



## 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 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]* to the 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,



## Mission Statement

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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## References

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