

IDENTITY

BELONGING

AGENCY

# The Heart of the Arts

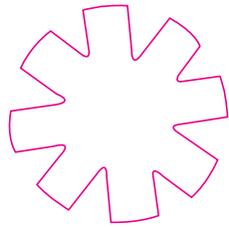
Collection One:  
Artistic SEL Foundations



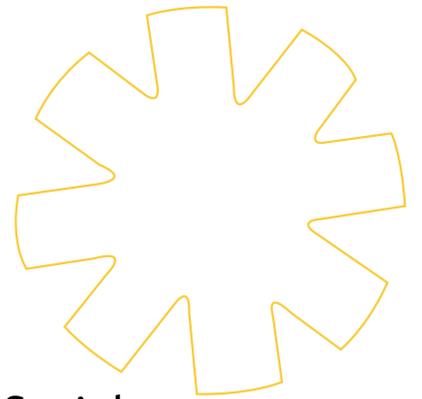
ArtsEd**SEL**

The Center for Arts Education  
and Social Emotional Learning

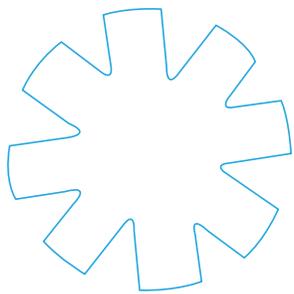
*A PROGRAM OF ARTS ED NJ*



## **Our Mission**



The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (ArtsEdSEL) is dedicated to illuminating the intersection between arts education and social emotional learning to facilitate the embedded, intentional, and sustained application of SEL-informed arts education.



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# ArtsEdSEL

The Center for Arts Education  
and Social Emotional Learning

*A PROGRAM OF ARTS ED NJ*

## INTRODUCTION

### The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Presents Heart of the Arts Collection One: Artistic SEL Foundations

**Arts Ed NJ launched the national Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (ArtsEdSEL)** in March of 2021 with the core objectives of increasing awareness and providing tools to develop and intentionally embed the connection between arts education practices and SEL. The Center, which was conceived, supported and developed by multiple stakeholders and collaborators, was a natural outgrowth of the Arts Education & Social Emotional Learning Framework created in 2020, which built upon nearly two decades of Arts Ed NJ's collective impact work. (Check out the Framework at [www.selarts.org](http://www.selarts.org) and examples in articles 4 & 5.)

The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (ArtsEdSEL) builds capacity to facilitate arts education enriched by SEL and offers a new vision for SEL within the context of artistic work. This is accomplished by elevating the lived experience, voices, and cultural assets of PreK-16 student learners through the development of exemplary arts education practices and approaches, designed to develop IDENTITY, BELONGING, and AGENCY through the artistic process of Create, Perform, Respond, and Connect (For more information see article 2). By supporting educator practice, shaping instructional resources and experiences, and furthering the arts education and SEL research agenda, ArtsEdSEL builds capacity for high-quality arts education, grounded in culturally-responsive, relevant, and sustaining practices that will embrace the needs of diverse student populations. We imagine a world where everyone engages in the arts in order to gain a healthy and functional awareness of themselves, make positive contributions to their communities, and has power in their own lives.

The Heart of the Arts Collection One brings together expert SEL practitioners and diverse perspectives to define Artistic SEL in precise and accessible language, provide practical examples of high impact practices, and illuminate models for effective implementation. Collectively, the Heart of the Arts series represents a resource to broadly conceive, clarify, and advocate for how Artistic SEL can deepen and enrich arts education and education more broadly.

These collective works illuminate key findings about Artistic SEL:

- Artistic SEL deepens and enhances arts education processes and products;
- Artistic SEL provides tools to deepen connections between educators and students to activate creative learning experiences that center identity, agency, and belonging;
- Artistic SEL is not a prescribed curriculum; and
- Artistic SEL must be organically embedded into arts education practices.

We hope you will use these articles to support your work, share with colleagues, and join us in advancing the Center's vision.

For further information or inquiries, contact us at [Info@ArtsEdSEL.org](mailto:Info@ArtsEdSEL.org)

**CENTERING  
ARTISTIC  
SEL**





# ArtsEdSEL

The Center for Arts Education  
and Social Emotional Learning

## THE HEART OF THE ARTS ARTICLE SERIES

*ArtsEdSEL: Centralizing Social  
Emotional Learning Within the Arts*

**Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D.**  
Director, Practice and Research

Volume 1 \* Issue 1



### The implicit connections between SEL and the arts

(dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts) are becoming more explicit as teachers, researchers, and policy-makers further these initiatives. For SEL to help build the capacity to encounter the tests of life, and equally important, nourish and advance the artistic processes (create, perform/present/produce, respond, and connect) it must be approached intentionally, embedded into the arts, and be sustained. The lines between SEL and arts can be blurred to a point that a casual observer (and even our students) do not know where one ends and the other begins. A common question is: "How many minutes should I spend on SEL?" The best answer is ALL OF THEM. When SEL is effectively embedded into the arts classroom, it simply looks like amazing arts teaching!

### \* The COVID-19

pandemic, systemic racism and racial injustice, political unrest, a general sense of divisiveness, and great uncertainty have left our students and teachers

in uncharted waters navigating teaching and learning amidst extreme challenges. Any one of these challenges would be enough to push our capacity to teach and learn effectively. Combined, however, they result in turbulent waters that can be challenging for students and teachers to navigate as they attempt to learn, teach, and collectively grow. Terms like trauma-informed, equity, academic loss, and emotional setbacks are saturating educational narratives. As we are learning to persevere, sustained, intentional strategies need to be embedded into school processes to help students and teachers forge a path forward, because simply expecting calm and collected responses to challenges that are rocking everyone is not reasonable. SEL skills are seen as foundational to managing these collective difficulties. Implementation of SEL in K-12 schools is growing steadily and key to its further expansion and effective delivery is the role of arts educators.

## "ARTS EDUCATORS

and their classrooms provide a welcoming environment and uniquely meaningful, sustained learning experiences to build these responsive skills. For many students, the arts are the portal to their hearts, souls, and minds because of the way in which the arts provide an opportunity for deeper understanding of emotions, eliciting empathy and compassion, and to see how the arts have been used to address social issues and problems throughout history "

**Dr. Maurice Elias**



# SEL has often been defined as

building capacity in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The language of SEL is purposeful, it does not say self-control; instead, self-management. The objective is for students, teachers, and communities to better understand their emotions, their root causes, and envision and enact productive actions from them. Control is silencing (“You shouldn’t feel that way, control your emotions”); management is empowering.

## \* The lived experiences

we have all gone through during 2020 (and beyond) have fundamentally changed us. We learn and teach differently. We realize that our educational priorities may not have best reflected what our students need. Our students’ artistic, educational, and personal needs have changed and we have become refocused on what was missing, lacking, and greatly needed. Personal connection, connectedness, and student voice are now even more necessary (and always have been) for meaningful teaching and learning.

## \* If schools and teachers

wish to have any meaningful teaching and learning the social, emotional, mental, and physical needs of students and teachers needs to be of paramount concern. Intentional, embedded, and sustained attention to SEL in schools and through arts education can help facilitate moving students from trauma back to trusting relationships and environments. This potential has long been imperative and prized in arts classrooms.

## \* The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (ArtsEdSEL)

is dedicated to illuminating the intersection between arts education and social emotional learning to facilitate the embedded, intentional, and sustained application of SEL-informed arts education. Though many are familiar with basic terminology, ArtsEdSEL helps educators fully understand the many opportunities and approaches to realize the

connections so that SEL skills development is supported artistically. ArtsEdSEL is the central voice linking social emotional learning to the arts education landscape, while positively impacting the entire education ecosystem resulting in artistic SEL that is embedded, intentional, and sustained in classrooms, schools, and communities. Student artists will learn that through the artistic process their voice can affect meaningful change in school and community contexts.

## \* ArtsEdSEL supports

practices related to development of student artists’ IDENTITY, BELONGING, and AGENCY through the arts. ArtsEdSEL focuses on Practice, Research, Policy, Collaboration, SEL-infused Artistic Works, and elevating Student Voice. By shaping curriculum, supporting teacher practice, and furthering the arts education and social emotional learning research agenda, ArtsEdSEL builds capacity for high-quality arts education, grounded in culturally-responsive, relevant, and sustaining practices that will embrace the needs of diverse student populations.



# Pillars of ArtsEdSEL

## PRACTICE

ArtsEdSEL equips arts educators and educational leaders with practices designed to activate the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making to enrich scholastic arts education environments.



## SEL ARTISTIC WORKS

ArtsEdSEL collaborates with and commissions artists in all content areas to create purposefully integrated SEL artistic works.



## RESEARCH

ArtsEdSEL promotes empirically-grounded insight that builds capacity for high-quality PreK-16 arts education, informed by culturally-responsive and sustaining practices by establishing and enacting a research agenda for arts education and social emotional learning.



## STUDENT VOICE

ArtsEdSEL elevates and amplifies student voices related to their artistic, social emotional growth, and experiences.



## COLLABORATION

ArtsEdSEL supports a collaborative space to translate and build upon established artistic SEL work by engaging the broad artistic and SEL communities to achieve complementary objectives.

## POLICY

ArtsEdSEL assists with systematic approaches to development and implementation of policies that will lead to embedding SEL into arts education at the local, state, and national levels.





***Embedded, intentional, and sustained attention to SEL in schools and through arts education can help facilitate moving students from trauma back to trusting relationships and environments. This potential has long been imperative and prized in arts classrooms.***



**By recognizing the implicit role of social emotional learning in artistic works and making this role explicit in arts education, ArtsEdSEL aims to dramatically impact the role of arts education. This Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning now launches with the vision and mission to dramatically impact the role of arts education. Intentional SEL-informed arts education is a powerful vehicle to develop student artists' identity, belonging, and agency which propels them toward school and life success.**

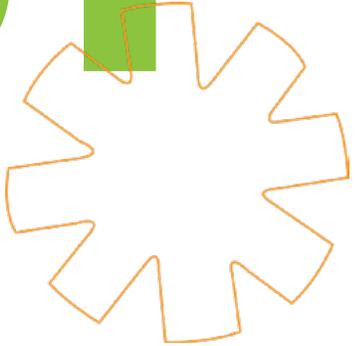
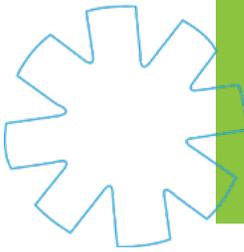


## **ArtsEdSEL: Putting SEL Center Stage**

Acknowledgment: Thank you to Dr. Maurice Elias for reviewing this brief and providing insight and quotations.



**IDENTITY**  
**BELONGING**  
**AGENCY**





## THE HEART OF THE ARTS ARTICLE SERIES

### *Identity, Belonging, and Agency: Reframing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Arts Education*

**Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D.**  
Director, Practice and Research

Volume 1 \* Issue 2



### **The COVID-19 pandemic and systemic racism**

have exposed inequity at an extreme level. For those who have been looking, we always acknowledged it was there; now, it is impossible to miss. Remote learning has exposed, and in some cases exacerbated, systemic inequities in our society and schooling structure. Every student does not have the resources needed to succeed, and stable internet is the tip of the iceberg. There are two narratives surrounding SEL as it relates to equity: (a) SEL can be a powerful tool to serve as a catalyst for anti-racism ; and (b) SEL can serve as another form of silencing students, especially those of color .

### **Equity**

Dr. Lorenzo Moore, superintendent of Aldine Public Schools, profoundly said: "If you are talking about social emotional learning but not talking about equity, you are not talking about SEL." However, we need to make an intentional choice to mobilize SEL and arts education for equity. Dr. Maurice Elias suggests this connection does not happen automatically.

**The Heart of the Arts**

### **"SEL is no more aligned to equity, inherently, than art is to goodness."**

### **Collaboration**

The work of SEL, broadly, must be positioned as a collaborative effort *with* our students so that our classrooms do not become assumptive spaces where students' and societal needs and challenges are dictated instead of explored. Similarly, without this level of co-learning and co-creation of our academic spaces, students and teachers will never fully realize the innate skills they bring with them to our schools. The academic arrow must cease to be one direction *from* teacher to student; instead, the arrows must be multi-directional where we learn just as much from the students as they do from us, and students (and their families) share their gifts and abilities with each other.

### **Competency Building**

The hallmark SEL competency-building of SELF (self-awareness

**Volume 1 Issue 2**

& self-management), OTHERS (social awareness & relationship skills), and DECISIONS is more important now than ever. While we see the results of many poor decisions being made in our world, explicitly targeting decision-making skills, initially, is missing foundational steps to build SEL work. Decision-making is an advanced skill and should follow reflection based upon to who we are and how we engage with our community.

### **Grace & Empathy**

Sheryl Crowell, a music teacher from Rockford, Illinois said: "I will try not to confuse their cry for help as a bad choice." When we approach our students, colleagues, and ourselves with this grace and empathy, we position our classrooms as a place for growth and learning, both artistically and holistically. The challenges we are facing necessitate positioning SELF-OTHERS-DECISIONS within a new context.

Dr. Robert Jagers, of the Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), has spoken extensively about how SEL needs to be adapted for all students during these times<sup>3</sup>. The result is a reconceptualization built upon collaboration across our communities.



**SELF** becomes more focused on our identity. Who are we, what have been our experiences, and how do those inform our beliefs, mindsets, and biases?



**OTHERS** becomes centralized on creating spaces for belonging. Are our arts classrooms safe spaces for all of our students to be vulnerable and to take risks as they pursue their artistic dreams?



**DECISIONS** expands to ensure that our students' voices are heard, amplified, and can affect change in school and community contexts.

**SELF → IDENTITY**

**OTHERS → BELONGING**

**DECISIONS → AGENCY**

**I used to say that SEL can give our students a voice.**

*This is not accurate; our students have voices; however, we typically do a very good job of silencing them. It is our job to amplify their voice. This often necessitates taking a less directed role in our arts<sup>4</sup> classrooms and assuming the role of facilitator where students can tinker and envision their own artistic journey. Intentional, embedded artistic SEL can lift up **every student's voice.***



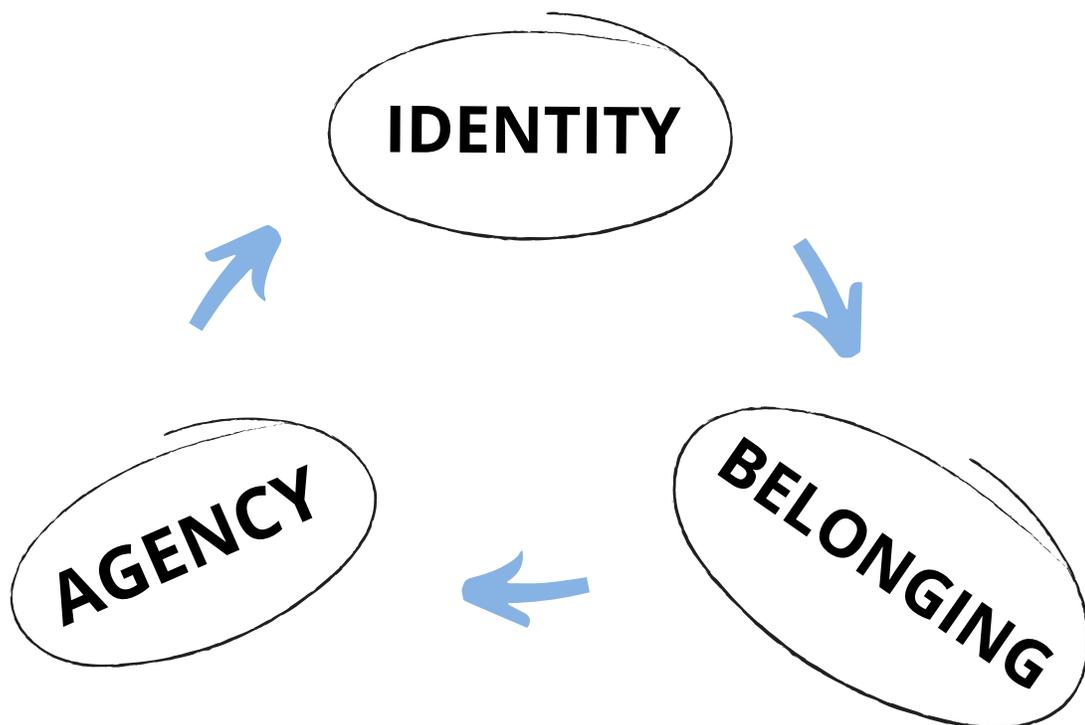
# Interpreting Students' Changed Needs for Arts Education

The pandemic has affected arts education profoundly<sup>5</sup>. The typical manifestations of concerts, plays, musicals, recitals, and gallery openings have had to be re-envisioned in a way that no one had experienced before. These adaptations have pushed arts educators and students to recreate what excellence can look like in our classrooms. The artistic process has emerged as equally as important as the artistic product<sup>6 & 7</sup>. This is a dramatic shift for many of us who have defined our work as outcome-based. As students and teachers are reimagining arts education through the process, student voice and empowering choice is emerging in meaningful and creative ways. When democratic and collaborative, the artistic process is capable of reminding students how much they love the arts.

Former First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama, stated: "Arts education is not a luxury, it's a necessity. It's really the air many of these kids breathe. It's how we get kids excited about getting up and going to school in the morning." This academic home for our students provides a fertile ground to acknowledge our students' and teachers' challenges, facilitate a trusting safe space to grow, and further the artistic processes (and products, where appropriate).

## Translating

identity, belonging, agency for arts education builds on the following points highlighting beliefs that have always unified us around the cultural necessity that is the arts.





