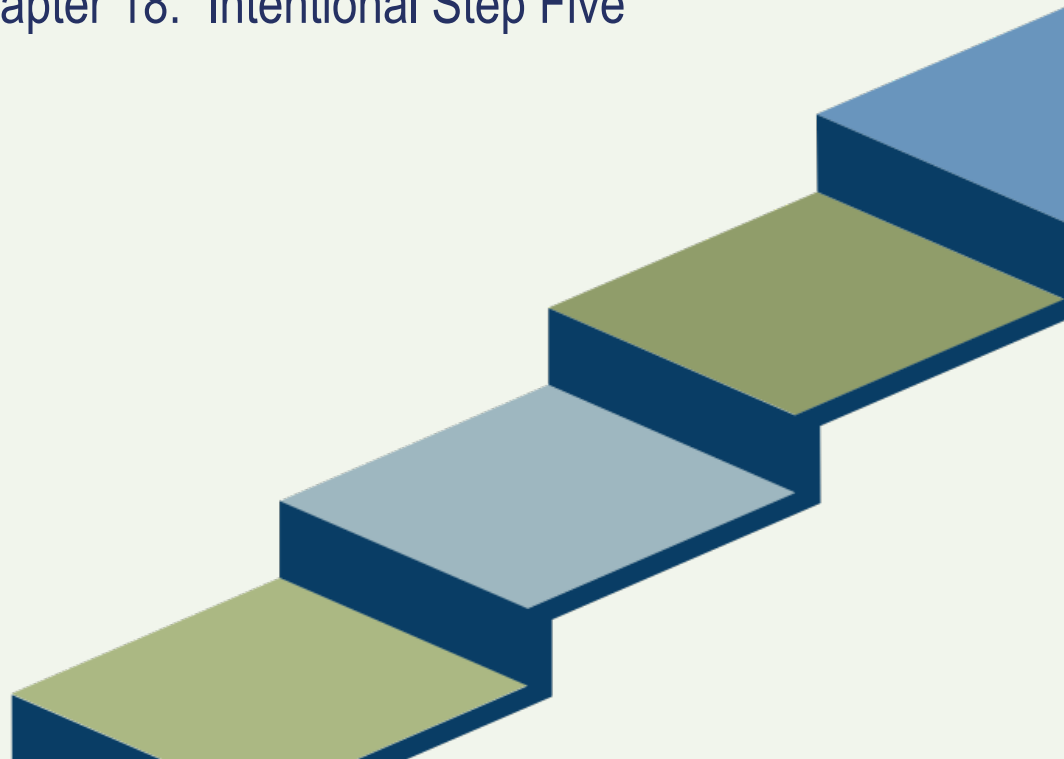


Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to
Accelerate Student
Learning

Companion Guide

Chapter 18: Intentional Step Five



Chapter 18

Intentional Step Five: Incorporate Reflection Time and SEL Skills

At the end of an activity, class day, or at some other point during the week, teachers can designate time for reflection. In addition to concluding a lesson and checking students' content knowledge, we also want to encourage students to reflect on how they persevered through the content, how they worked with others in a group, and how they resolved conflict. Reflection time helps students process what they've learned, acknowledge accomplishments, and discuss ways they can improve. When students reflect and offer feedback as a community, they also practice valuable SEL and workforce skills, like active listening, social-awareness, resilience, empathy, and teamwork. Students who actively work toward improving their community will learn to hold themselves and their peers accountable to classroom norms and will become more independent and self-driven in their community building skills.

Strategy 1: SEL Checklist for Teachers

Teachers can conduct a self-assessment to gain a better understanding of their classroom culture and policies. This will inform them about their current practices and how they can make changes to improve the classroom community. The questions below have been adapted from CASEL's core SEL competencies (n.d.b):

Direct Instruction Reflection Questions

- I regularly teach social and emotional skills in a sequenced, active, and explicit way.
- I use developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive methods for teaching these skills.

- I create space for students to participate in direct instruction of social and emotional skills. They have regular opportunities to lead, share, and reflect during instruction.

