



# SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

A UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE DOCUMENT

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# INTRODUCTION

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Social emotional learning or “SEL” is defined by the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) under [section R277-100-2 of the Utah Administrative Code](#), as:

“the process through which students acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitude, and skills necessary to:

- (a) understand and manage emotions;
- (b) set and achieve positive goals;
- (c) feel and show empathy for others;
- (d) establish and maintain positive relationships;
- (e) make responsible decisions; and
- (f) self-advocate.”

The six outcomes in the USBE’s definition of SEL (above) are heavily reflected in [Utah’s Portrait of a Graduate](#) (POG). The POG is a guiding vision for Utah’s education system that identifies a variety of ideal characteristics in which Utah graduates should attain competency during their time in public education. Many of the characteristics in the POG are related to SEL, including (but not limited to):

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Wellness
- Collaboration and teamwork
- Hard work and resilience
- Communication
- Honesty, integrity, and responsibility
- Respect

This guidance document and all other materials provided by the USBE will reflect the above definition. Local Education Agencies (LEAs, meaning school districts and charter schools) may choose to create their own definition of SEL, and/or may adopt, expand, or adapt the USBE’s definition to meet the needs of their local community.

## WHAT SEL SUPPORTS DO UTAH LEAs NEED?

Utah LEAs have requested additional guidance in SEL implementation from the USBE. In 2020, school administrators and school psychologists across 106 Utah LEAs responded to USBE's School Safety Survey and provided insight into SEL needs in their schools.

Over half (51%) of respondents indicated their educators needed additional training and information related to SEL. In addition, only 21% of respondents stated their school was fully implementing SEL practices. The remaining respondents reported one of the following: no SEL practices implemented (4%), implementation was in development (23%), or implementation was incomplete and needed improvement (52%). This data points to the need for a cohesive approach to supporting Utah LEAs in developing, implementing, and evaluating their SEL practices.

## HOW CAN THIS GUIDANCE SUPPORT UTAH LEAs?

This document is meant as a support for LEAs interested in learning more about SEL, or for building the capacity of LEAs already engaged in SEL work. The USBE is also providing this document for LEAs and other stakeholders as a way to clarify and define what SEL is and why it is important. It is the hope that this document will assist in facilitating continued partnership through:

- Providing transparency
- Creating shared language around teaching and reinforcing SEL skills
- Presenting a vision of what SEL skills look like in youth and adults
- Providing understanding for educators, families, and other stakeholders of how to model SEL skills
- Clarifying the importance of SEL skills in enhancing the well-being of students (otherwise known as promotive factors)
- Building characteristics or skills that counter or reduce the effect of unhealthy life experiences and the risk of negative outcomes (otherwise known as protective factors)
- Supporting educators who feel confused or uncertain about how to utilize SEL approaches
- Offering strategies to educators and families who have observed negative impacts of life experiences on students' social emotional well-being

## WHAT SEL IS AND DOES

SEL is a strategy schools use to reinforce and teach positive and adaptive social emotional skills. These skills are necessary for students to be able to set and achieve goals, collaborate with others, communicate effectively, and manage stress—all critical aspects of academic learning and long-term success in life.

All children learn social emotional skills as part of their developmental process. The specific skills each child learns reflect their early experiences and circumstances and may look different for every child. A variety of factors may influence the skills each child develops, including:

- Personality and temperament
- Home and community environments
- Parenting styles
- Exposure to positive or adverse experiences
- Disability status
- Mental or physical health issues

The six outcomes of the USBE SEL definition (in Utah Admin. Code R277-100-2) are multi-faceted with significant overlap between them. As students work on one SEL outcome area, they may gain skills related to another outcome as well. In other words, they are not mutually exclusive and are highly correlative.

Developing and strengthening social emotional skills makes a difference in the lives of students. Research shows that focus on social emotional development can lead to many favorable outcomes. Providing SEL support in the school setting improves academic performance and positive classroom behaviors, while reducing conduct problems and emotional distress.<sup>1,2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Durlak, et al., (2011), The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning, *Child Development*, 82, 405-432.

<sup>2</sup> Taylor, et al., (2017), Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions, *Child Development*, 88, 1156-1171.

