

# SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Relationship Skills Module Facilitation Guide

## Introduction

Administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders can use this facilitation guide to provide school staff with professional development on social and emotional learning (SEL), specifically on the responsible decision-making competency. The guide is part of a larger online professional learning system, “SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life,” which includes an “Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning” module as well as five other online modules, each focused on one of the five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and **relationship skills**.

This guide provides facilitators with a script, facilitation notes, activities, and a PowerPoint deck that will help the educators with whom they work to understand what SEL is, why it is important, and how it supports student success in school, work, and life. The information, knowledge, and tools included here can be used by professional learning communities focused on SEL and by administrators or other leaders or coaches to support the social and emotional competencies of their educators and students. Facilitators can also use this guide in a group context. If individuals want to engage in this learning on their own, it is recommended they watch the online video version of the training, which can be found on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website [Keeping Our Kids Safe, health & In School: Social and Emotional Learning](https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) webpage [https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/].

### Module Objectives

This module is the sixth and final module of six in the series and focuses on a specific social and emotional competency: relationship skills. If you have not already engaged in the “Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning” module, you are encouraged to do so. The series is intended to be a source of professional learning about SEL so that participating educators, in turn, can support SEL for their students. The objectives for participants in this relationship skills module are the following:

1. Define relationship skills and how relationship skills develop over time.
2. Highlight research on the importance of relationship skills.
3. Learn educator strategies to explicitly support student development of relationship skills.
4. Identify ways to embed support for relationship skills into general teaching practices.
5. Develop action steps to begin to implement practices that support students’ relationship skills.

### How to Use This Facilitation Guide

Given that SEL is intrinsically a social endeavor, this module is best used in a group context. Such group settings may include schoolwide professional learning sessions, grade-level or content-based team meetings, or professional learning communities. A facilitator may use this guide, including the embedded script and activity notes, along with the accompanying PowerPoint slide deck, to guide participants through the content, activities, and opportunities for reflection.

The online module can take between 30 minutes and three hours, depending on how you use the module: individually or in a group, completing all activities or not, and completing the entire module in one session or across multiple sessions. The module can be customized to fit the learners’ needs and school’s schedule. A facilitator can split the module into segments, completing them with the group as time allows. The facilitator can also modify the module to fit the schedule of the educators engaged in the learning experience. In addition, if there is an activity, slide, or discussion that does not seem relevant for a given context, or that is redundant or similar to the group’s prior learning, the facilitator can skip that section of the module. To help determine if and how to modify the module to meet the needs of participants, facilitators should complete the module first on their own, using the online version.

Furthermore, notes throughout this guide provide the facilitator with background information and guidance on how to facilitate the module’s activities. The guide also includes links to videos, describes activities, and provides discussion prompts to make the training in a group setting more interactive, which is especially important when facilitating professional learning opportunities related to SEL.

### Materials

Depending on whether participants will have access to computers during the session and be able to read handouts online, a facilitator may want to print copies of the handouts beforehand and share them with participants for the purpose of each activity.

* PowerPoint Slides: SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Relationship Skills
* Relationship Skills Handout 1a: Developmental Indicators Activity
* Relationship Skills Handout 1b: Developmental Indicators Activity – Answer Key
* Relationship Skills Handout 2: Student Vignettes
* Relationship Skills Handout 3: Educator Self-Reflection
* Relationship Skills Handout 4a: Educator Vignettes
* Relationship Skills Handout 4b: Educator Vignettes – Example Responses (optional, for use by the facilitator)
* Relationship Skills Handout 5a: SEL Lesson Planning Tool
* Relationship Skills Handout 5b: SEL Lesson Planning Tool – Sample Indicators and Teaching Strategies
* Relationship Skills Handout 6: Academic Integration Lesson Planning Tool
* Relationship Skills Handout 7: Observing Teaching Practices
* Relationship Skills Handout 8: Action Planning
* Relationship Skills Handout 9: Resources and References
* Pen and paper for notes
* Internet, projector, audio speakers

As this module also includes links to online videos, facilitators will want to have the videos prepared prior to engaging in the facilitated session.

A**bout Terminology in This Module:** The importance of students and adults being socially and emotionally competent — and, therefore, the importance of SEL — is widely accepted. However, even as the field matures, the terminology used in speaking and writing about this important concept continues to vary among and between educators, researchers, and policymakers. The two most commonly used terms for social and emotional strengths in the broadest sense are **skills** and **competencies***.* Each is used as an umbrella term for a particular set of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to someone being socially and emotionally competent in particular dimensions. In this context, New Jersey uses **competency**as the broadest term. In the context of these modules, the term **skill** is reserved for use only in its most granular sense — as something that contributes, along with knowledge and attitudes, to an individual’s social and emotional competency. These contributing factors of skills, knowledge, and attitudes are referred to here as **sub-competencies,**also in line with terminology in New Jersey.

**A Note About Pronunciation:** SEL, the acronym for social and emotional learning, is pronounced in the field by its three individual letters — *S-E-L,* not “cell.”

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Throughout the module, participants will be expected to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection exercises to evaluate the effectiveness of their own practices and their impact on student engagement and outcomes. In addition, the module provides a link at the end to obtain participants’ feedback on the module.

**Picture of a speaker.Audio Option:** The PowerPoint deck is available in two versions. The first version (available on the NJDOE website) has a voice-over narration that a facilitator may opt to use. The audio option does not include optional activities; however, the facilitator can still use them if desired. The second version has no voice-over and is intended for facilitators who wish to provide their own narration by following or adapting the script provided in the “Suggested Language for Facilitator” column in the following table.

