California Social Emotional Learning Modules

Professional Learning Toolkit

Safety & Belonging in Classrooms and Schools

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Topic and Module Overview

Caring for Ourselves: The Science of Emotional Resilience	MOD 1.1	Understanding Your Emotions
	MOD 1.2	Navigating Your Emotions
	MOD 1.3	How to Be Kind to Yourself
	MOD 1.4	How to Be Compassionate Without Suffering So Much
	MOD 1.5	Self-Awareness, Emotional Resilience, and Equity
Safety & Belonging in Classrooms and Schools	**MOD 2.1**	**Why Belonging Matters**
	MOD 2.2	**Knowing Ourselves First: Surfacing Our Beliefs About Social and Emotional Well-Being and Belonging in Schools**
	MOD 2.3	**The Questions of Belonging: Interventions to Help Students Feel Like They Belong**
	MOD 2.4	**Meeting Students' Psychological Needs to Help Them Feel Like They Belong**
	MOD 2.5	**Cultivating Belonging Through Teacher-Student and Peer Relationships**
	MOD 2.6	**Building a Belonging School Through Trust and Psychological Safety**
Teaching for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development	MOD 3.1	Preparing to Support SEL in Classrooms
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Committing to Racial Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	MOD 4.1	Unpacking Our Identities: Addressing Identity, Power, and Privilege
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	MOD 6.4	Expanded Learning and SEL: Collaborating Across In-School and OST Contexts
	MOD 6.5	Aligning around SEL Through Community Partnerships

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TOPIC 2 **Learning Objectives**
Safety & Belonging in Classrooms & Schools

Content	Learning Objectives	CA TSEL Guidelines
2.1 **Why Belonging Matters**	• Explore why belonging in schools matters and our beliefs about social and emotional well-being and belonging • Seeing our students and colleagues as human beings first by helping to meet basic psychological needs • Positive teacher-student and peer relationships, and how to cultivate them • Creating a safe learning environment using the science of psychological safety and trust	Link Objectives to Developmental Indicators in California Transformative SEL Competencies
2.2 **Knowing Ourselves First: Surfacing Our Beliefs About Social and Emotional Well-Being and Belonging in Schools**	• Examine our beliefs about emotions, success, fairness, and other cultural norms, and compare them with others' beliefs, using the "iceberg" model of culture • Compare how individualistic cultures versus collectivist cultures view the self and others, and explore how these differing views have an enormous impact on how we teach SEL in today's diverse schools • Determine how educators can make SEL "culturally-expansive" to honor students' families' varying approaches to social and emotional well-being	The California Department of Education (CDE) aims to support and advance the efforts of educators across California who are working to fully integrate systemic SEL and equity by building on the promise of T-SEL as a concept. To provide these supports, the CDE has articulated developmental indicators for CASEL's five core competencies:.
2.3 **The Questions of Belonging: Interventions to Help Students Feel Like They Belong**	• Examine the questions of belonging students hold within themselves • Explore practical, research-based ways schools can address questions of belonging	
2.4 **Meeting Students' Psychological Needs to Help Them Feel Like They Belong**	• Review the four basic psychological needs that affect motivation and belonging • Brainstorm examples of how educators and schools can meet the four basic psychological needs that affect motivation and belonging for their students	
2.5 **Cultivating Belonging Through Teacher-Student and Peer Relationships**	• Brainstorm ways to build stronger teacher-student relationships with students • Brainstorm ways to encourage stronger peer relationships among students	
2.6 **Building a Belonging School Through Trust and Psychological Safety**	• Explore the components of trust and how these might play out in a school • Examine what happens when trust is not there, along with what encourages and discourages us from trusting each other • Determine what administrators need from teachers and vice versa in order to build a trusting school environment • Define psychological safety and what it looks like in a work environment	Sourced from CDE (July 2023):

Research and Research Briefs

How To Beat Stereotypes By Seeing People as Individuals: This article discusses the research around overcoming stereotypes and gives examples for doing so.

