



Greater Good in Education
SCIENCE-BASED PRACTICES FOR KINDER, HAPPIER SCHOOLS

SUPPORTING SEL AT GRADE-LEVEL OR CONTENT AREA TEAM MEETINGS

"Unity is strength...when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved."

—Mattie Stepanek

OVERVIEW

Teacher teams use discussion prompts to reflect on creating a supportive classroom environment, integrating SEL into instruction, explicitly teaching SEL, and engaging in student-centered discipline.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- During grade-level or content area team meetings

TIME REQUIRED

- ≤ 30 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

School staff will:

- Reflect together on integrating and teaching SEL throughout the day
- Cultivate trusting relationships with each other through their discussions

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

If you are facilitating the discussion, take a few moments to reflect on how you might answer one or two of the discussion prompts you will be posing to the group. Are you surprised by your answer/s? What guidance or feedback from your colleagues would be most helpful to you?

INSTRUCTIONS

OVERVIEW

A school's efforts at implementing SEL are more likely to succeed if there is a consistent time and place to discuss SEL implementation. Grade-level and content area team meetings are an excellent time to support reflection, inquiry, and collaboration among teachers.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

- This tool provides discussion prompts divided into four buckets: supportive classroom environment, integration of SEL into instruction, explicit SEL instruction, and student-centered discipline.
- **For each meeting, select one or two prompts from the bucket that best align with the school's SEL implementation focus.**
- Representatives from the [SEL team](#) or other team leaders can use this tool to facilitate discussion with teachers in their own grade-level or content area teams during meetings.
- Ideally, SEL-focused discussion will be part of weekly team meeting agendas for 10 minutes or more.
- These prompts are most effective in groups of four to six people.
- The facilitator does not need to have all the answers! There may be challenges that come up for teachers where they could use feedback from peers. At other times, teachers may be able to find solutions themselves with a little time and space to talk through a situation.
- Facilitators may also choose to use meeting time for personal reflection on prompts.

FACILITATING THE DISCUSSION

There are multiple strategies you can use to facilitate discussions and to help ensure equity of voice. Try one of the following:

- **Think/pair/share.** Give everyone a minute to think and jot down notes. Have people turn to a partner and discuss for three to five minutes. Share out.
- **One-on-one share.** Give one partner three full minutes to talk while the other partner listens without comment. After three minutes, switch roles. Share out.
- **Whip-around share.** Each person gets two to three minutes (depending on the topic and time available) to share out.
- **Quick write/journaling.** Writing is a good way to encourage and ground reflection. The writing doesn't need to be shared, but can serve as a way to open up conversation.
- **Open-ended questions.** Posing questions that have no single answer supports deep thinking for complex challenges that have many possible solutions.
- **Think tank.** One person describes a problem of practice while peers listen. Then the peers do a quick whip-around to ask thoughtful, open-ended questions to support reflection (e.g., What are possible roadblocks? What made you decide to _____?) The person who described the problem jots down notes for reflection.

ABOUT THE LEVELED PROMPTS

While the main function of this tool is to integrate SEL into team meetings through reflection and discussion, it can also be a powerful mechanism to build relationships among team members. The questions in this tool are leveled so they increase in depth once trust is built. Use your judgment to determine when and how to integrate level 2 questions.

THE PRACTICE

PROMPTS TO DISCUSS BUILDING A [SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT](#)

<p>Level 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have teachers administer the Student Survey tool and discuss results. <i>What did you learn? What is one thing that surprised you? Why? What is one small step you can take now to respond to feedback?</i> • After students create classroom agreements, ask teachers to reflect on the process. <i>How did it go? Why do you think that is? What do students think will be the most beneficial agreement? Why?</i> • At the beginning of the year, ask teachers to reflect on what a supportive classroom environment looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Then ask them to identify one action step they will take to bring this vision to life in their classrooms. • <i>Think about a teacher who had a profound impact on your learning. Which competencies made them effective?</i> • What SEL competencies make a strong classroom leader? Why? • Collaboratively complete the Schoolwide SEL Implementation Rubric to determine where the school is in terms of implementation, and identify next steps to share back with the SEL Team.
<p>Level 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is one challenge you are facing in your classroom community? What is one step you can take to support students?</i> • <i>What is one way that you stay calm/support yourself when your classroom feels challenging?</i> • <i>How are students doing with classroom procedures? What is one time of day where they struggle? What is one step you can take to make it better?</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How is your classroom culture supporting or detracting from learning? Why?</i> • <i>What is one small action step you can take to continue to build a classroom culture that supports learning and intellectual risk-taking?</i> • <i>What attribute makes you a strong classroom leader? Why?</i> • <i>Have teachers complete the second page of the SEL in the Classroom Self-Assessment. Which of these statements did you mark as 'often'? How has it had an impact? Which of these would you like to get better at?</i> • <i>General reflections: Where are you confident in terms of creating a classroom community? Where are you unsure? What are you learning?</i>
--	--