## Relationship Skills Facilitation Guide

| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
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| **Slide 1** | **SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Relationship Skills**  How many times today have you had to communicate an important piece of information, listen carefully to what someone else was saying, negotiate a tricky interpersonal dynamic, or work with someone else to get something done? We all engage in myriad interactions with others, whether complex interactions or simple ones, during much of our waking lives. In the schooling context, educators and students engage in different types of interpersonal interactions and relationship-building activities each day — making school inherently social. To navigate these varied interactions, students need to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to build, maintain, and negotiate the multitude of relationships necessary to succeed academically and interpersonally in school.  How well they learn the skills to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships affects students in every arena of their lives, whether at school, at home, in their communities, or in their future college or career. With an intentional approach to SEL instruction, educators can help students develop skills as effective and clear communicators, active and empathetic listeners, and conflict mediators. Educators can also teach students to resist negative social pressures in person and online, and to ask for help for themselves and others when needed.  This module is designed to support educators as they help students develop relationship skills, an important social and emotional competency. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 2** | **Introduction to the Module Series**  This professional learning module is the sixth and final module in a series of six online professional learning modules supporting educators as they integrate academic, social, and emotional learning to support development of student competencies that are essential for school, work, and life. All modules in this series were created by NJDOE in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center.    The NJDOE has adopted a framework of five core social and emotional competencies, including relationship skills, as well as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making, modeled after the five core competencies developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Each competency is comprised of a set of sub-competencies — skills, knowledge, and attitudes — that guide student behavior.  Research and practice demonstrate that when schools and educators intentionally promote the development of social and emotional competencies, students gain academically, become more engaged in classrooms, and form more meaningful relationships, thereby enhancing their learning experience and outcomes.  The research base behind social and emotional learning or “SEL,” the key components of SEL, and strategies to support SEL in the classroom, including adult social and emotional competencies, are described in more detail in Module 1, “Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning.” | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 3** | **Objectives of This Module**  In completing this module, you will define relationship skills with special attention to how students develop this competency over time. You will also learn about research supporting the importance of relationship skills for students and adults.  You will explore teaching strategies to promote students’ development of relationship skills, both through explicit instruction and by embedding relationship skill–building strategies into academic instruction.  Lastly, you will develop action steps to implement teaching practices that support student relationship skill–building. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 4**  **Activity** | **Activity: Thought Starter**  Prior to digging into the material, we want you to do a quick reflection about how you think relationship skills are used in the classroom, both by educators and by students. Individually or in pairs, reflect on the following two questions:   1. In what ways do you need relationship skills to be an effective educator?   Think about the different ways that you communicate with, listen to, and negotiate conflict with your students, colleagues, and families. Describe a time when you had to use intentional strategies to navigate a relationship at school.   1. In what ways do your students need relationship skills to be effective learners?   Describe a time in your school or classroom when your students had to productively resolve a conflict or ask for help for themselves or others. | **3 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  This activity is a warm-up, for participants to start thinking about relationship skills and recognizing that they are needed not only for students but also for educators. The warm-up helps participants begin thinking about what they and their students need to be aware of in a classroom context. Participants do not have to use the language of the competencies, as the warm-up is more to tap into their background knowledge. |

