to think about (4 questions in total). After 5-10 minutes of journaling time, have youth share one of their answers.
  - Ways of Feeling: How were you brave today?  
How did you express your feelings today?
  - Ways of Relating: How were you kind to others today? How did you get along with others today?  
How were you a good friend today?
  - Ways of Doing: How did you work hard today?  
How did you succeed today? How did you fail today?
  - Ways I Am: How did you have a positive attitude today? How did you learn about yourself today?



# Designing Impactful Learning Experiences

Social and emotional learning can take place when youth are engaged in activities that allow them to practice and develop various skills that show up across the Ways of Being model.

Use this section of the toolkit to incorporate activities in your program that focus on developing all four of the Ways of Being. These activities allow youth to explore their individual and community identity (Ways I Am), practice sharing gratitude and communicate one's feelings (Ways of Feeling), learn about empathy and set group norms (Ways of Relating), and develop clear goals and work towards consensus (Ways of Doing).

# Meet the Wobbies

Wobbies are case narratives of individual youth who are navigating through one or more parts of the Ways of Being (WOB) model. The stories of these seven characters can be used to spark conversation among youth about the social and emotional skills at play in the stories and in their own SEL development. The Wobbies were created in partnership with a team of diverse young people as part of the Youth Voice Project on Youth Ways of Being (YWOB).

## Why This Matters

- The Wobbie stories provide a way for youth to begin to think and talk about the social and emotional skills of other youth as well as themselves.
- Discussing the life experiences of other people allows youth to practice social and emotional skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and understanding others' feelings.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of Wobbie story for each youth.
- Time: Devote at least 15 minutes to each Wobbie.
- Pick 2 to 3 stories that youth in your program might relate to.
- Before this activity, consider introducing the [Ways of Being model](#) so youth and staff have a common language for talking about SEL.

## How To Do It

- 1) Explain to the group of youth that you will be reading stories about other youth and then discussing their experiences.
- 2) Read the story individually or read aloud as a group.
- 3) After reading a story, use the discussion questions below each story to spark a conversation.

## Take It Further

- After reading the Wobbie stories, discuss with youth which Wobbie they most related to and why.
- Consider having youth create a Wobbie of themselves at this point in their lives. Have youth think about which of their SEL areas are strongest and which could be improved.
- Youth could create a play or write a story about the Wobbie of their choosing.

# Meet the Wobblers

## NIKKI

Nikki used to be one of those students. You know the kind: the ones who get good grades, participate in clubs and volunteer activities, and tutor younger kids after school. In middle school, Nikki was the captain of the dance team, helped organize trips for the environmental awareness club and got A's in her classes. She looked forward to high school, where they did real experiments in real science labs, where she could publish stories in the school magazine, and where the dance team would actually perform during halftime at games. But freshman year was tough. Nikki struggled in geometry class, but she was embarrassed to ask for help because she used to be one of the "smart" kids. The school magazine rejected the first story she submitted for the fall issue. Every time she got up to do a presentation in any class, she would freeze and forget everything she'd planned to say. Nikki's grades started falling. By the end of the year she had dropped out of dance team, had given up on the literary magazine and was failing math. She knew she needed to get some help with schoolwork, but wasn't sure how to. She was so far behind anyway, what was the point? School used to be so easy, but maybe she just wasn't good at it anymore, so why should she even try to do well at anything?



## Discussion Questions

- What are some of the feelings that Nikki is having right now?
- Why does she feel this way?
- What advice do you have for her?
- Think about a time where you tried to do something hard. What was it? What did you do to accomplish this? How did you feel about the outcome of what you did?
- When is it important to stick with hard things? When is it okay to let those things go?
- What long-term goals do you have? What short-term goals do you have? How could you go about accomplishing these goals?



# Meet the Wobbies

## DREW

Drew is almost finished with a beat he's been working on for a week. He has half an hour of studio time left and he thinks he'll get it done today. When Eddie texts: "come smoke with us," Drew isn't sure what to do. If he leaves to smoke, he'll lose his last 30 minutes of studio time and won't be able to work on his music until next week. Drew doesn't even like to smoke. But if he doesn't go hang out with Eddie, he and Eddie might not be cool anymore. It's important to be cool with Eddie because Eddie knows everybody and nobody messes with him—or his friends. Drew's parents have always told him to stay away from guys like Eddie, but Drew doesn't think it's that simple. "Guys like Eddie" are everywhere. Maybe not at school, and maybe not in the teen center where the music studio is, but Drew isn't always at school, and he isn't always at the teen center. He has to navigate the outside world where there are all kinds of people, and he has to figure out how to get along with them. Eddie doesn't have the greatest reputation—he's been banned from the teen center and a lot of adults think he's a juvenile delinquent. Drew's worried not only about getting caught smoking, he's also worried that people might think he's just like Eddie.



## Discussion Questions

- What are some of the choices Drew has to make in this scenario?
- What are the pros and cons of those choices?
- What would you do if you were Drew, both right now and going forward, with respect to Eddie?
- How are you similar to Drew? How are you different?
- In what situations might your personal goals be more important or less important than relationships you have with people?
- Think about two relationships from different parts of your life: they could be friendships, relationships with family members, teachers, coaches, people from your religious group, classmates. How do you act with each of these people when you're with them? Do you talk and act the same way around each group? Why or why not?

# Meet the Wobbies

## CHRIS

Chris has lots of friends. People like him because they say he is friendly and positive. He's good at cheering other people up, and at "looking on the bright side." He gets good grades at school, and adults think he's "mature" and "responsible." Chris has a good reputation with his friends and with adults in the community, and he knows he should feel lucky. But sometimes, Chris' life feels like an act. Sometimes he's sad. Sometimes he's mad. Sometimes he's confused, and isn't sure what he should do in certain situations. Chris likes his friends, but sometimes he feels like he doesn't fit in with them. He doesn't know how to tell them that's he's feeling bummed out or confused, because he's Chris, the Good Guy. He feels like the only time he can really say what's he's feeling is when he's in front of the mic, performing.



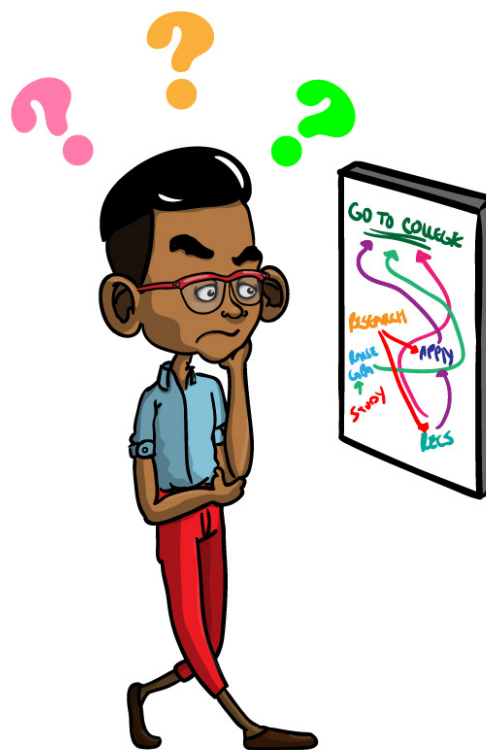
## Discussion Questions

- If Chris was one of your friends, how would you support him?
- What advice would you give to Chris?
- Have you ever felt like Chris before? How did you handle the situation?
- How are you similar to Chris? How are you different?
- In what situations do you feel most comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings? In what situations is it hard to express yourself?
- Which feelings are easy for you to express? Which feelings are hard for you to express? Why do you think certain feelings are easier or harder to share with others?