## IDENTITY

The perseverance needed to dedicate oneself to artistic excellence fosters resilience both in and out of the arts classroom.

Artistic creation fosters self-awareness and allows for students to develop a greater sense of identity, autonomy, and emotional vocabulary.

Artists learn the necessity of personal goal-setting, self-assessment, and accountability as they develop high standards for artmaking and themselves.



## BELONGING

The relationship built between arts teachers and students over multiple years of instruction fosters the caring environment necessary to help build school connectedness, foster empathy, and provide a sense of belonging.

Collaborative arts classrooms build connections between students, facilitate community engagement, and uplifts and celebrates the cultural assets of students.

Arts classrooms necessitate vulnerability and facilitate a space where students can explore, tinker, envision, and grow.



## AGENCY

The collaborative community developed in the arts classroom welcomes discussions and an awareness of acceptance and embracing diversity, resulting in a greater sense of agency and affecting meaningful change.

Student voice is amplified through the artistic process facilitating an experience to develop efficacy.

The artistic process necessitates editing of the artistic product. This process builds student capacity to hone their beliefs and become flexible to represent themselves in true, concise, and meaningful ways.



**The arts** can provide a portal to build back the trust and social emotional competence needed to confront the recent unparalleled challenges, meeting an essential need for all students. Beyond these skills, some of the most memorable art throughout history has spawned from trial and tribulation.

**Funneling our challenges** into the artistic process and products is our answer to building a road forward through arts education and social emotional learning. In the words of the first National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, in her inaugural poem *The Hill We Climb*,<sup>8</sup> art gives us insight, and art gives us strength.

***We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover,  
In every known nook of our nation,  
In every corner called our country,  
Our people, diverse and dutiful.  
We'll emerge, battered but beautiful.  
When day comes, we step out of the  
shade,  
Aflame and unafraid.  
The new dawn blooms as we free it,  
For there is always light,  
If only we're brave enough to see it,  
If only we're brave enough to be it.***

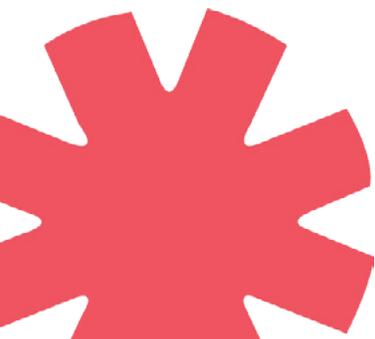
Note: Special thanks to Dr. Pamela Randall-Gardner from CASEL for her insight during the preparation of this article.



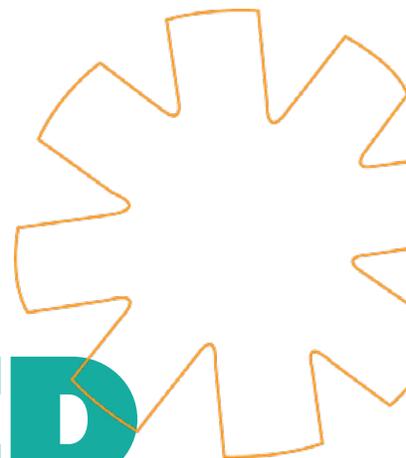
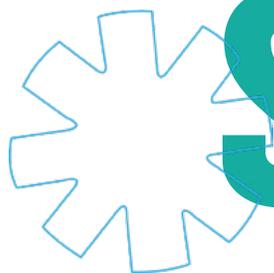


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**EMBEDDED**  
**INTENTIONAL**  
**SUSTAINED**





# ArtsEdSEL

The Center for Arts Education  
and Social Emotional Learning

## THE HEART OF THE ARTS ARTICLE SERIES

*Planning Artistic Social  
Emotional Learning:  
Embedded, Intentional, Sustained*

**Kira Rizzuto**  
Director of Programs and Partnerships

Volume 1 \* Issue 3



### The vision of artistic social emotional learning (SEL)

championed by the Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (ArtsEdSEL) acknowledges the important role of arts educators in the design of learning experiences and welcoming learning environments that will empower student artists to develop both artistic and cultural competence. ArtsEdSEL maintains that arts education actively prepares students to better explore, understand, and contribute to the communities in which they live, offering vital pathways to develop agency to better navigate and shape our global society.

### \* Embracing Learning

Teaching and learning that embraces inquiry and reflection opens the door to self-discovery and authentic artistic investigations, which can sharpen the ability of student artists to explore identity, belonging, and agency in tangible ways.

Embedding SEL directly into learning experiences in the arts helps students to recognize the value of encountering a broad spectrum of cultural perspectives and differing viewpoints, which directly contribute to development of artistic literacy and fluency.

### \* Arts Activated

While social emotional learning may be implicit when students engage in the four artistic processes—**Create, Respond, Connect, Perform**—arts educators can become intentional about making the deep connections between arts education and social emotional learning **explicit** rather than implicit by invoking the principles of social emotional development and common vocabulary throughout their teaching practices. While developing social emotional competence is a lifelong pursuit for all learners, PreK-16 arts educators activate social emotional learning in distinct ways when choosing to embed opportunities for SEL directly into curriculum and instruction.<sup>1</sup>

### \* Creating Space

Artistic SEL creates space within arts education environments for learners to explore the social emotional terrain of their own lived experience more fully, so that students have a place to flourish and find expression for their authentic voice. Thoughtful implementation of artistic SEL prioritizes development of artistic literacy and fluency as well as students' social emotional development in complementary ways.



## EMBEDDED

Embedding SEL into the artistic process and product results in SEL instruction that is artistic, and advances SEL along with visual and performing arts objectives. When student artists see themselves reflected in curriculum, scaffolded learning experiences in the arts become an invitation to explore identity, belonging, and agency in meaningful ways.



## INTENTIONAL

Intentional implementation of artistic SEL includes purposeful and thoughtful incorporation of SEL into the artistic process, and will influence both the creation and presentation of student artists' works. Intentional implementation will include common vocabulary coupled with relevant essential questions and enduring understandings. Explicitly naming SEL connections within the artistic process can help student artists to identify how SEL informs their artistry, and also help them to understand how social emotional competence developed through arts learning can be applied in other contexts as well.



## SUSTAINED

Sustained artistic SEL requires progressive, sequential, and regular artistic SEL facilitation in the arts classrooms that builds both artistic and social emotional competencies. When arts educators make instructional choices that model artistic SEL, their instruction reflects the value of social emotional learning as an important element of art education, while accelerating students' social emotional development and affirming student voice.



**ArtsEdSEL seeks to illuminate the intersection between arts education and social** emotional learning, to facilitate the embedded, intentional, and sustained application of SEL-informed arts education.<sup>2</sup> The common vocabulary, essential questions, and enduring understandings articulated in the Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework are central to the Center's work.<sup>3</sup> The Framework was created to provide arts educators with a resource to fully articulate natural connections between arts learning and social emotional learning, and is the result of careful consideration between all social emotional competencies and sub-competencies and the eleven anchor standards in the visual and performing arts<sup>4</sup>; it is a tool intended to assist educators as they embed SEL into curriculum and instruction, in support of culturally-relevant arts education practices that **center the needs of students**.



### **When embedded, intentional, and sustained, artistic SEL**

serves as a catalyst, enabling students to build knowledge and the artistic skills needed to create and respond to artwork, seek and make meaning, while exploring the five SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making in the process. It is through the implementation of artistic SEL that arts educators throughout the PreK-16 spectrum can offer student artists safe and welcoming environments to develop the sense of identity, belonging, and agency needed to navigate the complexities of life they encounter daily. Artistic SEL rooted in culturally-relevant practices will prepare students to think critically and creatively when addressing challenges; model multiple ways to envision solutions; offer constructive pathways for healing when faced with trauma; and build students' aptitude to regard and express **joy, curiosity, and wonder**.

**The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning champions embedded, intentional, and sustained implementation of social emotional learning, recognizing that impactful artistic SEL has a positive impact on student well-being, which enriches arts classrooms, school buildings, families, and communities. Envision the many ways that student artists will thrive outside the arts classroom once they have experienced arts education as a touchstone for deeper learning. Artistic literacy and fluency informed by artistic SEL invites students to understand themselves, and others, as they seek and create meaning through the arts.**



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- 4 <https://selarts.org/>

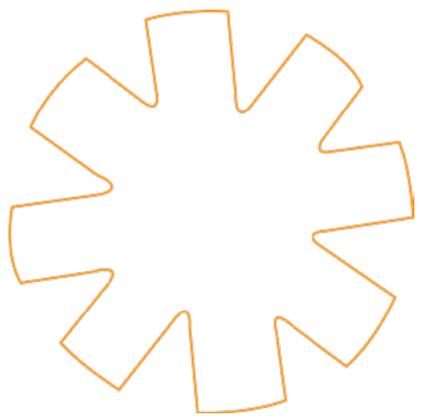


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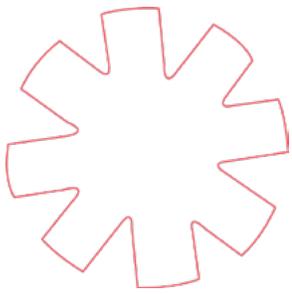
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# **UTILIZING THE FRAMEWORK**





## Utilizing the Framework for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning

Kerri Sullivan, District Supervisor of the Arts, K-12 at Bridgeton Public Schools

Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D., Director of Practice and Research



### Why Standards

When teachers hear the word “standards” the typical response is that they are something mandated that has to be added retroactively to lesson plans to check off a box. The spirit of standards is much more than this. There is a difference between standards and curriculum.

### \* Essential Ingredients

Standards are the building code, curriculum is the design for the house. Standards are the ingredients in a recipe rather than the final meal. Standards are the rules of the game, rather than the strategy for succeeding at the game (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). When teachers spend time with standards the box-checking becomes a road map to help provide a broad comprehensive education for students. The essential element is for teachers to adapt standards so that they are organically implemented into classroom culture. Behavior is what we do; culture is how we do it. The necessary step is determining HOW we embed standards into teaching.

### \* Arts Embedded

Another typical response to Social Emotional Learning from arts educators is “WE ALREADY

DO THIS.” The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning champions that arts education offers fertile ground to do this work; however, it must be embedded into curriculum, intentional, and sustained [see the June Heart of the Arts Brief (Rizzuto, 2021) for more information]. The Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework was created to provide a resource for teachers to embed SEL into their instruction, intentionally. This set of standards gives teachers the language to deepen what is an invaluable part of the culture we create through arts education.

### Introducing the Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework

The Arts Education and Social and Emotional Learning Framework is designed to illuminate the intersection between arts education and social emotional learning to allow for the intentional application of appropriate teaching and learning strategies, with the overarching goal of enhancing arts education. Arts educators often address different aspects of SEL in their everyday practice either through individual or across multiple competencies

(self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making). In some cases, these competencies are being addressed in an implicit way, without making explicit connections to the visual and performing arts standards. This Framework is the result of careful consideration of the synergistic connections between the five SEL competencies (CASEL) and the eleven anchor standards in the visual and performing arts (National Core Arts Standards).

### \* SEL Influence

This crosswalk culminates in the creation of enduring understandings and essential questions melding SEL and the arts. The essential questions (EQs) and enduring understandings (EUs) that resulted from a detailed crosswalk provide a clear understanding of these connections. The Framework provides arts educators a greater understanding of how SEL connects to and influences the artistic process. The Arts Education and Social and Emotional Learning Framework is designed to empower arts educators to intentionally embed social emotional learning.

# Enduring Understandings & Essential Questions

Enduring understandings and essential questions help educators and students organize information, skills, and experiences within content areas. The notion of enduring understandings and essential questions come from the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe and their educational framework, *Understanding by Design*®.

Enduring understandings are statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They synthesize what students should come to understand as a result of studying a particular content area (“**THE SO-WHAT**” “**THE BIG PICTURE**”). Essential questions are the drivers of deep inquiry. They are iterative in nature, and do not demand a single right answer (“**REFLECTION OPPORTUNITIES**” “**EXPLORATION**”).

Student responses to the enduring understandings and essential questions are anticipated to be increasingly sophisticated and nuanced over the course of their school careers and beyond (NJSLS-VPA, 2020).



# Navigating the Framework

There are multiple elements to the Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework. Each component serves as a means to support the intentional, embedding of arts and SEL into student learning experiences.

## Framework Elements:

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**  
Deep, overarching, open-ended questions guiding student learning.



### ARTS PROCESSES

The way we make and learn about the arts. The four artistic processes are creating, performing/presenting/producing, connecting, and responding (National Core Arts Standards).

### GRADE-BAND INDICATORS

SEL competencies and benchmarks articulated for each grade level.



### ARTS ANCHOR STANDARDS

Specific demonstrations of artistic knowledge and skill. There are eleven anchor standards that crossover and connect the five arts disciplines (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts).

### ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS

Enduring understandings are statements summarizing important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They synthesize what students should come to understand as a result of studying a particular content area.

### SEL COMPETENCIES

Characteristics (i.e., knowledge, behaviors) that lead to social emotional success. The five SEL competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL)



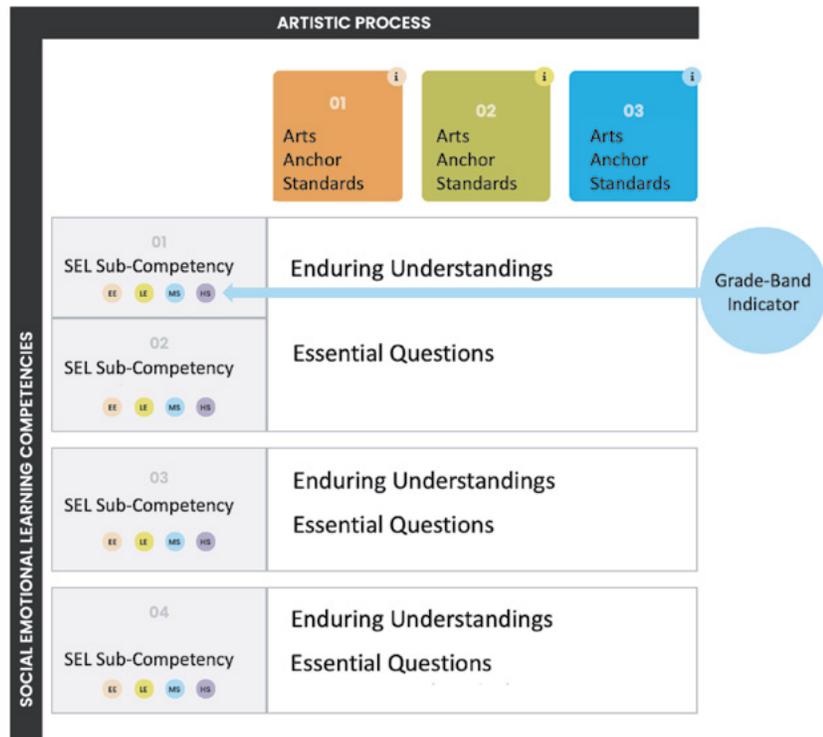
### SEL SUB-COMPETENCIES

19 specific, learned abilities that are manifestations of the five SEL competencies.



# Identifying Individual Standards

With many elements and entry points, navigating the Framework may seem overwhelming. Some teachers may find identifying individual standards to be of value. Teachers wishing to articulate a specific standard, can use this model. The ultimate goal of articulating a standard in the Framework is to identify the relevant enduring understanding and essential question.



Arts Process (create, perform, respond, connect)	SEL Competency (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making)	Arts Anchor Standard (1-11)	Sub-Competency (1-19)	Grade-Band (EE, LE, MS, HS)	EU (1-3)	EQ (1-2)	Discipline-Specific Performance Expectations (dance, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts)
Cr	SeA	1 (generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and works)	1 (recognize one's feelings and thoughts)	EE (early elementary)	2 (see below)	1 (see below)	
Pr	RDM	6 (convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work)	19 (evaluate personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions)	MS (middle school)	1 (see below)	2 (see below)	

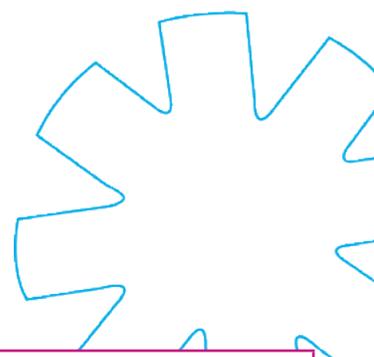
Cr/SeA.1.1.EE.2/1.: Recognizing the impact of one's feelings and thoughts on the creative process. How does the awareness of one's strengths, challenges, feelings, and thoughts influence the generation of creative ideas?

Pr/RDM.6.19.MS.1/2.: Artists develop practices for decision-making that enable them to realize their creative work in constructive ways. How do the choices made in the process of preparing and performing/presenting/producing artistic work affect the intended impact of the audience?