## Understanding Relationship Skills

| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
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| **Slide 5** | **Understanding Relationship Skills**  Relationship skills are the ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with individuals and groups. Doing so includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict, and seeking and offering help when needed. Developing relationship skills in and out of the classroom allows students to build a supportive network for themselves, and to contribute as part of a broader community. As educators, we can intentionally teach relationship skills as students work to make positive connections with others throughout their school experience.  Before we explore how educators can support student development of relationship skills in the classroom, let’s develop a common understanding about what relationship skill–building is and the importance of developing relationship skills. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 6** | **Defining Relationship Skills**  As we develop our relationship skills, we develop a set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills, or what the NJDOE calls “sub-competencies.” Based on the available research, the NJDOE identified five relationship skills sub-competencies that individuals develop over time. Individuals develop and apply these sub-competencies differently depending on context and on the person’s cultural group. The five sub-competencies are:   * **Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships**, which includes the ability to recognize the characteristics of positive versus negative relationships, as well as practicing strategies to build and maintain different types of positive relationships. * **Utilizing positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others**, which includes modeling respectful interpersonal interactions in-person and online, using active listening skills, and demonstrating effective communication skills for a range of social situations and audiences. * **Identifying ways to resist inappropriate social pressure**, which includes setting appropriate boundaries, identifying and responding to negative social pressure in healthy ways, and demonstrating the ability to be true to personal values when interacting with others. * **Demonstrating the ability to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways**, which includes using conflict resolution strategies and recognizing the factors that create conflict in the first place. * **Identifying who, when, where, or how to seek help for oneself or others when needed**, which includes recognizing situations in which seeking help is appropriate, identifying trusted adults or community resources, and using self-advocacy strategies to obtain the resources and help needed. |  |
| **Slide 7** | **The Importance of Relationship Skills**  We are a social species — throughout human history, we have formed interpersonal connections to help us survive and thrive. Today, research suggests that our relationships with others are essential to our health and well-being. Throughout our lives, our abilities to grow and maintain supportive relationships are linked to better physical and mental health, the ability to manage and overcome stress and adversity, and increased opportunities for growth and development (Feeney & Collins, 2015). In fact, a meta-analysis of public health studies shows that a network of high-quality relationships is a better predictor of mortality than more commonly discussed lifestyle behaviors, including smoking and physical activity (Holt-Lunstad & Smith, 2012).  The effective communication and social skills sub-competency of relationship skills is the suite of skills we use when we interact with others. Skilled communicators have been shown to be more resilient and have higher self-efficacy and greater overall life satisfaction than less-skilled communicators (Segrin & Taylor, 2007). In school, students who have higher levels of interpersonal skills perform better academically, are more likely to receive help and attention in class, and make friends more easily (Hargie, 2017). Later in life, employers regularly state that communication and interpersonal skills are among the most essential skills for a job candidate, even relative to technical skills (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012; Cunningham & Villasenor, 2016).  Building on other social and emotional competencies like self-awareness and social awareness, relationship skills also touch on an individual’s ability to respond to and manage challenging interpersonal dynamics, including inappropriate social pressure, interpersonal conflicts, and situations of adversity or need. In a school setting, when students are able to resolve interpersonal problems autonomously, situations that need referral are dramatically reduced (Johnson et al., 1994). Sometimes, individuals are unable to resolve interpersonal challenges independently. The ability to seek help, access positive supports and relationships, and self-advocate to meet one’s needs has been linked to academic success and higher school retention in K–12 environments, as well as to effective transitions to college and career (Roberts, Ju, & Zhang, 2014). | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 8** | **The Importance of Relationship Skills in the Learning Process**  Research has also demonstrated the importance of relationship skills for students in school settings.  At a schoolwide level, a positive school environment is closely connected to the quality of student-teacher and student-student relationships. Overall, students who feel they have caring and respectful student-teacher and peer relationships in their classrooms report more positive academic attitudes and higher levels of engagement in school than students who feel their relationships are less caring and respectful (Shonkoff & Garner, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2004). Specifically, Roorda and colleagues (2017) demonstrated that “engagement in school” connected to high-quality relationships means students are more deeply participatory during class, more emotionally connected to school, and more willing to engage in complex and challenging tasks. In turn, these types of engagement lead to higher school attendance, academic achievement, and higher graduation rates. Positive relationships with educators are important for all students throughout the K–12 experience, but students who are vulnerable are especially in need of these types of supportive classroom environments. Positive educator relationships in school provide a strong protective factor for other risks and influences for vulnerable students, including students who are racially or economically marginalized and students with disabilities (Murray & Pianta, 2009).  In addition to student-teacher relationships, in-class cooperative learning and collaboration between students are key elements of engaging teaching and learning. When class time is dedicated to interactive and engaging work, students build and use their relationship skills by working in small groups, engaging in discussions, listening to others, and collaborating on projects with shared goals (Durlak et al., 2011). This type of cooperative learning, with students working together to complete tasks and achieve shared learning goals, has been shown to push students to exert greater effort to achieve. More specifically, students demonstrate higher levels of motivation, more on-task behavior, and more frequent generation of ideas. Students also show positive impacts on self-esteem and a shared sense of positive group identity (Johnson & Johnson, 2010).  Johnson and Johnson (2010) also point out that in cooperative learning scenarios, conflict and challenging interpersonal dynamics are inevitable. In many instances in which students are in disagreement, if students have the skills to constructively discuss and reach a solution together, this type of challenge encourages students to achieve at higher levels, use higher-level reasoning skills, and get creative with problem solving. When conflicts occur that are more serious in nature, students with developed relationship skills can anticipate the challenge and use specific strategies to manage the situation, problem solve, and negotiate (Johnson & Johnson, 2010). When necessary, students with this set of developed skills understand what external help they need and how to engage that support from peers or adults. Actively leveraging relationships — at the right time and in a targeted and thoughtful way — allows students to effectively use available resources to increase their future success (Karabenick & Berger, 2013). | **4 minutes** |
