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Social and Emotional Learning
COACHING TOOLKIT

Keeping SEL at the Center

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Social and Emotional Learning

COACHING TOOLKIT

Keeping SEL at the Center

August 2017

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Contents

Introduction

Teachers recognize the importance of student social and emotional skill development; however, they often feel as though they do not have the time to support social and emotional learning (SEL). One approach teachers can use to support student social, emotional, and academic skills is through general teaching practices. To support teacher implementation of practices that support the whole child, coaches and administrators can observe teacher practice and provide feedback. The purpose of this toolkit is to support coaches and administrators as they observe practices that support the development of social and emotional skills in classrooms, and hold critical conversations that include SEL.

Although coaching practices—with a specific focus on classroom observations and feedback—are the primary focus of the toolkit, it is important to use the toolkit in combination with other system-level processes that support teachers in developing student social, emotional, and academic skills (e.g., school discipline, curriculum and instruction, and school climate efforts). It is possible to improve the system and improve support for these practices by noting barriers to effective implementation of SEL practices rooted in other levels of the system.

SEL Practices

Researchers from American Institutes for Research (AIR) reviewed existing literature on evidence-based SEL programs that focus on the relationship between specific instructional practices, positive learning environments, and student social and emotional competencies, identifying 10 teaching practices most frequently referenced across the SEL programs (Yoder, 2014; see Figure 1). Although not an exhaustive list, these 10 practices represent important teaching strategies to use in classrooms to support a positive, engaging, and inclusive classroom experience for students and teachers. This toolkit uses these practices to focus observations and coaching conversations.

Who Should Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is for instructional coaches, administrators, and district leaders who support teachers and other instructional staff in integrating SEL into their daily instructional practices.

How This Toolkit Should Be Used

This toolkit can support instructional staff in implementing SEL practices through planning, observations, feedback, and action planning. This toolkit is only for formative purposes—not for evaluating or rating teachers.
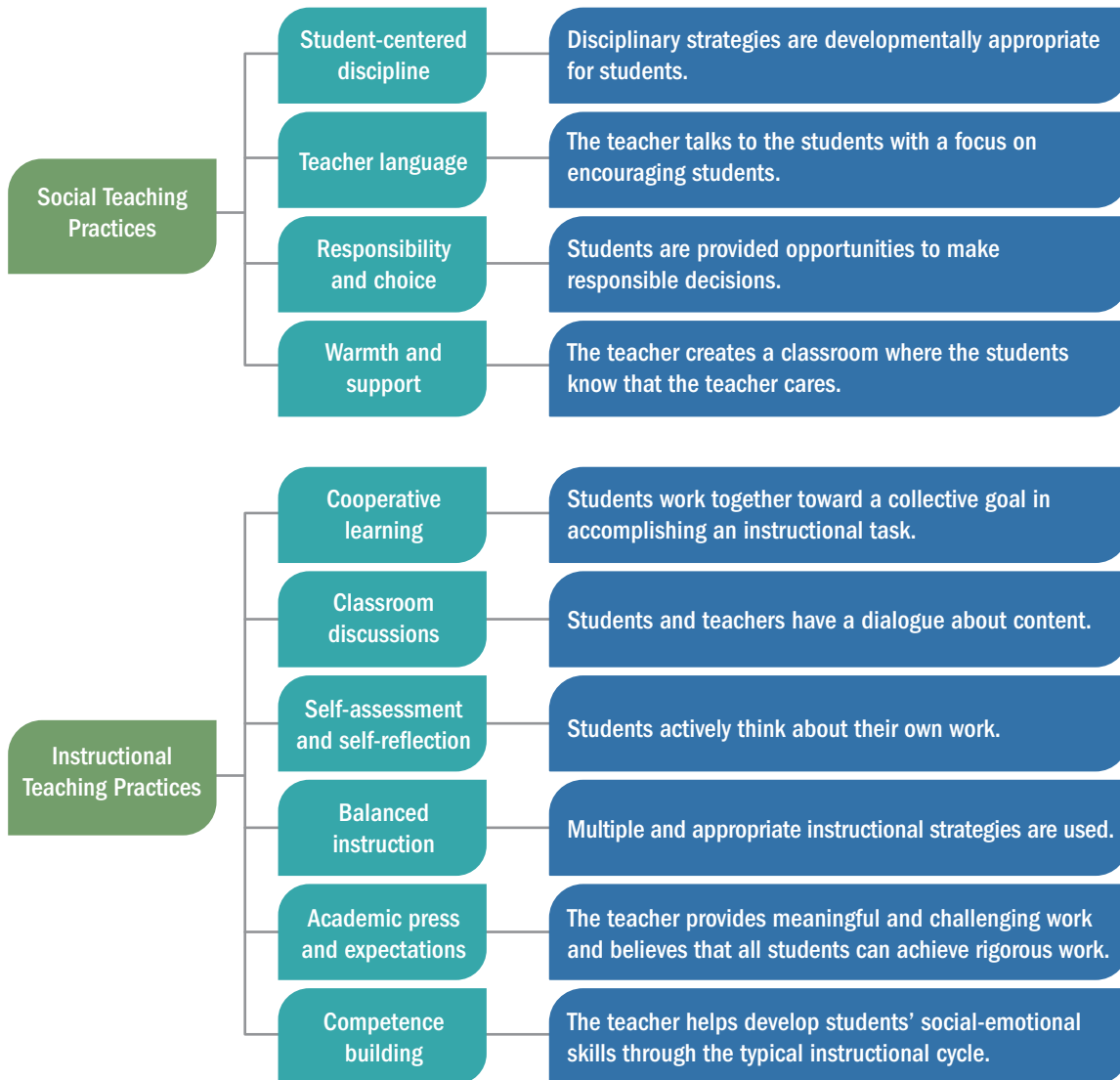
This toolkit is most useful when it aligns with SEL professional development, including opportunities for teachers to share their work with each other—for example, in a professional learning community.