# Sample Lesson Plan Template Utilizing the Framework

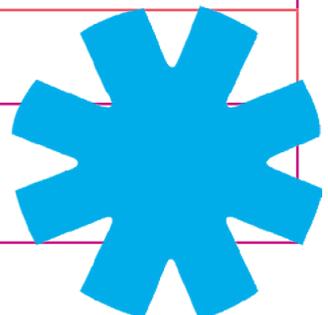
## Lesson Outline 1: 2nd grade, Theatre

<b>Arts Standard/Performance Expectation:</b>	TH:Cr1.1.2.b. Collaborate with peers to conceptualize scenery in a guided drama experience (e.g., process drama, story drama, creative drama).
<b>Grade-Band SEL Competency:</b>	Relationship Skills: Utilize “active listening” skills.
<b>Student Learning Objective:</b>	Students are learning to employ active listening skills while they collaborate to visualize scenery pieces for a story drama. OR I can show my classmates that I am listening to them while we work together to imagine the setting of our story drama.
<b>Assessment:</b>	Observation: Active listening (e.g., building rapport, eye contact, nodding, asking relevant questions, avoiding interrupting, verbal affirmations). AND Performance Task: Contributing to the collective envisioning of scenery for the story drama.
<b>Enduring Understanding:</b>	Theatre: Theatre artists rely on intuition, curiosity, and critical inquiry.  Arts & SEL: Artists conceptualize and generate ideas and works in relation to others.
<b>Essential Question:</b>	Theatre: What happens when theatre artists use their imaginations and/or learned theatre skills while engaging in creative exploration and inquiry?  Arts & SEL: How do social skills, social norms, and maintaining healthy relationships influence the creative process?
<b>Resources:</b>	
<b>Modifications:</b>	
<b>Learning Experience Sequence:</b>	



## Lesson Outline 2 - 8th grade, Media Arts

<b>Arts Standard/Performance Expectation:</b>	MA:Pr6.1.8.b. Evaluate the results of and implement improvements for presenting media artworks, considering impacts on personal growth and external effects.
<b>Grade-Band SEL Competency:</b>	Responsible Decision-Making: Explain how to respond with empathy when making decisions in real-life and on the internet.
<b>Student Learning Objective:</b>	Students are learning to consider the feelings of their intended audience when developing media artworks. OR When developing artwork, I can consider the impact my art may have on the feelings of my intended audience.
<b>Assessment:</b>	Journal: Student reflections on how their decision-making process influenced their artistic process. AND Performance Task: Drafts of various iterations of the artwork that demonstrate how altering specific elements may impact the audience.
<b>Enduring Understanding:</b>	Media Arts: Media artists purposefully present, share, and distribute media artworks for various contexts.  Arts & SEL: Artists develop practices for decision-making that enable them to realize their creative work in constructive ways.
<b>Essential Question:</b>	Media Arts: How does time, place, audience, and context affect presenting or performing choices for media artworks?  Arts & SEL: How do the choices made in the process of preparing and performing/presenting/producing artistic work affect the intended impact of the audience?
<b>Resources:</b>	
<b>Modifications:</b>	
<b>Learning Experience Sequence:</b>	



## The Journey Embedding the Framework into Practice

### **With so many moving parts**

and places to start, embedding the Framework into practice may seem daunting. It is important to remember that many educators are already doing this work, the key is ensuring that it is being done intentionally and authentically.

### **Identify**

It may be helpful to begin by thinking about what social emotional competencies and/or skills would be most beneficial to the students under the given circumstances. Where do they need the most support and guidance with their social emotional development? Once an area or areas to focus on for SEL have been identified, next examine the arts curriculum. Where are natural intersections between the arts learning and social emotional development? From there, use the Framework to illuminate that intersection and dig deeper in order to create meaningful learning experiences.

### **Student Needs**

For example, identify that students need assistance with communicating effectively in peer groups. Knowing that, look at the curriculum for opportunities that provide space for students to collaborate and communicate. This may be a unit that sees students working together toward a common goal (e.g., a community art project, a theatre or dance performance, a group composition) or lessons that facilitate students exploring and

responding to (e.g., perceiving, analysing, interpreting, evaluating) works of art.

### **Guide the Learning**

For the unit on performing, reference the Framework (starting with the intersection of Performing and Relationship Skills) and use the essential question (“How can an artist’s relationship with others impact the performance/presentation/production of artistic works?”) to guide the learning. Instead of focusing solely on the production or end result (as would be the case if only the arts standards are driving the learning), the learning expands to intentionally incorporate SEL, specifically relationships. Thereby helping students develop their communication and collaboration skills while also expanding their understanding of the artistic process of performing.

### **Assessing Art**

To elaborate on the example of responding to works of art with an SEL lens, reference the Framework (starting at the intersection of Responding and Relationship Skills) and decide to use the enduring understanding (“Artists rely on feedback and critique from others in response to an artistic work.”) to inform the learning experience. Focusing on this enduring understanding may help students consider how assessing works of art can impact the artistic process of creating.

### **Feedback**

This may look like the group collaborating to establish norms for effective communication and rules of engagement for critique, and then applying them to a discourse while examining works of art. Students can then use the feedback to shape their own artistic choices. As opposed to a discussion focused solely on looking at works of art on technical or expressive merit, intentionally adding the SEL component makes the learning experience richer and more meaningful.

### **Beneficial Tool**

The Framework is a tool that can help educators shape learning experiences and ensure that specific social emotional skills are intentionally being addressed at a developmentally appropriate level, thereby enriching and deepening the arts learning. There are many right ways for educators to engage with the Framework to benefit their students. Exploration and getting to know the Framework will help make it organic to individual teaching styles and contexts. Stay tuned for next month’s Heart of the Arts Brief where Shawna Longo and Scott Edgar discuss how to implement the Framework at a classroom level.



## References

Introduction to 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards-Visual and Performing Arts: [https://njartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/NJSLS\\_VPA\\_INTRODUCTION.pdf](https://njartsstandards.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/NJSLS_VPA_INTRODUCTION.pdf)

National Core Arts Standards (NCAS): <https://www.nationalartsstandards.org/>

The Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework: <https://selarts.org/?reqp=1&reqr>

The Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning Core Competencies ( The CASEL 5): <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>

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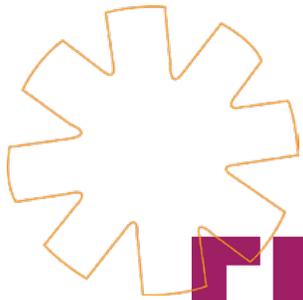


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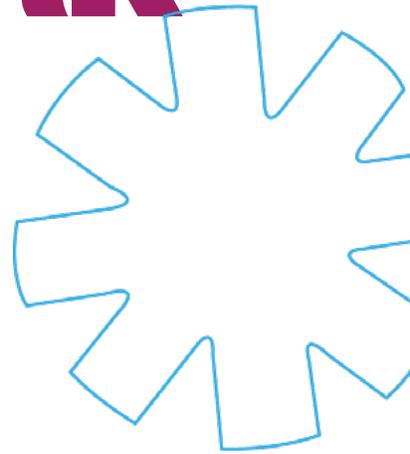
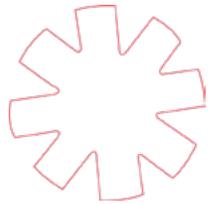
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# **EMBEDDING THE FRAMEWORK**





## Embedding the Framework for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning

Shawna Longo, Music Teacher & Arts Integration Specialist, Hopatcong Borough Schools  
and Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D., Director of Practice and Research



### \* Academic Standards

When teachers first look at a set of standards some view it as a map to explore and deepen teaching practice; however, some see it as a daunting set of tasks to check off. The Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Framework is no different. It can be intimidating to look at all of the intersections and crossroads, feeling pressure to teach it all.

### \* Relationships and Goals

SEL must be about relationships, always and intentionally embedding SEL into the arts classroom means taking ownership and agency of these standards in a culturally-relevant way. Interpretation, integration, and embodying this work in an organic way is necessary to furthering both artistic and SEL goals. If the Framework is seen as a set of boxes to check off, we are doing more harm than good and relegating our identity, belonging, and agency work as something to rush through to get to something else. SEL in our classrooms is not something that we must get through to get to the arts work, it must be the process and product embedded throughout.

### \* Connection to the Curriculum

Although we may start the process of intentionally embedding SEL into our arts classrooms through the work of revising our curriculum and lesson plans, this is not where it ends. This is just the beginning. It is no secret that many times, if not most, our curriculum lives as a document that we visit once when it is fresh and revised, but then falls by the wayside as time passes, only to return to our habits informed by how we were taught. By treating SEL as a sustained teaching and learning practice, we move away from checking the box that we completed our SEL lesson for the year. This then provides the opportunity to create authentic, natural connections with our students while promoting a positive and supportive classroom culture. The Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework serves as a resource to gain practical ideas for embedding as well as to see the natural connections that exist between SEL and the arts. SEL through the arts not only assists in providing students with authentic experiences to practice the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness,

relationship skills, and responsible decision making, but also assists the teacher with classroom routines and adaptation of instruction. When intentionally embedding SEL into teaching processes, cultivating a positive classroom culture where ALL students feel supported, heard, and valued emerges.

### \* Being a Part of the Classroom

When SEL is a part of classroom culture it can take on many roles and look different depending on the intent as well as the moment. There are times when SEL instruction is intentionally planned out ahead of time. It is documented in a lesson plan and serves to help drive instruction making direct connections to the arts concept(s) being taught that day and the SEL Competencies through the Arts Education and SEL Framework. And, even though one may plan out SEL instruction it may, and probably will, evolve as it is taught. As professionals, teachers have an idea of how a lesson will play out in the classroom, but we can't always predict everything. Students come to the classroom bringing in outside experiences that may have occurred during a previous class or at home. Educators never

truly know what to expect! But, that's one of the joys of teaching! Sometimes those unplanned and unexpected moments bring about the best teaching and learning experiences in a classroom. Educators need to approach every class with flexibility and an openness to whatever may come their way. And sometimes all it takes is the third or fourth time teaching the same lesson for a light bulb to go off that sparks a new approach or connection to a topic or concept. Educators cannot be afraid to follow those teachable moments because one never knows where it might lead!

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Photo Credit: Shawna Longo, Music Teacher & Arts Integration Specialist, Hopatcong Borough Schools



## Embedding SEL Into the Arts Classroom

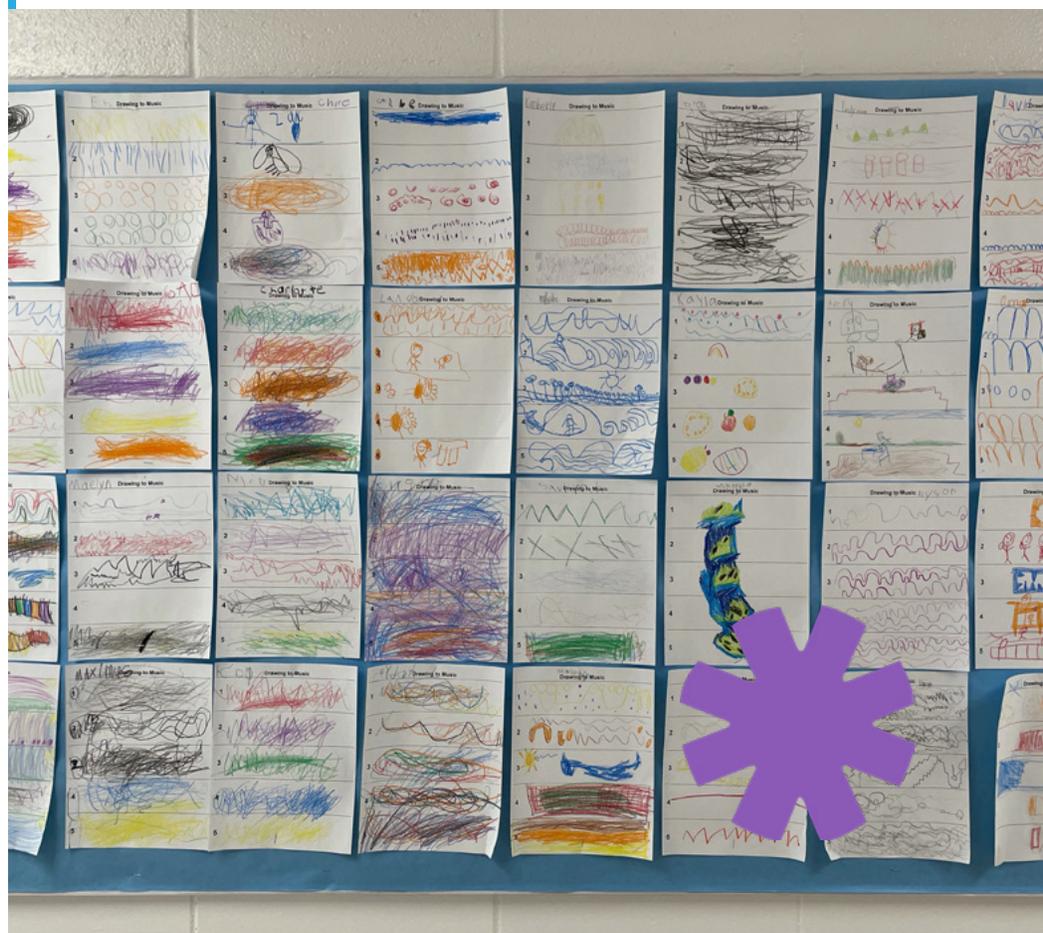
One example of an SEL lesson that was planned ahead of time and linked to the Arts Education and SEL Framework can be found in the following plan. This lesson was inspired by a TeachRock lesson and can be found in its original state at: <https://teachrock.org/lesson/drawing-music-hearing-colors-seeing-sounds/>

In this lesson, students created kinesthetic drawings based on five very different songs in terms of tempo, style, and emotional response. Seeing the students move with the music as they drew and made specific choices in the crayons they would use

tied to their emotional response was a powerful experience. And, it's not just about listening and drawing. The true connections between SEL, Music, and Visual Art in this lesson occurred when the students explained their choices (REFLECTION). Their discussions included various elements of music that they heard, the emotions that they felt, and various elements of visual art through the lines and colors they chose. This highly effective, authentic lesson can also be adapted for other arts disciplines. Students could show their emotional response through movement (dance) and/or improvisation (theatre).



## Student Examples of Kinesthetic Drawings





# Sample Lesson Plan Template Utilizing the Framework

## Lesson Outline: K-1, Music & Visual Art

### Arts Standard/Performance Expectations:

- **Music:** 1.3A.2.Cn11a. Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
- **Music:** 1.3A.2.Pr4a. Demonstrate and explain personal interest in, knowledge about, and purpose of varied musical selections.
- **Visual Art:** 1.5.2.Cr1b. Engage in individual and collaborative art making through observation and investigation of the world, and in response to personal interests and curiosity.

### Grade-Band SEL Competency:

**Self-Awareness:** Recognize one's feelings and thoughts.

### Student Learning Objectives:

- Know how to use the senses as a tool for inspiration.
- Demonstrate the role of the senses in visual art & synthetic principles through drawing to music and critical analysis.
- Create 5 drawings focusing on how a piece of music makes them feel and what colors/lines/kinesthetic response are made through drawing.

### Assessments:

**Discussion and Analysis:** Students answers to discussion prompts connecting their emotional response to the music and how that inspires their visual art creations.

**AND**

**Performance Task:** Create kinesthetic drawings while actively listening to five pieces of music in contrasting styles and with 5 different emotional responses.



## Enduring Understandings:

**Music/Visual Art:** The creative ideas, concepts, and feelings that influence musicians'/artists' work emerge from a variety of sources.

**Arts & SEL:** Recognizing the impact of one's feelings and thoughts on the creative process.

## Essential Questions:

**Music/Visual Art:** How do musicians/artists generate creative ideas?

**Arts & SEL:** How does the awareness of one's strengths, challenges, feelings, and thoughts influence the generation of creative ideas?

## Resources:

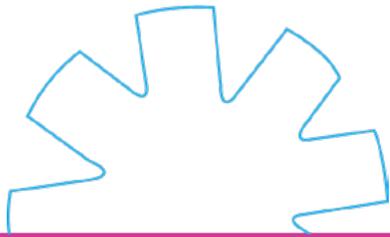
<https://teachrock.org/lesson/drawing-music-hearing-colors-seeing-sounds/> (original/ inspiration lesson that was adapted for younger students)

## Adaptations:

This lesson could be easily adapted for Grades 2-12 in the choice of music (songs) played, art that is created (varied materials) and the discussion questions.

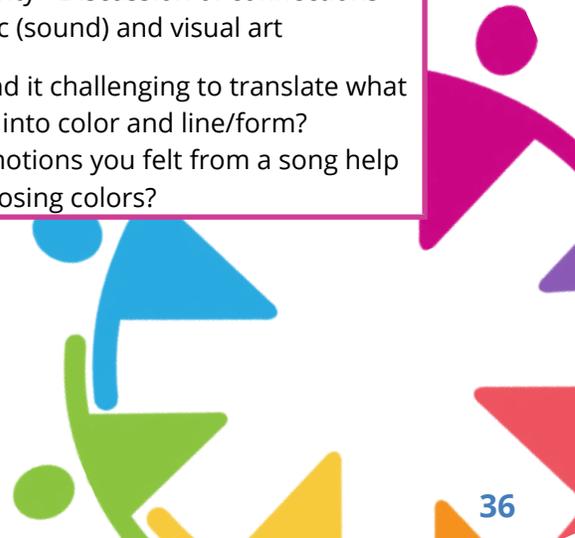
## Learning Experience Sequence:

- Introduce lesson: **Drawing to Music**
- Review elements of visual art: line, shape, space, color, texture by having students experiment with each element using crayons and paper.
- Discuss synesthesia (hearing colors, seeing sounds)
  - Occurs when a painter translates sound to color, or a musician who might hear sounds when they see color, or a chef might correlate smell with color
  - Watch example of synesthesia - *Symphony No. 5 from Fantasia 2000 (Disney)* - [YOUTUBE](#)
- How does the music go with the animation (visual)?



