



SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING - EVALUATION RUBRIC

Dimension and Key Question

Pro-Development

Needs Improvement

Destructive/Harmful



1. ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Does the SEL program imply or communicate a mission of helping young people and communities to thrive or does it emphasize correcting perceived deficits?

- Preparation and ongoing professional development of educators/staff to actively explore the defaults and harmful consequences of a deficit-based approach, especially for Black, Brown, and other diverse learners and the benefits to youth of asset-based approaches to development.
- Helps young people identify their own assets and strengths and build on them individually and in community.

→ Offers a set of competencies to help young people conform and assimilate, while subtly denigrating facets of their own home cultures, youth culture, and community practices that may differ from established white, middle-class norms.

→ Based on a deficit mindset to teach “those kids” how to behave or be good workers.



2. ACTION AND EMPOWERMENT ORIENTATION

Do young people learn to be passive or active in facilitating personal growth and shaping strategies that improve their community and environment?

- Integrate elements of peer engagement, leadership development, co-creation, relationship building, and community-building, applied into all settings and spaces.
- Young people are exposed to and/or encouraged to research examples of diverse youth, adults, institutions, and systems to positively and actively transform both themselves and communities like their own.

- Young people must go to extraordinary lengths to influence the educational setting’s culture, treatment, or community. They receive little or no adult support or encouragement for doing this work.
- Young people are encouraged only to make small changes or adjustments to the pre-existing culture rather than to co-create and continually revise.
- Only a few young people chosen by adults receive occasional opportunities to reflect on positive personal qualities, norms, and practices.

- Young people are not involved in the rule-setting process.
- Young people are threatened and made to follow rules set by adult authorities and then punished for noncompliance.
- Young people passively receive platitudes about following rules.

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3. COLLECTIVIST ORIENTATION/ COMMUNAL ACTION/ COOPERATION

Does the SEL strategy recognize the importance of collective progress rather than solely individual development as vital?

→ Process invites diverse local community leaders to have authentic dialogue with learners about how the roles of collective action (e.g., organizing and advocacy) and social movements demanding justice impact the identities-- and are driven by the shared goals--of people with shared interests.

→ Never interrogates SEL concepts for a healthy conceptualization of individuals as part of communities and societies

→ Mentions community only in passing, vague terms, with no explanation or exploration

→ Individualism remains a central feature of the organization's practices.

→ Focuses on the development of learners only as individuals.

→ Promotes individualism and competition as normal and desirable.

→ Assumes that individual rights/ concerns are always the most important consideration.



4. EXPLICIT ANTI-OPPRESSION ORIENTATION

In keeping with the idea of robust equity as an intentional counter to injustice, institutionalized privilege and prejudice, and systemic deficits (Thriving Equity), does the SEL program hold the elimination of oppression, the promotion of equity and justice, and healing trauma as central goals? Does the approach reinforce social hierarchies (e.g., racial, gender) or dismantle them?

→ Elimination of oppression is a core goal. The approach centers on the most marginalized youth and supports, encourages, and equips students with tools to identify, interrogate and transform harmful systems and practices, including systems of which they are currently a part.

→ Fails to speak to or covers up the ways that oppressive systems operate. Learners must figure out social ills such as racism, homophobia, misogyny, and ableism without meaningful adult support and must process their responses and relationship to these oppressive systems on their own.

→ Promotes and reinforces racist or other oppressive ways of knowing, being, and behaving, explicitly or implicitly, and re-inflicts oppressive trauma.

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5. SAFE & SUPPORTIVE CLIMATE

Do young people experience the institution's climate as welcoming and nurturing or as threatening and heightening anxiety?

- Developmentally affirming approaches are integrated into the daily life of the school or out-of-school program. Young people behave in beneficial ways because they are part of a community with peers and educators through restorative practices.
- Educational and developmental spaces and settings made safer through positive, trust-based relationships which are actively facilitated across the institution.

- Behavior is transactional, discussed only in terms of control and varying levels of reward and punishment rather than encouraging youth to determine their strengths and to build upon them in the pursuit of their interests and the development of positive internal habits of mind.
- The threat of punishment is pervasive, even if passive. Surveillance, policing, and punitive responses are routine and assumed to be normal.

