

# Transforming Education's SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators

## WHY INTEGRATION?

By integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the fabric of the school day, educators can support students in honing their existing skills and mindsets to help them succeed in school and in the broader world. The development of social-emotional skills is informed by context, culture, and students' interaction with different environments. Therefore, it is important that SEL-related activities in the classroom focus on helping students to learn, build, and practice skills that they can also apply at home and in their communities.

The SEL Integration Approach guides classroom educators in *how* to integrate SEL into academic curriculum and daily classroom routines. Using this approach, teachers can support students' development of social-emotional skills in ways that are applicable across various areas of their lives, more sustainable over time, and flexible to changing goals and priorities across the lifespan. This approach thus serves as an impactful resource to support and promote students' lifelong learning.

## TransformEd's SEL Integration Approach

**Conducive environments** promote the integration of SEL in physically, intellectually, cognitively, behaviorally, social-emotionally, and culturally safe and inclusive ways.

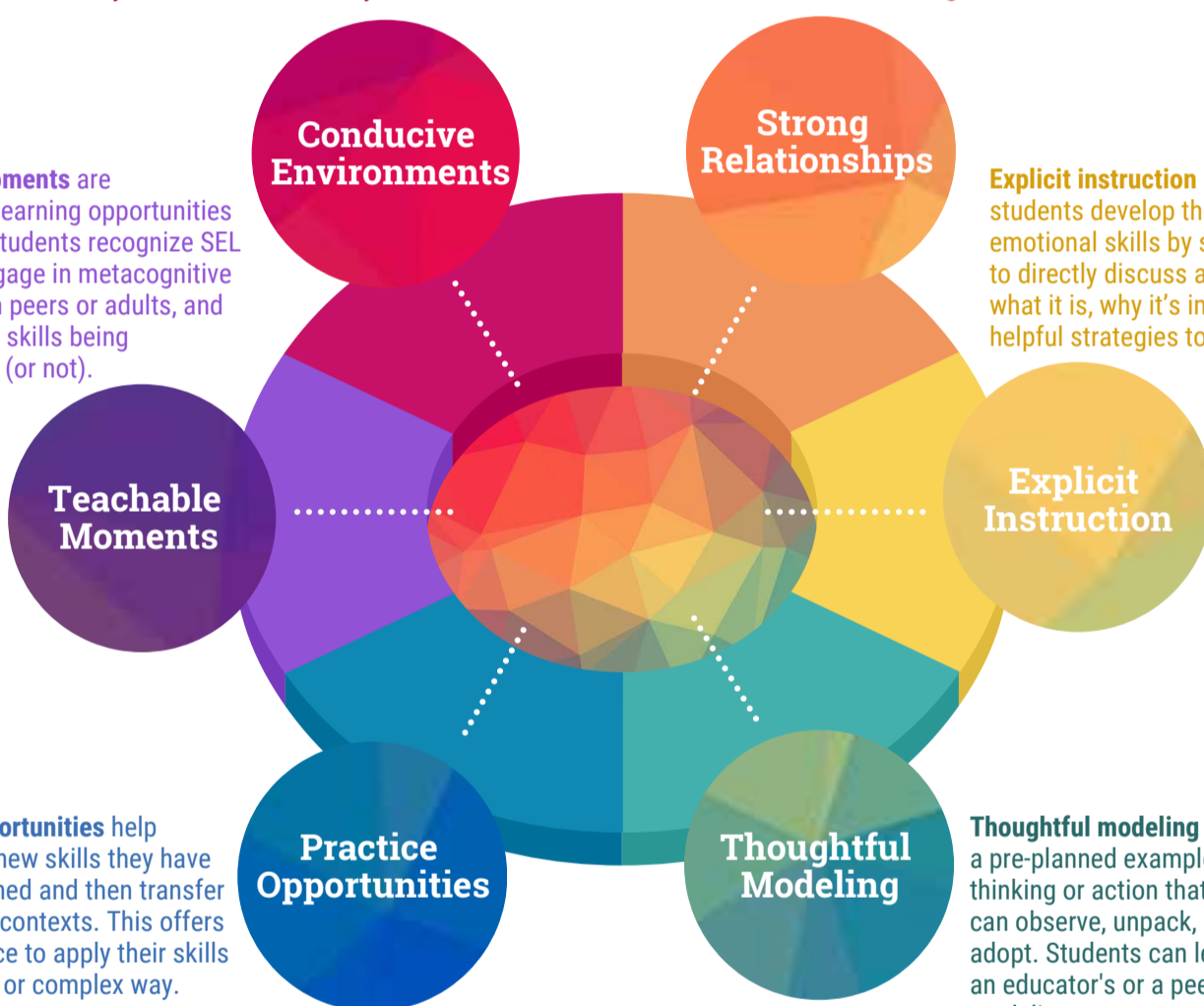
**Strong relationships** are foundational for learning. Intentionally building connections with students, having a personal regard for them as individuals, and facilitating meaningful peer interactions creates caring communities.