Content and Skills Reflection Questions

- I incorporate social and emotional skills into academic lessons and tasks.
- Students have opportunities to make connections between social and emotional skills and the current lesson or activity
- I encourage students to set academic and personal goals, take risks, correct their mistakes, and engage in productive struggle.
- I plan and deliver relevant content, instruction, and learning activities.
- I anticipate where students might struggle and offer appropriate support.
- I invite students to co-create solutions to improve the classroom and community.
- I balance periods of teacher-led instruction with student-to-student interactions, student-led discussion, and time to work independently.
- I create opportunities for classroom discussions and intentionally teach students how to listen actively, agree or disagree with peers, and ask challenging questions.
- I ask rigorous, open-ended questions that help students move toward higher levels of thinking.
- I utilize group work and other collaborative structures to help students develop their communication, problem-solving, and cooperative skills.
- Students have opportunities to reflect on their collaborative work and plan for improvement.

Classroom Environment Reflection Questions

- I co-create classroom norms and expectations with my students.
- My students know the classroom norms, follow them, and offer feedback.
- I make an effort to get to know all of my students and I demonstrate that I care about them and value their contributions.
- I encourage students to share their ideas and concerns.
- I hold regular class meetings and other intentional community-building activities to create a sense of belonging, connection, and support.
- I vary student groupings so students get to know all of their classmates.
- My students and I regularly share about our lives and backgrounds and affirm our similarities and differences.
- I teach and model empathy, conflict resolution, self-reflection, and self-regulation and encourage students to practice these skills.
- When behavior issues arise, I remind students of our shared norms and respond to the issue discreetly, appropriately, and restoratively.

When teachers reflect on their practices through the lens of SEL, they can better plan lessons, tasks, and supports that help target these essential competencies. Social and emotional skills are a critical component of healthy communities. Moreover, these skills can prepare students to be happier, healthier, and more productive adults by equipping them with self-regulation strategies (.52) and helping them develop positive relationships with their teachers (.52) and peers (.53).

Strategy 2: SEL Questions for Students

Much like group work and discussions, it can be easy to assume that our students already know how to be courteous and respectful. Because humans are social beings, it seems natural that children would intuitively understand how to interact and get along with others. But as many of us know, social and emotional skills aren't innate.

During reflection time or other group gatherings, teachers can ask students to reflect on the following CASEL SEL competencies (2023). Students can then be invited to take action to develop or improve these skills.

1. Social Awareness

- How can we see this topic/issue from a peer's perspective?
- How can we recognize the strengths of our peers?
- Who did you see today showing concern for somebody else's feelings? How did they do that? What impact did they have?
- How can we show gratitude to each other?

Activities to try: Morning Meeting, Student Photo Gallery, High Fives, Acts of Kindness, Warm and Fuzzies, and Group Shoutouts and Salutes.

2. Self-Awareness:

- What are your personal and cultural assets?
- What emotions did you experience today?
- How did you demonstrate kindness, empathy, or honesty today?
- How did you practice a growth mindset?
- How did you advocate for your needs?
- What are you doing to work toward your goals?

Activities to try: Empathy Training, THINK Acronym, and Appreciation, Apology, Aha.

3. Self-Management:

- How did you manage your emotions today?
- What strategies did you use to handle a stressful situation?
- What are your personal and academic goals?
- How do you keep yourself motivated when working toward a goal? How do you track your progress?
- How did you take initiative today?

Activities to try: Classroom Norms, Suggestion Box, THINK Acronym, and Acts of Kindness.

4. Responsible Decision-Making:

- How did you demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness?
- How did you propose a solution for personal or social problems?
- How did you use critical-thinking skills today? Do these skills apply to other areas of your life?
- How did your actions affect other students in the class?
- How did you promote our classroom community today?

Activities to try: Morning Meeting, Classroom Norms, Group Shoutouts and Salutes, and Partner Clock.

5. Relationship Skills:

- How did you communicate effectively with others?
- How did you cultivate positive relationships?
- How did you engage in teamwork and collaborative problem-solving?
- How did you resolve conflicts constructively?

- How did you demonstrate leadership during group work?
- How did you help a peer?

Activities to try: Morning Meeting, Student Photo Gallery, Warm and Fuzzies, Paper Tweets, Acts of Kindness, Conflict Resolution, and Group Shoutouts and Salutes.

Inviting students to reflect on their emotions, decisions, and interactions with others helps them learn to assess their role in the classroom community. It also enables them to evaluate the roles of their teachers and peers. After they pause and think about their behavior, they can discuss ways to improve and set goals for making those improvements. This promotes self-regulation (.52), classroom cohesion (.44), teacher (.52) and peer relationships (.53), and the kind of resilience and flexibility future employers are looking for.

Handouts

1. Partner Clock