Knowledge of SEL

This coaching toolkit assumes some level of knowledge of SEL. If you are not familiar with SEL, visit the following websites for information:

- SEL Solutions
- Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center) SEL School
- Collaborative for Academic Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

Figure 1. 10 Teaching Practices That Support SEL[1]

Social Teaching Practices	Student-centered discipline	Disciplinary strategies are developmentally appropriate for students.
	Teacher language	The teacher talks to the students with a focus on encouraging students.
	Responsibility and choice	Students are provided opportunities to make responsible decisions.
	Warmth and support	The teacher creates a classroom where the students know that the teacher cares.
Instructional Teaching Practices	Cooperative learning	Students work together toward a collective goal in accomplishing an instructional task.
	Classroom discussions	Students and teachers have a dialogue about content.
	Self-assessment and self-reflection	Students actively think about their own work.
	Balanced instruction	Multiple and appropriate instructional strategies are used.
	Academic press and expectations	The teacher provides meaningful and challenging work and believes that all students can achieve rigorous work.
	Competence building	The teacher helps develop students' social-emotional skills through the typical instructional cycle.

Changing Behavior

In the past two decades, much of education policy has narrowed its focus to standardized tests and accountability metrics, often leaving out the social and emotional development of students. Today, policymakers and educators are beginning to understand the value of supporting the whole child, preparing students to be productive and happy citizens. To support teachers in this work, it is important to provide feedback and coaching. However, to ensure that SEL does not become a one-off initiative that fails to become engrained in day-to-day teaching and learning, it is important

[1] This figure comes from the teacher SEL self-assessment from the GTL Center (http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/SelfAssessmentSEL.pdf).

to recognize how humans adapt to change and why oftentimes we fail to change. Difficulty with change results largely from the design of the human brain and the ways in which organizations support change. The brain is not designed for the complex, changing world of the 21st century (Scarlett, 2016). It is designed for survival, and human beings have to be intentional to overcome the biology of the brain to implement change successfully. Because new initiatives require human beings to change their behavior, it is important to consider what it takes for adults to change their behavior.

When teachers are asked to adopt new practices, they immediately begin trying to understand the meaning of these changes: for them, for their colleagues, and for their students. Coaches should keep in mind that change is a developmental process and that the nature of teachers' concerns about new practices will evolve over time. Initially, teachers may have relatively straightforward questions about the technical aspects of new practices. Over time, they may have more nuanced concerns about the meaning and impact of new practices (Hall & Hord, 2011). By advocating for new, SEL-aligned practices, school leaders are redefining *proficiency*, which can generate a range of emotions for teachers—from excitement, to fear, to anger. Coaching activities must be sensitive to these emotional responses and must support teachers in making sense of new practices (Evans, 1996). Coaching activities should include ensuring that the working conditions of educators are structured in a way that supports changing practice.

"Coaching that was ongoing and directly related to classroom instruction provided greater evidence of potential and actual improvement than did irregular interactions or activities directed at larger group meetings."

–Borman and Feger (2006)

Coaching to Change Behavior

Coaching focuses mainly on supporting or modifying new practices that help meet the needs of current students. These changes are difficult to implement because most adults are comfortable with the way they do things. Effective coaching considers the humanness of teachers and creates safe spaces for teachers to try out new practices and reflect on their own practices to determine for themselves what they need to do differently. It considers that teachers need to let go of the old ways, step out of their comfort zones, endure uncertainty, and finally succeed with the new initiative (Bridges, 2009), ultimately supporting teachers' own social and emotional competencies. Coaching is a way to support teachers as they work through the challenge of change. Thus, if we want teachers to support student social and emotional development, we need to support the change process teachers must go through.

This toolkit provides tools and supports for coaches and administrators to help teachers think about and plan for creating changes in their practice that focus on social, emotional, and academic development. Specifically, this toolkit and corresponding tools focus on the observation and feedback of teacher implementation of practices that support SEL. However, observation and feedback alone will not embed SEL into practice—observation and feedback should be used in combination with other coaching activities and additional supports and learning activities (see Table 1) to create a well-rounded professional development system.