| **Optional Activity** | **Optional Activity: Relationship Skills and Positive Communication**  Remember that the ability to utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others is one of the sub-competencies of relationship skills. Although we develop our relationship skills through general interactions with others, we can get better at our communication and social skills when these skills are explicitly taught in authentic contexts and reinforced in school and out of school.  View this [one-minute teaching strategy video](https://youtu.be/juR87aAg4vM) from [Edutopia](https://youtu.be/juR87aAg4vM) (https://youtu.be/juR87aAg4vM) of elementary school children engaging in a “talk detective” lesson in which they actively identify the interpersonal behaviors that make for a good discussion.   * How were students supported to think about positive communication skills before, during, and after this activity? * What applications (in and out of the classroom) can you imagine for the skills that students are building during this activity? | **3 minutes**  **Facilitation note:** View video and have participants discuss the two accompanying questions as a group. |
| **Slide 9** | **The Importance of Relationship Skills in Learning Content**  Relationship skills are a key element in how students learn and interact with peers and adults in the classroom. In the previously mentioned report on cooperative learning by Johnson and Johnson (2010), researchers showed a positive connection between cooperative learning and the ability of students to retain content and transfer learning from one situation to another.  Working cooperatively also allows students to build off of each other’s ideas to create new knowledge. Think about the moon landing — while President John F. Kennedy was the leader of the mission, it took 400,000 scientists, engineers, and technicians working together to realize the vision (Riley, 2009). In STEM subjects, the ability to disagree, probe for deeper understanding, and iterate new creative solutions from existing ideas advances further understanding and innovation. The learning standards for mathematical practices outlined in the [NJ Mathematics Standards](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/math/standards.pdf) [https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/math/standards.pdf] identify the ability to construct viable arguments and critique others — or build off the reasoning of others — as one of the eight essential practices that all students should master (New Jersey Mathematics Standards, 2016).  We will learn more about relationship skills related to academic content later in this module. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 10** | **Developmental Nature of SEL Competencies**  As discussed in previous modules, individuals continually develop and refine social and emotional competencies, in context, over time.    Let’s consider the developmental nature of relationship skills by discussing one of its sub-competencies: establishing and maintaining healthy relationships. In early childhood through grade 3, students typically are interested in creating friendships and are beginning to understand what “friend-growing” behaviors look like and to identify the qualities of a good friend. In later elementary and middle school, students begin to explore and understand the complexities of different relationships with peers and adults. At that stage, students develop a deeper knowledge about what a caring versus a hurtful friendship or romantic relationship looks like. Students face greater levels of peer influence and negative peer pressure, requiring them to develop skills to manage these kinds of stressors and challenges that occur with existing and new relationships. In later adolescence and into adulthood, students develop the relationship skills needed to form healthy romantic relationships, continue to build skills and strategies to sustain relationships, and learn strategies to form new types of relationships, such as professional relationships. Throughout these developmental stages, people continue to learn the skills to navigate ever-evolving relationships with peers, educators, and families. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 11**  **Activity**  Handouts 1a and 1b | **Activity: Developmental Progressions Related to Relationship Skills**  Let’s consider in more depth how students’ skills, knowledge, and attitudes that comprise relationship skills might develop over time.  Listed on Handout 1a are developmental indicators related to sub-competencies within the relationship skills competency. For each sub-competency, each column represents a different grade band, but the grade bands are not necessarily given in order from youngest to oldest. Your task is to read each row and, at the bottom of each column for that row, mark which grade band you believe the indicators in that column represent. The first sub-competency is already completed as an example.    When finished filling in Handout 1a, use Handout 1b to check your answers. Your thoughts may differ from the answer key in some ways. That is okay! Note and/or discuss your thought processes. Also using Handout 1b, engage in the following reflections and, if in a group, discuss your responses:     * Did your answers differ from the ones on the Handout 1b answer key? Discuss your thought processes. * As students develop, how might they be expected to display each relationship skills sub-competency in their classrooms at each grade band? * Identify how the developmental indicators might change based on environmental context - at school versus at home versus with peers. Do you see your students differ in the use of these skills across contexts? How? * Reflect on how students may develop, apply, or demonstrate developmental indicators differently based on their cultural context. How might these differences appear in your classroom? | **20 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  The goals of this activity are for participants to:   1. Pause to reflect thoughtfully on the developmental progression of indicators of each relationship skills sub-competency. 2. Illustrate how the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to relationship skills may progress as students grow. 3. Introduce the research-based DevelopmentalIndicators: SEL in the K-12 Classroom compiled by the NJDOE.   Remember, although social and emotional competencies have developmental indicators, individuals are constantly learning and relearning competencies based on the context. |