# Meet the Wobbies

## TONY

Tony is going to do it. He's going to be the first person in his family to go to college. His whole life, his parents and teachers have told him that he could go to college if he just worked hard enough. And Tony has worked hard. He has always gotten straight A's at school. He plays trumpet and is the section leader in band. He volunteers in the church daycare on Sundays during church services. He works as a cashier at a grocery store three nights a week, and his manager keeps telling him to apply for the assistant manager job because he's so good at calming mad customers down. Everyone tells Tony he is doing everything right, but he is worried that he isn't doing enough. The truth is, Tony doesn't know what exactly he should be doing, or when. He works hard, but he isn't sure what he should be working hard at. Tony will be a senior in the fall, and some of his friends are talking about visiting colleges and looking for scholarships, but Tony has no idea how to do any of this. Tony wants to go to college, but he knows his family can't afford it. He isn't sure how to research which colleges he should apply to because he doesn't know what he wants to study. Tony is worried that if he does one thing wrong, it will ruin his chances for getting into school, but he just doesn't know how to navigate all the steps and tasks.



## Discussion Questions

- How do you think Tony is feeling?
- Have you ever felt like Tony before? How did you handle the situation?
- What pressures do you feel in your own life?
- What strategies do you use to plan for the future?
- What goals do you have for the future?
- What kind of support does Tony need? Who do you go to for support in your own life?

# Meet the Wobbies

## AMIRA

Amira has 1000 followers on Instagram. Every picture she posts gets “liked” right away by tons of people she doesn't even know. Amira thinks a lot about the pictures she posts, especially the selfies. She's careful to choose the pictures that show the best parts of her life. In her pictures, Amira always looks perfect, is doing something fun, and is with cool people. She always has something funny to say about her pictures. Lately, Amira has been wondering what people think about her based on the pictures she posts. She wonders what they would think if they saw her real life, because it's nothing like the life she represents online. In her real life she gets in fights with her best friend. She takes care of her grandma, who sometimes needs help because she's old and sick. She's really good at math, and likes to watch stupid cartoons on TV. She feels like her real life is pretty normal and ordinary. Amira wonders, if she posted things about her real life, would people follow her? Would people still like her? And would it even matter, since she doesn't know who many of them are?



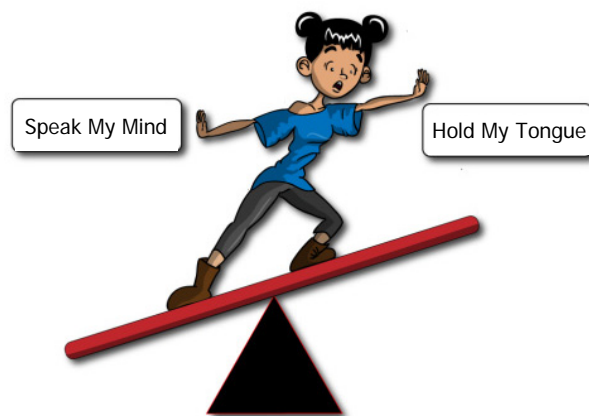
## Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to Amira? How are you different?
- What parts of your life do you share on social media? What parts do you not share?
- Do you think Amira should share more about her “real life”? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits of using social media in your own life?
- Which parts of your identity are you the most open about with others?
- What parts of your identity are harder to share with others? Why do you think that is?

# Meet the Wobblers

## MAI

Mai transferred to a school on the other side of town at the beginning of the school year. Her new school has classes in graphic design and an exchange program that lets students spend a semester in Japan—two things she's wanted to do for a long time, but that weren't available at her old school. Her friends from her old school tease her by saying that she goes to a 'fancy school' now with the 'fancy kids.' Many of Mai's new classmates live in really nice houses and go on vacations to places she's only dreamed of visiting. Mai was a little worried that she wouldn't fit in, but she's enjoyed making new friends, and some of them just invited her to join the school's newspaper staff. She feels good about being able to do things that she likes to do, and feels like she has a lot in common with her new classmates, even though they live on opposite sides of town. Last week, she went to a basketball game where her new school played against her old school. After the game, Mai went out with some of her new friends. They talked a little about how the game went (her new school won). Then her friends started making fun of the kids at her old school. Mai felt uncomfortable, like she should stand up for her old school, but is worried that it will make them dislike her. It's just like when her friends from her old school call her new classmates snobs. But she doesn't know what to say. She loves all of her friends, and wants to get along with all of them, but she thinks what they're saying is wrong. She doesn't know whether she should speak up or hold her tongue.



## Discussion Questions

- What are some ways Mai could handle the situation? What would you decide to do?
- Mai is deciding between her “speaking her mind” and “holding her tongue”. Have you been in a similar situation before? What did you do?
- Have you ever had to change schools? What was your experience like? What strategies did you use to make new friends?
- Think about the last time you had conflict with your friends. How did you handle it?
- How are you similar to Mai? How are you different?
- If you were in Mai's situation, what social and emotional skills would you use to move forward?

# Meet the Wobblers

## JAMES

James has to get to work on time because he wants to take Alexis to the prom. James has got prom night all planned out—a tux, a limo, dinner, flowers. Alexis is going to be so impressed. But those things aren't cheap, so first, James has to get to work at the pizza place on time. When he got hired at the pizza place, his boss made a big deal about how they never hire teens because teens are so irresponsible, like they couldn't trust him to do this important job of putting pepperonis on pies. It's not like life or death. But James also knows most of his friends are having a hard time finding jobs, and it would be stupid to lose the job he already has. He's already been late for work once, and the boss gave him this long lecture about it. James was annoyed—he's always the best worker on his shift—but he knows that the pepperonis are just part of his plan. Pizza is his ticket to the prom.



## Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to James? How are you different?
- What responsibilities do you juggle in your own life?
- James is motivated to work so he is able to go to prom. What are some of your goals that motivate you? Pick one goal. What steps are you taking to achieve it?
- How do you manage your time? What gets in the way of getting everything done?
- What strategies do you use when you have a lot to get done?
- Think of a situation in your life when you felt misunderstood by adults. How did it make you feel? How did you handle it?



# Identity Wheel

Use this activity with youth to think critically about how they see themselves and how they believe the world sees them. By examining their own identity, youth think about the **Ways I Am**.

This activity was adapted from the *Urban Youth Movement: Imagining Futures In and Through Higher Education* curriculum.

## Why This Matters

- Identity shapes the expression of social and emotional skills and informs how one defines which skills are most important.
- Youth practice self-awareness and reflection to think about their own identity.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Blank sheet of paper with a large circle in the middle, extra paper, whiteboard or large sheet of paper, Markers/colored pencils
- Time: 45 minutes- depending on group size
- Draw your own identity wheel ahead of time so that you can share it with youth as an example.
- We use the terms “identities” and “components of your identity” interchangeably.

## How To Use It

- 1) Begin by telling youth that we will be talking about our identities. Ask youth what an identity is. Continue to explain that an identity is what makes a person who she or he is. It also relates to how a person sees herself or himself relative to the world and how the person understands her or his possibilities for the future.

- 2) Ask youth to come up with examples of what might be elements of one's identity. Write this list on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper. Explain we will make a wheel to describe the most important components of our identity. You can bring an example of your own identity wheel to share with youth.
- 3) Ask youth to write down all of the components of their identity on a separate sheet of paper (i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, religion, social class, education level, abilities, etc.).
- 4) Using a blank circle, ask them to divide their wheel into sections that show the parts of their identity, with the size of each section relating to how aware they are of each identity on a daily basis. For example, a person might not think too much about being male or female, but might be very aware of their race and think about it a lot. [Tip: It is helpful sometimes for youth to rank their identities in order of importance.]
- 5) Once everyone has completed this activity, have youth share their circle and then answer these question in small groups or the large group:
  - Tell us why you see yourself this way.
  - Which parts of your identity were you most aware of? Why do you think that is?
  - Do any of these identities help you achieve your goals or aspirations?
  - Do any of them make it hard for you to achieve your goals or aspirations?
  - How much control do you have over your identity? Are there certain parts of your identity over which you feel you have more or less control? Why do you think that is?