What Coaches Do

- Give teachers feedback rooted in student engagement, evidence of learning, and achievement.

- Aspire to transform teaching practices, examine beliefs, and test assumptions.

- Develop expert, effective teachers who support students by helping teachers develop a deep understanding of theory and research.

Table 1. Additional Coaching and Professional Experiences

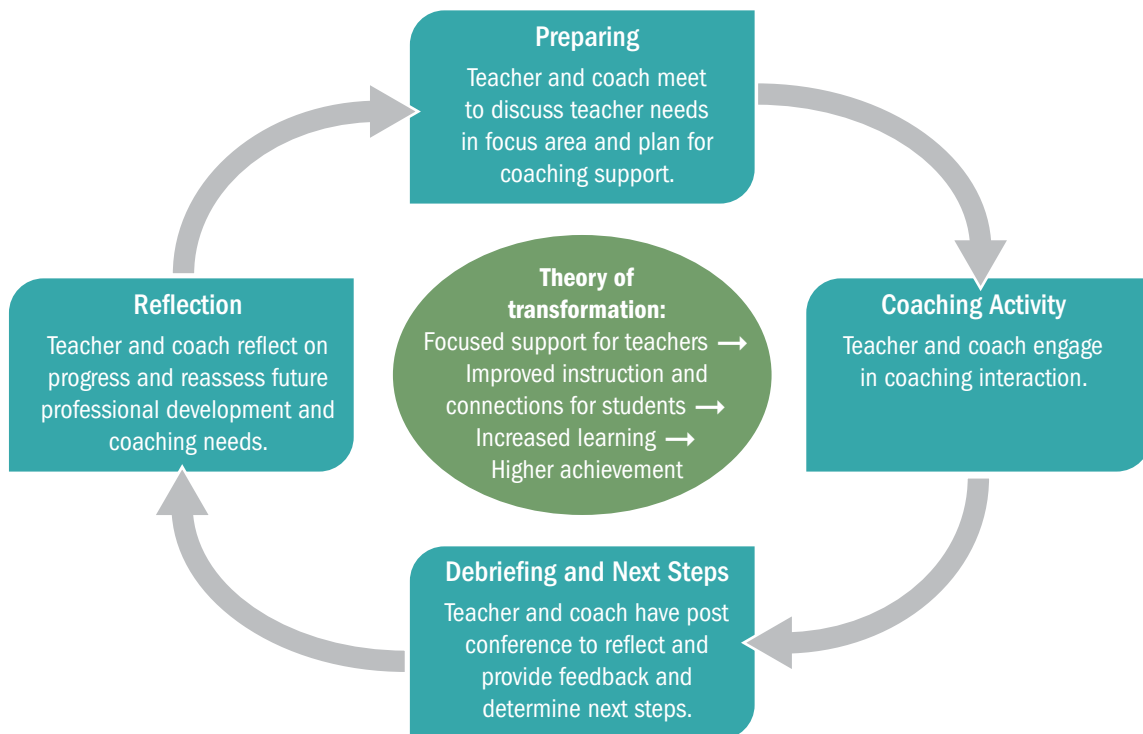| Menu of Coaching Activities	Additional Supports and Learning
- Provide resources - Deliver differentiated professional development (PD), such as study groups, lesson study - Work with teacher teams (grade level, subject areas) - Co-plan - Co-teach - Model instruction - Review data - Provide feedback - Additional observation and data collection	- Summer institute - Grade-level and content professional learning communities - August PD days - Wednesday early-release PD sessions - Content-driven PD - Positive behavioral intervention and support training - District-focused activities - School-focused activities - Teacher leadership PD book study

The Coaching Cycle Through an SEL Lens

Although this toolkit is not a robust coaching resource, it does provide a framework and tools for use in SEL classroom observation coaching activities and should be used to support other professional learning activities (see Table 1). It is organized around the coaching cycle, which breaks the process down into four distinctive steps (see Figure 2). There are different strategies for each of these coaching activities (Aguilar, 2013).

- Using a directive coaching strategy, the coach shares expertise, perhaps modeling a lesson or sharing resources.

- Using facilitative coaching, the coach encourages a teacher to reflect on or analyze experiences.

The strategies you use will depend on the goals and readiness of individual teachers. Regardless of the strategies you choose, you can coach teachers on SEL practices using the cycle in Figure 2. This toolkit is organized around the tools associated with each step of the coaching cycle.

Figure 2. The Coaching Cycle

Preparing
Teacher and coach meet to discuss teacher needs in focus area and plan for coaching support.

Coaching Activity
Teacher and coach engage in coaching interaction.

Debriefing and Next Steps
Teacher and coach have post conference to reflect and provide feedback and determine next steps.

Reflection
Teacher and coach reflect on progress and reassess future professional development and coaching needs.

Theory of transformation:
Focused support for teachers → Improved instruction and connections for students → Increased learning → Higher achievement

Preparing for a Coaching Relationship

Whether you are a coach or a teacher receiving coaching, there is prework to complete that will make the coaching process more effective. One way to prepare is to examine your beliefs. In her book *The Art of Coaching: Effective Strategies for School Transformation*, Elena Aguilar (2013) talks about the importance of the coach and the teacher understanding their own beliefs and core values.