Students who develop healthy social emotional skills at an early age are more likely to graduate from high school and obtain stable employment, and less likely to receive public assistance and become involved with law enforcement.<sup>3</sup>

SEL can also prepare students for career success by teaching skills like problem-solving and effective communication in the classroom. These skills are overwhelmingly rated by business executives as equally or more important than technical skills.<sup>4</sup>

Overall, a focus on teaching social emotional skills in the school setting leads to a variety of positive outcomes. Moreover, these skills are something that employers are seeking from their future employees. By providing opportunities for social emotional learning and development, schools are helping to prepare students for the expectations of adult life.

## WHAT SEL IS NOT

### SEL IS NOT A SPECIFIC CURRICULUM

Although there are several well-known evidence-based curricula about SEL that can be used in schools to teach SEL concepts, SEL is not a specific curriculum. The knowledge, attitudes, and skills of SEL can be integrated into any school subject.

SEL concepts are often first taught in the home by parents and families, and they are then reinforced as students practice applying those skills when interacting with peers and others at school.

### SEL IS NOT AN ACTIVITY THAT IS DELIVERED ONLY ONCE

An effective SEL implementation supports a positive school culture and climate. It allows all students to feel safe, supported in learning, and connected to the school community. As such, SEL implementation is a continual process, not a one-time activity or series of lessons that are delivered once. SEL implementation requires

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<sup>3</sup> Jones, et al., (2015), Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health, *American Journal of Public Health*, 105, 2283-2290.

<sup>4</sup> Deming, D.J., (2015), *The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market*, Retrieved from National Bureau of Economic Research, Working Paper Series, Working Paper 21473.

regular review to ensure that the changing social emotional needs of students are met.

A quality SEL implementation is informed by LEA data. It requires ongoing collaboration with and input from stakeholders, including parents, students, staff, and community partners. Collaboration with all stakeholders ensures that SEL needs are accurately identified, that plans for implementation are well thought out, and that there is support from key partners.

Once these steps have been taken, SEL strategies are then intentionally implemented to meet the identified needs. Finally, SEL strategies are evaluated (using both qualitative and quantitative data) to determine the quality and effectiveness of the implementation.

## SEL IS NOT THERAPY OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TREATMENT

SEL is most effective when implemented universally from a prevention viewpoint (before problems exist) with the goal for all students to develop the outcomes found in SEL.

While behavioral health treatment frequently addresses circumstances and situations that may arise as a result of an individual's lack of social emotional skills, these skills are generally only one small facet of treatment. SEL skills do not need to be taught or reinforced by a mental health professional. The main focus of behavioral health treatment is to address the underlying causes of maladaptive functioning that often result from trauma exposure and mental health and/or developmental issues.

## SEL IS NOT TELLING STUDENTS WHAT TO THINK

SEL focuses on teaching students to think critically and solve problems so they can make responsible decisions. SEL also supports emotional regulation to help students manage emotions in difficult situations. SEL provides learning opportunities for students to improve their decision-making skills but does not influence what decisions are made.



## SEL IS NOT SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT THE INPUT OF PARENTS AND FAMILIES

As mentioned previously, SEL must be done in partnership with parents and families.

Parents frequently express the desire for their children to have social emotional skills, and SEL starts in the home. Parents and caregivers should therefore be included in opportunities to support SEL as students transition between the settings of home and school. Parents have the most influence over their children, especially as they teach and model these skills.

However, school is an optimal arena to reinforce SEL and for students to be able to demonstrate and practice healthy social emotional skills.

## SEL IS NOT SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT ADULTS MODELING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL SKILLS FOR STUDENTS

Adults that serve students need to build their own SEL skills in order to model, teach, and provide effective SEL instruction for students. In addition, having an awareness of their own social emotional needs is critical for adults to be able to cope with stress and manage their emotions, so they can serve students and support learning in an effective way.

# SEL OUTCOMES

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The information below expands on the six outcomes of the USBE SEL definition, provides further explanation of the constructs of each of the six outcomes, and gives examples of strategies to build and strengthen each outcome area in students.

These examples are not comprehensive, because effective SEL should be individualized to the needs of each student. The examples, however, give a sense for how SEL can be integrated into classroom instruction and other educational activities.

As you read through the examples, you will notice how many of these strategies are already being utilized by educators and other staff in their work with students. SEL is about intentionally creating opportunities that will facilitate these outcomes in students and allowing students the time and space to reflect on their SEL learning progress.