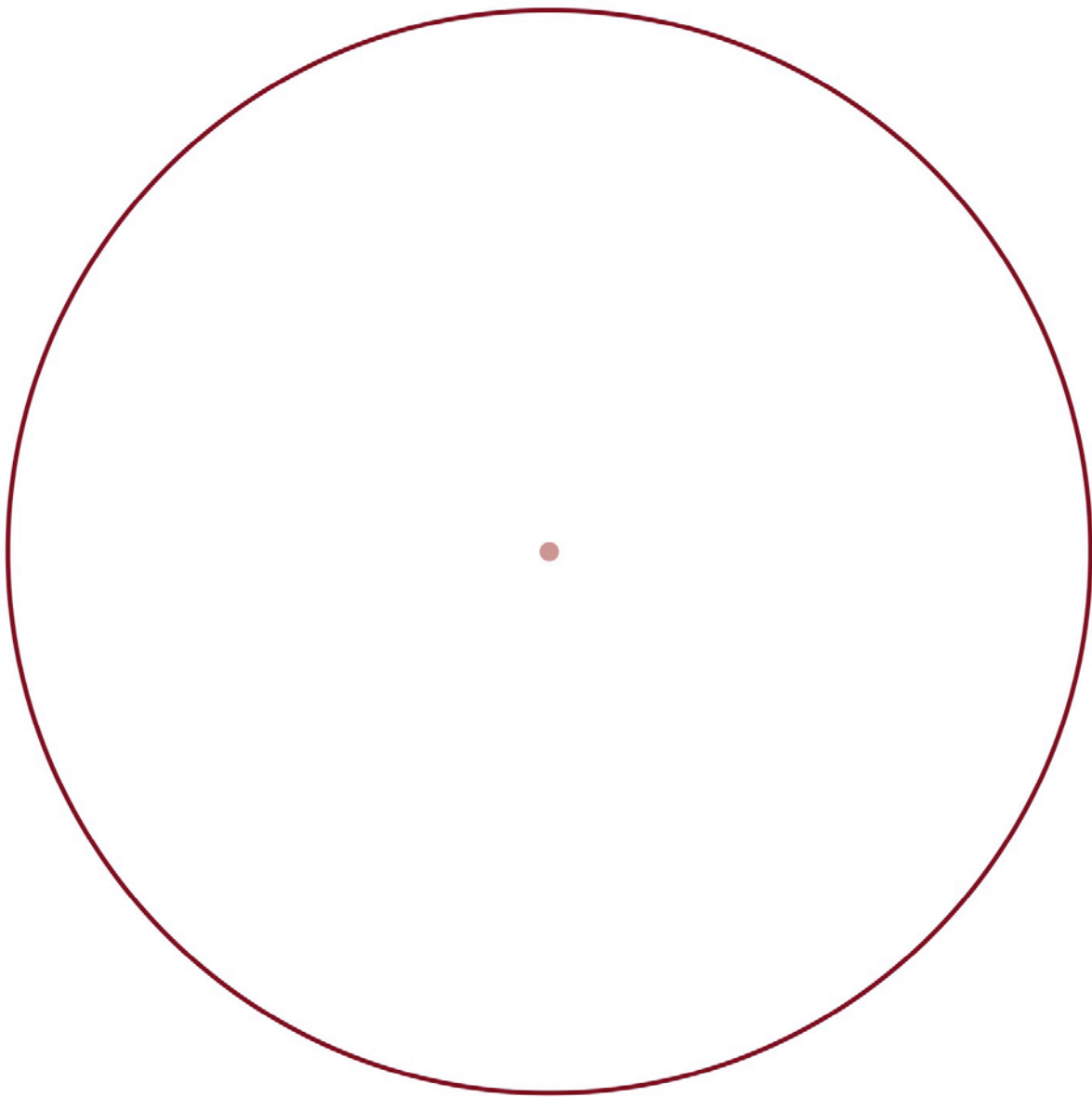
## Take It Further

- Do this activity at the beginning and end of a program cycle. Have youth compare the two identity wheels and discuss why the wheel might have changed.



# Template: Identity Wheel

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**Parts of My Identity:**


# Mask Making

Use this activity to help youth actively engage in expressing their identity as a dimension of their **Ways I Am**. This is an art activity involving decorating the inside and outside of masks with guided instructions. The goal is to have participants do a self-assessment of who they are and how they show up to others. This activity was contributed by the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program in the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

## Why This Matters

- This activity facilitates self-awareness as youth think deeply about how they express themselves.
- Youth will practice active listening and understanding of another youth.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Masks (can be purchased in bulk from art store), Paints, paint brushes, markers, magazine and newspaper, hot glue gun, beads, ribbons, flip chart paper, Mod Podge
- Total time: 2-3 hours
- Activity will need to be done in two sessions to allow paint to dry. Partners cannot be in the same room at the same time – it should be a surprise.
- Either set up two art rooms or plan a separate activity for one set of youth to do while their partners are making their masks.
- Consider in advance how you will help youth structure their partner interviews so that the time is meaningful.

## How to Do It

- 1) Assign each youth a partner and give them each a mask.
- 2) Have the youth interview their partner. Tell youth to talk about their interests, strengths, passions, talents, qualities, what's important to them. Remind youth to practice active listening since they will be making a mask that shows who their partner is and what matters to them.
- 3) Based on what they have heard, one partner should decorate the outside of their partner's mask. Emphasize to the youth that there is no right or wrong answer and they should do the best they can based on the information heard. Partners should have space to decorate the masks away from each other. If there is not enough space to accommodate this, plan a separate activity that can be completed by the non-mask making partner.
  - a. Direct participants to paint the outside of the mask
  - b. Caution against too much paint saturation because the masks have to dry while the cutting of magazines is being done.
  - c. Use other decorative materials to decorate the outside of the mask.
- 4) When everyone is done, have youth switch masks with their partner. Remind youth that they should not discuss their masks with their partner at this point. They will be discussing the masks after they have painted the inside.
- 5) Youth should then finish their own mask on the inside. They should have space away from their partner and others so they can work independently.
  - a. Have youth decorate the inside of the mask and think about the following questions: Who are you on the inside? What don't people easily see about you? What are parts of your personality or person you don't show often?
  - b. Cover with Mod Podge to make it shiny.

# Mask Making

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- 6) Bring the full group together to share masks. Youth should explain their mask, how someone perceived them, and how that is similar or different from who they really are.
- 7) Have partners pair up and share with each other why they painted the mask the way they did.
- 8) Debrief experience with guided questions. Some potential questions are:
  - What did you learn about how you reveal yourself to others?
  - If your inside self and outside self are not aligned, why not? What happens when there is a misalignment? How do you feel about this?
  - What holds us back from fully being our true self out in the world?
  - What would it take in order to align or integrate our inside with our outside selves?
  - Why might this be important to how others see and interact with us?
  - How might doing this or not doing this impact how we lead?

## Take It Further

- Bring this mask back at the end of the year for another art project to see how much you have grown over the year. Now, individuals can paint who they want to be or express themselves externally. This would be about claiming your own authenticity, growth in self-knowledge, and how they want to relate to others.
- This activity could also be done with adults as part of a staff training or staff development.

# Community Asset Mapping

Use this activity to help youth deepen their understanding of how their community informs their identity. Youth will participate in a structured walk to brainstorm assets and needs within their neighborhood. Rather than focus on Ways I Am this activity explores the **Ways We Are** as a community. This activity was contributed by Banyan Community and adapted from a National Youth Leadership Council curriculum.

## Why This Matters

- This activity allows youth to practice awareness of their physical surroundings and the community strengths that they benefit from.

## Getting Started

- Materials: pen and paper for each youth, clipboards for every two youth, route information, map of the neighborhood, large paper for group discussion.
- Time: At least 45 minutes to an hour for the entire activity
- Divide youth into groups of 3-4. There should be an adult for every group.
- A few days before the activity, try out your planned route. Make note of how long it takes to walk the route, safety hazards, and observations of your own take on the assets you observe.

