

# Implementation Guide

## Social and Emotional Learning through Music and Visual Arts

Grade Level: **High School**

Introduction \_\_\_\_\_ 2

Curriculum Implementation Planning \_\_\_\_\_ 3

SEL: What is it and why is it important? \_\_\_\_\_ 4

Five SEL Core Competencies \_\_\_\_\_ 4

The Connect with Kids SEL Platform: Make it Work for You \_\_\_\_\_ 5

The First Steps of Teacher Prep: Watch, Read, Make it Your Own \_\_\_\_\_ 5

Setting the Tone and Climate for Learning \_\_\_\_\_ 6

The “All-in-the-Same-Boat” Phenomenon \_\_\_\_\_ 7

The “Strength-in-Numbers” Phenomenon \_\_\_\_\_ 7

SEL At Home: Parent Involvement \_\_\_\_\_ 7

Why Connect with Kids \_\_\_\_\_ 8

## Introduction

Social and emotional learning (SEL) in the teen years allows students to discuss and address certain issues that are unique to a high school student's life. Incorporating music and visual arts — *your specialty* — provides an especially creative, dynamic and engaging approach to SEL challenges at hand: character and life skill development, resisting drugs and alcohol, managing one's digital footprint, making the most of high school years in order to become "college and career ready... to name a few!

Research shows that children and adults who emotionally connect with an experience are more likely to make life-long behavioral change than those who just receive information about that experience. Students realize that they are not alone in their feelings and challenges, sometimes referred to as "strength in numbers."

You play an important role as both the art and/or music teacher and the SEL coach. Your challenge? To listen and respond to students, asking open-ended, thoughtful questions, and working to create in your classroom an engaging climate of trust, sharing, participation and self-reflection among your students. Business experts call it "see-feel-change," fueling action by sparking emotion. Connect with Kids calls it **educating the heart**: using the power of storytelling and peer-to-peer connections to create heart-felt associations.

### Notes

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# Curriculum Implementation Planning

All lessons and videos are grouped into categories that address SEL topics for art and music courses: *Attendance, Achievement and College and Career Readiness; Bullying and Violence Prevention; Character and Life Skills; Digital Citizenship; Drug and Alcohol Prevention; and Health and Wellness*. There is no prescribed or required order for completion of this curriculum unless indicated (some videos should be shown in sequence and in entirety). Create your own implementation plan by selecting lessons from each of the six SEL categories. A music CD accompanies each music guide, one per guide. Please note the Music Guide Fair Use Statement in each guide outlining the use of the music on the CD for educational purposes only in accordance with section 107 of the United States Copyright Law. **Extension and Support Activities** offer further suggestions to expand the curriculum and make it your own.

Begin your lesson plan calendar and topics to address with a **thoughtful assessment of issues or challenges** that are top-of-mind, perhaps in your community, your school, the life of your students and even the world at large. A political contest might lead to a discussion on civility, resilience or winning and losing. An upcoming dance or social event might lead to a discussion on dating and relationship building. After your topic selection, **review each lesson's content** – video, print resources and needs for additional materials for suggested activities. The lessons with video have two parts (some have three): the first half of the lesson is about the video and ends with discussion questions; the second part is the activity. The lessons without video dive directly into music and art activities, embedding discussion questions into the procedure. Again, review the contents, **modify questions and activities to meet the needs of your classroom** and plan accordingly. You may need more than one session to complete each lesson and its elements, especially allowing for ample discussion and interaction among your students.

Please keep in mind that the content of many video segments, and the topics themselves, explore sometimes **tough-to-discuss themes**: bullying, suicide, depression and anxiety, and online pornography, to name a few. As educators, we must be sensitive to students in the class who may be experiencing or struggling with those challenges. Always review the video, topic and lesson plan, and involve your school counselors and/or social workers as you see fit. Only begin the activity if it seems the class has adequately processed each video segment.

**Extension and Support Materials** have been provided to help you enhance and modify the video curriculum with additional lesson frameworks, assessment rubrics, and other helpful information. These materials are open ended in that they leave room for the teacher to specify the topic to debate, the focus of the film to be created, the theme of the discussion, the details of the project, etc.

Connect with Kids is available to help assure your success! Please contact Connect with Kids client support at 1.888.598.KIDS (5437) or email [info@cwknetwork.com](mailto:info@cwknetwork.com) with any questions regarding these resources or implementation.

# SEL: What is it and why is it important?

It is fair to say that all of us – children and adults, alike – function better when our emotions are in check and we positively approach the task or challenge at hand. **Social and emotional learning (SEL)** is the process through which we acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to **understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy** for others, **establish and maintain positive relationships**, and **make responsible decisions**. Research confirms that SEL as part of the school curricula (pre-school through high school) plays a critical role in supporting academic performance and curbing risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out).

## Five SEL Core Competencies

[CASEL](#), the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, outlines the following five core SEL competencies, which are addressed throughout Connect with Kids curriculum.

- 1. Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- 2. Self-management:** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- 3. Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- 4. Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- 5. Responsible decision making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.



# The Connect with Kids SEL Platform: Make it Work for You

Connect with Kids has designed these resources as a dynamic, interactive social and emotional learning platform. Lessons, while grouped into six categories addressing today's most relevant topics in social and emotional learning (*Attendance, Achievement and College and Career Readiness; Bullying and Violence Prevention; Character and Life Skills; Digital Citizenship; Drug and Alcohol Prevention; and Health and Wellness*), lessons need not be taught in a particular order. Make the platform work for you! You can modify discussion questions and activities to meet your own teaching strengths, the needs of your students, and to address key challenges or issues in your school community. Additional Extension and Support Resources further provide academic programming options.