**Teachable moments** are spontaneous learning opportunities used to help students recognize SEL in context, engage in metacognitive reflection with peers or adults, and learn from the skills being demonstrated (or not).

**Explicit instruction** helps students develop their social-emotional skills by spending time to directly discuss a competency: what it is, why it's important, and helpful strategies to develop it.

**Practice opportunities** help students try new skills they have recently learned and then transfer them to new contexts. This offers them a chance to apply their skills in a nuanced or complex way.

**Thoughtful modeling** provides a pre-planned example of thinking or action that students can observe, unpack, and adopt. Students can learn from an educator's or a peer's modeling.



## HOW DO THESE COMPONENTS INTERACT?

We recommend a holistic approach to SEL integration that strikes a balance between environments, relationships, instruction, modeling, practice, and teachable moments, rather than emphasizing one action more than the others.

Teachers who successfully embed SEL in the classroom integrate all of the above components and discern when each component would be most beneficial for their students at any given moment.

Doing so provides students with multiple opportunities to learn about, observe, practice, and continuously develop social-emotional skills.



Based on knowledge gleaned from K-12 pedagogy, neuroscience research, developmental psychology, and the science of learning, this SEL Integration Approach serves as a starting point for educators. Want to learn more about how to implement it in your school and district? Contact us at [info@transformingeducation.org](mailto:info@transformingeducation.org)



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## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The purpose of this resource is to introduce several ways to help educators integrate social-emotional learning into everyday classroom activities using familiar tenets of pedagogy. Consider the following questions and tips below to help you plan for using the components of the SEL Integration Approach for Classroom Educators.

- *What are your goals for supporting your students' social-emotional development?*
- *How can you leverage your students' strengths and engage their interests, backgrounds, and experiences to practice SEL?*
- *Where do you see opportunities to discuss and practice social-emotional skills in your lessons in ways that are directly connected to academic learning?*
- *How can you use the different components to meet students where they are and scaffold their learning?*

- Create a physical space that is warm, inviting, and student-centered with thoughtfully chosen materials, furniture, and displays of student work.
- Maintain rigorous expectations for all students and leverage the trust built in strong relationships to encourage one another to work towards important goals.
- Encourage growth by providing actionable feedback and celebrating progress.
- Design assignments in a way that celebrates the diversity of students' assets, abilities, and cultural perspectives.
- Establish practices for building emotional awareness and emotional regulation as a classroom norm and priority.

## Conductive Environments

## Strong Relationships

- Make explicit connections between school and home communities such that regular, two-way, positive communication is a norm.
- Form honest, authentic relationships between students and teachers that foster complex understandings about one another in order to disrupt inequitable and deficit-based views.
- Learn about, include, and celebrate various cultural and racial/ethnic backgrounds year-round.
- Create activities and structures that continuously build strong relationships between students throughout the school year, rather than just during orientation.
- Resolve conflict through restorative approaches that promote empathy and understanding.

- Focus on evidence-based, high-quality approaches, regardless of whether the teacher is designing a new lesson or delivering a lesson from a pre-existing curriculum.
- Use materials that reflect and represent the diversity of students in the classroom.
- Ensure that lessons are adapted to meet students' developmental and language needs, cultural contexts, and interests.
- Make explicit instruction student-centered; rather than focusing on didactic lessons, engage students in discussion about how a competency plays out in their own lives.

## Explicit Instruction

## Thoughtful Modeling

- Be intentional. Carefully planning in advance will help an educator focus on being inclusive and using high-leverage words, messages, and body language while modeling SEL.
- Emphasize students' role in modeling. Be sure to offer students opportunities to discuss what they observe, ask clarifying questions, discuss an alternative perspective, and/or provide feedback to educators about what they're learning.
- Consider ways to use role playing and peer modeling to help students learn from one another.
- Use modeling as an opportunity to display behaviors that show respect, appreciation for, and inclusivity of the range of cultures, backgrounds, languages, and experiences of students' communities.

- Focus on reinforcing concepts that have already been explicitly taught and modeled.
- Consider which activities will be developmentally appropriate and relevant to students as individuals.
- Plan ahead to identify activities for students to practice using social-emotional skills that are related your existing lessons. Offer students choices in how they want to engage those skills.
- Create practice opportunities that respond to the range of students' abilities so that, with your support, students can build towards independently applying skills in various contexts.

## Practice Opportunities

## Teachable Moments

- Engage in spontaneous teachable moments as opportunities for conversation, learning, and constructive feedback, not to call out students.
- Focus on moments that can clearly reinforce the generalization and transfer of social-emotional skills that have been explicitly taught or modeled in class.
- Acknowledge both moments of celebration (to recognize when students are demonstrating command or growth in a social-emotional competency) and missed opportunities (to reassess a difficult situation and introduce a different approach).

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