## How To Do It

- 1) As a large group, brainstorm the meaning of "community." Potential discussion questions: "Is your school a community?" "How big does a community need to be?" "What should we consider our community for the purpose of doing some work to help improve it?"
- 2) Agree upon what the group will identify as their community or neighborhood (e.g., school campus, the school campus and five-block radius, X, Y, and Z streets).
- 3) Assign one adult per group, and assign different starting points for each group. Decide on an ending time for the activity and a meeting place. Plan for at least 30 minutes for the walk.
- 4) Walking in groups of three pairs within each group, conduct a tour of the selected area and identify key places, organizations, and institutions in the community.

Questions to consider:

- Where do people congregate?
- What are our most important businesses in the area?
- What recreation facilities, schools, associations, congregations, and other neighborhood institutions exist?
- Consider also social assets such as different cultures, ethnicities, and age groups.

These will be identified as **community assets**: the good things a community has to offer.

- 5) As the groups walk, have participants observe and write what they consider to be needs or problems in the community. Are there safe, productive, and fun places for children to spend time after school? Do they sense tensions among neighbors? What problems or issues do they find in the neighborhood? These will be identified as **community needs**: what the community is lacking.

# Community Asset Mapping

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- 6) Reconvene all the groups to share what the youth observed, both assets and needs. Use a large piece of paper, blackboard or whiteboard to record participants' observations under the two columns: Assets and Needs.
- 7) Reflect and discuss as a group. Ask the group what the common themes are among the participants' observations. Broaden the discussion by asking the group what items they would add to the lists, i.e. other assets and needs that the youth are aware of but may not have observed directly during their walk.

## Take It Further

- Consider having youth journal individually after the activity. Some potential prompts are:
  - Describe something that you noticed during your observation walk that you hadn't in the past.
  - How did it feel to look at a familiar area through "different eyes" in order to record assets and needs?
  - What would you like your neighborhood to look like in five years? What assets can you imagine it having? How can you help it develop these assets?
- This activity could be used to spark ideas about a potential service learning project.

# Gratitude Candle

Use this activity to create a space for participants to practice expressing gratitude. The exercise allows youth to explore their **Ways of Feeling** as they share their emotions about another person. The Candle Activity was contributed by the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program in the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

## Why This Matters

- Being able to express gratitude is an important part of being a leader.
- Expressing gratitude allows youth to practice their emotional awareness and communication skills.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Two chairs facing each other with a lit candle in the middle, tissue boxes.
- Time: A minimum of 30 minutes but it depends on how many youth are present.
- Have everyone sit in a circle as they enter the room. Consider having the room be slightly dark so the candle stands out.
- Have a youth leader (or adult if a youth leader is not available) model the process first.
- This activity works best with groups who already know each other.

## How To Do It

- 1) Explain to youth that this is a challenge by choice activity, so this means that they can choose to go in the middle or not. If they decide not to go, it is ok - their role is to listen, witness, and hold the space for others who take a turn in the middle.
- 2) Explain that throughout the world, people light candles for many purposes: to illuminate darkness, dedicate prayers, affirm intentions, offer blessings, and express gratitude. Explain to participants that the purpose of the activity is to express gratitude to others.
- 3) Ask youth to think about the following questions: Who are they grateful for in their life? How has that person helped or supported them? If they want to come up, one at a time, they should sit in either chair and talk to the imaginary person whom they want to talk to.
- 4) There is no clapping after people go. Just silently observe. Be sure to remind youth about working agreements or expectations: be respectful, treat others like how they want to be treated, and what is said here stays here.
- 5) Depending on the size of the group, set expectations for how many times participants will be allowed to go. Adult or youth leaders can begin the activity as a model.
- 6) Let participants know when the activity is almost finished. After the last participant, thank everyone who went and those who didn't but stayed present and witnessed the gratitude people shared. Encourage participants that this activity could be the beginning of a gratitude practice in their everyday life.

# Gratitude Candle

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## Take It Further

- This activity could be used consistently with a group as a way to encourage each other and provide positive feedback.
- Possible reflection questions:
  - How did you feel before in comparison to after going up?
  - How did it feel to listen to others express gratitude?
  - Why is gratitude important?
  - How did it feel to express gratitude toward others?
  - Who are other people in your life that you would like to express gratitude to? How might you go about doing this?



# Complaint/Feeling/Request

Use the Complaint/Feeling/Request (CFR) process as a communication tool to address issues/conflict through a one-on-one conversation. Introduce CFR when you sense that students need to give one another simple feedback. The process helps individuals bring up challenges and address concerns before they fester. CFR allows youth to explore their **Ways of Feeling** because it allows them to safely express their emotions about a situation. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

## Why This Matters

- Conflict is a healthy part of the group formation process.
- Teaching a conflict resolution process provides youth with the skills to resolve and learn from conflict.

## Getting Started

- Initially, CFR is taught as a group activity (see How To Do It). Once the group is familiar with the process, it is most useful as an ongoing peer-to-peer conflict resolution tool (see Taking It Further).
- Print off and consider laminating the CFR At-a-Glance so youth have an accessible reminder of the CFR steps.

## How To Do It

- 1) Explain that the group is going to practice a process for resolving conflict. Split up the group into pairs.
- 2) Have each pair establish who is giving and who is receiving the feedback.
- 3) Assign each pair a practice scenario. Feel free to come up with your own ideas for scenarios. Some potential scenarios are:
  - During a teambuilding game, Ben begins making negative comments about the activity (“We’re never going to finish. This is stupid!”) and Sarah starts to feel frustrated by Ben’s attitude.
  - A couple days into a week-long camping trip, Grace has started to avoid doing dishes. Leah, her fellow camper, has noticed and feels angry about the situation.
  - During their after-school arts program, Gabe constantly interrupts other students in the program while they share their artwork to the group. Gabe’s friend, Peter, notices what is happening and wants to talk to him about it.
- 4) Explain the steps of CFR:
  - **Complaint:** the person who is giving the feedback simply states their complaint or problem to a specific person (or the group as a whole); ex: “Jesse, my complaint is that you do not wipe off your shoes before walking inside the tent.”
  - **Feeling:** the person who is giving the feedback then states how the action/complaint/problem makes them feel; ex: “It makes me feel angry because the tent floor gets dirty.”
  - **Request:** the person who is giving the feedback then assertively requests their desire; ex: “Jesse, please use the rug to wipe off your shoes or take your shoes off before coming inside the tent.” The person receiving the feedback responds with how they will address the concern; ex: “I hear your point Jesse, and I will make sure to wipe off my shoes before I come inside next time.”
- 5) Before letting the pairs practice, have two adults model one of the scenarios.

## Complaint/Feeling/Request

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- 6) Give pairs at least ten minutes to practice. Have pairs pick a new scenario and switch who is giving and receiving feedback so they both get a chance to practice.
- 7) Debrief the experience with guided questions: How did it feel when you were giving feedback? How did it feel to receive feedback? Were you more comfortable in one role or the other? How could you become comfortable in both roles?

### Take It Further

- Continue to use CFR as a conflict resolution tool for one-on-one feedback.
- Use this activity as a framework for a larger discussion on conflict resolution/management.
  - Ask each youth in the group if they have ever been in a conflict before. Have a few share their experiences or share examples of situations when a conflict could arise.
  - Is it OK to have conflicts? Can you respond however you want when you are in a conflict?
  - What are other ways to address and resolve conflicts?

## Examples: CFR At-a-Glance

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### Complaint

The person who is giving the feedback simply states their complaint or problem to a specific person (or the group as a whole); ex: “Jesse, my complaint is that you do not wipe off your shoes before walking inside the tent.”

### Feeling

The person who is giving the feedback states how the action/complaint/problem makes them feel; ex: “It makes me feel angry because the tent floor gets dirty.”