Teaching Practices that Promote or Prohibit Classroom Belonging and Behavioral Engagement: Pages 180 and 181 of this study list ways that students say teachers create a belonging classroom environment.

The Many Questions of Belonging: This academic article describes students' questions of belonging, along with research-based interventions to address them.

What We Know About Belonging From Scientific Research: Mindset Scholars summarizes some of the research on belonging in schools, especially among middle, high school, and college students coming from marginalized backgrounds.

Articles/Websites

Black Male Educators Create Space for Joy: This article, from Learning for Justice, shares ways Black male teachers make space for community and celebration with each other.

Four Ways to Foster Positive Student Relationships: Explore practical ideas from Edutopia on building strong relationships between students.

Handling Negative Emotions in a Way That's Good For Your Team: This article from Harvard Business Review talks about the way in which leaders handle frustration, anger, fear, and even excitement can go a long way towards building or damaging school climate and staff motivation.

How to Help All Students Feel Safe to Be Themselves: This article highlights Social Justice Humanitas Academy's efforts to help all students belong.

Ideas for Fostering a Sense of Belonging For the Students In Your Classroom: Boost a sense of belonging among students and families with the ideas shared in this article from KnowledgeWorks.

I Need More From My Daughter's School Than Lip-Service About Racism: In this EdWeek article, explore practical methods for school districts to combat racism and create safe and supportive spaces for students of all races.

Individualistic versus Collectivist Countries: This map shows the degree to which a country is individualist versus collectivist (keeping in mind that the range may be greater within a country than between countries).

Social-Emotional Learning for Black Students is Ineffective When it is Culture-Blind: This article offers practical things educators can do to ensure that SEL does not "ignore and discount how both culture-blindness and cultural assets dehumanize people of color."

Understanding Our New Racial Reality Starts with the Unconscious: In this article, jon a. powell, UC Berkeley professor and founder of the Othering and Belonging Institute, argues that to address racial discrimination, we need to look inward at our deeply rooted implicit biases.

Why Teacher-Student Relationships Matter: This EdWeek article gives research and tips on how to build healthy relationships with students.

Welcoming Black Families: What Schools Can Learn From Churches: This research-based article lists highly-practical and doable ways that schools can create strong relationships with Black families and the local community.

Video and Audio Resources

Belonging Now: New Insights from Research and Practice from the Mindset Scholars Network (8:55-19:09): In this video, Dr. DeLeon Gray discusses practical ways to disrupt structures in schools that leave students of color feeling anxious about belonging.

Build Community through Icebreaker Games: Learn about icebreaker games and how to facilitate them with elementary students as you watch these two short videos.

Building a Belonging Classroom: In this video from Edutopia, researchers and practitioners demonstrate how students need to feel safe, cared for, and emotionally connected to their teachers and each other in order to learn.

EQ and Education Equity: What Should Education Do to Counteract Racism?: This video (1:01:15) from Six Seconds asks a panel of experts including Kamilah Drummond-Forrester, Cierra Kaler-Jones, Amber Coleman-Mortley, Lorea Martinez, and Giovanni Hernandez to discuss questions about education's role in creating a just and equitable society, and how emotional intelligence skills can help do this.

Why Shared Goals Can Bridge Divides: In this Science of Happiness podcast (21:12), Monte Robinson, an educator & football coach, tries a strategy for building stronger, more inclusive teams.

Practices to Support Adults

Belonging For Educators: This free 45-minute online online course from Stanford University's Project for Education Research that Scales (PERTS), educators learn about belonging, why it's important, and belonging strategies for their classrooms.

Common Beliefs Survey—Teaching Racially and Ethnically Diverse Students: In this practice, teachers rate their level of agreement with 13 common beliefs about racially and ethnically diverse students, reflect on their beliefs and their possible consequences, and then outline action steps for better serving their students.