Revealing the beliefs, biases, and skills of both the coach and teacher is an important first step in establishing a positive relationship and accepting support that leads to behavior change. Doing so will help form a meaningful, trusting relationship with the teacher. It will also help both of you avoid making assumptions about what you say and do during the coaching process; you can refer back to this discussion when differences arise. Although content knowledge is important, empathy and understanding of the challenges of teaching—*important social and emotional skills*—are critical skills for both coach and teacher to use in helping to change practice. Reflecting on your own beliefs and values not only will help you be more effective in your efforts to help others change their behavior but also will help you model what you seek for those you coach.

> ### Reflection on Core Values and Beliefs
>
> - The GTL Center provides a self-assessment tool that educators can use to reflect on their own social and emotional skills and SEL teaching practices. Coaches can take the assessment as well and use the results to improve their own social and emotional skills.
>
> - Elena Aguilar (2013) provides an exercise you can use to identify your core values and the actions you take as a result of holding these values.

Preparing With the Teacher for a Coaching Session

Before visiting the classroom, host a pre-planning meeting with the teacher to identify the objectives of the observation and feedback. For this pre-planning meeting:

- **Meet** with the teacher, principal, and other school-based staff who might have input for the coaching activity to determine the focus of the observation prior to the meeting.

- **Ensure** that you set a climate that will encourage teacher voice and instructional risk taking (e.g., you are in a place with minimal disruptions).

- **Reflect** upon the self-assessment data from the teacher, as noted previously.

- **Co-identify** teaching practices to observe. Be specific about what behaviors you intend to observe (no more than one or two practices), using data from previous coaching sessions and other formative data (e.g., including survey data, student work, incident reports, and attendance data) as well as established goals.

- **Be clear** on the purpose and expectations for the observation session for both the coach and teacher.

- **Come** to an agreement about the tool you will use to gather data during the observation. There should be no surprises. Respect and ensure the teacher's confidentiality.

"If we don't identify where a teacher is in her learning, we can't plan for and design the kinds of learning experiences that will help her meet her goals."

–Elena Aguilar (2013)

Tools for Preparation

As you determine which teaching practices you will observe, use the following tools:

- **Appendix A: Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices** can help the coach and teacher determine what to focus on in the planning process. These questions are designed to help the coach and teacher think about teacher and student SEL practices. You can use these questions during the planning session to come to an agreement about what is most important to focus on.

- **Tool 1: SEL Planning and Observation Worksheet** can help to ensure you have covered all of the important practices you will focus on during the observation. It is best to agree to focus on one or two practices so that you can do a thorough job of scripting or taking notes during the observation.

- **Tool 2: Rubric for 10 Teaching Practices That Support SEL**, included later in this toolkit, will help support the identification of the practices

STEP 2 | Engaging in the Coaching Activity

This toolkit is designed to support coaching activity observation and feedback, with a specific focus on SEL teaching practices (see Table 1 for other coaching activities).[2] As you engage in the coaching activity, the coach:

- **Observes** classroom instruction and scripts notes based on the agreed-upon focus determined at the planning meeting (see Tool 1 and Tool 2).

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[2] Coaching activities may begin with an observation and then move to modeling, coteaching, or coplanning. These activities are not explicitly covered in this toolkit. Consult additional resources for information on these coaching activities.

- **Observes** both teacher and student behaviors and their interactions. Take as many notes as possible. Be precise in what you write down. Summaries should be detailed and accurate; be careful to balance note taking with observing nonverbal gestures and interactions.

- **Allows** time as soon after the observation session as possible to review your notes and fill in gaps. The longer you wait to complete this part of the process, the less you will be able to accurately recall what you observed.

Tools for Coaching

As you observe classroom practice, use the following tools:

- **Tool 2: Rubric for 10 Teaching Practices That Support SEL** to identify specific behaviors to review as you engage in observation.

- **Tool 1: SEL Planning and Observation Worksheet** to indicate specific teacher practices and student behaviors you notice during the observation.

SEL Planning and Observation Worksheet

Directions: Use this tool to collect and record observation evidence during the classroom observation. Before the observation, decide on which SEL teaching practice(s) to focus on based on the planning conversation you had with the teacher.

Teacher: _____ Coach: _____ Date & Time: _____

Behaviors to Observe: _____

_____

Note Taking

SEL Teaching Practice	Teacher Actions	Student Actions	Time
Student-centered discipline			
Teacher language			
Responsibility and choice			
Warmth and support			
Cooperative learning			
Classroom discussions			
Self-assessment and self-reflection			
Balanced instruction			
Academic press and expectations			
Competence building			

Directions: Use the notes you took on the Planning and Observation Worksheet during the classroom observation to help you as you complete the following steps.

