

Transformative Social and Emotional Learning in **Social Science**

Oregon Teacher's Guide and Lesson Sparks

About This Guide

In Oregon, leaders envision Transformative Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as extending beyond a specific curriculum or standalone program, moving from a focus on each individual's development to an approach that is fully integrated with other aspects of teaching and learning and that supports all members of a school community in learning and thriving. To spark inspiration and provide guidance for teachers as they plan lessons that integrate Transformative SEL into their curricular focus, this resource offers examples of K–12 learning activities tailored to specific Social Science and Transformative SEL standards in Oregon.

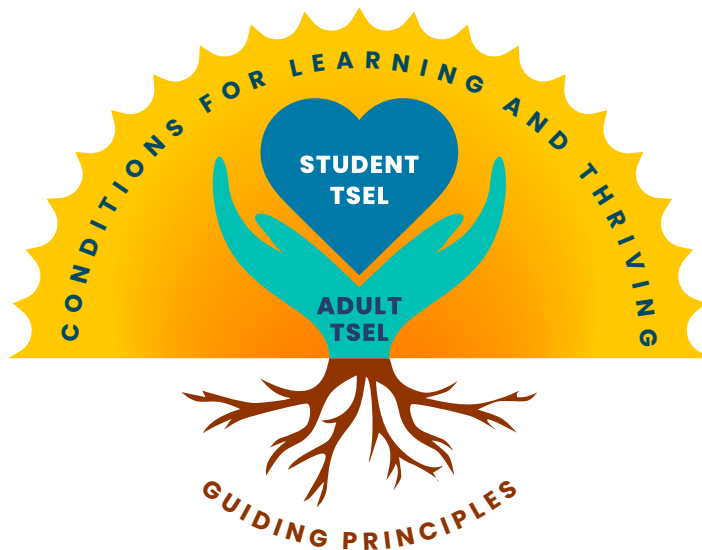
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Teacher's Guide to Transformative SEL Instruction

Just as an environmental ecosystem requires a balance of sunshine, water, nutrients, and a healthy atmosphere for plants to flower and bear fruit, the school ecosystem needs individuals, relationships, and the environment to work in interdependence so that everyone can flourish and thrive (Figure 1). For Transformative SEL to take root in schools, adults can reflect as learners on their own social, emotional, and cultural competencies so they can provide responsive, inclusive, and engaging learning opportunities for students. Teachers play an essential role as

Figure 1. Oregon's Transformative SEL Framework



the gardeners of the learning ecosystem, creating an environment where learning can flourish, developing relationships with and between students, and guiding students in their personal and academic journeys.

Academic instruction serves as the soil in this learning ecosystem, as instruction is full of opportunities for integrating Transformative SEL so that students can experience consistent, high-quality learning. A transformative approach to SEL instruction must consider not just individual students, but also the social systems around them by recognizing that

student actions and attitudes are influenced by systemic conditions. Conditions for learning and thriving therefore act as nutrients for instructional soil, as teachers should cultivate authentic partnerships, equitable policies, and thriving learning environments in order to meet the full range of students' social, emotional, and academic needs.

The Transformative Social and Emotional Learning in Social Science Guide aims to help teachers build vibrant, engaging classroom communities that celebrate identity, build agency, cultivate belonging, foster collaborative problem-solving, and encourage curiosity. Rather than offering one-size-fits-all lesson plans, this resource provides “lesson sparks”—ideas and practices that are intended to spark inspiration in teachers and can be used dynamically to help shift classroom practices and policies toward transformation. The guide refers frequently to the accompanying [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#) which teachers can use as they engage in the processes of reflection, integration, and lesson planning.