## OUTCOME 1: UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE EMOTIONS

The knowledge, attitudes, and skills to objectively examine, understand, and effectively manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors

### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Name and identify a wide range of emotions
- Understand the range of intensity of emotions
- Deepen their understanding of their own emotions
- Recognize the physiological responses associated with different emotions
- Understand the brain's response to emotions
- Understand how their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are connected
- Understand how external experiences or internal thoughts can influence emotions
- Understand how culture may influence understanding and the interpretation of emotions
- Understand how emotions and thoughts interact to influence behavior in different situations

- Communicate a variety of emotions
- Identify strategies which can help manage emotions
- Demonstrate personal agency to use stress management strategies
- Demonstrate self-discipline and self-motivation
- Manage emotions and behaviors in a variety of circumstances, including interpersonal conflict and in response to challenging situations
- Recognize and accept that their perspective may differ from the perspective of others
- Experience a belief in their abilities and capacity to manage emotions successfully
- Recognize how interactions with others may impact their own emotions
- Understand how their emotions may impact others
- Show awareness of their strengths and limitations

#### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Engage in activities with students that allow them to identify and articulate the emotions felt by others, such as reading literature and discussing what is observed about the impact of emotions on the characters
- Use reflective listening skills when interacting with students to help students understand their emotions
- Allow students time to stop and identify the emotion(s) they're feeling at different times throughout the day
- Provide breaks for students to practice using a coping strategy to manage their emotions
- Model how to identify and express all types of emotions appropriately
- Build student capacity to identify and express their emotions
- Teach students how to recognize the physiological sensations of emotions
- Incorporate opportunities for students to develop and internalize self-awareness into instruction and daily interactions
- Establish a culture where failure, setback, and disappointment are an expected and honored part of learning
- Help students identify coping strategies they can use to manage their emotions and allow students opportunities to practice using coping strategies

- Capitalize on both structured and unstructured opportunities for students to recognize and examine their own success, the successful experiences of others, and what led to those successes
- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their own experiences and the experiences of others to understand how emotional responses affect outcomes and build their confidence to respond

### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Promote their child's social emotional self-awareness by helping them thoughtfully examine their actions, thoughts, beliefs, and emotions
- Listen to and learn about their child's understanding of themselves
- Use reflective listening skills when interacting with their child to help them understand their emotions
- Interact in positive, supportive ways to emphasize their belief and value of their child
- Help their child value their culture and language by providing experiences that reinforce family traditions and values
- Throughout the day, ask their child to stop and identify the emotion(s) they are feeling
- Teach that mistakes are learning experiences
- Share with their child the skills and knowledge they use to handle everyday social situations and personal life experiences
- Promote their child's social emotional self-control
- Help their child identify coping strategies that they can use to manage their emotions
- Allow their child opportunities to practice managing their emotions
- Engage with their child to build on their strengths and nurture growth opportunities
- Support the development of their child's belief in their ability to succeed and in their sense of self-esteem
- Provide brain breaks where their child can experience a tool to regulate their emotions

## OUTCOME 2: SET AND ACHIEVE POSITIVE GOALS

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to set goals, plan one's actions to reach those goals, and carry out those plans to completion

### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Identify goals and aspirations
- Set strengths-based goals
- Build routines that facilitate goal achievement
- Articulate what they will do, rather than what they will not do, to achieve a goal
- Distinguish between wants, needs, and preferences
- Set short- and long-term goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART)
- Sequence steps in a task and/or towards a goal, with awareness of potential barriers
- Determine how to be flexible and change course, if needed
- Accurately assess the length of time to accomplish a task or to achieve an outcome
- Use available resources to organize and track progress towards a goal
- Develop awareness of their resources, strengths, and needs
- Develop a sense of self-efficacy and a positive outlook for the future
- Persist through difficulty, uncertainty, and discomfort
- Demonstrate the motivation and agency needed to accomplish personal/shared goals
- Demonstrate patience and the ability to delay gratification
- Manage stress and emotions when making a mistake or facing a challenge
- Assess who might be able to support in establishing accountability and reaching one's goals
- Recognize and celebrate progress towards goals

### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Help students identify and work towards developmentally appropriate and challenging goals based on individual strengths, interests, and needs

- Provide opportunities to estimate, measure, and reflect on the time necessary to complete a project
- Incorporate goal setting and self-assessment into activities and routines in the classroom
- Model one's own goal setting, planning, self-evaluation, and reflection
- Use examples from literature and history for how goals were set, worked towards, and achieved
- Support students in generating their own solutions to challenges and barriers
- Teach students strategies for managing stress while working toward a goal
- Recognize students for persisting in a difficult task
- Set aside time to support students in self-directed reflection on their efforts towards a goal and their next steps
- Highlight opportunities for students to ask for help from adults or peers
- Use growth mindset language (e.g., "you are not good at it, yet!" and "that feeling of it being hard is your brain growing" and "what is the next step you can try"?)

### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Emphasize that mistakes are learning experiences
- Demonstrate care and guidance while supporting their child's personal and educational choices and experiences
- Check in with their child regularly about their learning progress and set priorities (e.g., homework and class assignments, and time management, etc.)
- Model goal setting by creating family goals and engaging in planning, evaluation, and reflection together
- Support their child in identifying and selecting areas for self-improvement based on their roles (e.g., as a family member, sibling, student, friend, team member, musician, and athlete, etc.)
- Assist their child in setting personal goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART)

- Develop routines to support their child in making progress towards their goals (e.g., identify a specific location to work, remove distractions, provide feedback, and encourage independent work, etc.)
- Aid their child in developing manageable steps and measurements to track and achieve their personal goals
- Provide guidance as their child learns to track their progress towards achieving their goals (e.g., collecting evidence, reflecting, and making adjustments in response to changing circumstances, etc.)
- Discuss alternative solutions when barriers are faced and allow their child to make the decision for how to move forward
- Celebrate their child's successes when short- and/or long-term goals are achieved

### OUTCOME 3: FEEL AND SHOW EMPATHY FOR OTHERS

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to be aware of, understand, and be sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experience of others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts

#### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Demonstrate the ability to perceive and articulate others' perspectives across a variety of situations and experiences
- Recognize strengths in others
- Identify diverse social norms, including unjust ones, and how they influence the thoughts, behavior, and emotions of others
- Recognize that others' perspectives and behaviors are the result of many complex factors from an individual's knowledge and experience
- Understand differences across cultural norms and expectations, including the contexts in which those norms and expectations are developed
- Conduct themselves in online and group spaces in a respectful and compassionate way, regardless of the level of anonymity or the actions of other members of the group
- Show regard and compassion for the feelings of others and consider the impact of their actions on others

- Value the individual contributions made by each team member to cultivate a culture of community
- Demonstrate the ability to get along with and collaborate with others from different backgrounds, with different strengths/needs, and with different abilities
- Understand and self-reflect that their perspective can be limited by their own experiences and background
- Deepen their understanding of themselves holistically (e.g., with respect to academics, cognition, identity and culture, historical experiences, and social and community context) in order to understand how they relate to others
- Demonstrate curiosity to better understand unfamiliar perspectives and experiences
- Show awareness of the concept of stereotyping and respectfully challenge stereotyping when it occurs
- Recognize and critically consider unjust situations, not only on behalf of themselves but others who may be affected
- Demonstrate listening in discussions and disagreements with the intent to understand before responding
- Allow information and experiences shared by others to inform and update their perspective
- Identify family, school, and community resources and supports that can assist in developing empathy for others

### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Collaborate with students to establish a positive, open, respectful, and supportive educational climate, such as by letting them help define rules of classroom conduct
- Model empathy and respect in all interactions with students
- Discuss examples about how others showed empathy and build that into curriculum, when appropriate
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to engage in perspective taking and learn about other cultures and experiences
- Provide learning experiences that honor student perspectives, cultures, and experiences



- Recognize and reflect on personal and professional biases, and access resources to deepen understanding of differences to build stronger relationships and create more relevant learning experiences for students
- Create age-appropriate and challenging learning experiences based on individual student's strengths, interests, and needs
- Plan personalized learning supports for individual students (e.g., students with disabilities, students learning English, students not meeting learning goals, and students enrolled in advanced coursework, etc.)
- Prepare for and implement accommodations and modifications in accordance with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Accommodation Plan
- Provide safe opportunities for students to share their background and culture
- Build in opportunities for students to learn that everyone has their own unique individual and family background and culture
- Design opportunities for students to practice examining issues from differing perspectives and/or to articulate how others may be viewing a situation differently than them
- Create a classroom environment that is welcoming and safe for all students

### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Support their child in finding books, videos, and other resources to explore and learn more about the subjects that interest them
- Nurture their child's ability to be aware of and able to respond to others with understanding and respect
- Share with their child skills and knowledge they use to handle everyday social situations, personal life experiences, and world views
- Assist their child in developing respect and to value contrasts between their child's background and that of others
- Help their child value their culture and language, and that of others, by providing experiences that reinforce family traditions and values
- Provide opportunities to attend community cultural events to help their child learn about other cultures
- Listen to and learn about their child's understandings of themselves

- Talk with their child about how their learning and experience has changed their perspective over time
- Positively reinforce their child when they demonstrate empathy for others
- Recount experiences about interactions with others, including how they have been able to feel and show empathy to those that are different from themselves, and what they have learned from those exchanges

## OUTCOME 4: ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate relationships with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds

### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Understand and articulate the importance of connections with others and utilize appropriate skills to establish and maintain relationships
- Engage in relationships, including close relationships, that are safe, stable, and respectful
- Articulate and communicate needs in an effective, respectful way and recognize the way things are communicated impacts others
- Interpret both verbal and non-verbal information, and respond appropriately
- Show respect to others regardless of differences
- Advocate appropriately for their individual belief system while respecting the rights of others to hold their own beliefs
- Collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds
- Maintain healthy boundaries with others
- Respect the boundaries others set
- Recognize relationships have varying stages and demonstrate the types of behaviors that are appropriate at each stage
- Demonstrate they are dependable, trustworthy, and can be counted on to keep their commitments
- Provide emotional support to others
- Give and receive honest feedback
- Seek or offer help when needed

- Demonstrate leadership skills and cooperate with others and work within a team (e.g., take turns, share, negotiate, express their opinions, agree and to compromise, etc.)
- Express themselves appropriately and respectfully when they disagree with or are disappointed by others
- Recognize self-care is an important part of being able to maintain relationships
- Implement self-care strategies in order to balance competing demands
- Contribute positively to their community
- Resist negative social pressure
- Recognize when others need help and, when able, provide appropriate assistance or support
- Advocate for help to be provided to others when they are not able to address identified needs themselves
- Adapt interactions with others based on the circumstance/situation
- Demonstrate valuing the thoughts and ideas of others by handling disagreement respectfully and constructively, addressing the disagreement productively without denigrating others

### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Teach, model, and encourage the use of positive social skills in the classroom and school (e.g., respecting personal space, using manners, following directions, sharing, listening, and cooperating, etc.)
- Increase student knowledge about characteristics of inappropriate relationships
- Teach about stages of relationships and how to navigate each stage appropriately
- Use teaching practices such as cooperative learning and project-based learning
- Model respect and empathy for all students
- Give opportunities for healthy dialogue and debate around specific issues so students can learn how to respectfully disagree
- Model and provide opportunities for students to learn and practice how to negotiate and compromise to reach solutions that are acceptable for all

- Empower students to set appropriate boundaries with other students
- Provide opportunities for groupwork in the classroom and for students to take leadership roles
- Positively reinforce students when they use effective communication strategies and respect for others
- Help students understand how to interact with others who are different from them

### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Encourage their child to respect self and others by identifying boundaries, taking turns in conversations, considering another's point of view, and respecting personal space, etc.
- Find or create opportunities for their child to interact with peers from similar and differing backgrounds
- Discuss other cultures and how things may be done differently in other locations
- Encourage participation in team-based recreational activities
- Practice with their child how to communicate appropriately with others with whom they may disagree
- Discuss how and when to say no appropriately
- Empower their child to resist negative peer pressure and teach refusal skills
- Talk to their children about their values and ethics
- Model how to use respectful communication skills
- Be present and vulnerable with their child
- Share experiences with their child about positive relationships
- Spend quality time with their child daily

### OUTCOME 5: MAKE RESPONSIBLE DECISIONS

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across various situations

### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness
- Understand and utilize critical thinking skills
- Brainstorm different approaches