## Learning Experience Sequence (cont.):

- Discuss/Analyze - *Live Kinetic Painting to "The Sea" (Jura) by M.K. Ciurlionis, by Norman Perryman*
  - Ask students to focus on how the music and art interrelate in the clip.
  - In what ways do you think Perryman's painting might reflect elements of the music that is playing?
  - In what ways might some elements of music and visual art share properties?
- Do you think that there is a "right" way to paint music? How might you approach a painting if you were in Perryman's position?
- Listen & Draw: Exploring synesthesia as a way to use music for inspiration in visual arts and to express emotions.
  - Students will visually respond to 5 music genres through 5 song snippets of approximately 60 seconds each. Students will then have 30 seconds to draw after the song has finished playing.
  - Encourage students to "feel" each song quickly - use color, line, and rhythm to draw what comes to mind while listening.
- Compare Creations and Discuss Drawings:
  - Do you see any patterns between your drawings and those of others?
  - Are any of the drawings different in how the music was interpreted? What might make 2 artists respond to sound so differently?
- Summary Activity - Discussion of connections between music (sound) and visual art
  - Did you find it challenging to translate what you heard into color and line/form?
  - Did the emotions you felt from a song help you in choosing colors?



## Following Teachable Moments

Another way SEL can occur as a sustained practice is through following teachable moments. In order for these teachable moments to occur, the teacher needs to have developed a relationship with their students. This relationship has a direct connection to a positive classroom culture that fosters flexibility and student voice/choice. It will give the teacher and students space to ask tough questions, potentially changing the direction of the lesson, allowing the teacher to follow through with the teachable moment. Teachable moments can occur at any time. One example of following a teachable moment occurred during a Kdg/Grade 1 General Music lesson on loud and soft. The class was playing a game using the song, *Impuku Nekati*. In the song, the lyrics state, “the cat and mouse are crying.” A student made an observation asking, “why does the song make me feel happy, but the lyrics talk about crying?” The teacher in turn immediately asked the class, “have you ever cried when you were happy?” Another student responded, “yes, happy tears!” and gave an example. A discussion then ensued about when and where we might experience tears of joys. This connection was not planned. It took flexibility to adapt and follow the teachable moment that opened up the way for an amazing

conversation and authentic SEL-driven moment. We, as teachers, can’t think of everything and our students have so much to offer us every single day if we are open to listening.

## Have Courage to Embed SEL in the Arts Classroom

Many arts classrooms strive to have artistic excellence; however, a “clean performance” or “technically accurate drawing” rarely captures the connection between the student artists’ lives and the artistic process. To elevate the arts education processes beyond traditional excellence requires courage to explore our students’ lives and facilitate this connection. This can be a new approach to teaching and thoughts of “taking time away from teaching the arts” arise. By embracing the connections between the National Core Arts Standards and the core competencies of SEL made explicit in the Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning Framework, it ceases to be an either/or scenario. The arts are enhanced through this process and students’ identity, sense of belonging, and agency are prioritized so the student is at the center of our work. Embracing the essential questions and enduring understandings is the first step to broadening arts education to embrace the lived experience of our students.



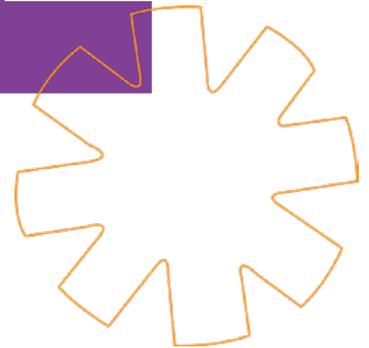
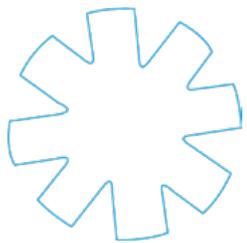
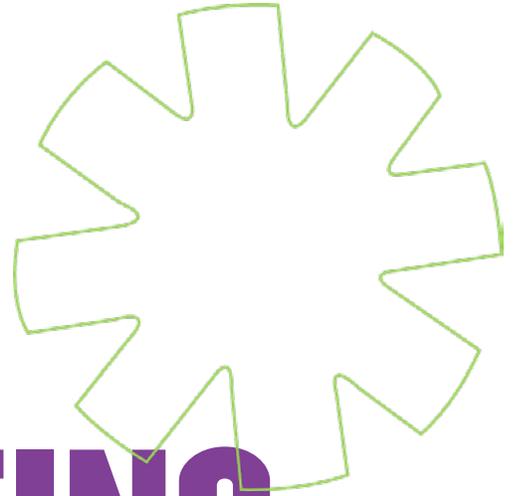
DURBAN AVENUE SCHOOL  
**DRAWING TO MUSIC**

SHAWNA LONGO, MUSIC TEACHER



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**NAVIGATING  
ARTISTIC  
SEL**





## On the Road Again: Using the Arts as a Vehicle for Students' Social Emotional Learning

Adrienne R. Hill, Principal Hedgepeth/Williams Middle School of Arts,  
Trenton Public Schools, Trenton, New Jersey



*"An arts education helps to **build academic skills and increase academic performance**, while also providing **alternative opportunities** to reward the skills of children who learn differently."*

- Gavin Newsom

### \* Potholes or Other Driving Distractions

As Principal of Hedgepeth/Williams Middle School of Arts, I anticipate that the driving of instruction this fall may prove to be the biggest pothole educators have encountered in modern times. Students have suffered tremendous losses over the last year and a half with no means of reinflating their educational or social tires. At every academic level, students have been damaged down to the rim. The amount of new stress and trauma experienced by children, adolescents and young adults has been potentially derailing for most and provided a jumpstart for a much smaller number. If deliberate and concerted efforts to get our students and schools

back up and running do not begin soon, educators will transform into a fleet of tow trucks and schools into salvage yards, forced to find ways to "restore" students. We know from research the negative impact that stress could have on students. Those possible outcomes include: a reduction in student motivation— "drive" (academic and personal), an increased risk of school dropout, high risk for depression and anxiety, poor decision making, and/or poor coping skills (Active Minds, 2020).

Until recently, the visual and performing arts have taken a back seat to other content areas. These other areas tend to be the ones that are nationally or locally tested and crucial to the students' meeting of promotion or graduation requirements. While students will likely benefit from their promotions, they may eventually be cheated of the opportunities that having a well-rounded education through the arts may offer.

Following a year of quarantining and the loss of not only precious academic hours, but also of physical losses, it has become increasingly necessary to integrate social and emotional learning

into students' regular instruction. Students (and staff) have been left to emotionally fend for themselves throughout the year of remote teaching and learning. In my role as a school leader and action researcher, school-specific use of student surveys, questions, and regular inquiries have revealed that students may heal from trauma caused by incidents like the pandemic. How might a school welcome an arts integrated approach to social and emotional healing? Such a shift in curriculum and instructional strategies requires out-of-the-box thinking and creativity. With this in mind and using the following analogy, let us use the arts as a vehicle to drive healing-centered engagement and stress management.

### \* Shifting Gears

According to Brian Kisida and Daniel H. Bowen (2019), the increase in standardized testing may be a contributing factor to the decreased opportunity for students to receive arts education. It would appear that educators and education decision-makers (not usually one in the same) place more emphasis on destination "grades and scores" as opposed



to the teaching and learning processes. This is evidenced by teachers' usage of phrases like, "I have to cover so much content" or "I'm not going to waste time teaching information that won't be assessed on the state tests". Some non-Arts educational professionals have forgotten about their purpose for teaching and have resorted to filling a prescription for regurgitation of information via filling in circles on answer sheets. We need to shift gears and reconnect core content areas with arts content and strategies.



## ✨ Intersections & Crosswalks

Arts Integration (AI) has been defined as an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject area and meets evolving objectives in both (The Kennedy Center). For example, at Hedgpepeth/Williams Middle School of the Arts in Trenton, New Jersey, students and staff engage in a monthly or bi-monthly "Genius Hour" session. The sessions are based upon Arts teachers' (Dance, Drama, Music, or Art) and other core content teachers' areas of expertise along with

students' interests. Together, the educators create dual standards-aligned projects. Even during the pandemic, the teachers engaged in virtual Genius Hour projects called Kaleidoscope, as evidenced in the photos seen below (last page).

There is a growing movement in education to revive arts instruction in school and to integrate it into daily practices not only for non-arts content, but also for use as a tool for addressing social and emotional learning (SEL). In recent years, there has been extensive research and efforts to define what arts integration truly is and how it might be used to support healing to school aged

children and adolescents. The findings in some cases are that most teachers utilize some sort of arts in their classes, but many do not have a clear grasp of what Arts Integration is or how to use it to promote students' deeper understanding of concepts. A reality is that the arts are able to bridge gaps between teaching and learning. The Kennedy Center has identified 3 basic categories to express the variations of arts in schools. They are Arts as Curriculum, Arts-Enhanced Curriculum and Arts-Integrated Curriculum.

- Arts as Curriculum: Students develop knowledge and skills in a particular art form.

## Imagine (or reimagine) that schools became places that...

- Hosted a performing arts show on the first day of school.
- Encouraged staff members to don costumes of the school's mascot.
- Offered proactive social and emotional guidance to students at the onset of each day. Students recite a pledge and/or affirmations to be and do their best.
- Acknowledges and celebrates student and staff birthdays.
- Promote that staff greets students with a smile and asks them how they were doing—at the door.
- Has Science classes which consist of digital theatrical set and lighting design.
- Social Studies students are not just wearing costumes. They are writing and performing historical scripts.
- Security or custodial staff noticed when students got a haircut, new shoes or glasses.
- Hugs and High-fives are exchanged between students and the cafeteria staff. (Pre-pandemic)
- Quality teaching and obvious caring inspires students to rush to class on time.

- **Arts-Enhanced Curriculum:** When the arts are used as a device or strategy to support other curriculum areas, but no objectives in the art form are explicit, then the approach is called Arts-Enhanced Curriculum.
- **Arts-Enhanced Curriculum** is often mistaken for Arts-Integrated Curriculum or a distinction is not made between the two.
- **Arts-Integrated Curriculum:** In Arts-Integrated Curriculum, the arts become the approach to teaching and the vehicle for learning. Students meet dual

learning objectives when they engage in the creative process to explore connections between an art form and another subject area to gain greater understanding in both.

SEL and the arts are a logical partnership as the arts traditionally involve cathartic elements and outlets for emotions or feelings. The Framework for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning ([www.selarts.org](http://www.selarts.org)) identifies the crosswalk between other content and arts content areas as a marriage of essential skills:

- The 4 Artistic Processes: Creating, Performing, Responding and Connecting
- The 5 Social-Emotional Learning Competencies: Self-awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Responsible Decision-Making, and Relationship Skills

Our school-based research suggests that with the arts at the center of learning, most other areas of growth and development may be achieved (i.e., ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science, Character Ed, STEAM, Design-Thinking, SEL, Problem-Solving and even Physical Education).



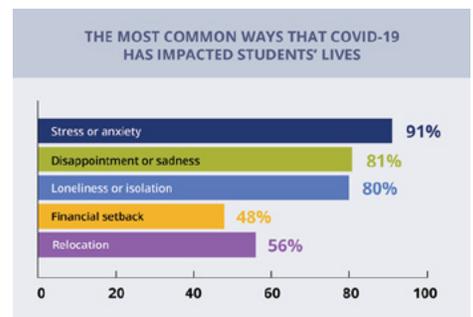
## \* Routes & Navigation

The key to addressing students' social emotional challenges using the arts requires a clear road map. The ultimate destination as outlined in the school's mission must be made clear so that everyone knows where the car is headed. An effective leader will ensure that everyone is gassed up for the trip. Checkpoints and

rest stops should be built into the implementation plan. Activities to occur at each stop should be identified and/or suggested. This map may include "streets" to avoid and road signs to look for as guidance. Addressing students' SEL teaching or successfully integrating the arts into daily instruction are no easy task alone so combining them both may present many challenges (and possibly fears). Pedestrian attitudes are not allowed on this journey. Safety belts (Counselors) must be worn throughout the entire ride because as students begin to connect with their most vulnerable selves, emotions will begin to leak from them disguised as songs, dances, music, theatre and visual art. Be sure to have a first aid kit handy that is equipped to treat the variety of trauma that may rise to the surface. According to a recent survey, 55% of all students surveyed did not know where to go for help for their mental health. One of the best steps to reopening schools that leaders could make is to provide mental health supports and resources for students (and staff) as they try to navigate paths to success and wellness through the arts.

## \* What Might Safe Driving Look Like?

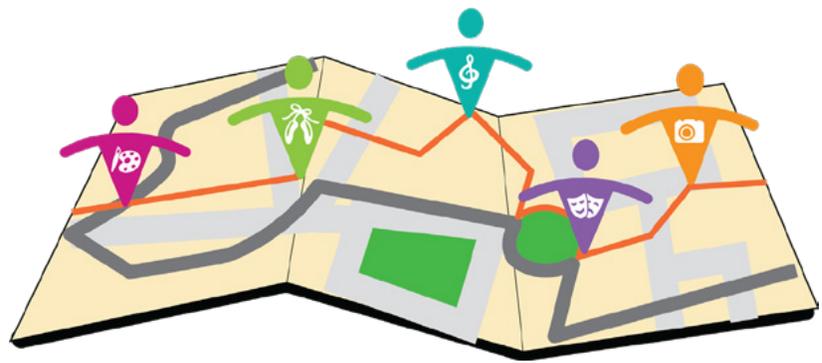
- An educator using the arts processes to build students' emotional vocabulary
- Arts teachers collaborating with school counselors/social workers to design meaningful dual standards-based SEL lessons/activities.
- Students using creativity to express feelings, emotions and ideas (i.e. sketching, role-playing, songwriting, poetry...)
- Students using dance to express lines, angles, perspective(s) and relationships



## Call AAA (Arts Assistance Allies)

Shifting gears, avoiding potholes and navigating uncharted social emotional avenues via music, art, dance, and drama is a seemingly insurmountable challenge that should not be addressed in a silo. There are organizations like ArtsEdSEL and local arts institutions that are eager to help you along your SEL Arts trip. Arts and mental health partners like NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) may be the safest routes to addressing this SEL Arts approach. The reality is that students' cars have been parked at home for too long and quite frankly, they have forgotten how to drive. When faced with any potential barrier or an after-crash, many students have limited problem-solving (safety) gear, and they therefore yield to their emotions.

Looking in the rearview mirror of the 2020-2021 school year, leaders (educational, political, religious, community...) must put in place mental health safeguards and arts supports to insure and ensure students' well-being.



## Here are some tips for “first time Arts & SEL drivers”:

- Read and heed the signs of student (and staff) trauma.
- Create and follow a road map: avoid side streets. Stay focused on the mission.
- When extreme stress is detected, pump your breaks and tier the levels of arts and SEL supports offered.
- Do not speed through the processes of integrating SEL structures or Arts Integration strategies.
- Establish an in-house department of motor vehicles to help steer drivers towards the wellness end goal(s).
- Join a carpool by enlisting community partners with goals that are aligned to your school or district. Share the ride to the common destination.
- Tailgating is permitted and encouraged: Don't Reinvent the Wheel. Research already exists to help navigate across the highways and byways of integrated Arts and SEL programming.
- The newness of the arts vehicle may promote some staff defensive driving. Introduce new strategies and offer meaningful Drivers ArtsEd (PD). It may take longer for some to earn their learner's permits. Be patient. The goal is not to add stress but to alleviate it.
- Remember that school leaders and staff have been Driving Under the Influence (DUI) of state standardized testing for years.
- Be mindful of your emissions (emotions)—what you are putting out. Messaging about importance, urgency, value and support for Arts and SEL integration is key to getting on the road again.
- There may be detours ahead disguised as mandates and regulations, but belief in the impact of the Arts and SEL on students' success will help to go the distance.
- Stay the course. In the end, students and staff will benefit from the implementation of both SEL and Arts training, strategies, resources and support.

# Hedgepeth/Williams MS of the Arts Students Trenton, NJ

Pre-Pandemic

During Pandemic

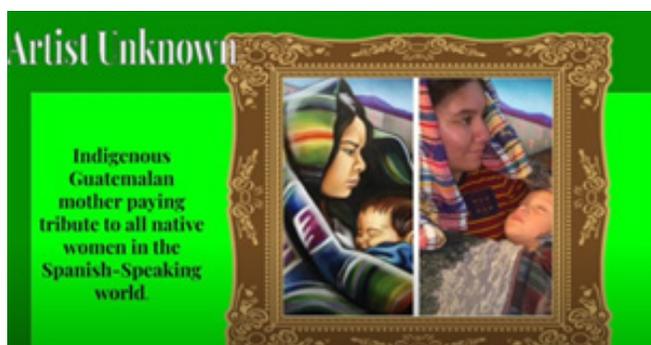


Prior to the pandemic, Hedgepeth/Williams MS of the Arts students and staff were engaged in a variety of Arts Integration activities that promoted self-understanding and freedom of expression. During the pandemic, students were encouraged to explore and share their feelings through visual art.



Kayona T.  
Social Justice (Year 8)

Josue A.  
Social Justice (Year 8)



Remote Arts Integration Project 20-21 SY—World Language (predominantly Spanish speaking) students were tasked with researching famous aspects of Latino culture and art. They selected famous works of art and celebrities from the Spanish-speaking world and recreated them as personal portraits using items from their homes.

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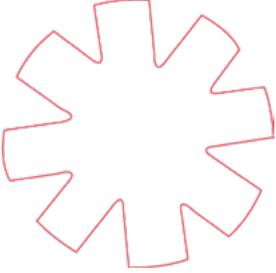
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**CULTIVATING  
STUDENT  
EMPOWERMENT**





## Cultivating Student Empowerment Through Artistic SEL

Yorel Lashley, Ph.D.  
Director, Student Empowerment



### ✨ What is SEL for Student Empowerment?

Social and emotional learning (SEL) means equipping ourselves to be whole people who have a healthy, functional awareness of ourselves (Identity) and meaningful connections to others that allow us to make positive contributions to our communities (Belonging), as well as have power over our lives (Agency). Positive self-identity facilitates building and maintaining healthy relationships and necessary connections to others which, in turn, form solid foundations that propel students to serve themselves and their communities through decisions and action.

