



SEL Integrated Lesson Planning Checklist

Strong SEL-integrated lessons include some or all the following practices. As you review a lesson plan, identify places where these practices are already present or where they could be included.



Connect academic and SEL learning objectives.

Clearly define both the academic and social-emotional goals for the lesson. As you review your lesson plan, reflect:

- Which social and emotional skills will students need to use so they can deeply engage and experience success with the academic objective?
- What opportunities can I create for students to practice, reflect on, and improve those skills within this lesson plan?

Ensure that goals are developmentally appropriate and correspond with any standards adopted by your school. (Use [this map](#) to look up SEL standards in your state or other examples.)



Ask open-ended questions.

Open-ended questions cannot be answered with one correct answer or a simple “yes/no.” The goal is to surface student thinking and curiosity. Review your lesson plan to see if closed/rhetorical questions or areas of teacher explanation can be replaced open-ended questions that encourage exploratory thinking. Write out the wording and sequence of questions ahead of time. Include questions such as:

- What do you notice about _____?
- What are some examples of _____?
- How is this [similar to/different from] something we’ve seen before?
- What have you heard about _____?
- What do you want to know about _____?
- Why does/doesn’t it make sense that _____?
- What do you think the author is trying to do here?
- What are some of the steps you took to solve this problem?
- What are some of the SEL skills/competencies you used or saw your classmates use during this activity?

Set the expectation that students should interact with and build on each other’s ideas rather than expect you to respond to every comment. For example, “I’m going to listen while you do the thinking and build knowledge together. I want us to hear each other think.”

FACILITATING FULL CLASS DISCUSSION

- Have students use discussion prompts: “I agree with ___ because___”, “I have a different idea than ___ because___”, “In addition to what ___ said, I think___”
- Use wait time of 5-10 seconds after asking questions before calling on anyone to respond.
- Explicitly cue the need to focus on classmates: “[Zoe] is going to talk now. Let’s give her our full attention.”
- Teach students to “tag” each other in conversation so they are calling on others to speak.
- Ask facilitative questions: “What do you think about what [Sarah] just said?”, “Do you agree or disagree with what [Pablo] said, and why?”, “What questions can we ask [Martine] about what [she] shared?”, “What can you add to what [Abdul] said?”
- Refrain from repeating or paraphrasing students, so that the class will learn to tune into each individual speaker.



Build in opportunities for choice.

Look for places where students can make choices (e.g., which text to read, activity station to visit, question to answer, topic to research, or presentation method to demonstrate understanding). Ask students to reflect on how their choice will be the right level of challenge, how it connects to their strengths or interests, or how it relates to a goal they have set.



Include more partner discussions.

Look for places to use the [“Turn to Your Partner”](#) or “Think-Pair-Share” strategy. This helps students process and make sense of what they are learning and increases their confidence before asking them to begin an assignment or share an idea with the whole class. You can plan ahead for moments you’ll ask students to discuss with a partner, but you can also do so spontaneously whenever you notice that only a few students are talking, or when many students want to talk (e.g. *“This is a tough question. Turn to your partner first, then we’ll hear ideas from a few pairs.”*).

Be intentional and clear about SEL by first framing a skill students should try to use with their partners (e.g. listening to understand, ensuring all voices are heard, compromising, offering or asking for support, asking follow-up questions) and later prompting reflection about what they noticed.

FACILITATING PARTNER DISCUSSIONS

- Teach a procedure for how students should find their partner, ensure they both have time to talk, and wrap up their conversation at your attention signal. Have students practice until they can do this comfortably and productively with any classmate.
- Pose an open-ended question before giving the prompt to discuss with a partner (e.g. “How does this connect to what we learned yesterday? Turn to your partner.”)
- During partner discussions, scan the class and observe. As the conversation begins to dwindle, signal for attention. Immediate silence is not the goal – just as in an adult setting, students should be permitted to finish their train of thought. Use proximity or a verbal reminder with a neutral tone if it takes more than about 10 seconds for any pairs to finish up.
- Partner discussions are best for boosting engagement and thinking, and serve as an inclusive segue into a task, activity, or topic. For this reason, it’s usually not necessary to spend a lot of time (if any) on whole-class sharing after the partners talk. Just call on a few volunteers before moving on and acknowledge any moments where SEL skills were apparent.



Structure tasks to require collaborative problem-solving.

Look for places where you can have students work in pairs or groups to accomplish a collective goal while maintaining individual accountability. Restructure tasks so that they require talk and teamwork (e.g., games, art, research projects, class presentations), and foster interdependence by requiring students to both individually contribute and negotiate agreements to complete the task. Teach and explicitly practice and reflect upon the skills needed for working effectively as a team. Consider defining specific teamwork roles for group members to focus on, and brainstorm sentence stems for each collaborator as in the example below.

TEAMWORK ROLES

Adapted from “Talking in Class” ([Edutopia, 2016](#))

Each student in a group can take on any of these roles during a small group discussion or project. After discussion, ask students to identify and discuss the roles they played most, what was helpful, and what they might do differently next time.

- The **Instigator** begins conversations.
What do you think? The big question is... The first thing we need to do is...
- The **Builder** builds on and develops others’ answers.
Yes, and then you could... I would add to that... That’s a good point, it could also...
- The **Challenger** reminds the group to consider other possibilities and think critically.
But what about... You said __, but... Let’s take a step back and think about other options...
- The **Clarifier** makes sure ideas are fully explored and understood.
What do you mean when you say... Can you give an example... Can you explain a little more about...
- The **Summarizer** surfaces the main points from discussion to bridge to a next step.
Is it correct to say that we... So, what we need to do next is... Would you agree the headline from our discussion is...



Anticipate differences in styles of learning and cultural experience.

Hold a few different students in your mind and consider how each of them will experience your lesson.

- *Will they each be able to participate fully? What support might some students need?*
- *How will their different cultural experiences and frames of reference impact their understanding of what you are teaching? What can you adjust or add so the material is accessible and affirming for all students?*
- *Will each be able to achieve the lesson objectives in a way that reflects their unique strengths and SEL skills? What will you say to help them reflect on and develop these strengths?*



Save time for a closing reflection.

Before the end of the class period or instructional block, reserve several minutes to bring the class back together to debrief learning and progress and think ahead to next steps. Pose 1–3 questions for discussion or writing, to focus on both academic and social-emotional skills that were practiced.

- *What is one thing you know now that you didn't know before?*
- *What is one thing you want to keep thinking about?*
- *What was the easiest and most challenging part for you?*
- *Which SEL skill did you find you needed to use today?*
- *What's something one of your classmates did today that was helpful for you?*
- *What did you do to be a good partner/group member? How did that help your work?*
- *What did you do to make sure you were sharing the work fairly?*
- *How were you able to stay focused? What strategies did you try to work through moments you felt frustrated?*
- *What was difficult about working together? How did that affect your work? What needs to be different?*
- *What was good about today that we should keep doing? What should I do differently as your teacher to support you?*