- Rigid system of surveillance, behavioral rules, and harsh consequences (from corporal punishment and physical isolation to shame and denial of learning) are disproportionately applied to Black, Brown, neuro-diverse, and other learners from non-dominant groups.
- Buildings and settings are hardened against perceived threats. Young people are viewed and treated as potential threats whose emotions and actions must be carefully controlled by rigid rules with swift, certain punishment and punitive consequences.



6. CULTURAL ORIENTATION

Is the program culturally and historically affirming, open to, and supportive of, diverse perspectives and histories, or is it hegemonic (prescribing, promoting, and enforcing one set of cultural practices and worldview and destructive of others)?

- Educators and educational settings affirm and facilitate a range of cultures and ways of being as contributing to the flourishing of everyone in the community, recognizing that Black and Brown people have a diverse set of norms, values, and practices that lift up and define community, equity, excellence, and justice.

- Designers factor in shallow, sporadic efforts to recognize culture and difference as a periodic add-on or as special sessions.

- Program is culturally normative and actively disparages and discourages other perspectives.

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7. IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

Do young people have sufficient opportunities to develop and explore their personal and collective identities as part of the intentional promotion of thriving across multiple domains? (Thriving Equity, page 3)

- Supports healthy human development of multiple aspects of identity, understood in all their contradictions and complexities, particularly in relation to equity and justice.
- Identity as a learner is cultivated when youth can experience various ways to understand, analyze, and apply information to discover what works best for them and practice how to advocate for themselves.

- Identity is mentioned as a valued characteristic, but vaguely defined with no attention to power dynamics and context or is treated as a self-help process undertaken alone.
- Identity as a learner is tied to production (e.g., test scores or grades) and procedure, where learners' only path to success is to replicate processes and products exactly as they are shown. Hence, youth adopt external judgments about themselves as learners, without the chance to learn what works for them.

- Identity development is discouraged unless it meets the needs of the youth settings, for instance as "scholars," while "inconvenient" identities (trans, activist, non-hetero) are repressed.
- Identity is ignored in a youth-serving setting or thought of in strictly individualistic terms, with no social orientation to community or justice.



8. ADAPTABILITY

Does the approach and strategy change in response to context and community input?

- Educators/staff commit to an inclusive process of continual interrogation, refinement, and adaptation, where young people, families, and communities are engaged partners.

- Designers present a preconceived program for community approval or agreement and expect it to fit all young people and contexts with no or only superficial changes.

- SEL strategies and approaches are developed without input from impacted communities and remain rigidly fixed and inequitable, no matter the context or feedback.

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9. SUFFICIENT RESOURCES

Do learners have all the resources they need to thrive, including the level of funds, effort, and emphasis deployed to identify, report, and address inequities that exist across schools and districts? Are professional learning supports available and adequately focused on reflection and action to develop adult anti-oppression, pro-development skills, and attitudes in every adult who engages with youth?

- Policies, practices, funds, and materials from a variety of sources ensure youth have equitable access to high-quality curricula and content, mental health staff, social workers, guidance counselors, peer mentors, and other staff.
- Strategies provide support and additional opportunities to help students effectively identify and deal with stressors and to develop positive, healthy identities, aptitudes, and skill sets.

- Institutions have inadequate, direct service mental health and material resources contributing to positive human development.
- Institutions assess human development/growth but do not allocate or secure the resources needed to achieve justice and ensure that all diverse youth thrive.

- Little to no investment of staff, materials and time dedicated towards supporting youth holistically.



10. LANGUAGE

Does the design use appropriate, accessible language?

- Uses and consistently develops accessible and clear language that all the young people and families in a given community can understand, use, and modify for empowerment and self-determination.
- Incorporates and celebrates language norms, expressions, and images/symbols that reflect local cultural traditions in the surrounding community.

- Language is respectful but vague or opaque, and difficult for young people and communities to understand.

- Language is denigrating, insulting, and based in stereotypes, shame, blame, deficit mindset, exclusion, and coercion.
- Language is full of terms requiring specific social, educational, or professional experiences.