Thus, the final goal for educators is supporting students to achieve this sense of empowerment that leads to agency and action. So how do we get there through the arts? We embrace and build our classrooms and arts learning processes to be opportunities and safe spaces for students to practice SEL as well as develop and apply agency and critical thinking. Arts educators deeply know the value and nuances of processed-focused work because our disciplines require developing skills, awarenesses, sensibilities, practice habits, routines, personal goals, reflection, honest self-assessment and joy over time. We know that young artists need this focus on process over products,

and that honoring this purpose requires time and consistent care. This means asserting that embedded, intentional and sustained practices, routines and development opportunities is not just one way, but the only way forward.

### ✨ Embedded Student Empowerment Teaching

Just as with all teaching, aligning content, priorities and pedagogical decisions in service of student empowerment starts with deep thinking on both the outcomes we want for students as experiences and skills, and the opportunities your skills and content area provide.

### ✨ Start with a few key questions and let them guide your curriculum and routine development:

What are the decisions and leadership roles that cannot be fulfilled by students? We most often start with asking the opposite question: "where students can take the lead?" which builds in the assumption that that will be the exception rather than the rule. If we work from assuming more student leadership than teacher leadership we are more likely to create that environment.

What are the key choices and

tasks required in the subject I teach? Can students make these choices and execute these tasks?

And what are the SEL competencies needed to thrive and grow in the art form we are learning and exploring? What community, cultural and experiential knowledge do students bring with them about these ideas and how can I create a comfortable safe space to lift up that knowledge?

How will these SEL competencies live in our routines and how will students direct that work? How can students define and pursue their own learning goals through the art form you are teaching? How can you engage students as co-creators and co-teachers?

What role will students have in regularly teaching one another and YOU?

How will you create or co-create regular daily and weekly routines with students where they can engage in exercises and conversations that direct lesson planning and implementation?



## ✿ Intentional Student Empowerment

It is also essential that teachers be explicit and intentional in forecasting, practicing and reinforcing SEL skill development in and through the arts, and all learning. Students learn when to use SEL skills when they experience and are aware of their positive impact on their lives--what psychologists have termed metacognition. Since teachers prepare students for life, the lessons learned need to be understood beyond the specific contexts and examples we teach so that students make broader connections that will facilitate applying them later in different situations.

To illustrate what intentional SEL looks like I offer the case of [Drum Power](#), a youth program I founded in 2001, in New York City, that I taught in public schools and community centers all over the city. The program teaches West African,

Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian drumming to practice what we termed life skills then, but now know as SEL. To date, more than 3900 students have come through Drum Power in NYC, Madison, Wisconsin and Denver Colorado. For me, centering the whole child meant providing a space to practice and learn life skills through developing drumming skills.

To be intentional we always help students set goals for themselves to elevate the work toward student empowerment. We challenge students to be the architects of their own plans to address the following guiding questions:

### ✿ Who do you want to be?

- What kind of person do you want to be for yourself and for those you care about?

### ✿ What are you doing to get there?

- What are you doing now and more importantly, what are you going to do from this day forward?



An excellent example of fully embedded student empowerment is the [Kid Nation Education](#) program created by Iris Patterson, Teacher Leader in the Madison Metropolitan School District in Wisconsin. Patterson has empowered her students to teach all the core curricula to one another by adapting the content and instructional materials to be led and delivered by students. Students form districts of learners which function as pods or learning families and they elect fellow students to lead each district. They hold one another accountable while sharing responsibility for encouraging and bringing one another along as learners. Patterson's curricular approach is featured in the student empowerment module of the [Building the SEL Classroom](#) course viewable at this [link](#).



We often have open discussions and regular check-ins on these questions where students can depend on receiving supportive, non-judgmental feedback from the class community. Students also get to belong to a community around music skill development, personal growth and creative

collaboration. However, intentionally building and maintaining a space of student empowerment begins with addressing important questions that must lead to systems, consistent routines and regular student opportunities.

## Sustained Student Empowerment

As presented above, being intentional about embedding SEL in arts skill development and learning community practices is done most effectively with consistency students can both count on and lead. This means the work is most effective when it is sustained, ever-present and grounded in the learning culture. However, since the culture of each classroom consists of contributions and experiences from all its members, sustained youth empowerment requires honoring the identities and cultural realities and riches all the students bring with them.

Culture is what students bring with them as who they are; and every student has culture: youth culture (hip hop for example), ethnic backgrounds, communities, histories, and experiences. In building an SEL-based learning environment we make spaces for culture(s) to live--which means spaces that nurture and sustain it like a plant with consistency through our routines, not through show and tell activities once or twice. Learning is relevant when it is applicable and learning is applicable when students can see, experience and determine how it facilitates the goals they have for themselves--and that leads to engagement and ultimately, vitality.

Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings offered that "Culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture," (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.19). If we apply that definition to implementing SEL, selecting and translating broader SEL



### The following questions are starting points for making student empowerment intentional:

- What are your intentions for your students? What power do you want them to have access to? What should the ideas they explore and the skills they develop in your class enable them to do both as artists and as people?
- What does it mean to be powerful in this classroom/activity space?
- How can students influence shaping it? Ask them what it means to be powerful in this space and let them lead.
  - When and how will reflection be student-led?
  - What teacher behaviors will allow students to remain empowered and which will not?
- What guiding questions might you ask students to inspire and develop their own goals for personal growth?
- How will you make SEL goals, growth and skills explicit through arts activities/learning?

This [PBS feature](#) on Drum Power provides more detail on the program.





competencies must include connecting them to student life experiences, interests, values and personal goals, as well as language and meanings they understand. This is when we translate selected skills, competencies or pursuits (Muhammad, 2020) into language and experience that is owned by students, which means engaging them as the knowledge experts. Or further, we make space and get out the way so that students exercise power over how learning happens, what is deemed valuable knowledge and finally, what is actually learned.



## The following questions are ways to begin grounding sustained student empowerment:

What class activities will regularly allow students to incorporate their cultural identities into individual OR group content learning?

What routines will you use for students to regularly introduce and explore their own thoughts, interests and topics for group discussion in deeper ways?

How will the individual cultural identities and shared experiences be used to forge a shared community identity? How will art be used to do that? How will students lead that work?

In summary, when I observe classrooms to support educators I don't look for compliance nor assume that just because a class is quiet and orderly that students are engaged and empowered. I look for vitality which can be present as a range of behaviors from quiet intense focus, to the laughter and smiles of joyful work with a purpose. Supporting such an arts environment requires structure and commitment to protecting everyone's safety, learning and joy through shared agreements, collaboration and student leadership. Working to intentionally embed and sustain student ownership is not just the path to student empowerment, it is also the only way to prepare students to be the stewards of their own futures as well as our own.



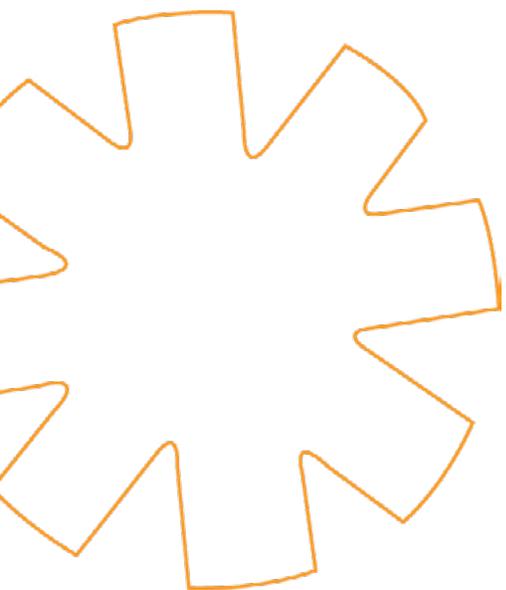
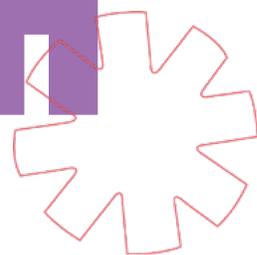
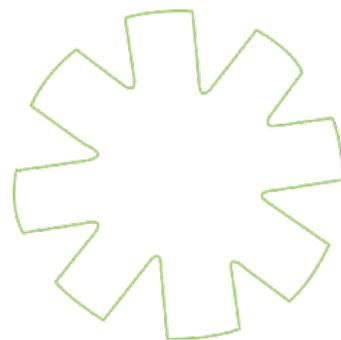
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# A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH





## Brave Spaces: How to Empower Staff and Students via SEL and a Trauma-Informed Approach

By Angela Schendel Keedy, University of Northern Colorado, DA Candidate, Practice Advisory Board Member, ArtsEdSel

Courtney Powers, Music Director South Philadelphia High School, BA Berklee College of Music, MA Villanova University

Lynna Russell, MM, Boston College



*"Don't give up on us - we need just one human to show grace and compassion so we can heal together."*

...

Student Quote

Over the past year we have experienced large scale stress and strain on the education system. All of the wonderful concerts, performance opportunities, art shows, theater productions, and dance recitals were replaced with endless Zoom classes and stretching our brains to be more creative and engaging than we ever have been before. While the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the education system, it is not the only large scale interruption that can happen at a school. Natural disasters such as tornadoes or floods, violence in our communities, and a cessation of safety net resources such as unemployment are all events that can happen to many families. All

of these events can lead to trauma in our schools for all stakeholders. We are going to examine trauma through three different lenses: that of a school administrator, that of an arts teacher, and that of our students.

Trauma is defined as "an event that threatens injury, death, or the physical integrity of self or others and also causes horror, terror, or helplessness at the time it occurs" (American Psychological Association, 2011). Trauma resides on a continuum and is different for each person.

An event that causes trauma for one person may not for another. It is common for some of our students/staff each year to experience trauma. Our challenge, for the foreseeable future, is that large groups of stakeholders (including teachers and support staff) have a higher probability of having experienced at least one traumatic event. How can school leaders help our students and our staff? We need to address this challenge systemically.

*"There are teachers in my school that say their space is safe- but it is false. I want to yell 'HEY you just yelled at us and now you want to ask me about my feelings!' We have these circle activities at school and it is super fun with some teachers, but with others it's like why am I even here in this class. They make me feel like not coming to class."*

...

Schools that already have Social Emotional Learning (SEL) embedded into their classrooms are set up to succeed as trauma-informed schools. Embedded SEL instruction in all classrooms helps give students identity and belonging. Building in similar systems for teachers and staff also increases job satisfaction and staff retention. Trauma-informed schools take SEL a step further and implement specific additional guidelines in anticipation of needs, instead of in reactionary ways to help those that have experienced trauma.

"I really like the staff vs. student activities. It gets our minds focused on the students that make up our school family. We have group Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) with different groups of staff members and run circles and SEL activities as teachers. Some get into it, some don't, but we all feel seen and heard," said one staff member when asked about SEL activities. The key to implementation is to use common, research-based practices building-wide with intentionality (Embedded, Intentional, Sustained). Schools and their leaders can use basic school-wide guidelines to help those experiencing trauma:



- **Frequently** evaluate to ensure that the school environment is welcoming to all
- **Prioritize** positive adult-student relationships daily
- **Ensure** that students and staff know that you "see" them every day by using their name and making proper eye contact
- **Establish** consistent routines that all stakeholders can count on to be predictable
- **Prepare** a system and a space for stakeholders to regulate their emotions and transition back to class with dignity
- **Ask** for help when you notice a child/staff member needs additional supports

*Sometimes as school leaders, in our preparation to "solve" a problem, we forget to really listen deeply to those we serve. Student voice, otherwise known as agency in social emotional learning, is an incredibly powerful tool when trying to understand trauma from the student's perspective.*

As the teacher above noted, the same tools can be used for staff members to get to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. Darlene Machacon has used the phrase "Brave Space" to describe our trauma informed teaching spaces. In a recent study seeking to capture student voices, we discovered their perceptions of trauma. Take a close look at a few of the actual student responses:

## Defining Trauma

### How do you define trauma?

Something that affected you in your past life, such as an accident, abuse, bullying etc, and I think that people are left thinking a lot, they get panic attacks.

Something happened to you, the aftermath would be you scared or sad when reminded of that event.

A shock emotion because it is an emotional response to a terrible event or something.



### How does music/art help you through a traumatic time?

I get anxiety attacks that are triggered by past traumas and, as cheesy as it sounds, I like to put on music to dance it out. It's a safe and positive form of self care.

Music, no matter the genre, can be very comforting, especially when the music is associated with a good memory.

I feel as though music helps release emotion and personally when I am going through an upsetting time I often look for lyrics in the song that relate to my situation.

It takes the pain away and lets you be yourself in your own world.

Students need the support of caring, compassionate and collaboration of all teachers. In the arts we have students for multiple years and are therefore uniquely advantaged to be a witness to the student's journey over time. Many of us are that one teacher that the students love and colleagues may be envious of but that is ok- they have their 'kids' too.

*"I was shot during the COVID pandemic and **school was the last thing on my mind.** It is **hard for me to relate** to my teachers because they seem to have a perfect life- I've never seen them act like my mom when she is stressed. **How can I talk to someone who will just judge me and put blame and pressure on me? That's why I come to you- you listen and care.**"*

That is a powerful statement from a student who could be right in your school- down the hall- acting out- punching- angry- too social- talking back- depression- any of the behaviors that are unacceptable, worrisome or out of character for that student-- that is their snap. We all have one, that breaking point that sends you to the edge. "Don't cry over spilled milk" is a common phrase for when there is no point to cry over something that can not change. But what about what led you to cry over spilled milk? Was it just the milk or the mountain of other things on your mind? Here are what some students say about their 'snap.'

### What does your 'snap' look like when you are upset?

I don't ever get mad, but when I have my attacks, I start to dissociate and cry while my mind races with thoughts that never stop.

I usually get overwhelmed and develop a sort of attitude towards everyone, and I might not be able to communicate very well in general.

My snap either looks like silent treatment and me shutting down, or me talking and expressing my emotions.

Usually I cry in the bathroom.

### What do you want teachers to do when you are having a bad day?

Just put yourself in our shoes. We know we might seem ridiculous but really we just need you to understand we can't control it. Have some sympathy for us and try to understand please.

The last thing I'd wanna do is talk about it. I would personally would just like a little bit of time to clear my mind or put my head down.

Let me be or let me play something to distract myself.

### What do you think about when another student is having a meltdown?

I understand and relate. It doesn't usually trigger me but it helps me be more self aware of my own meltdowns and how it could potentially affect others.

I feel bad for the student, I know how it is and I wouldn't wish a meltdown on anyone. I would just want to help them.

I know what it feels like so most of the time I'll just want to inform anyone to let that person calm down but if he or she gets physically, approach calmly because most of the time people won't mean what they do during that process.

These are powerful statements from our students. Imagine trying to learn when you feel this way on the inside? Trauma responses, or “snaps”, are automatic physiological reactions even after the traumatizing event has ended. In other words, they cannot be easily predicted or controlled, as in our milk example above. While arts teachers are not therapists, many techniques are easily applied to our arts classrooms in addition to social emotional

learning. They require minimal amendments to the current practices and expand options to include a trauma-informed approach.

Students experiencing a “snap” need space to get themselves regulated with dignity so that they can come and be part of our classrooms again. Here are some ideas about how to marry the social emotional learning pillars with a greater focus on deeper trauma informed practices within arts classrooms:

Social Emotional Learning Pillar	Trauma-Informed Practice
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Identity</b> (Self-Awareness &amp; Self-Management)</p>	<p>Providing a brave space for students to experience their emotions</p> <p>Provide physical and emotional safety, including safety from feeling shamed, admonished, or judged</p> <p>Emotional Regulation</p> <p>Teach awareness of breath</p> <p>Begin with a metered breathing practice, such as Breathing Gym</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Belonging</b> (Relationship Skills &amp; Social Awareness)</p>	<p>Curate a sense of community and connection with all class members</p> <p>Become aware of our individual role within the group</p> <p>Become attuned to those around us</p> <p>Avoid blaming or shaming between students in your classrooms</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Agency</b> (Responsible Decision Making)</p>	<p>Students participate with their peers in creating art by making both personal and group choices.</p> <p>Allow for differentiated instruction when needed.</p>

## Trauma Informed Arts Instruction

Activities such as dancing, playing the drums, drawing, or embodying a character in a play are engaging activities that can help a student's brain recenter within the arts classroom. "My mind races and I just don't know what to do- then teachers start yelling that I'm off task and I just can't even remember what I was supposed to be doing, then I get angry because kids laugh- they think I'm stupid, so I would rather hit or yell to get out of the classroom to go calm down. My drama teachers let me dance freely- kids think it's crazy, but it's a release for me and sometimes they join in and laugh in a good way- not bad." With all the trauma lenses we have looked through, what does this mean for you and your arts classroom?

When back in the classroom and someone, even you, becomes overwhelmed, stressed or triggered, try really reading the classroom then take your lesson rogue. Play a song of your choice, perform for students anything you like, free draw on the board, take a 10 min heads down break- show them how to heal. Be an advocate for mental health while showing students a healthy way to deal with stress.



## Pause right now- picture your classroom- ponder on these questions:

- What is something that I can bring to the table today?
- What is the first thing that your students see when they enter the classroom?
- Is this the first period that the students have been free to move?
- Who needs a special wave or acknowledgment for today?

**Students will take notice when you put in the effort.**

*"It was weird at first for my teachers to say good morning to me when they saw me in the halls but it has become my favorite part of the day. When I get the huge good morning, I smile on the inside and sometimes I show it or say it back. I just like to know that I exist."*

*"I love in my teacher's room there is this tree with all the special ornaments students have given them over the years. It's a whole mood' to look at- when I need a break. I like it when we get to bring something special into school like when we were in grade school- it's fun to break away from the rehearsals for a second."*

Student Quotes



The next time you are in your classroom, take a moment—imagine what lens you will be seeing your class through and how you can effect positive change through being a trauma informed teacher. You do not have to live through trauma to be an advocate of SEL- just be mindful of you and your students triggers and, most importantly, your usage of this knowledge.