Dimensions of Difference and Similarity Reflection: Use this reflection tool in staff meetings to ask teachers to reflect on and discuss various dimensions of their identities to gain awareness of the impact of these on relationships with students and their families. This exercise can also be done individually.

Making Practices Culturally Responsive: Use this list of questions to help ensure that SEL and other types of well-being practices are inclusive.

Mindful Reflection Process for Developing Culturally Responsive Practice: Try this mindful reflection process to create space for checking one's assumptions about student behavior.

Mindfully Creating Positive Relationships with Students: Try this brief practice that involves recalling and focusing your attention on the emotional experience associated with helping a student in order to recognize and understand your emotional patterns.

Six Things Educators Can Do to Build Relationships with Students: Explore a short list generated by student leaders at Californians for Justice working to create Relationship-Centered Schools that value student voice, invest in staff, and create spaces for relationship building.

Understanding Justice: In this brief series of self-paced activities, school staff 1) consider the term "justice" and related terms, 2) record their immediate reactions to a series of words, 3) explore the relationships between personal stereotypes and systemic discrimination, and 4) reflect on the ways that privilege can influence justice.

Practices to Support All Students

Conversations, Stereotypes, and Social Justice: This lesson from Learning for Justice provides essential questions for students to consider how their identities influence their interactions with others. This resource meets the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness.

Dialogue Journals for Elementary, Middle, and High School: Teachers and students write to each other in journals on a regular basis, helping to build positive teacher-student relationships and to grow students' self-awareness and social awareness. This resource meets the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness.

Four Corners: Students move to one of the four corners of the classroom to indicate their position on a controversial statement, then engage in discussion or debate about their opinions. This resource meets the psychological need of autonomy.

Giving Wise Feedback: This research-tested method for providing feedback to students has been shown to help mitigate stereotype threat and build students' academic mindset, trust, and positive identity. This resource meets all three psychological needs, i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

I See You, Everyone Matters: To promote inclusivity and belonging in the classroom, students stand and respectfully acknowledge each person in the group. This resource meets the psychological need of relatedness.

Making Families Feel Welcome: Try a few activities from this research-based list of methods for helping families of all backgrounds feel welcome in the school community. This resource meets the psychological need of relatedness.

Pleasant Events Calendar for Students: Students learn to care for themselves by planning enjoyable activities to combat stress and anxiety. This resource meets the needs of autonomy and competence and is appropriate for grades 3-5, middle school, and high school.

2×10: Getting to Know a Student: Teachers spend two minutes a day for ten days getting to know a student with whom they wish to foster a positive relationship. This resource meets the psychological need of relatedness.

Practices to Support Elementary School

Drawing as a Way to Manage Emotions: Students take a few minutes to draw anything they like, learning an emotion regulation strategy that can help shift unpleasant emotions to calmer, more pleasant ones. This resource meets the psychological need of competence and is appropriate for PreK-5.

Kindness Buddy: Students get a secret kindness buddy to do a kind act for during the week. At the end of the week, they reveal their buddies and reflect on how it felt to be kind. This resource is intended for PreK-2 and meets the psychological need of relatedness.

Superstar: To build trust and inclusion, students play a game in which they learn more about each other and celebrate what they have in common. This resource is intended for PreK-5 and middle school students and meets the psychological need of relatedness.

Practices to Support Middle and High School

Be the Change: Performing Acts of Kindness: Students watch a video of a school where a class of students carried out anonymous "random acts of kindness," and then plan ways to do their own acts of kindness. This resource meets the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence and is appropriate for middle school.

Bridging Differences Videos: View a series of engaging videos from Greater Good that illustrate science-based solutions to social and political differences. The videos can be used to jumpstart class discussions, or as a tool for small group discourse or individual reflection. This resource is intended for middle and high school students and meets the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness.

Discover Your Great Full Self: Students take the VIA (Values-in-Action online survey) to identify their strengths and discuss with each other ways they could use their strengths. This resource meets the needs of autonomy and relatedness and is appropriate for middle and high school.