## The First Steps of Teacher Prep: Watch, Read, Make it Your Own

Prior to each art or music classroom session, it is imperative to objectively prepare: **Read** the lesson plan, **view** video material, **listen** to audio selections, open links and **read print resources** in order to **make adjustments** based upon your student population, current issues and challenges. We are aware that depending upon the make up of your classroom and school community, some topics may be too challenging or be deemed inappropriate. Connect with Kids' **best practices** encourages teachers to choose to **omit or to modify a lesson or use the art or music activity without the video component**.

Additionally, each student has his or her own unique life experiences. The discussion questions following each video segment, musical selection, or art or photography visual are designed to assist students with sharing their experiences and beliefs about the topic at hand. By encouraging their participation in the learning process, you can help students listen to each other while correcting any misinformation that the students may have. The curriculum provides students with the opportunity to receive support and validation from you and each other as they participate in activities and discussion, which ask them to explore their struggles and need to make wise choices. As appropriate, guide your students toward supporting their peers by asking them to react and give feedback.

At the core of effective social and emotional learning is the notion that the leader must **understand the population** he/she is teaching, referred to as "**preparatory empathy**." It is important for you to prepare for the adolescent audience by considering:

- What pre-teens and teens may be thinking and feeling about the many issues addressed in adolescent social and emotional learning, such as peer pressure, substance abuse, bullying and violence prevention, and developing the character and life skills to handle adversity and build lifelong resilience.
- What it is like to be a teenager in today's online, digital world.

# Setting the Tone and Climate for Learning

Experts agree that a most important variable in conducting student classroom sessions can be how the adult facilitator relates to the students in the class. Your challenge: To **create an emotionally safe environment** for honest dialogue and sharing without relinquishing your role (and control) as the teacher. As an effective facilitator, students need to know that you are both in charge of the classroom and that you are a truly caring person who is interested in the social, emotional and academic challenges they face.

In order to effectively involve students, develop a working agreement with the students. Each session, encourage participation by asking for feedback and responses from the students, and an atmosphere of acceptance by encouraging students to listen to differing viewpoints. It is your role to remain neutral and to be supportive and encouraging of all points of view.

Create a platform for open communication at the start of each classroom session by:

- Rearranging classroom seating to allow students to sit in a circle facing each other; this can help to encourage open and direct communication.
- Keeping the discussion on topic. If participants get off-topic, it's your job to bring them back on task. Find a moment in the conversation to gently remind participants of the goal and topic.

## Navigating Difficult Conversations and Creating a Climate of Sharing

Students will learn and adopt new behaviors from adults and their peers when a climate of honest and thought-provoking discussion and sharing is fostered. That climate of sharing often leads to questions that can be difficult to address. The following guidelines and responses are offered:

### What should I say if students ask challenging questions?

When encouraging an open and trusting dialogue to support social and emotional learning, students may ask challenging questions, such as "Do you use drugs?" "Have you ever used drugs in the past?" "How have you dealt with prejudice?" "Have you ever broken the rules?" "Do you text while driving?" While they may simply be curious, more often the questions are asked because they want to see if you, as the adult program facilitator, really understand what it is like to be a teenager faced with handling these situations.

Tough questions from teens should be answered after considering the following: your school or agency's guidelines, your own comfort level and your past history of use. Generally speaking, self-disclosure about past use is best kept to a minimum, or not shared at all. When it comes to drugs and alcohol, keep in mind that it is illegal for anyone to use certain substances and any disclosure about current use of legal substances is best shared with a positive health message: "I have a glass of wine with dinner, but I never drive."

All things considered, it is best to say: "We are here to talk about the challenges we face throughout life and I know how difficult that can be for teens."

## What should I say if a student discloses substance use/abuse/highly personal information about family members, friends, or him or herself?

The curriculum is designed to have students watch videos about “real teens” and react to their stories. Therefore, it is likely that students will share personal information. Prior to discussions, it is important to tell students that they should not use names or identifying information. It is equally important to monitor if the disclosures are relevant to the discussion.

## What should I do if the students do not seem to connect with the stories or people in the video?

Although a diverse group of teens are represented in the video segments, not everyone can relate to all of the teens. Some students may get distracted if the teens in the video “don’t seem like them” and need help to refocus. It is important to redirect the discussion to the issue and how they would handle the situation at hand. Ask students if there is anyone in the video that they were able to relate to, or transition the discussion to relating to the overall situation depicted rather than the specific individuals featured in the video.

## The “All-in-the-Same-Boat” Phenomenon

A potent force in social and emotional learning is the discovery that one is not alone in his or her thoughts, feelings, and emotions. There is something special in hearing others articulate similar feelings and experiences. Such mutuality produces support that energizes learning. As students respond to key questions in the lesson, the facilitator can establish connections by acknowledging the adolescent experience, including academic stress, social anxiety and peer pressure.

## The “Strength-in-Numbers” Phenomenon

Adolescents often feel overwhelmed by everyday stress and the pressures. Media, peers and communities often contribute to this. The pressure is less overwhelming and frightening when students are able to deal with these pressures as a large group. When students collectively address this in the classroom, they can learn from each other and garner the support needed to manage these pressures.

## SEL At Home: Parent Involvement

Students, families and educators must work together to develop, live, and contribute to a shared school vision and academic and lifelong success for its students and children. Similarly, SEL goals are best achieved when **students, families and educators work toward a common goal**. That said, Connect with Kids can provide you with a suggested letter for parents and guardians of your students. A letter to parents/guardians can both reinforce school goals, social and emotional learning at home, and encourage parental involvement, even (perhaps especially) during the high school years.