*"I was very nervous when I started using SEL in my classroom. I had so many 'What-if's' that the thought of a circle was anxiety inducing. But my neighbor teacher gave me the advice that I needed to know who my students were before I tried to go into deep feelings and vulnerability. They suggest a game like categories or a kahoot followed by a writing prompt to literally 'throw away' a negative feeling."*

Anonymous Quote

There are layers, like an onion, to trauma-informed instruction that can be implemented on both the large and small scale. As educators, we peel back the layers of hurt and anguish and then learn to grow and heal together in our schools. That may start with the

core of SEL in the arts classroom. Teacher by teacher, students to administration, all peeling away at the semi translucent layers of harm within the motto of 'WE will make this school better' will have the advantage to see all the agents of positive and negative

change. The accountability of good and bad behaviors by all agents (students, staff, administration) coupled with the reflective approach of changing with non-judgmental attitudes and clear communication is the pillar to start the change we need in our schools.

Remember you just need one person to help the healing process- be that one for yourself and your classroom. Are you that person that never takes lunch? Do you know that person who stays after till 7pm making copies? Self reflection is key and we hope that by employing a trauma-informed lens in your situation, not only can you provide more enriching, memorable, and intentional artful experience for your students, but you also have research-backed advocacy tools at the ready for campus and district administrators.



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**OPERATIONALIZING  
ARTISTIC SEL**





## How Do We Operationalize Artistic-SEL?

Utilizing the STAY Framework for Embedded, Intentional and Sustained Social and Emotional Learning

Yorel Lashley, Ph.D. Director, Student Empowerment

It is well-established that the areas of “self”, “others” and “decisions” are key elements of social and emotional learning (SEL) for student exploration and practice (HotA, Edgar, May 2021). Self includes **identity, culture, personal beliefs and experiences**; Others includes **connections, community, empathy, belonging** and **collaboration** and Decisions includes **agency, goals, power, voice, choices** and **action**.

### *But how do we create an environment to practice these skills?*

We also know that when students create, connect, or respond in any artistic discipline educators can bring SEL competencies to the forefront, if done with intention. For example, we often see collaboration in a chorus, music or theatre classroom, and we may see identity exploration as students create portraits of themselves in a visual arts class, and we have seen that all the arts require responsible decision-making as students choose to try, work and persevere. These SEL skills can

be brought to light as skills students can identify, practice and then aim at their own goals for the short time that they grace our classrooms and especially, after they leave.

### *So how do we make identifying, recognizing and using these skills an intentional aspect of instructional practice and student/teacher reflection?*

We also must guarantee that students experience environments for practicing SEL that are true to life and contextually linked to the relationships, gifts and challenges they actually have. Our work must embed SEL as both learning targets and tools they can intentionally practice using to pursue artistic development that feeds enduring understandings that are sustained reflective journeys for students and teachers as collaborators (Rizzuto, HotA, June 2021).

### *But how do we nurture and maintain a learning environment where SEL is embedded and sustained?*

Finally, we also know that preparing students to be the stewards of their own futures, and ours, requires empowerment. Students will not become the architects of their own plans and goals until they attain agency, self-direction, internal motivation and power. The foundations of those characteristics are feeling seen, heard and valued. This means embracing who they are, the communities they come from, their experiences, and creating space for the elements that make them unique, complex and special to always be present and nurtured like a plant you water daily. We must select, connect and translate SEL competencies into student life experiences, interests, values, personal goals, language and meanings they understand (Lashley, HotA October 2021). Put simply, teaching must be culturally relevant, “using student culture in order to maintain it...” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p.19)

## So how do we apply this important intersection of culture and SEL as well as address the previous questions?

When I became the Director of Arts at UW–Madison’s Office of Professional Learning (PLACE) in the School of Education in 2018 I had just earned a PhD as a developmental psychologist and my research focused on student outcomes in Drum Power, the program I founded in 2001 to use West African, Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban drumming to teach life skills (SEL). I had also been supporting teachers leading professional development sessions around building and maintaining healthy classroom culture, as well as facilitating musical learning and social and emotional skill development and practice in Drum Power Classrooms in New York City, to Denver Colorado and Madison, Wisconsin. After many years of professional learning work and reflection on the cognitive developmental outcomes, theories and analysis of student-derived data around the cycles of learning in my classrooms I conceived the **STAY** framework. It calls for teachers to initiate and guide conversations that center students’ experiences and learning goals to build classrooms where students and teachers journey together in a reflection-driven process to **Select** SEL competencies, **Translate** them into shared commitments and common language, and make them clear, lived behaviors and **Actions** that support **Youth empowerment** for more thoughtful critical students able to seize agency in their lives.

The framework, which I developed into an [asynchronous course](#) where participants create personal implementation plans, walks teachers through SEL as learning to **STAY** in a reflection-driven process--where for S we...

**Select** SEL skills/competencies (like goal setting, self-awareness or leadership) — by asking What do you and your students/children need to learn and practice? And then for T We...

**Translate** those skills/competencies into language, routines, plans and community commitments that students understand. And then for A we...take

**Action** — Good Social emotional learning must come to life as student and teacher behaviors/actions that live in everything we do in class--And finally for Y we support...

**Youth Empowerment** — Good SEL is driven by students to empower them to think critically, and experience the benefits of SEL as a tool for accomplishing the goals they set for themselves, not focused on controlling student behavior.



# STAY Framework

Educators **STAY** in a reflective process to ensure that Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) goals drive toward youth empowerment.



## So this framework allows us to:

- Set priorities for the environment we want to help create/provide
- Develop systems we would use
- Communicate with students very intentionally and based on Pillars/core values and shared definitions of them through clear action beyond value statements
- Teach toward Youth empowerment in service of student vitality and critical thinking
- Integrate SEL and arts integration thinking and behaviors/actions toward student support growth so that students build goals for their own learning.

## Case Study: Drum Power

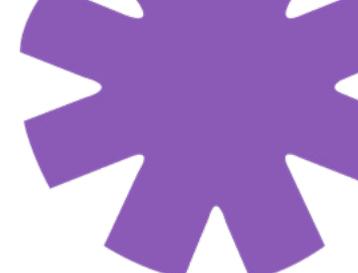
Let's consider how the process of selecting, translating, moving to action and serving youth empowerment looked and evolved for Drum Power as an exemplar for fellow art educators in similar or different disciplines. This is not meant to be a template, however the processes leading to the adoption of the pillars and their function as core values and intentional, embedded, sustained SEL skill development/practice through the arts is intended to be an example that ideally supports educators as they build their own learning spaces.



There are 3 main SEL pillars that live in all the work and every activity guiding how we care for one another in our shared learning space(s): **Discipline**, **Community** and **Leadership**. Each came to be through discussions with students exploring their experiences to define meanings and this process takes place at the start of every learning engagement with a new group of students. Students are asked, "what does discipline mean to you, what does community mean for you and what does leadership mean to you?"

When I started I initially had a list of approximately 20 youth development outcomes including goal setting, experiencing the importance of practice/repetition, self-determination, math skills, hard but fun work, ensemble work and on and on..., but I always asked students how they wanted to feel and be treated in class and what they thought was necessary to create a sense of community to support our work, while also giving them ownership over the space, and making it culturally relevant—shaped by their goals and values. After

many years I settled on the SEL pillars of discipline, community and leadership as the intentional foundations of our gatherings (Parker, 2018). However, the evolution of each pillar has been unique to my experiences with students and unique to the way we work in Drum Power—thus, yours too will likely be unique to what and how you teach.



**Discipline**, our first pillar, is a conscious reclamation of the term away from negative connotations — I always ask students what discipline means to them and someone always says “when I get in trouble” and back in the day they’d say “when I get a whoopin’.” We, however, connect it to the old school idea of arts disciplines as a practice in service of skill development and perseverance over time with regular work, growth and positive energy — in the way that music, dance and visual arts were cultivated disciplines. And we apply scholar Michael Yang’s (2009) interpretation of Paulo Freire: where discipline is a necessary condition for effective action in the social world. Freire wrote that “True discipline does not exist in the muteness of those who have been silenced but in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in the doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hopes of those who have been awakened” (Freire, 1998, p. 86).

However, our action-focused, applied definition came from a young drummer who shared that his karate Sensei told him discipline was “**using your energy for good things.**” Thus, *discipline* is a pillar that includes several competencies: responsible decision making, self-management and self-awareness (CASEL, 2013) as well as personal goal setting, self-assessment and monitoring self-progress that are unique to Drum Power.

**Community**, our second pillar, is the translation of social awareness and relationship skills which centers what students bring with them from their communities and homes and then positively reinforces it. Students always know what communities are and do. They know what they contribute to their communities as well as what they receive in return. They know, from experience, the ways those dynamics play out as empathy, self-sacrifice and reliance on others. The actionable definition we use in our classroom context is “**supporting my own learning and the learning of others.**”

*Discipline and community* alone are sufficient to create rich spaces to practice SEL and learn academic skills in powerfully supportive ways that build skills for use more immediately and into the future. However, in order to provide a space to build and support student agency through critical thinking and self-confidence, I translated those concepts into **leadership** — “**doing the right thing especially when no one is watching and even if I have to do so by myself.**” This was also a response to models of extrinsic motivation whereby students are offered praise or prizes as rewards rather than being allowed to embrace and practice wanting to be their best selves through internal motivation with positive reinforcement. Leadership is a concept that lives in learning, sports, communities, churches, schools, and most careers.

The selection of *discipline*, *community* and *leadership* was also an explicit choice to use language that is familiar to students when they are young that will still be present when they grow into adults. Moving from selecting SEL competencies to translating them as a community is an iterative process toward empowerment that starts with finding shared experience-based meanings and defining shared commitments that tie all the life skills to our work and actions as individuals (teachers, administrators & students) and as connected community members. Then, tying them to the goals students have for themselves elevates the work to student empowerment. We challenge students to be the architects of their own plans to address the following questions:

1. Who do you want to be? *What kind of person do you want to be for yourself and for those you care about?*
2. What are you doing to get there? *What are you doing now and more importantly, what are you going to do from this day forward?*

**So how did I get there?** I worked backwards considering what lived in the content I was teaching as implicit SEL and considered what skills we would need to practice just to be in a healthy learning space together. However, rather than stop there I moved from translating those pieces together with students into actions to facilitate youth empowerment. The following STAY SEL classroom planning worksheet illustrates and summarizes the key steps:

## STAY Classroom SEL Plan

STAY Elements	My Plans
Select SEL Skills/Competencies: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What life skills do you need students to use/practice in your class?</li> <li>2. What skills does the content you teach require?</li> <li>3. What skills are needed for a healthy learning community?</li> </ol>	
Translate those skills/competencies into pillars: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What might your pillars be?</li> <li>2. Share one strategy you will use to define or explain their meaning to/with students?</li> </ol>	
Action—Good Social emotional learning comes to life as student and teacher behaviors/actions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create an action for each pillar from above.</li> </ol>	
Youth Empowerment—Good SEL is driven by students to empower them <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Share 1 routine for students to regularly explore their own thoughts and interests for group discussion?</li> <li>2. Present one arts activity that will allow students to incorporate their cultural identities to individual OR group art making</li> </ol>	



## What does applying the STAY framework allow students to do?

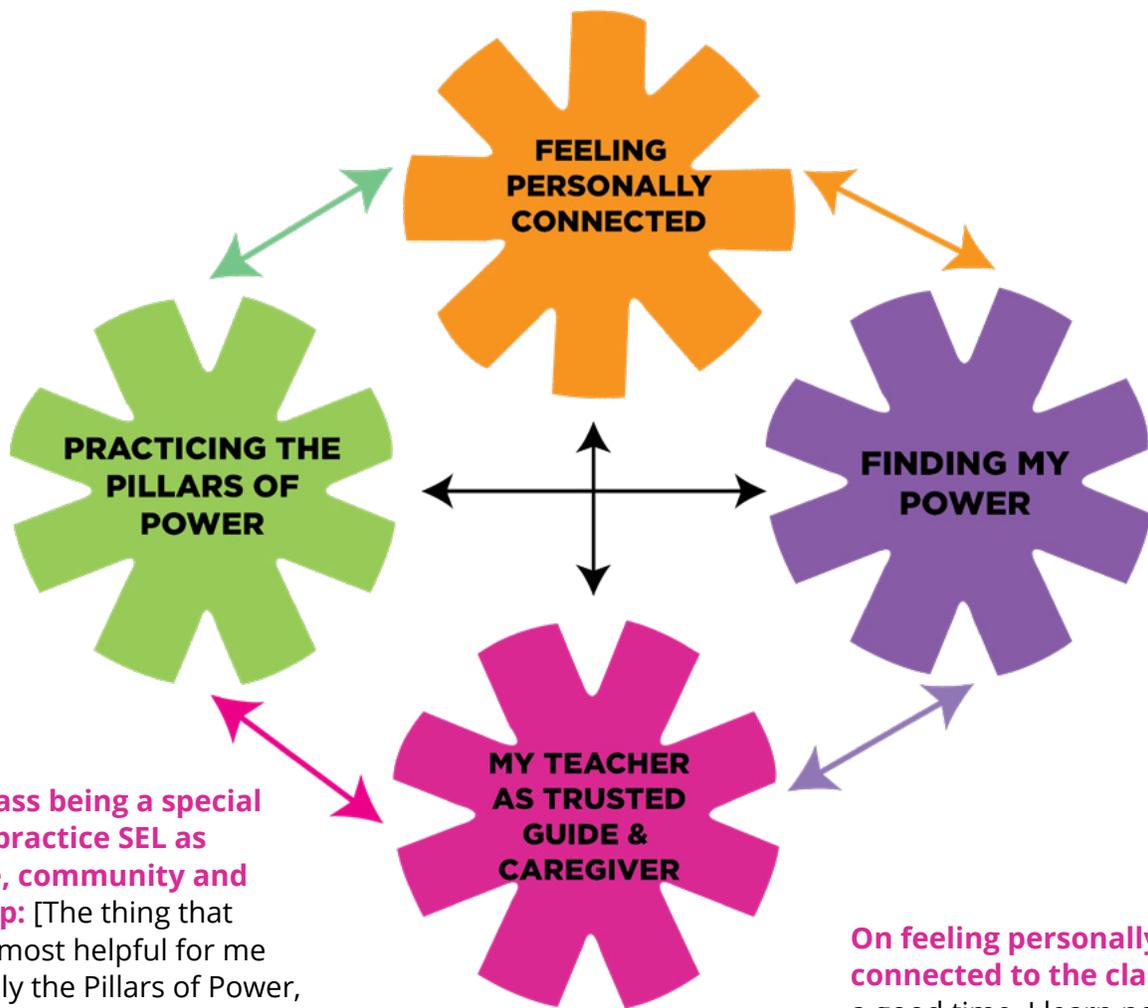
First, it is important to measure success by centering student voices. This model of SEL integration engages students to feel empowered in the class context because they can see and feel how it benefits them even beyond the current arts class. Success is defined by self-efficacy--what students are able to do and what they believe they can do (Bandura, 1986). The following initial questions can guide early thinking around outcomes and assessment:

- Are students feeling powerful and using that power for good in ways that they are expressing in obvious and subtle ways?
- Are students helping one another, kind to one another, empathetic toward one another?
- Are students expressing their own ideas and running the class?