1. In the Narrative Summary box, summarize the observation, including the context and outcomes of the classroom observation, as well as your initial thoughts on the teacher's implementation of SEL practice during the observation. Complete this summary shortly after the observation to capture your immediate reflections and comments while they are still fresh in your memory.

2. For each teaching practice you observe, review the observation notes in *Tool 1: SEL Planning and Observation Worksheet*; compare the observation evidence with the performance-level descriptions for each observed indicator.

3. Select a performance level that best reflects the evidence you collected. It is not the case that all behaviors are expected to be exhibited throughout the lesson. The teacher and coach should choose a practice in which those practices will be observed in the lesson.

- **SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.** Neither the teacher nor the students demonstrate any of the behaviors associated with the description of the teacher practice or student behaviors.

- **SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.** The teacher and students demonstrate some of the behaviors associated with the description of the teacher practice or student behaviors but demonstrate them only a small number of times throughout the lesson.

- **SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.** The teacher and students demonstrate some of the behaviors associated with the description of the teacher practice or student behaviors but demonstrate them inconsistently throughout the lesson.

- **SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.** The teacher and students demonstrate the behaviors associated with the description of the teacher practice or student behaviors consistently across the lesson.

Narrative Summary of the Observation Session

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[3] This rubric has yet to be validated in a rigorous research study, and should not be used for any high-stakes decisions, but rather should be used to guide conversations between coaches, administrators and teachers.

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
1. STUDENT-CENTERED DISCIPLINE refers to the types of classroom management strategies teachers use in their classrooms.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing student-centered disciplinary practices, the teacher has discussions with students about classroom procedures, including incorporating student voice with the rules and procedures of the classrooms. The teacher provides students strategies so that they can monitor and regulate their behavior and emotions in the classroom. The teacher consistently implements classroom rules and consequences but also considers pupil-specific factors when trying to help students correct their behavior.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements student-centered disciplinary practices, students exhibit positive classroom behaviors, regulating their own behaviors and emotions in the classroom. If students do misbehave, they have tools and strategies to accept the consequences of their behavior, problem solve situations that may arise in the future, and articulate how their behavior influences the ways the classroom operates.				
2. TEACHER LANGUAGE refers to how teachers talk to students.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing teacher language practices, the teacher acknowledges specific positive behaviors and asks students to reflect on their behavior—both social skills and work habits. The teacher also provides specific affirmation to let students know their efforts lead to positive results.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements teacher-language practices, students use positive language with the teacher and their peers, including appropriate academic language. Students become more motivated, persist in tasks, and modify or continue positive behaviors based on the language the teacher uses in the classroom.				

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
3. RESPONSIBILITY AND CHOICE refers to how students are allowed to make decisions.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing responsibility and choice practices, the teacher engages students in how they are going to learn. The teacher asks for student input, provides meaningful choices, and creates opportunities for students to be responsible in the classroom. The teacher ensures that students make connections between their choices and potential consequences.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements responsibility and choice practices, students have opportunities to be responsible within lessons as well as classroom procedures. Students are aware that there are multiple ways to solve a problem. Students accept responsibility for their own behavior and the class's behavior, holding each other accountable. They also have opportunities to help their peers and teacher.				
4. WARMTH AND SUPPORT refers to the academic, social, and emotional support students receive from their teacher and peers.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing warmth and support teaching practices, the teacher demonstrates that he or she appreciates each student as an individual and is concerned about how and what each student learns. The classroom is structured so students feel included and appreciated, creating a space where it is okay to make mistakes and where the teacher checks in with students about academic and nonacademic concerns.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements warmth and support practices, students express academic and emotional support for their teacher and peers. Students know about each other's interests and backgrounds and take into account the perspective and emotions of their classmates and teacher. Students communicate with each other in meaningful ways and feel comfortable taking academic risks.				

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
5. COOPERATIVE LEARNING refers to a specific instructional task in which students work together toward a collective goal.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing cooperative learning practices, the teacher creates learning experiences in which the students apply positive social skills to succeed, depend on each other, and work through difficulties they may have with assignments. Individual students and the group are held accountable for learning during small-group work. In addition, the teacher provides opportunities for students to share their work, receive feedback from others, and collaboratively process how they work together.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements cooperative learning practices, students work with their peers in meaningful ways and hold each other accountable during group work. Students process how they work together and focus on promoting the group's success. Students provide specific, high-quality feedback to each other and are receptive to feedback from their peers. Students resolve conflict that arises during cooperative learning.				
6. CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS refers to conversations students and teachers have about content.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing classroom discussion practices, the teacher helps students identify how to listen to, respond to, and learn from other students in a discussion. The teacher helps students learn how to effectively communicate their point of view, allowing students to hold in-depth discussions about content and reflecting on their peers' thoughts.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements classroom discussion practices, students listen attentively and can paraphrase and analyze the speaker's main points as well as extend their own thinking in response. Students can ask clarifying questions as well as use effective communication skills to present their own point of view and reflect on their peers' points of view.				

