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SEL Strategies for Teenagers



Mary Haasdyk for Education Week

1

Integrate SEL into academic learning to invite opportunities for discussion, decisionmaking, and persuasion

- There are opportunities to discuss SEL skills like collaboration, personal relationships, and perseverance, in context of the novels, historical events, and even the scientific method. What SEL skills did civil rights leaders draw on? How about scientists who developed medical breakthroughs?
- Have your teachers brainstorm about how some common SEL skills look different based on content and assignments: What does it mean to “self manage” in the context of a science lab project, compared to an English term paper?

2

Aim for coherence across schools

- Create common, model lessons integrating SEL tenets into academics so all students get a set of rich experiences. As in the District of Columbia, for example, all 10th grade students might study narrative poetry, meet a local poet or learn about poetry slams, and write and perform their own poetry.

3

Focus on the adults as much as the kids

- Help your educators identify and eliminate barriers that can send mixed signals to students about leadership. Are your discipline and dress code policies unnecessarily rigid? Does your student school board representative’s vote really count for anything?
- Encourage teachers to create opportunities for students to have a say in school norms, beyond existing opportunities like student council. For example, have students help evaluate a classroom library and make recommendations for titles that connect with their own life or community.

4

Lean in to extracurriculars and other out-of-classroom opportunities to let students lead

- Let students take the lead in selecting the school musical, designing sets, crafting the literary magazine, and heading up other student organizations.

5

Peer mentoring can be both a leadership opportunity for some students, and help others exercise SEL skills

- Pair upperclassmen with freshmen and sophomores to share tips on how they succeeded in difficult classes or projects.
- Invite successful former students back to a classroom to talk about the transition to college and the workforce.