| **Slide 12** | **Context Matters**  While students develop relationship skills in different ways over time, it is also important to recognize that individuals may exhibit relationship knowledge, skills, and attitudes differently depending on the environmental context they are in and the cultures to which they belong.  An individual may or may not exhibit a particular social and emotional competency in one set of conditions, but that may not be a full representation of the individual’s competence in another context. You can probably think of ways in which your students exhibit relationship skills differently in the classroom versus when relaxing with their friends, when participating in extracurricular activities, or at home with their families.  For example, an early elementary student may be able to follow positive discussion and interaction guidelines during a structured class discussion but may struggle to consistently demonstrate care and respect by using polite language with friends. An older student might feel comfortable speaking to a trusted coach when they are struggling with a challenge directly related to their soccer performance. This same student may feel shame or uncertainty when trying to find the right tutor or summer remediation program after receiving a failing grade in math class. Remember as well that within grade levels, students can also display a wide range of developmental competence in relationship skills. A high school student who is on the autism spectrum may struggle to connect socially with other students in the lunchroom, but with a clear set of guidelines and time to prepare, the same student might be the top scorer on the school debate team, which requires positive communication and social skills.  These examples represent the need for adults to create the conditions or the environment in which students are able to develop and apply their social and emotional competencies. When students are not in safe and supportive contexts, they may not feel comfortable or confident in using the skill sets they have developed. It is important for educators to examine both their own practices and their students’ skill sets to determine how best to support each individual student’s growth and development. | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 13** | **Culture Matters**  Individual students’ cultures have powerful influences on how students develop and apply relationship skills. For instance, cultural expectations may differ regarding how we listen and communicate. In western cultures, direct eye contact is typically considered a sign of active and engaged attention. However, many cultures consider direct eye contact a sign of disrespect, especially during an interaction with a person of authority, like an educator. So, it may be confusing for some students if an educator asks them to look at someone directly in the eyes when they are speaking, as doing so may be inconsistent with their norms at home.  Given the importance of culture in our use of relationship skills, it is also critically important to be self-aware and socially aware as we build relationships with others. In other words, relationship skills rely heavily on these two other social and emotional competencies. If we aren’t socially aware and self-aware, we may be more likely to misinterpret the communication patterns of others. Such misinterpretation between and among students and educators can create tense and unproductive relationships, in which one or both people feel disrespected or misunderstood.  Jagers and colleagues (2018) find that a productive response to this type of relationship breakdown is for adults in the classroom to develop a sense of cultural awareness and cultural fluency. In this type of environment, the educators ensure that students in their classrooms feel valued and recognized for their unique strengths and assets. Educators can provide opportunities to recognize the diversity in their classroom and have conversations about the ways that diversity adds value to the classroom and school. Educators can provide opportunities to recognize and speak openly about the different types of relationships we have in our lives, the different types of values or behaviors we appreciate in friendships, how our interactions influence the decisions of others, and the varied ways we may manage interpersonal challenges or conflicts. This type of open discussion and allowance for different approaches and needs provides the necessary space for all students to feel welcomed (Jagers et al., 2018).  To promote equity, educators can recognize the influence of culture on students’ and educators’ own relationship skills and provide opportunities that draw upon students’ unique strengths while orienting learning in relation to their cultural contexts. | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 14**  **Activity**  Handout 2 | **Activity: Student Vignettes**  Let’s consider some examples illustrating the ways in which students use their relationship skills, knowledge, and attitudes in different contexts. It is important to remember that many social and emotional competencies relate to each other, and that we use multiple competencies in any single interaction. As you read the student vignettes on Handout 2, note that you will also probably see other social and emotional competencies at work. Please pay specific attention to relationship skills and its sub-competencies in these examples. Use Handout 2 to consider the vignettes and answer the questions to reflect on your insights. | **10 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  Ask participants to read each vignette individually and record their thoughts, then discuss as a group. Repeat for each vignette***.*** |
| **Slide 15** | **Educators’ Relationship Skills**  Given the complexity of teaching and meeting the needs of all students from all backgrounds, educators’ relationship skills are essential to ensure that schools are equitable and effective learning environments for all students.  Educators exercise their relationship skills by building supportive classroom and school environments in which students are able to connect in positive ways with caring adults and with their peers. Student perceptions of positive educator relationships and a sense of school connectedness are among the most important predictors of student success in terms of both academic and social and emotional outcomes. Not only do positive adult relationships help students achieve, they also serve as a protective factor and build student resiliency, especially for groups of students who may be more at risk for negative outcomes and experiences, like bullying or other victimization behavior (Konishi & Wong, 2018).  Educators are also in a unique position to model relationship skill–building behavior. Educators can talk through how they have navigated challenging interpersonal situations or resolved a conflict in their own lives. They can share stories about their own relationships and how they work to build or maintain these different connections. Educators can also share and model ways they have reached out for support or resources in different situations. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 16 Activity**  Handout 3 | **Activity: Educator Reflection**  Let’s pause to reflect on your own sub-competencies related to relationship skills.  Complete Handout 3. Revisit this tool periodically, updating your reflections and noting progress.  There is a significant amount of reflection represented in this activity. Do not feel compelled to fill in every box now. You can record your initial reflections now, and then revisit the worksheet repeatedly when you have more time or new insights.  After you complete Handout 3, consider the following questions: Which sub-competency was the easiest to reflect upon? The most difficult? What surprised you? Did you discover new elements of relationship skills or their impact on your teaching?  This self-reflection may uproot deep-held feelings about your work. Remember the importance of self-care as you balance the goal to continuously improve professionally, while also staying attuned to your needs, personal well-being, and realistic expectations. | **20 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  If working in a group, give participants time to complete the reflection on their own before discussing as a group. They can use the handout to record their initial reactions now, and then revisit the handout later. When all participants finish, ask them to discuss their reflective process in small groups. |