This guide includes:

- Guiding Principles from the Oregon Department of Education
- Guidance on Transformative SEL, including how to embed it into instruction
- Information on and examples of Signature Practices grounded in Transformative SEL and Social Science, organized by grade band
- Additional resources and inspiration for units and lesson plans

The companion [Lesson Spark Tool](#) offers:

- Reflection questions to demonstrate the necessary mindsets, values, and beliefs for Transformative SEL
- Guidance for instructional and Transformative SEL alignment
- A resource for planning Signature Practices

Guiding Principles

Figure 2. Oregon's Transformative SEL Guiding Principles



This guide is grounded in the guiding principles outlined in Oregon's Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Framework and Standards (Oregon Department of Education, 2023). The principles are the roots of the learning ecosystem, serving as foundational values and beliefs that can lead to fruitful interactions, communication, and decision-making. The principles include **culturally responsive** education as a powerful pedagogical approach to cultivating Transformative SEL practices in students and adults by affirming and honoring their ways of being, knowledge, experiences, and cultures to promote engagement and learning. The principles also encourage teachers who bring a culturally responsive lens to their instruction to be **community responsive** and **strengths based** by centering and affirming students' lived experiences, perspectives, and contributions as assets for learning academic content. Finally, the framework is grounded in instruction that is **trauma informed** and in the **science of learning and development**, acknowledging the importance of recognizing behavior as communication while building consistent, positive routines to ensure all students are primed for new learning.



What is the relationship between culturally responsive education and Transformative SEL?

A transformative approach to SEL invites adults and students to see and understand the systems and structures that influence their attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and interactions. Culturally responsive education offers an essential pedagogical approach for creating the conditions in which Transformative SEL can take root. Culturally responsive education

stems from a long history of pedagogical research by scholars such as Gloria Ladson-Billings, Django Paris, Geneva Gay, in addition to Shawn Ginwright, who brings focus on healing-centered engagement, and Liza Talusan, who focuses on identity-conscious practices. By nurturing their self-identity, agency, and curiosity, culturally responsive teachers committed to Transformative SEL can harness the innate capacity of youth to actively create change in their own lives and the world.

How do teachers take a culturally responsive approach to their TSEL instruction?

- Teachers build on students' cultural identities, perspectives, and contributions as key assets in the classroom
- Teachers encourage intellectual risk-taking and emotional connection to academic content
- Teachers understand and address the role that toxic and traumatic stress (including racial oppression) can play in shaping students' histories as learners, without seeing them as victims
- Teachers support students to make sense of the world around them, so they can name and act upon the norms, values, institutions, and systems that produce and maintain inequities
- Teachers practice critical self-awareness by reflecting on how their multiple and intersecting identities inform and affect how they act, how they interact with others, and how they see the world around them



Each of these guiding principles is built into the sample activities throughout the guide. Teachers can use **Step 1** of the [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#) to reflect on the current strengths and skills they bring to enacting Transformative SEL in your classroom. The tool's prompts are designed to get teachers thinking about their own learning journey in preparation for working with their students.

Continuum of Transformation

A transformative approach to SEL is not confined to a single person, lesson, or specific time of the day and is not a one-size fits all program or curriculum. Instead, it is an ongoing process and practice of how adults and students show up for one another in moments throughout the school day. SEL practices exist on a continuum, moving from personally responsible and participatory SEL to a Transformative SEL approach (Figure 3). Transformative SEL was developed to shift the focus of educators away from behavior management and toward creating the conditions that support respectful, dignifying, and affirming interactions among all students and adults along the continuum of transformation. Once conditions for learning and thriving are put in place, students can learn to set goals, manage their own behaviors, and ultimately participate, improve, and change institutions and systems in ways that promote equitable outcomes (Jagers et al., 2019). When Transformative SEL is embedded throughout the day, it has the potential to humanize the learning environment by honoring students’ and adults’ lived realities of race, class, culture, and other intersectional identities.

Figure 3. Continuum of Transformation



Transformative SEL in Social Science

Transformative SEL offers essential guidance in helping classroom educators establish caring, nurturing and active social science learning environments. Transformative SEL can be readily integrated with the ten Essential Disciplinary Practices for social science and help support a classroom climate to allow the exploration and discussion of complex histories.