Encouraging Prosocial Actions in Students: Students watch videos on prosocial (kind, helpful) action, complete self-reflection activities, and plan and record their prosocial acts over ten consecutive days. They finish with a reflection on the impact of their actions. This resource meets the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence and is appropriate for middle and high school.

Exploring Your Personal Values: Students sort value statements in order of importance, and then reflect on the ones that mean the most to them. This practice for middle and high school students helps them overcome stereotype threat and meets the psychological needs of autonomy and competence.

Make Fast Friends: Students participate in a "speed-friending" activity by taking turns describing themselves to classmates in 30 seconds. This resource is intended for middle school students and meets the psychological need of competence.

Making Science Meaningful: To cultivate interest and motivation in science class (or any class), students write a short reflection on how the science they are learning is useful and relevant to their lives. This resource meets the need of autonomy and is appropriate for middle and high school.

Strategies for Teaching Fearless SEL for Societal Change: Explore ideas for using CASEL's five SEL competencies to help cultivate youth agency, civic engagement, and social change. This resource meets the needs of autonomy, relatedness, and competence and is appropriate for middle and high school.

Truth Be Told for High School: Discover a series of writing prompts that explore healthy decision-making, reducing risks, having healthy relationships, and more social-emotional topics—a great way to get to know your students! This resource meets the psychological needs of autonomy and relatedness.

Additional Group Facilitation and Professional Development Resources:

Active Listening for Staff: School staff members practice listening to each other with empathy and understanding.

Dimensions of Difference and Similarity Reflection: Use this reflection tool in staff meetings to ask teachers to reflect on and discuss various dimensions of their identities to gain awareness of the impact of these on relationships with students and their families. This exercise can also be done individually.

Gratitude Circle for Staff Members: Start staff meetings by giving time for staff members to say "thank you" to each other for kind and thoughtful acts over the past week.

Gratitude for the Wider School Community: Use at the beginning or end of a meeting, to express gratitude for members of the school community.

Overcoming Obstacles to an Open Heart: School staff build their capacity to create relationship-centered classrooms by discussing with each other what opens and closes their hearts in the classroom. The session closes with participants making their own plan for cultivating an open heart.

Staff Meeting Rituals that Build Trust and Community: Try these opening and closing prompts for building trust and community among staff at meetings.

Sustaining an Open Heart: Staff members discuss in pairs a variety of prompts that focus on establishing healthy boundaries in order to create deeper and more positive relationships with students and colleagues.

Understanding Justice: In this brief series of self-paced activities, school staff 1) consider the term "justice" and related terms, 2) record their immediate reactions to a series of words, 3) explore the relationships between personal stereotypes and systemic discrimination, and 4) reflect on the ways that privilege can influence justice.

Practice for Staff Meetings

I See You. Everyone Matters: Members of the staff stand and respectfully acknowledge each person in the group.

Staff Meeting Rituals that Build Trust and Community: Try these opening and closing prompts for building trust and community among staff at meetings.

Active Listening for Staff: School staff members practice listening to each other with empathy and understanding.

Gratitude Circle for Staff Members: Start staff meetings by giving time for staff members to say "thank you" to each other for kind and thoughtful acts over the past week.

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MOD 2.1 Why Belonging Matters

TAKE IT DEEPER:
Exploring Beliefs About Belonging

Does this quote confirm, challenge, or shift your beliefs about what it means to belong? If so, how? How does your school encourage a sense of belongingness among students and staff?