In 2015 interviews of Drum Power students ranging from students in their first year of drumming to those in their 7th year revealed the following themes, outcomes and student observations (Lashley, 2018)

Students expressed the following in interviews:

- **On feeling personally connected to the class:** I have a good time. I learn new things and just be in my own little world...my own little world is music and stuff... (Second year drummer, 5th grader)



**On the class being a special space to practice SEL as discipline, community and leadership:** [The thing that would be most helpful for me is] probably the Pillars of Power, which are discipline, community and leadership, which probably saved my life during all the stuff happening [with me] at school. Sometimes I get mad a bit but then I feel like the discipline, leadership and community like, really helps me. Before I joined I didn't feel like I had those powers and those strengths. So when I joined I felt like Mr. Lashley was a very optimistic person who could help me with my life. (3rd year drummer, 7th grader)

The most important thing I think I've learned from drumming is the sense of community and kind of how everyone is better as one. Everybody sounds better together and we are all stronger in a bundle than just like as stick. That's how I kinda' see it. We build each other up and help each other with that. (2nd year drummer, 4th grader)

**On the teacher as a trusted guide and caregiver:** When I first joined [the School A drum class] I felt pretty nervous. It was a new thing and there were a lot of people in there and Mr. Lashley has an interesting teaching style. He's a great teacher but very different than more traditional teachers. He's very focused on discipline and he pushes people. He doesn't let people stay down. He constantly pushes for them to be able to go farther and he makes them think that they can go farther. He tells people that they can, and he helps them do that. (6 year drummer, 10th grader)

**On feeling personally connected to the class:** I have a good time. I learn new things and just be in my own little world...my own little world is music and stuff... (Second year drummer, 5th grader)

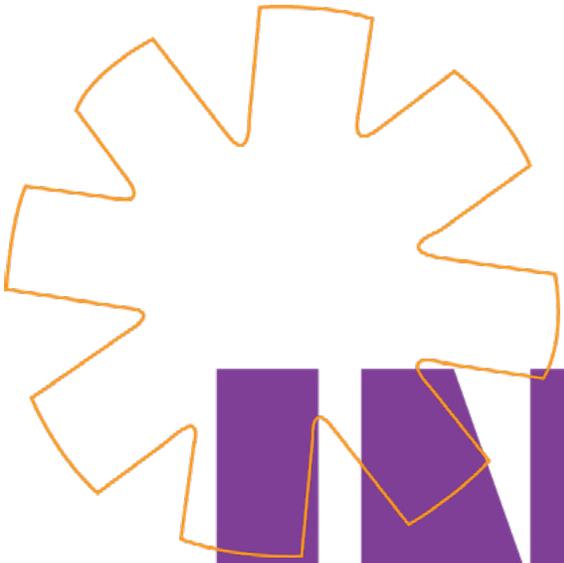
**On finding my power:** I learned that I should not doubt myself...The most important thing I learned is probably that you should not give up and [to] keep trying. If you are doing drumming and you get something wrong and you just say 'Oh I can't do that' then you're never gonna learn it... This girl Samia does the breaks [leads the drummers playing instructions with her drum], and she's really good at it but sometimes she messes up but she keeps trying and she doesn't just say 'Oh I can't do this' but she keeps going. And I learn from [watching] her that I should do that. (1st year drummer, 5th grader)

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**SEL IN  
TEACHER  
PREPARATION**





## Teaching How We Were Taught:

### Student Perspectives of SEL in Arts Teacher Preparation Programs

Sarah Wojcik, University of Delaware MM Student

Jamie-Anicette Pineda, Orchestra Director in Zion Elementary School District 6

Kathia N. Torres, Lake Forest College Music Education Major



### \* Choosing To Be An Arts Educator

Arts classrooms can be places of safety, refuge, and joy for students of all ages. These truths have remained constant for many years, and will often be mentioned when young preservice teachers are asked the question: “Why choose to major in arts education?” Aspiring arts educators will spend their undergraduate careers learning content necessary to teach their subject most effectively, and many find the notion of their future arts classroom to be a motivating factor throughout their education. But what happens when the world is shaken by a pandemic, social unrest, or the general unknowns that come along with “unprecedented times?” While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, an effective place to start preparing preservice arts teachers to adapt to the day-to-day “unknowns” of teaching is to start steeping them in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)-informed experiences early in programs. By modeling SEL-framed instruction and behavior in an organic manner,

instructors of preservice teachers can effectively prepare future educators to understand and meet the social and emotional needs of their students – as well as their own.

### \* Modeling: We Teach How We Were Taught

Modeling in the classroom is the act of teaching through observable practice. This method was widely researched and discussed by psychologist Albert Bandura, who points to “exposure to social models” as the primary method through which human behavior is learned (Bandura, 1975, p.4). In education, students watch as their teachers handle a new situation, and this observation guides the student in their future engagement with similar situations.

In a music classroom, this can look like a choral director leading their students through a new vocal warm-up. The teacher demonstrates all the correct pitches and techniques, then the students echo this behavior and perform the warm-up on their own. In a dance class, modeling might look like an instructor’s

physical demonstration of the plié. In future classes, they can replicate this same process by remembering the initial model that was presented to them by their instructor.

Modeling can be used to effectively teach “curricular” content, and it can also be used as a good method to introduce SEL to undergraduates in arts teacher preparation programs.

As many teachers **teach how they were taught**, it is imperative that preservice teachers are taught early on with methods that incorporate SEL, so that they themselves will model their teaching based on these methods. The pedagogical practices and teaching philosophies framed by SEL will feed into their instructional techniques for the entirety of their careers. Modeling SEL in education courses gives future educators the tools they will need to teach their students about emotional growth and the SEL core competencies of Identity, Belonging, and Agency (CASEL, 2020). SEL not only benefits those who learn with it, but also those who teach with it.



**Figure 1: Multi-Layered Benefits of SEL Instruction: “The SEL Waterfall”**

	Identity		Belonging		Agency
	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making
<b>Professors</b>	<p><i>While introducing an important educational theory, Professor Hedges notices that a few students are struggling. Professor Hedges invites them to his office hours, and explains that not all concepts are easy to grasp – they will get it in time!</i></p> <p>(Professor Hedges seamlessly demonstrates how having a “growth mindset” is important, and that struggling with new concepts is nothing to be ashamed of.)</p>	<p><i>Stacy auditions for a solo in her college’s symphonic choir, but she begins to experience stage fright as she prepares for the concert. Noticing this, Dr. Reid speaks with Stacy after rehearsal, and asks her what makes her nervous.</i></p> <p>(Dr. Reid teaches Stacy to practice good self-management by acknowledging her emotions when she’s having a hard time doing so.)</p>	<p><i>A debate breaks out in a theatre education class between Janice and Lina about the best method to structure a rehearsal. Rather than side with either party, Professor Hall asks each student to make a “pros and cons” list about their methods, and facilitates a discussion which results in the students both seeing the merits to <i>both</i> methods.</i></p> <p>(Professor Hall not only resolves the debate, but shows the students how to truly take in other perspectives, and understand why their counterpart thinks the way they do.)</p>	<p><i>Dr. Lance makes an effort to facilitate opportunities for members of her contemporary dance class to get to know each other before the group even starts working on routines, because she believes that a group that cares about each other will create more meaningful art.</i></p> <p>(Dr. Lance creates the space for students to communicate and form positive relationships.)</p>	<p><i>Dave and his friends don’t practice for their sectional in band, and now they don’t know their music. Rather than reprimand the students, Dr. Jameson asks them to think about their actions’ impacts on the rest of their section and ensemble.</i></p> <p>(By discussing the consequences of actions, Dr. Jameson helps Dave and his friends develop agency.)</p>
<b>Undergraduates</b>	<p><i>One of the students, Marco, goes on to teach a high school visual art class. He notices that Larry is struggling to accomplish a specific brush stroke. Marco tells Larry that he will get it eventually, and assures him that new skills take time.</i></p> <p>(Professor Hedges’ “growth mindset” approach made an impression on Marco, and now he uses the same mindset to teach artistic concepts to his students.)</p>	<p><i>Stacy becomes a middle school choir teacher and notices her student, Michelle, is very nervous about her solo in the concert. Stacy speaks to Michelle beforehand.</i></p> <p>(Stacy helps Michelle to acknowledge her emotions surrounding singing alone.)</p>	<p><i>Lina is directing her high school’s play and the two student stage managers get into a disagreement about backstage protocol during rehearsal. Lina, remembering how Professor Hall handled the debate in her class, has the students discuss the pros and cons of each method and helps them reach a compromise that honors both viewpoints.</i></p> <p>(Lina helps the students learn how to see and value both viewpoints, making them more socially aware in the process.)</p>	<p><i>Miles, one of the dancers in the class, goes on to direct a middle school dance club. Just like Dr. Lance did, Miles provides ample group bonding opportunities, which helps build a healthy community and good relationships in the class.</i></p> <p>(Miles was inspired by the behaviors of his teacher, and incorporated positive relationship building into his dance program.)</p>	<p><i>Dave walks into his elementary general music classroom to find his students throwing the Orff instrument mallets at each other. Rather than taking away instrument privileges for the day, he asks the students why this behavior is not responsible.</i></p> <p>(Dave helped the students to uncover the reasons why throwing mallets is not responsible, giving them agency and ownership over the importance of safety.)</p>
<b>Future Students (K-12)</b>	<p><i>In the future, when Larry finds himself struggling with difficult tasks, he will realize that he cannot be too hard on himself – new skills take time!</i></p>	<p><i>Now, whenever Michelle starts to feel nervous about singing, she remembers that her teacher knows she gets nervous, and she can talk to Stacy about her fears whenever she needs to.</i></p>	<p><i>When the student stage managers run into difficulties outside of the theatre, they now know how to handle debates in a calm manner that gives both parties space to be heard.</i></p>	<p><i>The students in Miles’ dance club have now experienced a healthy community and have formed lasting positive relationships, and will know the traits of these things for the future.</i></p>	<p><i>Now that the students have gained ownership over the importance of safety, they are able to apply this to scenarios outside of the music classroom.</i></p>



## The Post-Pandemic Vitality of SEL in Arts Classrooms

With the transition back to in-person learning, it is evident that many students are struggling with academic and social setbacks due to the pandemic. Besides the challenges associated with school disruptions, students may also be dealing with traumas and other setbacks that occurred during remote learning and the pandemic. Now more than ever, students need more support in school to ensure a positive and conducive learning environment for all. To be effective, adults must be willing to embrace and facilitate these SEL skills in the school setting. When teachers engage with students in an empathetic matter, the students feel safer and more supported in that setting (Newman et al., 2018). Incorporating SEL skills in the classroom can help to triage any challenges that may arise by allowing students to use those skills in a positive manner.

While SEL may not be the answer to all the challenges in education, it can help to create a positive environment. Undergraduate programs benefit from teaching SEL skills in the sense that it would allow future teachers to bring more than just content knowledge to the classroom. As per the case studies in Figure 1, we can see how these embedded skills can benefit students in scenarios both in and out of the classroom. Arts educators have the ability to organically integrate SEL into instruction by being intentional about the manners in which they approach the tenets of identity, belonging, and agency.

## SEL: Structure for Implicit Truths in Art

The arts are naturally deeply social and emotional, often dealing with themes of humanitarian struggle, triumph, and joy. As arts educators, we face these topics daily — both through the art we teach, and through the eyes of our young students who are learning to navigate the world. As such, it is pragmatic and efficient to teach this subject through the lens of the SEL framework — a framework designed to provide structure and support for lessons centered around these topics.

Often, the real-world topics we encounter through art deal with emotions and experiences that transcend the curricular content normally conveyed in traditional teacher preparation programs. This is where the SEL framework becomes invaluable — the structure it provides for teachers to begin navigating these waters. If naturally embedded into the instruction preservice arts teachers receive as they learn how to be educators, not only



As depicted in Figure 1, **SEL-informed instruction is effective if it is implemented in a natural and organic manner.**

These valuable lessons can be taught through actions that are as simple as asking a student what makes them nervous, as Dr. Reid did for Stacy, and in turn, Stacy did for Michelle.

The framework can be used to guide educator thought processes and behaviors, so they might help students learn the same skill set. And **if woven into instruction early on, thinking in this manner can become reflexive — not contrived.** In their article about district-wide SEL implementation, Kendziora and Yoder (2016) found that **systemic implementation of the framework led to “positive trends in the academic and behavioral growth of students”** (p. 11).

As many districts nationwide are now adapting and implementing SEL in their schools, it is deeply important to begin preparing young arts educators to teach these skills to students in a meaningful and natural manner. This is especially important given the challenges of the past two years, and the mental health crisis we are experiencing.

will the skills highlighted in the framework aid the teachers in their own lives, but they will set them up for success in the day-to-day happenings in the classroom.

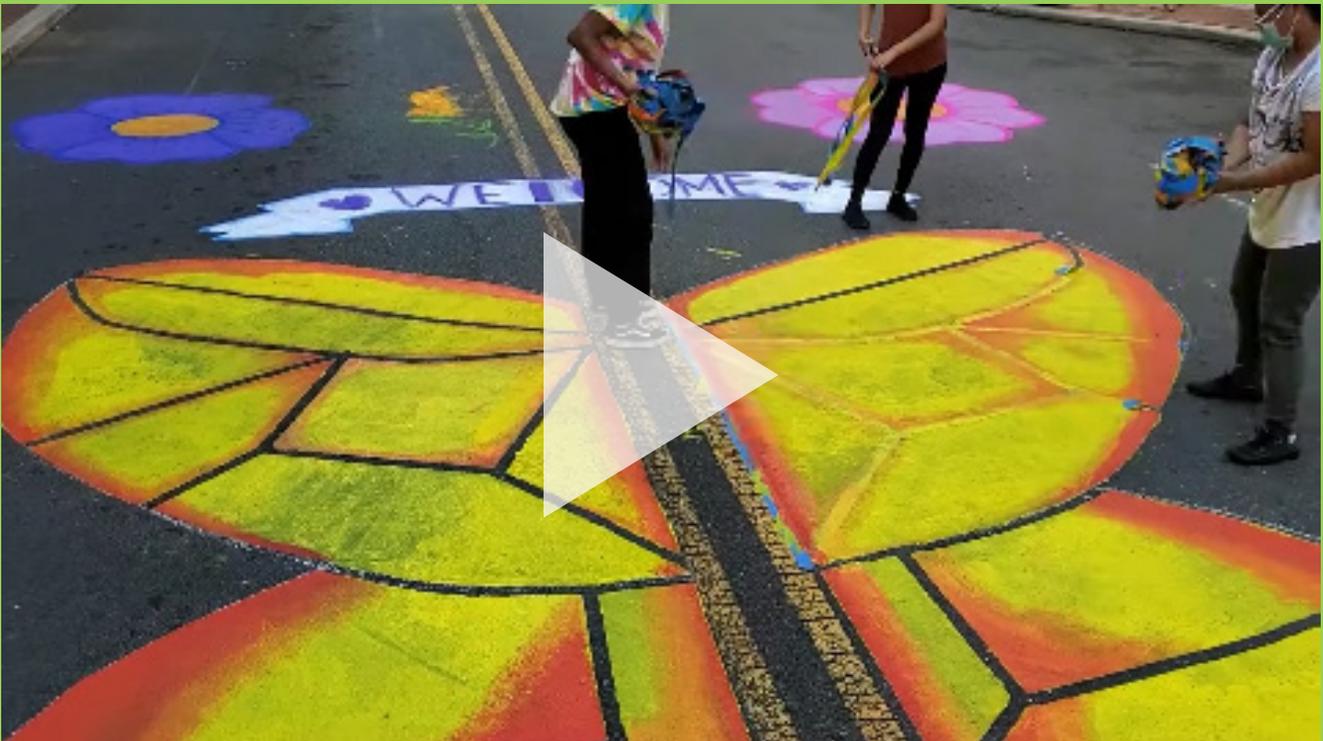
While there is no perfect approach to teaching in a post-2020 education-scape, framing one's approach in an SEL-informed manner can hold great benefits for students and future teachers. Teaching young arts educators about the SEL

framework will provide support as they traverse the unknowns of teaching. These SEL foundations aid in curriculum design and delivery, and provide students with healthy behaviors and thought patterns that will prevail beyond their school years.

As art has always possessed the power to move hearts and minds in a natural and organic manner, arts educators have likely unknowingly been embedding these skills for many

years. If professors provide new arts teachers with the words and framework to describe the humanitarian lessons they have implicitly gained in their arts education, they will be able to embed these values more effectively in their lessons for generations to come. And, if truly embraced, their future students will experience deep social and emotional engagement in the arts — setting them up for a lifetime of artistic profundity.

## ✿ How Has SEL Aided Students Through COVID-19?





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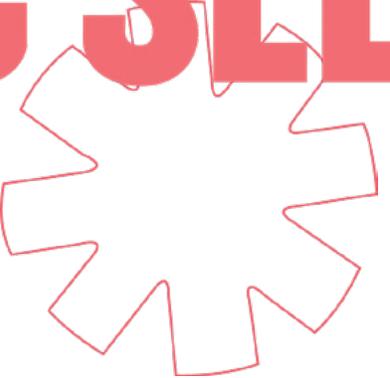
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**MEASURING  
ARTISTIC SEL**





## Measuring Artistic-SEL

Closing the Gap Between Awareness and Meaningful Application

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*"In a world and business that is awash with data, it is tempting to use data to answer all of our questions, including creative questions, I urge all of you not to do that."*

- Bob Iger, Former Disney CEO

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) has achieved unparalleled attention and implementation at all levels of education during the 2021-22 school year. Teachers are focusing on how to embed SEL meaningfully into their curriculum and classrooms and are finding that students and teachers need to utilize the classroom space to navigate social and emotional health concurrently with academic artistic objectives. Many arts teachers are finding organic opportunities to be intentional about SEL through the artistic processes ([www.selarts.org](http://www.selarts.org)). The increased attention of SEL has been an artifact of necessity as we are all facing unprecedented challenges re-entering the classroom. A reactionary approach to crisis often leads to piecemeal implementation without thinking about objectives or end results. Teachers, administrators, districts, and grant funders are starting to

ask "Is it working and how will we know?" There are two levels of assessment addressed in this question — individual and systemic. How are individual students growing socially and emotionally? How successful are the classroom and school initiatives? There are plentiful assessment tools, measures, scales, surveys, etc. to assess SEL. **However, as we explore the nuanced relationship between arts education and SEL, measurements need to reflect this creative process.** For many arts teachers embedding SEL into their classrooms, the process becomes the product. This mindset shift requires a restructuring of traditional arts objectives and outcomes to be more student- (and less performance-) centered.

### \* Measuring Artistic-SEL is a Process

In the January/February Heart of the Arts Brief, Dr. Yorel Lashley outlined the STAY process of implementing SEL focusing on teacher and student agency to have meaningful, organic implementation in their classrooms. The first step to measuring artistic-SEL is to clearly go through this process

so outcomes are identified. What will success look and feel like? Once an objective or desired outcome is articulated, then we can identify what data, outputs, or artifacts are needed to see how well we are achieving. The shift from SEL being a scripted activity to a process centralizing student empowerment necessitates a different type of measurement to assess and chart a path forward. The assessment itself needs to be artistic and a tool that arts educators can implement. The measure needs to be about how students are connecting with the arts to advance the targeted life skills. This type of data is only captured through having the students reflect and amplifying student voices (Reflection=Assessment). For many educators and administrators, this requires rethinking standard measures of school/classroom success (GPA, graduation rates, incident reports, truancy, etc.). None of those measures are artistic. Therefore, our assessment needs to look at it differently. Begin backwards planning by using informal formative assessment information then select artistic content to set SEL goals.