By cultivating critical awareness, students develop a deeper understanding of historical and societal constructs, power dynamics and systemic inequalities. Transformative SEL also promotes empathy and respect for diversity, encouraging students to embrace various perspectives and cultural contexts, which aligns with the goal of seeking diverse viewpoints in social sciences. Additionally, it fosters reflection and a growth mindset, essential for processing social science content, and enhances communication and collaboration skills, enabling effective participation in democratic discussions and decision-making processes.

Transformative SEL's emphasis on responsible decision-making and ethical considerations resonates with the social sciences' objective of nurturing informed citizens who act for the public good. It propels students towards active community engagement and advocacy for social justice, echoing the social sciences' aim to empower students to confront systemic injustices and strive for a more equitable world. Equally important is the role of Transformative SEL in teaching students to critically evaluate information, a vital skill in an age rife with digital misinformation. By weaving Transformative SEL into the fabric of social sciences instruction, educators not only impart essential knowledge and analytical skills but also inspire students to become agents of change.



Teachers can refer to **Step 2** of the [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#) to help determine how instructional goals align with Transformative SEL standards. [See Appendix A](#) for a more detailed Standards Crosswalk to support curricular integration.

Explore Integrated Signature Practices

Oregon's Transformative SEL standards include guidance on practices and growth indicators. The guidance is intended to be broad enough to support adaptation while also specific enough to provide useful takeaways for adults to use with students across all contexts. Teachers may choose to adapt Transformative SEL from many different entry points, including:

- Aligning Transformative SEL standards with academic objectives by emphasizing student skillsets and outcomes in lesson planning
- Building a climate and culture for Transformative SEL, by placing student interests, needs, and learning styles at the center of instructional decision-making
- Integrating Transformative SEL through Student-Centered Instruction that puts collaborative problem-solving and student curiosity at the center of learning

Because Transformative SEL is an ongoing process, this guide describes how teachers can use Signature Practices as an entry point to Transformative SEL in the classroom by embedding predictable opportunities for relationship- and community-building and moving their practices along the continuum of transformation. Developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the three Signature Practices are Inclusive Welcome, Engaging Strategies, Intentional Close.

For each Signature Practice, this guide provides universal and content-specific examples of how Transformative SEL might look in the classroom. These examples are intended to demonstrate how teachers can weave classroom routines and strategies that align to their learning objectives and the Transformative SEL focal constructs.



Step 3 of the [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#) provides space to identify how Signature Practices can help support student outcomes, and **Step 4** includes a template for teachers to sketch their own practices.

CASEL developed the Signature Practices in response to frequently asked questions such as “What does SEL look like? How can we start?” After teachers choose a curricular focus, using CASEL Signature Practices can help teachers instill their classroom with routines and interactions that nurture Transformative SEL focal constructs while also connecting to disciplinary learning outcomes.

The following sections provide guidance and examples for teachers to use in integrating Signature Practices into their classrooms.

SIGNATURE PRACTICE:

Inclusive Welcome



Consider opening each class period with a welcome that is inclusive and respects cultural and linguistic diversity, builds community, and sets the stage for learning.

Examples include:

- ⦿ Whole-group greeting activities
- ⦿ Deep breathing or mindfulness
- ⦿ Morning circles or rituals
- ⦿ Interactive do-nows, such as peer-to-peer homework help or quick pair assignments

Engage students in **square breathing** as an **Inclusive Welcome** to help them focus on their breath and release tension before a potentially activating lesson such as peer reviewing a writing assignment.

TRANSFORMATIVE SEL IN SOCIAL SCIENCE 3–5 LESSON SPARK:

Civic Engagement Morning Greetings

Students start their day by contemplating a civic action they can take to improve their school or community. As they enter the classroom, the teacher prompts each student to share their intended action, reinforcing democratic values and the importance of active participation. The brief, personalized exchange at the door aims to empower students and encourage reflection about their role in promoting community well-being.