### Request

The person who is giving the feedback then assertively requests their desire; ex: “Jesse, please use the rug to wipe off your shoes or take your shoes off before coming inside.”

The person receiving the feedback responds with how they will address the concern; ex: “I hear your point Jesse, and I will make sure to wipe off my shoes before I come inside next time.”

# The Power of Empathy

Use this animated short of [Dr. Brené Brown](#) to explore the differences between empathy and sympathy. This activity allows youth to explore their **Ways of Relating** through practicing empathy with others.

## Why This Matters

- Connecting with and supporting others is essential. That's why empathy—the ability to identify with other people's struggles and support them—is so important.
- Sympathy minimizes someone's pain, whereas empathy connects us to their pain. Empathy helps us discover what we have in common with each other.
- Empathy is a skill that develops by practicing giving and receiving empathy.

## Getting Started

- Materials: video + audio for group
- Time: 20-30 minutes
- This activity works best with groups that are comfortable with each other.
- Count the number of youth ahead of time so that you know you can form groups of two or three.
- Preview the 3-minute video created by the Royal Society of the Arts, which is available on [Vimeo](#) or [YouTube](#) or [download the MP4](#) (<https://www.thersa.org/discover/videos/rsa-shorts/2013/12/Brene-Brown-on-Empathy>).

## How To Use It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to learn about and practice empathy, an important skill for supporting friends and family.
- 2) Have a discussion about the concept of empathy compared to sympathy. What comes to mind when you think of the word sympathy (feeling sorry, providing comfort or assurance)? What comes to mind when you think of the word empathy (feeling with people, putting yourself in their shoes)? If you share a struggle, worry or challenge, how do you want people to respond ("that sucks", "I've been there", "it could be worse". "why don't you...", "it sounds like...", "I'm sorry").
- 3) Watch the 3-minute video.
- 4) Discuss the four attributes of empathy that Brown references:
  - To be able to see the world as others see it. This requires putting your own "stuff" aside to see the situation through someone else's eyes.
  - To be nonjudgmental. Judgment of another person's situation discounts the experience and is an attempt to protect ourselves from the pain of the situation.
  - To understand another person's feelings. We have to be in touch with our own feelings in order to understand someone else's.
  - To communicate your understanding of that person's feelings. Rather than saying, "At least you..." or "It could be worse..." try, "I've been there, and that really hurts," or, "It sounds like you are in a hard place now. Tell me more about it."
- 5) Explain to youth that Brown defines empathy as a skill that develops by practicing giving and receiving empathy. It's a skill, and it takes practice. Have youth spend the next 10-15 minutes practicing empathy with the following activity.
- 6) Have youth get in groups of three (or pairs). Each person in the group will take turns having each role. Describe the three roles:
  - One person is the fox, someone willing to talk about a challenge they are having in their life. (Depending

# The Power of Empathy

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on the maturity of the group, consider giving youth scenarios. Potential scenarios might include: receiving a low grade on a test, the loss of a pet, conflict with friends, etc.)

- The other person is the bear who listens and resists the urge to offer advice or try to fix it. The bear might say phrases like: “It sounds like...” “Thank you for sharing with me.”
- The third person is the reindeer who offers silver linings: “At least...”.

7) Debrief the activity with some of these questions:

- Foxes, what did it feel like to have someone listen to you?
- Bears, was it challenging to not give advice? What were some of your responses to the fox?
- Reindeers, how did it feel to offer silver linings?
- For everyone: What is challenging about expressing empathy rather than sympathy? What do you see as the main differences between sympathy and empathy? What surprised you most about the activity? How will this activity affect your actions moving forward?

## Take It Further

- Use this activity with adult staff to build their own empathy skills. Have a discussion about how to be empathetic with youth when providing feedback.
- To learn more about The Power of Empathy, you can watch [Brown's complete RSA lecture](#). You can also watch her very popular TED Talk on [The Power of Vulnerability](#).

# Eight Arrows

Eight Arrows is an activity that allows participants to acknowledge what they can commit to bringing to the group, and identify the impact of their shared commitment. Eight Arrows falls primarily in the **Ways of Relating** category because youth discuss how they will work as a team and what they will accomplish. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

## Why This Matters

- This activity helps groups understand their own strengths and establish expectations for each other. Setting positive behavior expectations in a program is a crucial step for creating an environment for SEL growth.
- This process helps groups identify the collective goal for their time together.

## Getting Started

- **Materials:** You will need a board with the Eight Arrows on it, which looks like the template (with four inward arrows and four outward arrows). Each member of the group needs a piece of paper with the template and something to write with.
- **Time:** 30-60 minutes
- This activity is best for an adolescent group that is going to be doing a project together.

## How To Do It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to talk about individual strengths and resources and how they affect group outcomes. Use the analogy of baking a cake to talk about the parts that make up a whole. (Ask: "What are the different ingredients we bring to make a cake? What is the outcome when all the ingredients come together? What happens if one ingredient is missing?"). Use this example to emphasize that in order to work together as a group, it is important that each individual commits to bringing their own strengths and resources.
- 2) Ask the group to spend a few minutes brainstorming individually. First, on their own sheet of paper, each participant should write a few things that they are willing to contribute to the group project at hand. Participants should think about the following questions to spark their brainstorming:
  - Think of a successful team you have been a part of in the past (e.g., sports team, a play). What helped you succeed? What did you contribute to the group?
  - Be sure to give some examples. Some ideas include: organization, honest feedback, creative ideas, support to others, positive attitude.
  - Those items should be identified in the inward arrows.
- 3) Ask the group to then identify things they believe will result from their contribution. Those items should be identified in the outward arrows. Some questions to consider:
  - What do you hope will be some of the outcomes of this group? (i.e. successful camping trip, service learning project, new friendships)
  - What are some of our group goals?
- 4) Spend five minutes having participants add ideas to their individual sheet of paper. After everyone has had enough time, bring the group together and have each person share what they wrote. As each person talks, write down their contributions on the poster board. By the end of this process the group will have a visual representation of the group's strengths and their desired outcomes.

## Eight Arrows

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- 5) This can be used as a reflection activity throughout the project or it could be the start of a group contract, mission statement, or purpose.
- 6) Reflection Questions:
  - a. What did you learn about the resources in your group? How can you use this information to help accomplish your group goals?
  - b. Where do our group strengths lie? What other skills do we need to accomplish our goals?
  - c. What do we do if we notice someone is not offering what they committed to bring?