## What Tools Can We Use?

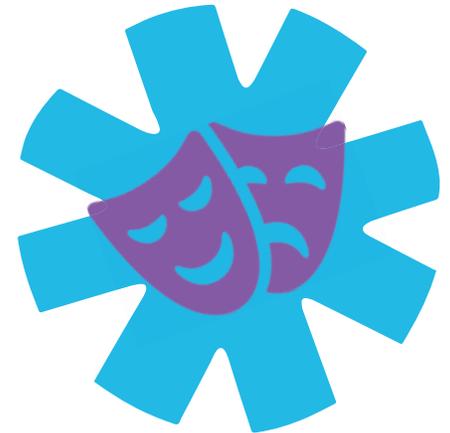
To measure simply means to ascertain by using an instrument (a ruler for example). **The tools we use to measure “success” in our artforms often do not address social emotional needs and experiences.** In order to more closely tie SEL skills and habits to our artistic content, we must reinvent, or at least modify, the wheel. We are trying to capture a glimpse into the internal processes of our students and then observe how those processes are manifesting themselves in the interactions between students. Internal processes include filters such as past experiences, current awareness, and future ambitions. To accomplish this, we must use a two-pronged approach to measure how the students are explicitly connecting the artistic processes in our classes to their own internal processes. We must design our classes using both the whole group and the individual in mind, taking SEL into consideration as well as artistic growth.

In the past, we may have selected artistic content to study with little to no consideration for the group and/or individual social emotional growth that the work will have on our students. We can no longer afford to be so myopic. **First, we must use our professional judgment**

**to carefully curate artistic processes for our students through study and experience and not only use a more traditional approach where artistic skill building is the main objective.** What good is it if a student can identify what it feels like to be lonely if they cannot recognize it in an artwork and create a project that demonstrates that feeling? How can we help our dance students connect their movements to emotions? **Our goal for our courses should be not only the production of a product, but also a guided tour of the process of artistic expressions as it relates both to the group and the individual.** We must have both technical and social emotional objectives in mind when selecting literature and performance pieces. These objectives will be what we measure artistically.

After carefully choosing the works to be studied with specific student groups in mind, we plan for instruction. Generally, teachers have a large bag of tools they use to help build artistic skills and processes for students to learn the craft. While the objectives may be the same from class to class, we must choose our experiences carefully and not simply use the same plan for each class as each group is different. When we see that students are not moving toward

our artistic objective for that day, we need to stop and carefully evaluate why that might be. We may make the assumption that a lack of student progress is simply because they do not understand the assigned task or they are struggling with the skill that they are being asked to master. As teachers, we must also consider other factors as we check off the possible reasons for a lack of mastery or progress. Are there social emotional factors creating barriers to success and what can we do to overcome them? The answer is more simple than we think.



## Common Techniques

Utilize these common teaching techniques and routines to embed an awareness of social emotional skills and how those SEL components elevate the artform. **Close the gap between passive SEL awareness to active application both inside the classroom and in student personal lives.** Do not assume that the students will be able to close the gap on their own, we must help them.

- **FOCUS ON WHY:** Be clear with our students as to the “why” we chose the content, including those social emotional goals. Additionally, include students in the content selection.
- **STUDENT VOICE:** Have students help identify SEL needs in the class, and have them help create the plan to address those needs.
- **SELF-ASSESSMENT:** Students can then set their own individual artistic-SEL goals for class and track them through a variety of techniques such as individual student journals,

goal cards, progress charts, and practice/process reflections on a platform such as Google forms or Kahoot.

- **EMBEDDING SEL EXPLICITLY:** Many of us write an agenda on the board for the day; try adding your specific social emotional goals to that agenda.
- **COMMON LANGUAGE:** Create a common vocabulary as a group of not only arts-specific vocabulary, but also social emotional vocabulary. Where do they intersect?
- **STUDENT AGENCY:** Give students the option to teach the significant adults in their lives the vocabulary. Then discuss their favorite shared artistic experiences.
- **MODELING:** Model healthy conversations about the art form for our students, and then invite them to participate in those conversations.
- **TEMPLATES:** Incorporate sentence stems to help students using artistic and SEL vocabulary.
- **FLEXIBILITY:** Allow grace in the own classroom to address student challenges in the class when they come up. They are the elephant in the room and you will probably not get much learning/creating accomplished if you do not. Students are amazing; Sometimes they just need a moment to process what is happening in their lives.
- **CONNECTION:** Engage students in their own creative process to generate works that speak directly to their own internal processes. Then have them share what they experienced through the process with artist statements or program notes.
- **PROCESS-FOCUSED:** Communicate the whole of the experience, not just the end product, through student performer statements to the greater community. Drill down to where the artistic skills meet the social emotional goals, then celebrate our successes.
- **ASK THE STUDENTS:** Use pre/post performance student surveys to show how students have grown.





## Accountability and the Artistic Process

All of these ideas address both individual and classroom social emotional learning as well as artistic outcomes. But how do we translate this into data that is easily digestible for our use and our administration? Too often arts teachers are measured using tools that do not fit our content area. The answer is again two-fold — we need to create our own measurement tool and then leverage the relationship with our principal/supervisor to close the gap between the measures of School Accountability and the Artistic Process. We must speak their language. **School Accountability is frequently measured in two ways: through student achievement and student growth.** These two measurements are not that different from our own thinking in the arts. How much

have we grown and what is our performance level? We teach in different grade levels, arts content areas, and geographic locations. Try using this three-step process to create a data dashboard for administration as a springboard for a meaningful conversation.

**DESCRIBE:** After using information from your formative assessment, identify clearly describe the standards and outcomes we are using in our process. Real achievement and growth cannot be measured until we know where we are AND where we are trying to go.

**DETERMINE:** After fully applying the STAY process, review your data from a variety of sources and determine the notable trends and gaps. What do the trends and gaps tell you about your individual students, your class, and your program?

**DESIGN:** What new goals can be made using the data we have? How do these new goals address the SEL and artistic needs in your classes? How do these fit within the school/organization as a whole?

Once the chart is completed, share it with administrators/supervisors (or even your students!) to reinforce authentic assessment and growth in the arts. Using the cross-references to specific teacher evaluation rubrics set meaningful personal and program goals that embed SEL in deep and connected ways to your arts classrooms.

**By focusing on our role in the entire process of learning, we can create an explicit connection between our artistic content and the social emotional lives of our students.**

		DESCRIBE	DETERMINE	DESIGN
<b>Arts Standards</b>	Which Arts Standards are you using in your classroom? Site specific, State, National?			
<b>SEL Standards</b>	Which SEL standards are you specifically working to implement and why?			
<b>Teacher Evaluation Standards</b>	Where do the Arts Standards and SEL Standard intersect with the Teacher Evaluation rubric?			
<b>Outcomes</b>	What are the specific student outcomes that show alignment to the Arts Standards and the SEL Standards? What does student achievement look like in your area? How much have your students grown and how do you know?			
<b>Artifacts</b>	What student artifacts can you present to demonstrate they have met achievement and growth?			



## Administration Letter Template

Proactive communication is critical with those who are in a position of evaluation. Here is a sample template letter you can share with your administrators about the work you will be doing. Make sure to adapt this for your setting, context, and culture.

Dear *[Name of Supervisor or Principal]*,

In the next school year I will be focusing on embedding Social Emotional Learning within my classroom. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) describes Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as “a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically.” SEL focuses on creating and sustaining primary (school-wide), secondary (classroom), and tertiary (individual) systems of support that improve the personal health, mental health, learning, and family lives of all children. SEL is a natural fit within my *[INSERT ARTISTIC MEDIUM]* classroom structure. *[ADD LANGUAGE ON HOW AND WHY]*

Connecting the SEL standards (<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/>) to the *[or use your state specific SEL standards]* standards for my courses will create a richer and more effective learning environment for me and our students. I would like to request a meeting where we can discuss the classroom benefits of this connection, what my initial goals are for implementation, and how SEL can fit within the overall school culture environment. Please let me know what days and times you may have available.

In the meantime, please take a look at the website for The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning ([www.artsedsel.org](http://www.artsedsel.org)) for some great examples of how this can work in our arts classrooms and school.

Sincerely,



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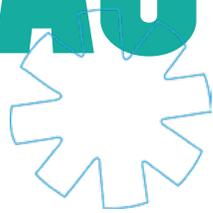
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# **ARTS TEACHER AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER**





## Arts Teacher as Reflective Practitioner for Personal SEL Growth

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**As educators our minds are always 'on', planning, questioning, wondering, and continually observing students and learning.**

We are able to look at any given moment in our classroom, and in a flash, envision the outcome while considering student feelings, backwards designing the necessary steps from that very vision, and in the next breath share the exact words and needs that will support learning for everyone involved. We are thinkers! We care about how and what students learn, and as arts educators, we also care about how they feel because we know that their feelings will drive or inhibit their engagement and learning.

**As adults, we are similar to our students, because our feelings and personal traits also either motivate or deter us from tasks and relationships, depending on our strengths, needs, and the given circumstances.** The difference is that we get to design these learning moments for ourselves as reflective practitioners.

**As a music teacher, I don't think I have ever had an evening where I didn't stop and replay various moments**

**from that day's instruction.**

Sometimes I would replay a conversation with a student and try and solve the problem, and other times I would replay a moment and feel so embarrassed that I overreacted and didn't have a better approach. While some of this was reflective much of it was rumination that may or may not have been helpful.

The question is, how can we embed a reflective practice into our daily routine so that we, too, can improve in our own competency levels of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making and that also anchor us in our Identity, Belonging, and Agency? These are the very skills

that we strive to support in our students.

I think it's so interesting that as an arts educator (specifically music, for me), the very reflective practice that makes a musician great was never a part of any class or ensemble I experienced. Music is the very sound that expresses emotions and ideas, but growing up, I was never asked to really think and reflect about the process of who I was in relationship to the process and art of creating or composing music. Music was a reflective task of 'the error was made, so fix it', instead of, "I wonder what you are thinking before or after the mistake, what would help address this?" Or, "What steps or guidance do you need to achieve or complete this task?" I also so





wish that someone could have helped me deal with the extreme anxiety I had in college when it came to performing. **There was this prevalent idea that if you broke down, you weren't strong enough to make it.** Thinking back, I just needed someone to coach me and to do it in real time. What authentic learning moments those would have been!

Thankfully, we know more about the brain and our emotions and we can now integrate Social Emotional Learning in the moment for authentic and embedded learning.

The importance of the integration of the five competencies of Social Emotional Learning, as a model for our students and for our individual growth, is three-fold. **Firstly**, when we reflect and grow, we develop as individuals and educators, and then our students benefit from an educator that is thoughtful and who cares for people as much as they do for their subject matter. Students will also see Social Emotional Learning in real-time along with our personal process of improvement. This opens a safe space for learning and growth, and it will be felt, seen, and emulated. **Secondly**, if SEL learning is modeled by the classroom teacher in the arts classroom, the educator is sending a clear message to

their students: 'this is how we do things around here' and 'we are in this together as learners and creatives'.

**Finally**, and most importantly, we need to continue to reflect and improve in our own Social Emotional Learning because we should always participate in the very tasks or experiences that we ask our students to do. We get the opportunity to 'walk the talk.'

**Simply stated, understanding, and engaging with these competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making will help us continue to grow as people and educators.**

For most of us, Social Emotional Learning wasn't a concept that was introduced in college or embedded into other subjects, and clearly SEL wasn't viewed as 'skills to learn' like multiplication tables or scientific terms. As a flutist in many ensemble rehearsals, I was never asked how I felt or what I thought because it was an outcome-based learning. Learn the music to play for the concert. **We might have been judged, 'given a look of disgust', or negatively graded if we didn't have the SEL skills, yet no one ever bothered to teach these with intentionality or in the context**

**of the learning.** So, it makes sense that improving in our own social emotional growth in front of our students and peers just might be challenging because it feels new and awkward. It might also feel embarrassing to be open and vulnerable, but the outcomes will benefit everyone in connection with you.

Social emotional traits are the most important skills that are needed for survival, success in life, learning, and relationships, and are arguably the hardest skills to learn as a human. These are not 'soft' skills at all, as I've heard and read all too often! Trust me when I say that I would much rather memorize an algebraic formula than have a personal confrontation with another individual, which requires social-emotional skills to confront, listen, grow, or possibly identify areas where I have fallen short.

The reality is that the very understanding and skills that make us human and help us function and succeed in society can't be memorized or recalled to simply 'pass' in a multiple-choice test, but rather they must be experienced in real time, over and over, and in a multitude of contexts in relationship to our emotions. I can only imagine how this will benefit all of our students in the arts because we then support a higher level of artistic literacy, one that integrates the students' personal expression and emotions with the skills and knowledge of an art form to become a whole artist. Experiencing these emotions and skills can be hard, and the classroom is a perfect place for these moments because the people and the connected experiences are real world

opportunities for personal growth and lifelong learning. We just need to take the time to reflect and connect ourselves to each of these moments because

reflection is how we learn. As John Dewey said, “We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience.”



## We Are Learners and We Are Teachers

We are learners and we are teachers. Social learning in the service and context of teaching is challenging because we are trying to improve in our own SEL growth at the same time that we are guiding students to do the same. However, once we've found anchors and know our strengths and needs, we will continue to practice and reflect for improvement, and we'll feel safer to admit our truths and grow.

Some of the most powerful moments in my musical ensemble classes occurred when I stopped the class and let them know that I felt uncomfortable by how I spoke or reacted. I remember one after-school rehearsal where I had truly lost all patience. I was exhausted, the concert was a week away, and we had rehearsed a particular section repeatedly, but the errors were still glaring. I stopped the ensemble and said, “Come ON - what's going on?” The students could feel my exasperation, and no one spoke. I knew in that moment that my reaction was just that, a reaction, and wasn't helpful. Everyone knew why we had stopped, and no one spoke. The drummer started the group again to give it another try, while in my mind my internal dialogue was so fierce that I floated away from the rehearsal. “Anne, they are more tired than you, there is NO reason to place any guilt or anger on the students. How else can you review this to support them, because now they've shut down.” I let the music play for a moment and then I stopped the group and paused. The students looked up at me and



### So, here are a few tips to guide you as a reflective practitioner in your own Social Emotional Learning:

- **Align mind and body to focus.** Play or listen to your favorite music that is relaxing and helps you wind down a bit. If you like to dance, put on your favorite music and move, or if you like to draw or paint, take out your favorite medium and spend a few minutes creating. Allow yourself time to anchor your body and mind in the very art that grounds you.
- **Carve out 5-10 minutes every day to think about the various situations you encountered during the day.** These could range from students forgetting their music or leaving their final art piece at home, or maybe a verbal exchange with a student that escalated. View yourself as an individual who has the opportunity to learn from these situations and suspend judgment.
- **Be kind and honest with yourself** and know that every person is on a continuum of growth throughout their entire life.
- **Have an honest conversation with yourself about your strengths and needs** connected to the SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Identify where you excel or where you feel that you need improvement and note what and how you will improve upon. Spend time reflecting on which competencies are tested at different times in the class or rehearsal. Look for patterns that help provide a deeper understanding.
- **Pinpoint one moment in the day where you were truly your best** in relation to the 5 competencies and identify key aspects that demonstrated this. Celebrate the moment!
- **Pinpoint one moment that didn't go so well** and identify how it could have been improved. Celebrate the recognition of this!
- **Reflect on your thoughts, actions, and words from that moment and replay the situation**, choosing different words and actions to improve the outcome for the next time it comes around.
- **Use each of the above moments as templates or experiences to guide you in new situations.**
- **If you don't have time to reflect, or a situation has caught you off-guard, use the following chant:** *listen, pause, think, breathe, respond*. This will give you something to hold on to and to provide time to respond and not react.

the silence was deafening. And then, I glanced around the room, looking at each student, and simply apologized. **I told them I was so sorry for my reaction, I knew that they were working hard, and that I had lost my patience and needed to find a better way to help each person.** I literally heard students give a sigh of relief. A student then spoke, "Thanks, Ms. Fennell. We get it, we're tired too." I smiled and said, "I will do better and you can always call me on that if it happens again. OK, let's take a break and come back in 10 minutes, would that work?" The students smiled, walked away from their instruments, and when they returned, it was like a new class of students entered, and guess what, the errors were gone. From that point forward, I would often apologize, share my emotions and what I was thinking, and then give it another try.

***This was truly a pivotal moment in my teaching and this was all a part of my transition to a learner-centered classroom. The classes became a safe space where everyone belonged and where they could be authentic.***

When I made a mistake talking about the music, or misjudged something, I admitted error and corrected myself or asked for a student to find my error. I began to release this concept of having to be the 'expert', and fell into a space as a guide, and all of my classes shifted. I have to say, that when I first started apologizing or admitting my errors, students would sit in absolute silence and then it eventually became



the classrooms' norm. Without judgment, students would simply say, "My error," or "I'm sorry, that came out meanly." Grace and kindness lived in our classes where we held a safe space for being human and learner-centered. My favorite times were when the students themselves would stop the ensemble rehearsal and say, "I keep on playing that wrong, can we run it again or can someone help me," or "I don't understand this, can someone explain it to me in a different way?" Learner-centered classes where students advocate for their needs in a group in which they truly belong, is a positive and nurturing classroom environment like no other, and agency in action is powerful for everyone.

As we as individuals become aware of ourselves and identify the perspectives of others and their needs, we will also

continue to monitor, contribute, and improve as educators. This creates a classroom environment that is inviting for students to do the same. The classroom culture then becomes one of growth and acceptance. For our students to understand and see authentic application and integration of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, our modeling will pave the way for their success through authentic, embedded, sustained application.

We can be aware and support the needs of our students for their personal and collective social-emotional skills, but to truly grow as an individual, it's our job to reflect as learners in this work as well. Now - take 5 minutes, carve our a little time for yourself, and think back on your day!



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