

Appendix A. Ten Teaching Practices That Promote SEL

Social Teaching Practices

1. Student-Centered Discipline

Student-centered discipline refers to the types of classroom management strategies teachers use in their classrooms. In order to be effective at student-centered discipline, teachers need to use disciplinary strategies that are developmentally appropriate for their students and that motivate students to want to behave in the classroom. Such discipline occurs when students have opportunities to be self-directive and have some say in what happens in the classroom. Teachers should not attempt to overmanage their students, nor should they use punitive measures to get students to behave. Furthermore, students and teachers should develop shared norms and values in the classroom. This strategy allows students to connect the rules to the overarching vision of how the classroom is run and increases student buy-in.

Similarly, teachers should enact proactive classroom management strategies (compared with reactive strategies). This approach is evident when teachers use management strategies consistently, and those strategies are related to the norms and visions of the classroom. If a student happens to break a rule, the consequences should be logical in relation to the rule that was broken. For example, if a student pushes another student in line, that student should have to line up last for the rest of the week rather than lose gym or recess for the week, a consequence that is not related to the incident. Through the development of these consistent and logical rules and consequences, students begin to learn how to regulate their own behavior and problem-solve difficult situations that arise in the classroom. Programs and scholars that discuss student-centered discipline include Caring School Communities; Raising Healthy Children; Responsive Classroom; Christenson and Havy (2004); Hawkins, Smith, and Catalano (2004); Johnson and Johnson (2004); and McCombs (2004).

2. Teacher Language

Teacher language refers to how the teachers talk to students. Teachers should encourage student effort and work, restating what the student did and what that student needs to do in order to improve. For example, teacher language should not be simply praise (e.g., “You did a great job”) but should encourage students (e.g., “I see you worked hard on your math paper. When you really think about your work, and when you explain your thinking, you get more correct answers”). In addition, teacher language should encourage students how to monitor and regulate their own behavior, not just tell students how to behave (e.g., “What strategies have we learned when we come across a problem that we are not sure how to do?”). Programs and scholars that discuss teacher language include Responsive Classroom and Elias (2004).

3. Responsibility and Choice

Responsibility and choice refer to the degree to which teachers allow students to make responsible decisions about their work in their classroom. The teacher creates a classroom environment where democratic norms are put into place and where students provide meaningful input into the development of the norms and procedures of the classroom as well as the academic

content or how the academic content is learned. Democratic norms do not mean that everything the students say gets done, but the teacher provides structures so that the students have a voice in the classroom. Teachers give students controlled and meaningful choices. In other words, teachers should not give students a “free for all” but provide specific choices students can select from during lessons and activities, in which students are held accountable for their decisions.

Other ways to get students to feel responsible in the classroom are peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, or participating in a service-learning or community service program. When students extend their learning to help others, they often feel more responsible in the classroom. Programs and scholars that discuss responsibility and choice include Caring School Communities, Responsive Classroom, Tribes Learning Community, and Hawkins et al. (2004).

4. Warmth and Support (Teacher and Peer)

Warmth and support refers to the academic and social support that students receive from their teacher and from their peers. The teacher creates a classroom where the students know that teachers care about them. Teachers can demonstrate that they care about their students by asking students questions (academic and nonacademic), following up with students when they have a problem or concern, providing the teacher’s own anecdotes or stories, and acting in ways in which students know that taking risks and asking questions are safe in the classroom. In addition, teachers need to create structures in the classroom where students feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers. Teachers can do this through morning meetings, small moments throughout the day or class, or projects in which students get a chance to share what they learn. Programs and scholars that discuss warmth and support include Caring School Communities, Responsive Classrooms, Tribes Learning Community, Christenson and Havsby (2004), Hawkins et al. (2004), and McCombs (2004).

Instructional Teaching Practices

5. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal. Teachers ask students to do more than group work; students are actively working with their peers around content in a meaningful way. To implement cooperative learning effectively, teachers include five basic elements: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual accountability, (3) promoting one another’s successes, (4) applying interpersonal and social skills, and (5) group processing (the group discusses progress toward achieving a goal). When implementing cooperative learning, teachers should have an element that requires collective accountability as well as individual accountability to ensure that everyone participates in the learning task. In order for this to have an impact on student learning, as well as social and emotional skills, students need to collaboratively process how they work together and monitor their progress toward their goal. Programs and scholars that discuss cooperative learning include Caring School Communities; Raising Healthy Children; Steps to Respect; Tribes Learning Community; Elias et al. (1997); Hawkins et al. (2004); Johnson and Johnson (2004); and Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004).