"The Eurocentric idea of community never approaches the strongest connections in indigenous community that are held together through a core and deep love, which operates as the spirit and atmosphere of community. Indigenous deep love is the stronger spirit that overpowers its rival in the struggle for mastery of troubles in life. It is not similar to the thin concepts of love in Eurocentric thought. When deep love generates deep dialogues among the family and relatives through the generations, community is developed. The shared, communal indigenous love finds expression in the acceptance of nature and community with an affirmation of one's own humanity. In this community, each person is able to recognize his or her own humanity in relations with broad family, community, and other people. Whenever the personal or group conflict between deep love occurs within a community, love throughout the workings of belonging and empathy generates justice. In Indigenous communities, the interrelations of deep love, belonging, and empathy outlasts conflict, and conflict drives people into a deeper, shared involvement with love and justice, until at last they feel deeply responsible for one another's fate. "—James [Sa'ke'j] Youngblood Henderson, Chickasaw Nation Native Law Centre of Canada (from the foreword in Indigenous Community: Rekindling the Teachings of the Seventh Fire by Gregory Cajete, Ph.D.)

"We all belong here equally...Just by being born onto the earth we are accepted and the earth supports us. We don't have to be especially good. We don't have to accomplish anything. We don't even have to be healthy." —Polly Horvath

MOD 2.2 Knowing Ourselves First: Surfacing Our Beliefs About Social and Emotional Well-Being & Belonging in Schools

TAKE IT DEEPER:
Iceberg Questions: Reflecting on Culture

SURFACE CULTURE QUESTIONS:
• How do you greet a friend? family member? supervisor? student? stranger?
• How do you think teachers should respond to a student who is disrupting the class?

SHALLOW CULTURE QUESTIONS:
• How are challenging emotions handled? For example, are emotions suppressed, expressed, or ignored?
• When is it appropriate to touch another person?

DEEP CULTURE QUESTIONS:
• How do you define success? Is success defined more as achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material rewards? Or is success defined more as a preference for cooperation, modesty, caring for the weak, and quality of life? Or something else?
• Within a family, are a member's individual rights and goals more important than the individual's duty to the family and its goals?
• What are some of your beliefs about social and emotional interactions?

"A nation's culture resides in the hearts and
in the soul of its people.." — Mahatma Ghandi

TAKE IT DEEPER:
The Questions of Belonging

Read the article, "The Many Questions of Belonging" before answering the questions below.

What are 2-3 interventions/approaches you will focus on adopting or reinforcing in your classroom or school to increase students' sense of belonging?

How can you measure the success of those interventions?

What specific method(s) will you use to continue gathering and seeking understanding of your students' questions of belonging?

MOD 2.4 Meeting Students' Psychological Needs to Help Them Feel Like They Belong

TAKE IT DEEPER:
SWOT Analysis Psychological Needs

Complete a SWOT analysis, analyzing your school's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to how it currently meets the assigned psychological need for students and teachers. Consider noting thoughts related to students in one color and teachers in another color. Focus on one of the following: psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, or competence.

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunities

Threats

Based on your analysis, what are three ways you can better meet students' needs in one area – autonomy, relatedness, and competence?

TAKE IT DEEPER:
Cultivating Belonging through Teacher-Student and Peer Relationships

Think of a teacher or mentor with whom you really connected or who made a difference in your life. Note your thoughts on the following:
What made this person special? Was it what they said or did? **Were there certain qualities or behaviors you admired? Or something else?**

Reflecting on your own work in education, do you see any of what you admired about them in yourself?

Make a collage of ways your model mentor or teacher cultivated strong teacher-student and peer relationships. Draw and write phrases – the purpose is to create a collage that will serve as reminders in your own day-to-day role.

TAKE IT DEEPER:
Building Trust in Classrooms and Schools

Think of a time trust was particularly important in your role in the school. Depict the scenario either through drawing or writing.

Which factors of trust, i.e., openness, benevolence, honesty, reliability, competence, were in place that allowed for the presence of trust in this scenario? How did the presence of trust impact students? Professional peers? Others? Did a sense of psychological safety enhance your ability to show trust in this scenario? If so, in what way?

Write a list of factors that you need to be able to show trust." Then create a 4th box with the statement "What does your school currently do well to encourage trust among faculty members? What is one thing that could be done to improve trust?