- Recognize choices have intended and unintended consequences
- Recognize the role emotions play in decision making
- Collect data to inform decisions
- Analyze all the relevant information to come to a decision or find a solution
- Assess, monitor, and reflect on progress
- Evaluate the consequences of one's own actions on self and the community
- Consider multiple sides of an issue when seeking a solution to a problem or making a decision
- Determine the impact of a decision upon individuals and the community
- Critically analyze all available materials, information, sources
- Analyze and reflect on errors, misconceptions, and outcomes
- Explore possible solutions for both personal and social problems
- Evaluate how social norms and expectations influence decisions
- Understand social pressures and how to resist pressures that may lead to unsafe or unethical decisions
- Explain their reasons for making a decision
- Anticipate and evaluate the consequences of their actions

### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Engage students in activities that allow them to analyze information, data, facts, and context to make reasoned judgement
- Incorporate opportunities for students to utilize critical thinking skills
- Establish a culture where students develop higher order thinking and metacognitive skills
- Share decision making with each student to support learning and accountability
- Provide differentiated opportunities for analysis, synthesis, and decision making in real-world contexts
- Encourage students to seek inventive solutions to problems and create original work
- Provide choices and opportunities for students to select strategies to meet learning goals, allowing students to think independently as they explore something relevant to their lives

- Support students in making informed decisions in a challenging and rigorous learning environment
- Provide students with opportunities to be leaders, problem solvers, and decision makers
- Incorporate student suggestions and perspectives when making decisions

### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Allow their child to make choices/decisions regarding personal and educational opportunities
- Share decision making with their child to support learning
- Encourage their child to ask questions and seek inventive solutions to problems
- Incorporate opportunities for their child to utilize critical thinking skills
- Provide choices and opportunities for their children to select strategies to meet personal and educational goals
- Empower their child to ask questions of themselves, of others, and about what they are learning
- Support the process of learning by asking their child to explain their thinking as they answer questions or respond to prompts (e.g., explain in your own words, make a model or draw your thinking, asking questions for further clarification)
- Establish a positive home learning environment and set the stage for positive school behaviors

### OUTCOME 6: SELF-ADVOCATE

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to effectively communicate and assert personal needs and wants

### STUDENTS OR ADULTS WITH THESE SKILLS CAN:

- Reflect on their circumstances and needs
- Set personal values and boundaries
- Recognize when they need help
- Evaluate and defend their thinking
- Ask for the support they need to balance mental, physical, social, and emotional wellness

- Effectively communicate their needs
- Request help, support, or assistance appropriately
- Identify available resources and how to access them
- Differentiate between situations requiring peer support and those requiring adult or professional help
- Identify adults that can provide them with support specific to a need
- Identify the right support for the problem they face
- Identify their strengths and weaknesses
- Utilize existing strengths to offset weaknesses
- Understand what actions they need to take to achieve a positive outcome
- Make decisions about learning experiences
- Make choices to demonstrate their learning
- Ask for additional time to complete a project
- Understand what feedback benefits them and what feedback does not
- Be persistent to get their needs met
- Ask for clarification when they do not understand
- Understand their responsibility for their own success
- Set challenging but achievable goals
- Assert personal needs with a sense of confidence and purpose
- Challenge existing structures and norms to meet individual needs

### ADULTS SERVING STUDENTS CAN:

- Foster students' active participation in a learning community
- Provide a variety of learning opportunities
- Grant student's agency to determine how they learn best
- Provide opportunities for students to have choices and make the decision they feel would best meet their needs
- Allow students a variety of ways to demonstrate learning sensitive to multiple experiences and diversity
- Create opportunities for students to generate and evaluate new ideas, seek inventive solutions to problems, and create original work
- Provide choices and opportunities for students to select strategies and tactics for meeting learning goals, allowing students to think independently as they explore something relevant to their lives

- Support students in making informed decisions in a challenging and rigorous learning environment
- Provide access to asynchronous learning opportunities, including time for students to pursue their own interests

#### FAMILIES/PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN:

- Teach their child that asking for help is a strength
- Encourage their child to respect self and others by identifying boundaries, taking turns in conversations, considering another's point of view, etc.
- Make time, throughout the year, to talk with their child about their learning progress and determine what, if any, additional supports may be necessary
- Advocate for additional supports for their child, as needed
- Help their child practice articulating their needs to others
- Partner with teachers to provide needed supports (e.g., assignment information, access to learning tools at home)
- Provide opportunities for their child to take the lead when solving problems and making decisions
- Make choices/decisions for educational opportunities with their child
- Help their child to build independence in seeking answers to questions; ask their child to explain what they do and do not understand and help them to find their own answers



## REFERENCES

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