PROMPTS TO DISCUSS THE [INTEGRATION OF SEL AND INSTRUCTION](#)

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What are your lesson objectives for next week? What SEL objectives could you include?</i> • <i>Look at your lesson plans for next week. Where do you see an opportunity to embed more collaboration or reflective discussion?</i> • <i>Which SEL competencies did you encourage students to use in their academic learning this week? How did using those competencies support their learning?</i>
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is one area of integration that you have found especially challenging? What is one small step you can take right now to make it better?</i> • <i>Have teachers complete the first page of the SEL in the Classroom Self-Assessment. Which of these statements did you mark as 'often'? How has it had an impact? Which of these would you like to get better at?</i> • <i>General reflections: Where are you confident in terms of integrating SEL and instruction? Where are you unsure? What are you learning?</i>

PROMPTS TO DISCUSS [EXPLICIT SEL INSTRUCTION](#)

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How can you extend the main ideas from this week's SEL instruction throughout the week?</i> • <i>Which SEL topic are you teaching this week? What competencies are included?</i> • <i>What do you anticipate will be challenging about this week's SEL instruction? How do you think you'll facilitate the activity so it has the desired impact?</i> • <i>How did students respond to the recent SEL lesson? Is there anything about the way you facilitated the lesson that you would change or do again in the future?</i>
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What challenges have come up during your SEL instruction (e.g., time constraints, student behavior, etc.)? How have you dealt with these challenges?</i> • <i>What is one thing that went really well during your SEL instruction this week? Why do you think this is?</i> • <i>General reflections: Where are you most confident in teaching social and emotional skills? Where are you unsure? What are you learning?</i>

PROMPTS TO DISCUSS [STUDENT-CENTERED DISCIPLINE](#)

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Describe one strategy that you used proactively to meet students' needs last week or that you plan to use this week. What impact did it have?</i>
----------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What is one social-emotional skill that many of your students need support with right now? How could you provide opportunities for them to practice this competency? Examples might include being able to take the perspective of others, communicating assertively, or having awareness of personal strengths and goals. Use the CASEL competency wheel to guide you.</i> • <i>Name one student with whom you would like to work on developing a more positive relationship. What is one thing you could do to develop this relationship?</i>
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Describe one type of misbehavior that occurs in your class. How do you respond? What has been the effect? Is there a more restorative way to approach this kind of misbehavior?</i> • <i>Ask teachers to track their responses to student behavior and whether responses escalated, de-escalated, or had a neutral effect on student behavior. Discuss what they found and why they thought it was the case.</i> • <i>Describe a way you have leveraged your own social-emotional competencies to support a student whose behavior has been challenging. Have you seen progress?</i> • <i>Are there any students who you find yourself responding to more harshly than others? Why do you think you are reacting that way, and what can you do about it?</i> • <i>Which of our students are easiest for you to build relationships with? Which are harder? Why do you think that is, and what can you do about it?</i> • <i>General reflections: Where are you most confident in terms of student-centered discipline and relationship-building? Where are you unsure? What are you learning?</i>

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Was this tool helpful? Did it give you a deeper insight into implementing SEL into classroom practices? If so, in what ways?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

In a longitudinal, quasi-experimental [study](#) of 15 public schools with diverse populations, researchers found that schools where grade-level teams met regularly to discuss how to improve student learning increased academic outcomes faster than the control schools whose outcomes improved only a little or not at all. This positive outcome can be attributed to 1) the teachers' choice to be part of the teams, and 2) the provision of explicit protocols to help guide team discussions.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Ongoing support and training is key to successfully implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) into schools. Researchers have found that [SEL program implementation](#) is more successful when all stakeholders in a school are committed to SEL as part of their professional development.

In addition, fostering trusting relationships among the adults in a school through collegial discussion can help form the foundation of a safe and caring school climate. Indeed, a study of reform efforts in 12 Chicago schools

found that enabling positive, [trusting relationships](#) among staff members, including the leadership, were at the heart of school improvement.

SOURCE

Adapted from the [CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL](#), developed by the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL). CASEL, a nonprofit founded in 1994, defined social and emotional learning (SEL) more than two decades ago. Today, CASEL is a trusted source for knowledge about high-quality, evidence-based SEL and collaborates with leading experts and supports districts, schools, and states nationwide to drive research, guide practice, and inform policy.