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
7. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SELF-REFLECTION refer to teachers and students actively thinking about their own work.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing self-assessment and self-reflection practices, the teacher is clear about the learning goals and asks students to reflect on and monitor their progress toward meeting those goals—both social and academic. The teacher ensures that students have time to analyze their own work, think together about the effectiveness of learning activities, and provide feedback for improvement.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements self-assessment and self-reflection practices, students understand their goals and actively think about how their work is related to achieving them. Students are able to monitor progress and know where to go when they need assistance. Students are able to identify what they do and do not know as well as effective strategies for learning. They can provide feedback on how strategies are working for them.				
8. BALANCED INSTRUCTION refers to the balance between active and direct instruction and individual and collaborative learning.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing balanced instructional practices, the teacher uses multiple instructional practices to keep students engaged, knowing when to best use direct instruction and when to use active engagement activities. The teacher asks students to extend their learning when they provide simple answers. In addition, they have students work on real-world products that not only are fun but also represent one of the best ways for students to learn.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements balanced instructional practices, students interact with content in multiple ways, actively solving problems and working both independently and collaboratively. Students identify challenges in solving problems and find potential solutions. Students create products for different audiences and develop an understanding that these audiences may require different communication strategies.				

	SEL practice is not yet present in the classroom.	SEL practice is minimally present in the classroom.	SEL practice is moderately present in the classroom.	SEL practice is fully present in the classroom.
9. ACADEMIC PRESS AND EXPECTATIONS refer to the implementation of meaningful and challenging work, expecting that students will succeed.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing practices that reflect academic press and expectations, students are given more challenging work once they have mastered easier material, ensuring that students feel responsible for their successes and their failures and that they understand the connection between effort and results. The teacher supports students socially and emotionally while challenging them to achieve and surpass their goals.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements practices that reflect academic press and expectations, students feel a need to succeed as they work to master increasingly challenging material. Students understand that they are responsible for their academic outcomes and can analyze information to solve problems. They are able to identify and regulate their emotions when facing new challenges and barriers to success.				
10. COMPETENCE BUILDING refers to using the instructional cycle to develop social and emotional skills.				
Teacher practice: When fully implementing practices that build competence, the teacher uses a variety of tools to model and practice new learning with students. The teacher has students correct mistakes and improve their work using multiple strategies, including relevant feedback from both the teacher and their peers. The teacher uses student misconceptions to guide instruction without singling out individual students.				
Student behaviors: When the teacher fully implements practices that build competence, students are engaged with the content throughout the entire instructional cycle. Students use support and feedback from teachers and peers to improve their work, and they recognize that this is an important part of the learning process, especially when they notice mistakes. Students are aware of their emotions and behaviors during instruction, and they respond appropriately.				

STEP 3 | Debriefing and Next Steps

The responsibility of an effective coach is to provide usable and actionable feedback. It is important to exercise great care in providing feedback so that you can keep the trust of the teacher. Without trust, it is impossible to make progress. As you engage in the debriefing and next steps conversation:

- **Be sure** to bring all relevant materials with you, including any notes from the planning session, the completed observation tools (*Tool 1: SEL Planning and Observation Worksheet and Tool 2: Rubric for 10 Teaching Practices That Support SEL*), other data (e.g., survey data, student work, incident reports, attendance data) the teacher indicates is relevant to the session, and necessary resources to further develop the teacher. These documents will serve as your primary sources during the debriefing conversation.

- **Ensure** that you set a climate that will encourage teacher voice and instructional risk taking (e.g., you are in a place with minimal disruptions). A good climate will help you create a dynamic that encourages the teacher to do most of the talking, responding to questions you pose.

- **Provide** feedback focused on high-priority areas in which the teacher can take action, avoiding minutia that can drag down the conversation.

- **Use** a structured set of questions with a specific focus on continuous improvement. This process begins with an examination of data, determining what is most important to you and the teacher.

- **Use** the structure and tools for the debriefing conversation based on the Focused Conversation Model (Stanfield, 1997), which works well for this type of conversation that can be found below.

- **Determine** what to do next once the first three steps of the focused conversation process are completed. It may be helpful to review *Table 1. Additional Coaching and Professional Experiences* as you identify next steps.

"Without a good relationship with teachers, coaches cannot get the work done."

–Killion, Harrison, Bryan, & Clifton (2012)

Focused Conversation Model

The Focused Conversation Model includes four levels of questions that are rooted in the way the human brain processes information. It is a process that is aligned with continuous improvement principles.

> **Objective Questions.** The focus of the objective questions is on data and facts: directly observable data. In addition to reviewing the data you (the coach) have collected in the observation, you can encourage the teacher to bring additional evidence to the coaching

session. Objective questions are probably the hardest questions to answer because of the human tendency to jump to meaning making and action. With these questions, it is important for you and the teacher to stay focused on data.

Reflective Questions. The questions at this level are focused on reactions to what you have discussed so far. You are tapping into the teacher's internal data to understand what was positive about the observation session and what may be of concern to him or her. This level of question provides the teacher an opportunity to express both excitement and concern.