## Strategies to Support Student Relationship Skills

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 17** | **Strategies to Support Student Relationship Skills**  Educators can intentionally and effectively support student relationship skills by implementing practices that help students to communicate clearly, listen actively, cooperate, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict, and seek and offer help when needed.  By incorporating instructional strategies that explicitly teach and afford students the opportunity to apply relationship skills sub-competencies, educators support students as they build their own networks of caring and supportive relationships and their skills to navigate interpersonal conflicts.    Educators can also support students’ relationship skills through practices and strategies that relate to, but are distinct from, SEL — for example, through character education, restorative practices, trauma-informed or healing-informed care, positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS), and the multi-tiered system of supports. | **2-3 minutes** |
| **Slide 18** | **Three Integrated Classroom Approaches**  As noted previously, SEL is a process, and there are multiple ways to implement this learning process. As noted in the introductory module, there are three classroom-based approaches to SEL which can be implemented either through SEL programs or through teaching practices.    First, you can provide instruction that explicitly targets specific social and emotional competencies, focusing on the underlying knowledge, attitudes, and skills that constitute each competency.    Next, SEL instruction can and should also be integrated with core academic content.  And finally, you can help students develop social and emotional competencies through teacher pedagogy — in particular, regular teaching practices that encourage social and emotional learning within a safe and supportive learning environment.    These approaches are not mutually exclusive; they can be integrated to reinforce each other, as each supports the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills.    For our learning purposes in this module, let’s engage in learning about each approach one at a time. | **2-3 minutes** |
| **Slide 19** | **Teaching Strategies to Support Relationship Skills**  First, let’s consider teaching strategies that explicitly target the development of student relationship skills and the corresponding sub-competencies. Multiple strategies exist that educators can use to teach and support student relationship skills. This module will not include all strategies but rather provide examples, and we encourage you to find the evidence-based practices that will meet the needs of your students.  Research indicates that educators have to be purposeful and planful for effectively carrying out SEL instruction. The introductory module discussed the “SAFE” approach to being systematic in SEL implementation. The SAFE approach to instruction is:   * **Sequenced:** following a specific scope and sequence of when social and emotional competencies will be taught and reinforced; * **Active:** with students engaging in activities that allow them to practice and apply the targeted social and emotional competencies; * **Focused:** with instruction concentrating on only one or two social and emotional competencies, sub-competencies, or skills at a time; and * **Explicit:** with students made aware of, and able to identify, the specific social and emotional competencies, sub-competencies, or skills they are learning and using.   All students should engage in social and emotional learning and application; however, some students may need more individualized support. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 20** | **An Example Teaching Strategy**  Let’s consider an example of an explicit teaching strategy to support students’ development of relationship skills.  As you listen to the example of Ms. Brown’s class, consider the following questions:   * What does Ms. Brown do to support students’ development of relationship skills? * What do the students do to apply relationship skills?   Ms. Brown teaches seventh grade reading and literacy. Her classes have been reading a young adult novel in which the protagonist struggles with a bully at her school and a distant and difficult relationship with her mother at home. Students read the book out loud to each other during class. After completing each chapter, students work in small groups to discuss the interpersonal interactions in the book and reflect on how these interactions connect to their own lives or school. In their small groups, students discuss how the protagonist reacted or handled the situation, and brainstorm other options or responses she could have displayed to resolve the problem, set boundaries for herself, or seek help. Throughout this unit, students work together as a class to write and stage a play in which the types of interactions discussed in the book are happening in their own school. At the end of the unit, Ms. Brown’s classes perform their plays for each other and answer questions from their peers about their creative process and their thinking on interpersonal relationships.  Now, reflect:   * What did Ms. Brown do to support students’ development of relationship skills? * What did the students do to apply relationship skills? | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 21 Activity**  Handouts 4a and 4b | **Activity: Educator Vignettes**  You can find additional examples of teaching strategies at the elementary and high school levels in Handout 4a. Use the handout to consider the vignettes and answer the reflection questions individually, then discuss as a group. | **10 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  Ask participants to read each vignette individually and record their thoughts on Handout 4a. After they finish, discuss as a group. You may choose to use Handout 4b for more examples of responses. Note that there is certainly more than one correct response for each question. |
| **Slide 22 Activity**  Handouts 5a and 5b | **Activity: Design a Lesson to Support Student Relationship Skills**  Now that you have considered examples of direct instruction supporting student relationship skills, brainstorm one way in which you might target support for student development of relationship skills in your classroom.    Use Handout 5a to plan a targeted SEL lesson and Handout 5b to reference sample indicators and teaching strategies for each relationship skills sub-competency.    For this activity, choose one sub-competency on Handout 5b and read through the column for your students’ age group. Choose a learning objective for a lesson. Then choose one of the strategies listed or another strategy you are aware of that will support the development of that skill. As you decide which objective and strategy to choose, keep in mind your students and the content that you teach, and think about how you would adapt the activity to meet the needs of your students and your class context.    Using the chosen strategy as a starting point, design a lesson to explicitly teach the learning objective using the lesson planning template in Handout 5a. You can modify this template as you see fit to meet your context; its purpose is to prompt thinking on how to support student relationship skills. | **10 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  If working in a group,have participants discuss their answers and share the lesson they designed. |

