



SEL Skill-Building Strategies

Relationships

- Begin and end day with opening and closing circles.
- Involve youth in creation of group promises/norms.
- Acknowledge unique attributes/interests of youth.
- Use mediation when conflict arises.
- Use students' names as often as possible.
- Role-model behavior you expect from students.
- Four positive reinforcement statements made for every redirection needed.
- Divide youth into small groups in kind ways.
- Check-in with students informally.

Teamwork

- Have youth create a product or showcase they all can contribute to.
- Encourage positive language "shout outs".
- Match students to appropriate peer mentors.
- Establish roles when working in teams.
- Present a challenge and have youth work together to figure it out.
- Use teambuilding activities throughout program, not just at beginning.
- Coach facilitators to guide teamwork – give instructions on turn taking, etc.

Communication

- Create safe opening circles where students feel safe sharing in the group.
- Break students into small groups and facilitate communication.
- Encourage and model use of I-Statements.
- Provide a framework and safe way for students to have respectful disagreements.
- Model calm and clear communication.
- Present a ritualized talking stick for one person to speak at a time.
- Practice speaking in front of a group.
- Communication is not just talking; teach active listening.
- Practice different forms of non-verbal communication.

Perseverance

- Frame feedback positively for youth.
- Create a culture of hard work.

- Match youth with pacing partners (similarly achieving students who will push each other, instead of pairing the highest achieving with the lowest achieving).
- Create a structure for students to track their own progress.
- Create attendance rituals so young people feel excited to come to program.
- Utilize long term projects.
- Integrate perseverance language and talk about it daily.
- Reward effort, not only success.

Self-Regulation

- Set clear and achievable behavioral standards for youth.
- Facilitator models appropriate responses.
- Use signs and posters as much as possible.
- Designate a calming space and calming rituals for youth to use and participate in daily.
- Plan ahead to create a calm environment.
- Assist youth in setting goals they want to achieve during the program and help them track their progress.
- Use rituals for students to monitor their behavior and energy level.

Critical Thinking

- Have students work through problem solving activities in small groups.
- Debrief all activities, incidents and conflicts (What? So What? Now What?).
- Ask “open-ended” and “probing” questions.
- Reflect in journals on daily basis if possible.
- Connect activities to young people’s lives.
- Use structured debate programs to push youth to defend their positions.
- Assign cognitively demanding project-based tasks related to analyzing, designing, and creating.
- Allow students to figure things out and work through problems themselves. Provide guidance instead of major adult intervention to help improve risk-taking opportunities.
- Allow youth to make decisions and ask for rationale to back up their choice.

Youth leadership & youth choice/autonomy

- Create program rules with input from students.
- Give choices wherever possible, avoid implied choices, and make it explicit.
- Have specific opportunities for leadership/roles for students to step into.
- Teach a routine at beginning of the program that youth can lead in future.
- Create opportunities for students to share their work publically to improve ownership of material.
- Accept what youth produce may not be exactly what you envision.
- Listen to students’ suggestions for improvement.

- Allow staff to have a voice that is heard in the program community and empower them to do the same with youth.
- Facilitate active community engagement and service.
- Pluses and Deltas: Youth-led discussion on what worked well in the program that day and what needs to be changed going forward. Deltas can then be added to group norms.

Engagement in Learning

- Ensure youth has access to resources that let them explore new information for themselves.
- Have staff show their own passion and enthusiasm in material, providing a model to youth.
- Fit in as many experiential learning exercises (e.g. lab experiments, educational games) as possible into a lesson plan.
- Create safe and comfortable space with posters on the walls, youth artwork and accomplishments.
- Youth and staff help to write the mission statement or goals of program.
- Have teachers and principals modeling respectful behavior towards each other.
- College-mentoring program for youth to connect to a college student (in person or via Skype) who can provide advice, study tips, and other advice that is crucial for young people to have.
- Provide opportunities for families to be actively involved in their child's participation at program.