Interpretive Questions. People feel most comfortable with this level of question because human beings love to make meaning. Using what you and the teacher learned from the objective and reflective questions, together you will start to develop a story about the observation activity—one that will be important to the two of you and help you build ownership for the next steps.

Decisional Questions. The decisional question stage is where the resolution to the coaching debriefing session takes place—where you and the teacher determine what to do next. Because you and the teacher determine the next steps together, you are providing the teacher with an opportunity to own the plan. Decisional questions guide the *next steps* in the coaching cycle.

Using this model to develop questions for SEL coaching will help both coach and teacher engage in a continuous improvement process that begins with a focus on data, allows for reaction and interpretation, and finishes with next steps.

Tools for Debriefing Conversation

In addition to the focused conversation questions, it is important to ask questions specific to the development of student social and emotional skills and SEL practices. Use the following tools to support your debriefing conversations:

- **Tool 3: Focused Conversation Example Questions and Responses** provides example questions and responses that you can use to help guide your conversations.

- **Appendix A: Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices** provides targeted questions about SEL.

- **Tool 4: SEL Practice Debriefing and Next Steps** prompts you and the teacher to determine who needs to do what next, the resources required to complete the tasks at a high level, and when these tasks need to be completed.

- **Tool 2: Rubric for 10 Teaching Practices That Support SEL** guides you in your conversations, using the evidence and data collected.

Focused Conversation Example Questions and Responses*

Question Type	Example Questions	Example Responses
Objective	• What do you notice in the data that I recorded during the observation? • What other data are important for us to consider in this conversation? • What caught your attention from the observation session? • What important moments do you recall from the observation period?	• I noticed that I had to talk with Peter three times during that 15-minute observation. • Nonexample: Peter was distracted during the observation. (If the teacher provides a judgment, remind him or her that you are just noticing, and there will be an opportunity for analysis, judging, and sense making later in the conversation.)
Reflective	• Where were you confident in the way the lesson took place? • Where did you feel unsure? • What was most exciting about the lesson? Where did you have concerns?	• I was really excited to see the class respond so positively to the activity. • I was concerned that Peter seemed unable to stay on task.
Interpretive	• What are you learning about your practice? • What questions did this raise for you? • What kinds of changes do you need to make next time?	• I am learning that not all of my students will respond the same way to the activities I ask them to engage in. • I may need to have multiple strategies in my toolkit for times when students seem disengaged.
Decisional/ Next Steps	• Given today's discussion, what will you focus on between now and our next coaching session? • What support do you need from me before our next coaching session? • What support do you need from others before our next coaching session? • What other resources do you need to access before our next coaching session? • When will you integrate this SEL practice? • When would you like to schedule our next precoaching and coaching sessions? Who else do we need to consult with before this session?	• I need to be sure to include several strategies in my lesson plan so I am ready for times when the main activity doesn't work for everyone. • I will observe Miss Springsteen because I know she is an expert at this particular strategy.

* To support targeted questions about SEL, use the questions found in *Appendix A: Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices*.

SEL Practice Debriefing and Next Steps

Directions: Use this tool as you and the teacher engage in your debriefing conversation to keep an accurate record of the conversation as well as to identify the next steps each of you will take to improve SEL teaching practices. Use *Tool 3: Focused Conversation Example Questions and Responses* and *Appendix A: Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices* to guide the conversation.

Debriefing Conversation

Focused Conversation Question Type	General Teacher Practice Responses	SEL Teacher Practice Responses
Objective		
Reflective: Concerns		
Reflective: Excitements		
Interpretive		

Decisional/Next Steps

Teacher Goal	Teacher SEL Next Steps	Coach/Other SEL Next Steps	Resources Needed	Timeline
1.				
2.				
3.				

STEP 4 | Reflection

Although this toolkit focuses primarily on the classroom observation and feedback activities, it is important for the coach and teacher to take time to reflect on the teacher's overall development, including participation in other professional development activities that can strengthen the teacher's practice to support student social, emotional, and academic development.

Reflection can include reviewing coach and teacher beliefs and coaching observations over a period of time, revisiting the purpose and expectations of the coaching sessions, as well as checking to see if activities continue to align with district and school improvement initiatives. Remember to celebrate successes as well as identify areas for continued improvement.

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Appendix A. Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices[4]

SEL Teaching Practices	Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices
1. Student-Centered Discipline	• Describe how you create a classroom environment to encourage student engagement. What norms and values do you discuss with students? Do these include high expectations, respect, and caring for all students? • Describe how you create a classroom environment that incorporates student interests and experiences. • Describe ways you help students identify and articulate their feelings. • How do you help students learn to regulate their behavior (e.g., when others do something they do not like)? • Describe how you respond to students' misbehavior. Which strategies have you found are most effective/ineffective? Describe approaches you take to assist students who have a difficult time following behavioral expectations.

2. Teacher Language	• Describe how you communicate encouragement to motivate your students.
	
	• Describe how you communicate desirable outcomes for behavior and academic performance (e.g., positive behaviors, academic performance).
	