## Embedding Relationship Skills in Instruction

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 23** | **Embedding Relationship Skills in Instruction**  In the previous section, we learned that educators can support students’ development of relationship skills through explicit teaching of relationship skills, attitudes, and knowledge. It is beneficial to use an SEL evidence-based program that is sequenced, active, focused, and explicit.  In this section, we will discuss two additional approaches to SEL instruction: integrating relationship skills into academic content and implementing general teaching practices that support relationship skills. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 24** | **Integrating Relationship Skills in Academic Learning**  Learning academic content in a classroom environment typically requires students to demonstrate a variety of relationship skills and abilities. Integrating relationship skills into academic content allows students to continuously reflect on and build the skills that will help them be effective and collaborative learners in and outside of school. For example, each academic class can develop a set of clear discussion guidelines that structure how students will communicate their thoughts and actively listen to their peers. Remember that New Jersey further defines relationship skills in terms of the following five sub-competencies:   * Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships * Utilizing positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others * Identifying ways to resist inappropriate social pressure * Demonstrating the ability to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways * Identifying who, when, where, or how to seek help for oneself or others when needed   Let’s consider specific examples of ways in which these relationship skills sub-competencies support deeper engagement with academic content. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 25** | **Sample Strategies: English/Language Arts**  The [New Jersey Student Learning Standards for English and Language Arts (ELA)](https://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2016/ela/) [https://www.state.nj.us/education/cccs/2016/ela/] across grade bands call for students to develop clear and effective written and verbal communication skills. Students must also be able to adapt their communication to reflect a variety of different audiences. New Jersey students are also asked to use their literacy skills to develop an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of people and experiences, and to be able to listen to and communicate effectively with people of different backgrounds. In this instance, there is direct alignment between the ELA standards and the social and emotional skills. The ELA standards just noted are all components of relationship skills that students need in order to be successful in school and in life.  Given the direct integration of relationship skills in ELA standards, educators can use multiple strategies to integrate relationship skills into ELA instruction. For example, ELA teachers can:   * Analyze relationships in books and help students use these examples to define good relationships. Use literature as a way to illustrate both negative and positive relationships or interpersonal reactions and their consequences. * Use storytelling and journaling to help students reflect on their own relationships, problem solve hypothetical interpersonal challenges, and respond to the relationships or experiences of others. * Have students prepare a presentation to deliver to different audiences, and discuss why the messaging might need to be different depending on the audience. * Have students explore literature and short stories that involve conflict, then detail how the character’s conflict is similar to or different from their own experiences and reflect on how they could have resolved the conflict. * Utilize different relationship-building teaching and learning strategies, including project-based learning activities that organize students into teams, full-group or small-group discussions, or pair-share activities. Provide clear communication and interaction guidelines for these interactions to support skill-building. * Assign written projects that require students to refer to external sources or conduct independent research of nonfiction literature. Support students to develop skills to conduct effective and ethical research, especially online. Have students examine and discuss trustworthy versus deceptive or false resources when deciding whether to use or trust a source. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 26** | **Sample Strategies: Mathematics**  Similar to the ELA standards, the [New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Mathematics](https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/math/) [https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/math/] across grade bands call for students to be able to engage in multiple mathematics practices that require relationship skills, including constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others, using appropriate tools and resources strategically, and attending to precision in mathematical communication. As with ELA, the practices described in these standards are all components of effective relationship skills.  Given the importance of relationship skills in mathematics classrooms, educators can use multiple strategies to support relationship skill–building in math instruction. For example, mathematics teachers can:   * Make time for collaborative, project-based learning in mathematics classes. * Connect mathematical practices and concepts with hands-on STEM challenges, real-world math problems, and applied mathematics problems. * Provide students with a framework for effective classroom communication around math concepts and their own thinking. Encourage students to engage in conversations in which they share knowledge, discuss their reasoning, challenge others’ reasoning, provide alternate hypotheses, and consider others’ ideas. * Give students opportunities to address challenging and complex problems that have students working together or researching additional resources to solve the problems. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 27** | **Relationship Skills**  Relationships and relationship skill–building are essential to creating a learning environment in which students feel safe, supported, and able to learn. Effective communication is a relationship skill that students are asked to demonstrate in every classroom in a variety of contexts, from large-group discussions to paired-peer feedback. Consider this example:  In this New Mexico high school classroom, the educator uses a fishbowl discussion protocol to teach verbal and nonverbal communication skills and peer-assessment strategies. [Watch the one-minute video](https://youtu.be/JVCFGLVZA3w) from Edutopia [60-Second Strategy: Fishbowl Discussion](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVCFGLVZA3w), [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVCFGLVZA3w], to hear more from the educator about his classroom’s approach to large-group discussions.  After viewing the video, reflect on these questions:   * How did the educator integrate relationship skill–building into academic lessons? * What did the educator do during the lesson to develop relationship skills in his students? What did the students do to apply relationship skills? | **2 minutes** |

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 28 Activity**  Handout 6 | **Activity: Design a Lesson Integrating Relationship Skills**  Use Handout 6 to think strategically about how you can integrate relationship skills within an academic lesson. You will use a lesson-planning tool that is nearly the same as the last activity but with a different purpose. In the last activity, you designed a lesson that directly targeted a sub-competency of relationship skills as a learning objective. In this activity, you will design a lesson that integrates relationship skill–building within an academic lesson.  Note: The goal is not necessarily to use the exact lesson planning template provided, as you may have a lesson planning template that you already use. Focus on the aspects of SEL integration encouraged by the template, rather than the exact template itself.  You may want to refer again to Handout 5b to refamiliarize yourself with sample learning objectives related to relationship skills competencies.  To ensure alignment of learning objectives, refer to the New Jersey SEL competencies and sub-competencies and the New Jersey academic standards as you complete the handout. Discuss your ideas with your grade-level or department team to identify ways in which you can create consistent structures to integrate relationship skills into your lessons. | **20 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  If in a group, participants can complete the lesson planning template individually and then discuss or complete the activity together to collectively model the process. |
| **Slide 29** | **Implementing General Teaching Practices That Support Relationship Skills**  A third way for educators to promote the development of social and emotional competencies in the classroom is to implement general instructional practices that create a safe and supportive learning environment.  As discussed in the introductory module, content experts from the American Institutes for Research and a panel of expert reviewers compiled 10 research-based teaching practices that promote SEL. Implementing these evidence-based teaching practices in your classroom can help all students master academic standards while simultaneously helping them to develop social and emotional competencies.  An overview of the 10 practices is offered on this slide. The next two slides offer examples of how specific social teaching practices and instructional teaching practices support, and are enhanced by, students’ development and application of relationship skills, attitudes, and knowledge. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 30** | **Social Teaching Practices That Promote Relationship Skills**  Students are required to use a variety of relationship skills as their teachers engage in social teaching practices.  As educators work to develop productive relationships in their classroom, “teacher language” is one of the essential building blocks of this work. Teacher language that is intentional and purposeful helps students recognize their strengths and identify areas where they need to improve. This type of educator approach to language recognizes the assets that each student brings to their work and helps students feel recognized and appreciated by the adults in the room.  In addition, the social teaching practice of using “warmth and support” builds on teacher language and is deeply based in relationship skills. Educators focus on creating a caring and mutually respectful learning environment in which students understand that the adults in the classroom care about them. One of the critical elements of this kind of teaching practice is that educators take the time to get to know their students as individuals and recognize and appreciate the unique assets they bring to the classroom; in doing so, educators build and maintain positive relationships. Educators should also create structures in the classroom whereby students are required to interact with educators and peers, so students need to build effective communication and listening skills, negotiate conflict productively when it arises, and learn to seek help when necessary. In a classroom that uses warmth and support as well as teaching structures like morning meetings, collaborative work, and group discussions, students use their relationship skills to interact with their peers and then are able to transfer those skills to the school community. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 31** | **Instructional Teaching Practices That Promote Relationship Skills**  In today’s classroom, a student’s ability to demonstrate relationship skills in different contexts is essential to their success in school activities ranging from small-group work, to large-group class discussions, to reflective assessment. These types of instructional practices allow students to build social and emotional skills while engaging in academic learning.  Classroom discussions are a key instructional element in the K–12 environment. When classroom discussions are used in a productive way, educators encourage student thinking and collaboration by asking open-ended questions, ensuring that all students participate, and supporting students to build on each other’s thinking throughout the conversation. Students are encouraged to confidently communicate their own thinking and reasoning, as well as listen to their peers for understanding. When students disagree, they have the skills to do so respectfully and in ways that can enhance and deepen content understanding.  Self-reflection is an instructional practice that is more individual and internal than a classroom discussion, but it still requires relationship skills. As students reflect on their own learning, students learn how to identify their own areas of need and seek targeted help from peers or educators. When self-reflection is used as part of a larger classroom assessment strategy, students can use what they have learned as part of their self-assessment practice to provide feedback to peers and set next steps for improvement together.  Finally, cooperative learning requires that students work directly together to accomplish shared goals. Educators can provide intentional structures to support this type of classroom learning and relationship skill–building, including discussion guidelines, feedback rubrics, monitoring and planning tools, specific group roles and role descriptions, and opportunities to share learning with the larger class.  Let’s pause to watch two minutes (starting at minute 1 and viewing to minute 3) of this [video](https://youtu.be/-Mb9-At2Ss0?t=59) from [Edutopia](https://youtu.be/-Mb9-At2Ss0?t=59) (https://youtu.be/-Mb9-At2Ss0?t=59), featuring a school that intentionally teaches cooperative learning strategies to students in grades 6–12. In the video, what specific instructional practices do you notice educators using to support cooperative learning? | **5 minutes** |
| **Slide 32 Activity**  Handout 7 | **Activity: Reflect on Teaching Practices**  As you can see, the relationship skills competency is reflected not only in academic instruction, but also in the interactions that educators have with their students within schools and classrooms. We encourage you to review one to two classroom videos that focus on the 10 teaching practices that promote SEL, which can be found on the [Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjoWr_wxMaSdShazWcer9Endr4MXDcews) (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjoWr\_wxMaSdShazWcer9Endr4MXDcews).  For this activity, individually or in a group:   1. Watch one or two videos focusing on educator practices that promote SEL. 2. Identify the relationship skills sub-competencies that students are exhibiting. 3. Identify how educators are helping students to develop those skills.   Use Handout 7 to record your thoughts. | **20 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  If in a group, participants may complete the handout individually and then discuss as a group or complete the handout with a partner or small group. |