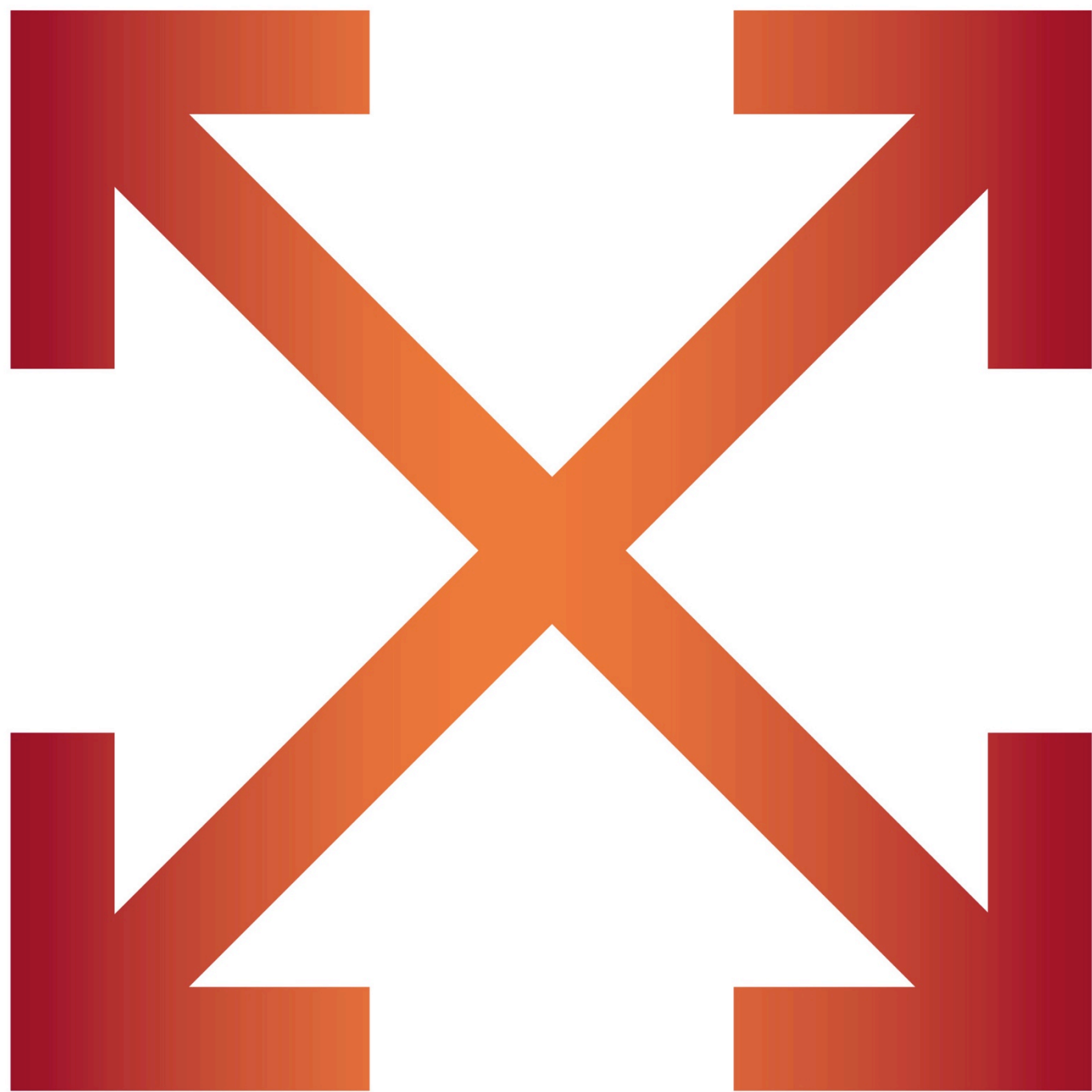
### Take It Further

- Use this as a start to a group contract or mission statement.



# Template: Eight Arrows

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# Goal Sandwich

Use this activity to help youth identify a short-term goal and create concrete steps to complete that goal. This short process is great for groups new to goal-setting. Goal sandwich allows youth to practice their **Ways of Doing** by learning the important skills of goal-setting. This activity was contributed by Project Success.

## Why This Matters

- Goal-setting is a crucial social and emotional skill that helps youth plan for their future.
- This activity breaks down the process of goal setting into easy, actionable steps.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Pens/pencils, 4 different colored notecards or paper. You need enough so that each youth has one of each color.
- Time: At least 30 minutes
- Explain the activity using a group example.

## How To Use It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to have youth identify a goal and make steps to achieve that goal. Discuss the word, "goal," and ask youth to think about how it is used in different contexts (e.g., a goal in soccer). Potential questions: What comes to mind when you think of the word "goal"? What are some examples of goals that you have set in the past? Explain that goals are the smaller, practical steps one needs to achieve a dream.
- 2) Tell the group that today they will set goals in the form of a goal sandwich.

- 3) Distribute a packet of index cards to each student, saying that each color represents a different layer of the sandwich.
  - The [name color] card is bread. The bread frames the sandwich. It's the beginning and the end. Youth fold the yellow card hamburger-style and title the left panel "Present" and the right panel "Future." On the left, students write a current challenge (i.e. "I am failing biology."). On the right, they write their goal (i.e., "I want to raise my biology grade to a B.").
  - The [name color] card is jelly. Jelly gives the sandwich flavor. It is motivation to take a bite, but remind them that they can't eat it all in one big bite. Bites have to be manageable. Title this card "Steps to My Goal." Using checkboxes, instruct the students to list at least 3 steps they will have to complete to accomplish the goal.
  - The [name color] card is peanut butter. Peanut butter is tasty, but it is thick and slows eating a sandwich. Title this card "Obstacles." This is not to say that peanut butter or eating slowly are bad things, but the illustration demonstrates how goals may be slowed. Instruct students to list 2 or 3 obstacles that might prevent accomplishment of the goal.
  - The [name color] card is milk. Milk helps the sandwich-eating experience, allowing the sandwich to be ingested more easily. Title this card "People Who Can Help Me," those who can help with the "how and why" of goal-setting. On this card, instruct students to list 3 people who will support their completing of the goal.
- 4) Before having students work on their individual goals, explain that you will all work through an example as a group. Pick a concrete and silly example to work through the goal sandwich with the group. Ask youth to help brainstorm each part of the sandwich. Write down the components on a white board or large sheet of paper. Some potential goals to work through are: Organize an end of the year field trip to the zoo, get a summer job, volunteer at the local animal shelter, etc.
- 5) Tell youth that the next step is for them to work on an individual goal. Place some confines on the scope

# Goal Sandwich

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of the goal (i.e. a goal for the beginning of the school year, a goal for school, a goal for after-school time, a goal in their family). Give students at least 20 minutes to work on their goal sandwich. Walk around the room to answer questions and help those who might need ideas.

- 6) Wrap-Up: Ask students to turn to the person next to them and share their goals with each other. The listener should support the speaker by asking 4 questions:
  - Is the goal attainable?
  - Is the list of steps complete?
  - Will you accomplish the goal?
  - How will you celebrate the accomplishment of this goal?
- 7) Ask the students how it felt when their classmates evaluated their goal. Who might be able to help them set goals in the future?

## Take It Further

- This activity could be used as a process for a group of youth to set goals for a specific project or a period of time.
- The Goal Sandwich could also be used in a one-on-one setting with an individual youth.
- To further reflect on the activity, consider asking the following questions:
  - How did it feel to share your goal with someone else?
- What other goals would you like to set in the future?
- What parts of the sandwich were the easiest to come up with? Which parts were the most challenging?

# Consensus Building

Use this facilitated conversation template to help youth reach consensus regarding a program, project or initiative that they will implement. Use it at the start of a program cycle, or for an isolated event that can accommodate a high level of youth ownership and direction. The final decision and direction rests with the youth involved, but it can be confined by any parameters you set in advance (i.e. budget, time, geography, purpose, outcome, etc.). This activity allows youth to practice their Ways of Doing as they work together to move their project forward. This activity was contributed by Banyan Community.

## Why This Matters

- This activity takes youth through the process of navigating relationships with others, their feelings, and an alternative process for getting things done.
- As youth identify their individual rationale, it also provides an opportunity for reflecting on “Ways I Am.”

## Getting Started

- Time: This activity will take at least 30 minutes depending on the engagement of the group and how quickly you move the discussion along.
- Materials needed: poster paper and markers for each group of 4-6 youth. Sitting in a circle at tables or on the floor is highly preferred.

- This activity can be used for middle and high school youth. The depth of conversation and time it takes to reach consensus will vary based on the age and maturity of youth.
- This activity is most effective with established groups that have a high level of trust.
- This activity follows a brainstorming session where the group identifies a number of options for an activity, service project or program that they will implement.

## How To Use It

- 1) Begin by explaining that youth will be working together to decide the direction of their project. Say something like: “Today you will have a chance to decide what we’re going to do for (e.g., our service project). We are going to have a consensus building conversation. Can anyone define consensus? (General agreement; it doesn’t mean that every individual has to feel the same way, but the overwhelming majority has to agree). We’re going to break into small groups. Be sure to allow each person in the group the opportunity to share their opinion.”
- 2) Divide your group into teams of about 4-6 youth.
  - Create groups that include diverse perspectives and skills. The more representative, inclusive and diverse the groups are, the easier it will be to reach consensus later. If groups are organized by friend groups, gender, culture, or obvious interests, youth might NOT encounter alternative opinions until late in the process.
- 3) Each group will need to choose someone as their scribe and someone as their spokesperson. The scribe will be responsible for writing down their conversation. The spokesperson will be responsible for speaking on behalf of the group to the larger group.