	• How do you help your students use language effectively?
	
	  ▶ How do you enable your students to use language to monitor and regulate their own behavior? To work well with others and resolve interpersonal conflict?
	
	  ▶ What opportunities do you provide your students to develop, practice, and improve their academic language?
	
	• Describe how you address the cultural and linguistic differences in language between you and your students and among your students. What do you do if socioeconomic, linguistic, or cultural language differences lead to confusion or misunderstanding?

3. Responsibility and Choice	• How do you help students take responsibility for their actions or connect actions to potential consequences? • How do you model and encourage learning from mistakes (both behavioral and academic)? • Describe a time when you integrated student choice into a lesson. How often do you provide similar opportunities to your students? • What are the barriers to incorporating more student choice? How can you overcome those barriers? • How do you help students take responsibility for their actions or connect actions to potential consequences?

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[4] The reflective questions are adapted from the Tennessee Department of Education's toolkit *Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning Into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness*, which was codeveloped with the GTL Center and the Appalachian Regional Comprehensive Center.

SEL Teaching Practices	Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices
4. Warmth and Support	• Describe how you create a classroom environment to encourage student engagement that incorporates student interests and experiences. • Do students feel valued, respected, and supported by their peers in your classroom? How do you know that? • What opportunities do you provide for students to develop and foster positive relationships with their peers? • Think about a lesson from this past week. Did the lesson offer students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in a respectful environment? • How do you acknowledge and support the concerns of students, whether academic, social, or emotional?
5. Cooperative Learning	• How do you use cooperative learning in your classroom? Is there a particular model or approach that you use? Which elements do you use (interdependence, accountability, team encouragement, social skills, group processing)? • How do you encourage students to collaborate with one another, particularly when they are having difficulty with classroom content? • How do you ensure that students have the appropriate social and emotional skills (e.g., communication, self-regulation) to successfully accomplish group tasks? • How do you help students provide and receive feedback from their peers?

6. Classroom Discussions	• How do you incorporate questioning techniques into your lesson plans?
	
	• Think about a lesson from this past week. How did the lesson offer students the opportunity to voice their thoughts and opinions in a respectful environment?
	
	• What kinds of questions do your students ask?
	  ▶ Do student-generated questions move beyond simple clarifications to more complex questions that prompt further, more sophisticated reflection?
	  ▶ How can you help your students learn the skills to ask more complex questions?
	
	• To what extent does your instruction facilitate thoughtful classroom discussions by developing the listening skills of students? By building their skills to conduct inquiry? Their ability to collaborate with others to arrive at a deeper understanding or a decision?

SEL Teaching Practices	Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices

7. **Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection**	• Think about your most successful lessons in the past two weeks:
	  ▶ How did you ensure that your students learned, and how did you know that your students understood the learning goals? How did you help them reflect on their progress in understanding the learning goals?
	  ▶ How did you help your student reflect on their behavior (both positive and negative)?
	• What self-assessment techniques did you use most frequently in the past two weeks?
	  ▶ Describe how you used the results of student self-assessment to inform your practice.
	  ▶ Describe how you helped students use the results of their self-assessment to inform their learning.

8. **Balanced Instruction**	• How do you define "direct instruction"?
	  ▶ How do you use direct instruction in your classroom to ensure students understand the content? Engage in the content?
	• How do you define "active instruction"?
	  ▶ How do you use active instruction in your classroom to ensure students understand the content? Engage in the content?
	  ▶ What types of instructional strategies do you use in your classroom to engage students? How do you integrate multiple strategies into a lesson or unit?
	• What types of products do you ask your students to develop to demonstrate their work?
	• How do you ensure that you use the correct balance of direct and active instruction for you and your students?
	• What types of strategies do you employ to help students solve problems throughout the learning process?

SEL Teaching Practices	Questions for Planning and Debriefing SEL Classroom Practices
9. Academic Press and Expectations	• How do you know where each student's level of academic challenge is—and keep the student moving forward? • What tells you that your students have understood the relationship between the effort they make and their ability to move to a higher level of achievement/challenge? ▶ How do you help students regulate their emotions (e.g., frustration) when they are presented with more rigorous content? ▶ What skills are students learning to manage their social or emotional responses to rigorous academic content? • What learning skills are you teaching and modeling to help students manage their social or emotional responses to rigorous academic content? • How do you help students feel responsible for accomplishing work that meets high expectations? How does the school culture support academic press and expectations? How does a school culture of high expectations support students' social and academic growth?
10. Competence Building	• How do you help build your students' social and emotional competencies throughout academic instruction? What additional ways can you brainstorm to accomplish this in your daily practice? • How do you model and encourage prosocial behaviors throughout your instruction? ▶ How do you incorporate feedback on your students' behavior into the normal course of instruction? ▶ What do you do if a student needs extended coaching in a social and emotional competency? • How do you model and encourage learning from mistakes (both behavioral and academic)? • What types of strategies do you employ to help students solve problems throughout the learning process? • What opportunities do you provide students to take responsibility in the classroom and in their learning?