## Action Planning

| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
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| **Slide 33** | **Action Planning**  In this module we have:   * Defined relationship skills and how these skills develop over time * Highlighted research on the importance of relationship skills * Learned educator strategies to explicitly support student development of relationship skills * Identified ways to embed support for relationship skills into general teaching practices * Developed action steps to begin to implement practices that support student relationship skills   You can now plan for the incorporation of new insights that you gained in this module into your teaching practice. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 34** | **Considerations for Action Planning**  As you begin to take action to more strategically incorporate relationship skills into your teaching, consider the following:   * Define learning objectives. Determine which social awareness sub-competency(s) you want to target in your instruction, and why? * Determine which educator competencies — social and emotional skills, knowledge, and attitudes — are necessary to teach those objectives well. * Integrate the three approaches to supporting relationship skills: explicit teaching strategies, integration with academic content, and embedding through general teaching practices. * Monitor progress of your SEL efforts by collecting data that indicate progress. * Determine ways to sustain this work so that it is effective over time. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 35 Activity**  Handouts 8 and 9 | **Activity: Action Planning**  For today’s purposes, we’ve allowed time to plan for individual shifts in teaching practice. If you are completing this module as a group, you will use this time to plan together for a collective instructional approach to supporting students’ development of relationship skills. You will want to think broadly about how this focus complements and enhances existing initiatives within your district and school, such as trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and positive behavior support in schools (PBSIS). In addition, it is critical to think about how relationship skills and SEL broadly fit within your school improvement plans — how you are identifying the strategies and supports to purposefully support SEL schoolwide.  To finish off the module, we provide an additional handout for action planning. Please refer to Handout 8 for a template to assist in the action planning process and Handout 9 for additional resources to review as you develop your action plan. You can engage in action planning on your own or in a team. As this planning exercise focuses on the classroom level, consider student and educator needs, as well as consistency and sustainability, when planning for moving forward. | **15 minutes**  **Facilitation note:**  This activity can be done individually or in a group. If in a group, allow adequate time for discussion. |
| **Slide 36** | **Evaluation**  Thank you for participating in this social and emotional learning module focused on relationship skills. We hope you find the learning modules useful and that the suggestions they provide help you to enhance your practice and support the development of students’ social, emotional, and academic competencies.    The NJDOE developed this online module in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Comprehensive Center, which are funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.    To learn more about SEL and the online modules, visit the [New Jersey Department of Education SEL page](https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) (https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) or contact the NJDOE Office of Student Support Services at SchoolClimate@doe.nj.gov.    We ask that you now complete the online evaluation of this learning module. We also encourage you to review the other online modules that provide knowledge, tools, resources, and strategies to embed social and emotional learning in your classroom. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 37** | **General Resources to Support SEL** | **1 minute** |
| **Slides**  **38–41** | **References** | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 42** | **Thank You** | **1 minute** |

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