# Consensus Building

- 4) Ask groups to review the projects recorded in the brainstorming activity, and rank their top three based on what they are most interested in doing.
  - Have youth write the reason for their interest in a given project next to their ranking (e.g., I've always wanted to do that. It would help the most people. It would be fun!).
- 5) Once all groups have had a chance to record their rankings, ask each spokesperson to present their rankings to the class, along with their rationale.
- 6) After each spokesperson has presented their rankings, ask youth to identify any trends.

Discussion questions:

- Did any of you choose the same or similar activity for your top three?
- Did any of you have similar reasons for wanting to do a particular project?
- Based on what others have shared, do any of you feel like changing your rankings?
- Are there ideas that other groups shared that you disagree with, have no interest in doing, or don't understand? (If there are, would anyone from that group like to clarify what you were thinking?).
- Are there any projects that don't seem to have much interest? Cross those out.
- What project seems to have the most interest? (You can offer suggestions based on your observation of the conversation, but try very hard not to usurp their decision.)
  - If the group is able to identify one, ask "Is anyone strongly opposed to this?"
  - If there is no strong opposition, you have arrived at consensus!
  - If there is strong opposition, or there are a couple projects that stand out, you could break back into small groups to rank projects again based on their conversation and a narrower list of options. Then move through some of the discussion questions above until they have identified one project.

- If there is one youth who opposes, make sure they have the opportunity to share their opinion and be sure to ask specific questions to understand their opposition (e.g., How would you change or improve the project?). If further discussion does not convince them, try going back to the original definition of consensus and remind the group that not everyone will agree and that is ok. To ensure the involvement of this youth going forward, consider giving them a leadership role in the project.

## Take It Further

Assign some youth as observers in each group. Their role is to watch and record how their group worked together to reach its rankings, and how the larger group worked together to reach consensus. At the end, invite them to share their observations.

- Discussion questions: Did everyone in your group have the opportunity to share their opinions? Were anyone left out? Were there ideas that were received differently in your small group versus the large group? Do you want to give a shout out to anyone in the group? Did you see something in any of your peers that you hadn't seen before (e.g., their voice, strong opinion, leadership)?

# Using Data for Improvement

Using data to improve social and emotional learning is an essential tool in supporting youths' meaningful growth.

This section includes tools and templates to help staff gather and use data for improvement. This is different from formal, high-stakes outcome assessment or program evaluation. This section includes creating a data dashboard by using reflective activities to measure change over time, having youth assess and provide feedback to the adults that support them in learning social and emotional skills, and a checklist to help select SEL outcome measurement tools.

# Emoji Data Dashboard

Use the Emoji Reflection activity (under Creating the Learning Environment) to track changes over time by creating a data dashboard. At the individual level, the Emoji Reflection activity is a tool for personal growth. At the program-level, it is well-suited for youth-directed measurement and continuous improvement. There are no-tech and low-tech options for creating a data dashboard.

## Why This Matters

- Youth are often the subject of evaluation, but don't get a voice in making meaning of the data. When youth are empowered to be at the center of measurement and meaning-making, programs give them voice and influence about how data is used.
- Tracking how youth perceive their SEL development gives program staff important insights into how staff actions influence youth outcomes.
- The Emoji Reflection activity is a powerful reflection tool AND easily provides program-level data with minimal administrative work.

## Getting Started

- Pick whether you are going to use the No-Tech Dashboard or the Low-Tech Excel Dashboard. The No-Tech Dashboard is ideal for 10 or fewer youth. The Low-Tech Excel Dashboard is ideal for groups with more than 10 youth or for programs that want to compare data across groups, reflection prompts, or program cycles.
- Materials and time vary depending on group size and type of dashboard.

## How To Do It

### No-Tech Dashboard

- 1) Ideal for groups with 10 or fewer youth. If you have a group larger than 10, break them into smaller groups to track their Emoji responses.
- 2) Start tracking group responses after you have been using the Emoji reflection for at least 3 weeks.
- 3) Create a large poster or wall space for each group that can accommodate an enlarged version of the dashboard template. Be prepared to keep this poster for the duration of the project (or at least the weeks that you plan to use the Emoji reflection).
- 4) Invite youth to transfer their individual Emoji responses from the previous weeks to the group dashboard. Have youth draw in their Emoji or pre-draw Emoji and have youth color in their response.
- 5) Update the dashboard at least every other week. A dashboard is only useful if it is responsive and accurate.
- 6) Gather the group of youth and staff together every 3-4 weeks to discuss the data.

### Low-Tech Excel Dashboard

- 1) Ideal for groups with more than 10 youth or for programs that want to compare data across groups, reflection prompts, or program cycles.
- 2) Download the Excel-based template (available online).
- 3) Watch the interactive tutorial (available online) for step-by-step instructions.

For each type of dashboard, display the poster graph or the Excel graph so that everyone can look at the group data, and make sure that everyone has their individual Emoji reflection available. Use the following conversation starters to discuss the dashboard:

- For each week, quickly identify as a group which Emoji got the most and fewest responses.
- Which weeks did your response match up with the most frequent response on the group graph?



## Emoji Data Dashboard

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- What stands out to you about the group graph?
- Do any of the weeks surprise you?
- What was happening in the project/program/group each week?
- Why do you think so many people chose X response for this particular week?
- What changes should we consider based on this information?
- How do we define “success” for this particular skill (or anchor statement)? Is there a “best” Emoji response? This is a good opportunity to introduce the idea that “success” might be about getting better at reflecting or building awareness, rather than answering in a specific way.

### Take It Further

- Continue the conversation with your staff team. Reflect on staff actions, programmatic choices, and youth dynamics. Are there any youth that need additional support? Is there anything that staff should modify in order to better support youths' social and emotional growth, as they are reporting it? If you decide to make changes, note the specific change and date on your dashboard or in program notes. After a few weeks evaluate if those changes had the desired effect.
- Once you've finished the cycle of using Emoji Reflection, share the story of how youth used reflective measurement to track change over time and make programmatic improvements.

# Staff Support Card

Have youth use this tool to assess and provide feedback to the adults that support them in learning social and emotional skills. It should be used at multiple points in time to track progress. This is intended as a low-stakes way to inform and strengthen staff practices, not a high-stakes evaluation.

## Why This Matters

- Staff play an important role in enhancing the social and emotional learning of youth in their program. Feedback from youth can provide valuable information that staff can use to improve their practice.

## Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of the Staff Support Card
- Time: 15 minutes to complete card, 30-60 minutes for staff discussion
- This tool can be used either in reference to an individual staff member or to a group of staff as a whole. Be sure to decide this before using the support card and communicate this to youth.
- Youth should complete the Staff Support Card 2-4 times a year (e.g., once a semester).
- Choose a specific period of time that youth should consider when completing the Staff Support Card (e.g., think back to the last week).
- Be sure to communicate the intent of the Staff Support Card and how the information will be used with the staff who are going to be the focus of youth feedback.

## How To Use It

- 1) When you first introduce the Staff Support Card, explain that the purpose is for youth to provide feedback to staff so that staff can improve their work with youth.
- 2) Go through each statement with youth and make sure you have a common understanding of each statement. Ask youth for an example of what each statement would look like (e.g., What does it look like when staff show you respect?)
- 3) After responses from youth have been collected, convene your staff group to discuss the results. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- What was most surprising to you about the responses?
- What practical steps can staff take to improve?
- What kind of professional development or training might help us improve?

If collecting information over time:

- How does the current feedback compare to previous feedback?
- What changes have been made since the last Staff Support Card?