6. Classroom Discussions

Classroom discussions refer to conversations students and teachers have around content. During classroom discussions, teachers ask more open-ended questions and ask students to elaborate on their own thinking and on the thinking of their peers. When classroom discussions are done well, students and teachers are constantly building upon each other's thoughts, and most of the dialogue is student driven. In order to have effective classroom discussions, teachers should develop students' communication skills. More specifically, teachers ensure that students learn how to extend their own thinking and expand on the thinking of their classmates. Students need to be able to listen attentively and pick out the main ideas of what classmates are saying. Teachers also must make sure that students have enough content knowledge in order to do this, in addition to having the skills necessary to hold a substantive discussion. Programs and scholars that discuss classroom discussions include Caring School Communities, Raising Healthy Children, Tribes Learning Community, Elias (2004), and Elias et al. (1997).

7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment

Self-reflection and self-assessment are instructional tasks whereby teachers ask students to actively think about their own work. In order for students to self-reflect on their work, teachers should ask them to assess their own work. This does not mean that teachers simply provide the answers and students look to see if they got the answer right or wrong. Students need to learn how to assess more rigorous work against performance standards that have either been provided by the teacher or co-created in the classroom. The process should not stop there, however; students also need to think about how to improve their work on the basis of their self-assessment. In order to assist students with this process, teachers need to develop goals and priorities with students. If students do not know what they are working toward, how to accomplish those goals, or when those goals have been accomplished, students will be less invested in the classroom. Along with goal setting, students need to learn how to monitor the progress toward meeting their goals. In addition, when students self-reflect, they also need to learn when and how to seek help and where to search for resources. Programs and scholars that discuss self-reflection and self-assessment include Caring School Communities, Steps to Respect, Tribes Learning Community, Elias (2004), and Elias et al. (1997).

8. Balanced Instruction

Balanced instruction refers to teachers using an appropriate balance between active instruction and direct instruction, as well as the appropriate balance between individual and collaborative learning. Through balanced instruction, teachers provide students opportunities to directly learn about the material as well as engage with the material. Balance, however, does not mean an equal split between the types of instruction. Most programs and SEL scholars promote active forms of instruction in which students interact with the content in multiple ways, including games, play, projects, and other types. Although active forms of instruction are typically engaging for students, these activities should not just be for fun; teachers should use strategies that represent one of the best ways for students to learn and engage with the content.

An example of an active form of instruction is project-based learning. In project-based learning, students are actively involved in solving a problem, which could be completed collaboratively or

independently. Even during independent projects, students typically have to rely on others to find information. During the project, students should plan, monitor, and reflect on their progress toward completion. Programs and scholars that discuss balanced instruction include Caring School Communities; Christenson and Havy (2004); Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011); Elias (2004); Elias et al. (1997); Hawkins et al. (2004); and Zins et al. (2004).

9. Academic Press and Expectations

Academic press refers to a teacher's implementation of meaningful and challenging work, and academic expectations focus on the teacher's belief that all students can and will succeed. Students should sense that academics are extremely important, that the teacher wants them to succeed, and that they have to exert effort in challenging work in order to succeed. However, this academic rigor should not cause teachers to be too strict with their students. Teachers should ensure that students feel pressure to succeed, as well as feel responsible for accomplishing or failing to accomplish their academic work. In order to be successful with this practice, teachers must know what their students are capable of doing academically and how they will emotionally respond to challenging work. Programs and scholars that discuss academic press and expectations include Caring School Communities, Tribes Learning Community, Cristenson and Havy (2004), McCombs (2004), and Zins et al. (2004).

10. Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching

Competence building occurs when teachers help develop social and emotional competencies systematically through the typical instructional cycle: goals/objectives of the lesson, introduction to new material/modeling, group and individual practice, and conclusion/reflection. Each part of the instructional cycle helps reinforce particular social and emotional competencies, as long as the teacher integrates them into the lesson. Throughout the lesson, the teacher should model prosocial behavior (i.e., positive relationship skills) to the students. When students are participating in group work, the teacher is encouraging positive social behaviors and coaching students on how to use positive social behavior when they practice their prosocial skills in a group setting. The teacher also provides feedback to students on how they are interacting with their peers and how they are learning content. If problems arise between students in guided practice or if problems arise with content, the teacher guides the students through problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies. Programs and scholars that discuss competence building include Responsive Classroom, Raising Healthy Children, Steps to Respect, Christenson and Havy (2004), Elias (2004), Elias et al. (1997), McCombs (2004), and Zins et al. (2004).