## Take It Further

- After using the Staff Support Card several times, have a check-in conversation with youth. Discuss the results of the Staff Support Card and what the staff is working on. Let youth know that their input was considered and even incorporated.
- Turn it into an online survey.

# Tool: Staff Support Card

Think about \_\_\_\_\_ (name or group of staff) in the last \_\_\_\_\_ (week, month)...

		USUALLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY
WAYS I AM	Staff respect me			
	Staff make sure everyone feels included			
	Staff encourage me to share my perspective			
	Give an example:			
WAYS OF FEELING	Staff help me when I feel frustrated or upset			
	Staff handle their own emotions well			
	Staff check-in with me about how I feel			
	Give an example:			
WAYS OF RELATING	Staff encourage us to work together			
	Staff help us resolve conflict			
	Staff give us a chance to play special roles			
	Give an example:			
WAYS OF DOING	Staff challenge me to try hard and do my best			
	I can ask staff for help			
	Staff will support me if I try and fail			
	Give an example:			

# Sticky Note Survey

This is a simple activity that serves to combine reflection and measurement by asking participants to rate themselves on a particular skill at the beginning and end of a session.

## Why This Matters

- Visual displays of data help groups identify trends.
- Feedback helps staff know whether they are on track.
- This activity is to be used at the beginning and end of direct SEL instruction to assess effectiveness.

## Getting Started

- Materials: sticky notes (2 colors – pre and post); 4 response cards (8.5 x11 sheets) that say strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree; tape; and a few feet of wall space.
- Time: 5 minutes at the beginning and 5 minutes at the end of an activity
- Set up: somewhere in the room, tape the response cards on the wall, evenly spaced in a line over a few feet.

## How To Do It

- 1) Choose a social and emotional skill that you are working on today, like conflict resolution or emotion management.
- 2) Write a goal statement about learning or practicing that skill, as it's unrealistic to expect that youth would change their overall feelings or behavior significantly in one session. It's much more realistic that they might learn some new strategies for resolving conflict with a teammate, for example.
- 3) Be sure your outcome statement can be answered with the response categories strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. For example, "I know strategies to control my temper," or "I have skills to resolve conflict with others." Above the

response cards, place the outcome statement (write on board or tape to the wall).

- 4) As young people arrive, invite them to grab a sticky note and respond to the statement by placing their sticky note along the strongly agree to strongly disagree continuum for how they would rate themselves at the moment. They do not need to write their name on the sticky note. Once everyone has placed their sticky note, proceed with your activity.
- 5) At the end of the session, pass out another set of sticky notes (in a different color than the pre-question).
- 6) Tell participants that you are interested in both reflecting on what happened today, and measuring the effectiveness of today's activity.
- 7) Ask them to write down one idea that relates to the outcome statement. For example, depending on the focus of the activity, they might write down one strategy they learned to control their temper, or one thing they plan to work on to be a better teammate. Or, ask them to write down why their sticky note is in the same or different spot than earlier. Then have youth go place their post-sticky notes on the wall below the pre-sticky notes. Allow 5 minutes for this.
- 8) Now you have a dashboard—real time information that you can use. Take a look at the line:
  - What do you notice? Where was there a change from pre to post?
  - Why is this happening?
  - How could we use this information?

## Take It Further

- Consider using the sticky note survey activity at different times throughout your program rather than at the beginning and end of a session.

# SEL Assessment Decision-Making Checklist

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Use this checklist to evaluate formal social and emotional learning assessment tools. The checklist will help you evaluate practical, logistical, and technical considerations for each tool that you are considering.

## Why This Matters

- The best assessment tool for your program is the one that aligns with your goals and is practical to use.
- The checklist is designed to raise awareness of considerations that may be important in your decision-making process.

## Getting Started

- Evaluate your readiness to make use of a formal assessment tool. Read the *Assessing Social & Emotional Skills in Out-of-School Time Settings: Considerations for Practitioners* issue brief for more information.
- Use the checklist to determine your priorities (cost, time, usefulness, reporting, etc.) in selecting a tool. Not all checklist items will carry equal weight for every program.

## How To Use It

- 1) Review the items on the checklist as you evaluate formal social and emotional learning measurement tools.
- 2) Take time to investigate answers to questions that are most important to your program.
- 3) Request sample surveys, measurement instruments, and reports of tools that you are seriously considering.
- 4) Make a decision based on your program priorities and measurement needs.

## Take It Further

- Ask 2-3 additional staff to review the checklist in order to evaluate the measurement tools you are seriously considering. Discuss your findings and make a collaborative decision.
- Ask youth leaders to review potential evaluation tools. Include youth in the decision about which tool to use.
- Ask for input from funders and other stakeholders who are invested in your program's SEL outcomes.

# Tool: SEL Assessment Decision-Making Checklist

Use this checklist to evaluate and compare formal SEL assessment tools.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	WHY THIS MATTERS
<input type="checkbox"/> Do the items measured by this tool align with our program goals?	The closer the alignment between what the tool measures and your program goals, the more helpful the data will be to youth and practitioners.
<input type="checkbox"/> Will the tool provide helpful feedback to youth and actionable data for practitioners?	Receiving helpful feedback is an important part of developing social and emotional skills. Actionable data will help practitioners make better decisions about program design and youth interactions. Reports that only provide data in spreadsheets or complicated tables will be more difficult to use.
<input type="checkbox"/> Does the tool align with our program’s definition of success in SEL?	There is not a universal standard of success in SEL. What counts as SEL success will vary based on the values and goals of each program. Alignment between the tool’s standard of success and your program standard is important.
<input type="checkbox"/> How accessible is the actual tool that youth or practitioners are required to complete?	The visual design of the tool and the formatting of measurement items matters. If the tool is burdensome or confusing to complete, the quality of responses will be affected.

## The bottom line: Will this tool help you improve outcomes for youth?

Only consider tools that will help your program become more effective.

Notes:

## Tool: SEL Assessment Decision-Making Checklist

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LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS	WHY THIS MATTERS
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>How much does the tool cost? (per youth/per year)</b>	Pricing is not standard across tools. Calculate the per youth/per year cost for each youth in order to compare differing price structures.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>What are the training requirements for practitioners and associated costs?</b>	Training requirements vary widely and can add considerable time and money to the cost of using a tool.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>How is the tool administered? How many items or questions are included?</b>	Some tools must be completed on a computer, others on paper. Paper-based tools increase the amount of data entry time required. The number of items on a tool will significantly impact the time and energy it takes to implement a tool.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>How quickly will you get access to the data?</b>	Some reports can be generated immediately. Others will take weeks or even months to create. If you intend to use data for program improvement, getting quick access to data reports may be an important consideration.

### The bottom line: Do you have the capacity (money + time) to meaningfully use this assessment tool?

The best measurement tool is the one that you can actually use.

Notes:



# Tool: SEL Assessment Decision-Making Checklist

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS	WHY THIS MATTERS
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>What is the reliability score of the tool?</b>	Look for a tool with high reliability and administrative requirements that you can reasonably manage. Tools that have high reliability will provide more consistent results. You can find this information in a technical report or directly from the publisher.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>What is the validity score of the tool?</b>	Validity scores indicate how accurately the tool measures the outcomes or skills it claims to measure. For example, if a tool claims to assess problem-solving skills, but only includes questions related to emotion management, this would be a red flag. You can find this information in the technical report or directly from the publisher.
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Do you agree with the underlying theories that inform the assessment items?</b>	Consider how the tool's authors define social emotional skills. How the authors understand effective communication or healthy relationships will influence how the tool is designed and scored.

## The bottom line: How valid is the tool for your context?

While a tool may have high technical scores, the data and feedback you receive will have limited usefulness if it doesn't align with your goals, values, or population. For example, if the tool you are considering was developed with a sample population that was primarily middle school youth in rural areas, it will not have high validity for your urban high school program.

Notes:

Adapted from:

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