See the 3–5 Lesson Spark in Appendix B for a more detailed lesson activity.

SIGNATURE PRACTICE:

Engaging Strategy



Consider embedding interactive or reflective opportunities that vary in complexity and style to allow students to grasp content while connecting learning to their experiences throughout the school day.

Examples include:

- **Think, Ink, Pair, Share** — silent time to reflect; time to write; partner discussions; close with a group share out
- **Mindful Minute Brain Break** — a calming activity, promoting focus and readiness to learn
- **Gallery Walk**
- **Pass It On**

Use a gallery walk as an **Engaging Strategy** to facilitate a discussion about a unit's essential questions.

TRANSFORMATIVE SEL IN SOCIAL SCIENCE 6–8 LESSON SPARK:

Co-creating a Code of Conduct

Students collaborate to write a classroom code of conduct, drawing from their personal values and understanding of rules' impact on society. This exercise connects to content about the development of modern governments and legal systems and fosters Transformative SEL competencies in reflecting on personal and collective identity and well-being. Students discuss the purpose and potential benefits of their rules, leading to a collectively created code that parallels historical governance studies their experiences to what they learned about their classmates.



See the 6–8 Lesson Spark in Appendix B for a more detailed lesson activity.

SIGNATURE PRACTICE: Intentional Close



Consider closing each learning experience by highlighting an individual or shared understanding of the lesson, reflecting on the process or the content, helping students identify next steps, or encouraging students to show appreciation for one another.

Examples include:

- [Future Me](#)
- [One-minute Accolade](#)
- [My Next Step](#) — invite students to commit to an action based on the lesson topic or experience
- [One Word Whip Around](#) — invite students to respond to a prompt or question with a one-word answer

Use [My Next Step](#) as an Intentional Close to connect students' conceptual understandings to their everyday lives by asking students how they might apply learnings on geography on a commute or a nature walk.

TRANSFORMATIVE SEL IN SOCIAL SCIENCE 11-12 LESSON SPARK: Reflecting on Power

Students reflect on their understanding of dominating and transformational power in the context of civic engagement. They define both types of power and consider how they can exert transformational power within their own lives. Students use sentence frames to discuss how they can enact positive change individually and collectively.



[See the 11-12 Lesson Spark in Appendix B](#) for a more detailed lesson activity.

Additional Inspiration

The external links below provide inspiration as teachers work to incorporate Transformative SEL into their social science lesson plans. Please note that these resources are neither affiliated with nor endorsed by the Oregon Department of Education.

RESOURCE & DESCRIPTION	K-5	6-8	9-12
<p><u>A+SEL inAction</u></p> <p>This resource provides guiding questions and simulation examples that could be used to incorporate SEL skills (such as empathy, compassion and assertiveness) into middle school social science activities. It includes a section on how to use morning meetings as an opportunity to blend social science and SEL.</p>		●	
<p><u>Learning for Justice Lessons</u></p> <p>Learning for Justice offers ready-to-use lessons that promote social justice; challenge bias; engage students in discussions of diversity, equity and belonging; and encourage discussions around civics and civic engagement. Use the filters to sort by grade level, social justice domain, subject and topic.</p>	●	●	●
<p><u>High Tech High Unboxed Project Cards</u></p> <p>High Tech High's Project Cards provide highlights of inspiring social science projects designed by teachers and realized in collaboration with students. The examples invite students to practice Transformative SEL skills. Use the social studies filter.</p>	●	●	●
<p><u>The Learning Network</u></p> <p>The New York Times Learning Network offers resources and learning content grounded in real-world events to encourage student conversation in civics and civic engagement.</p> <p><u>Social science</u> content is available in 4 areas: U.S. history, global issues, civics and social science. Example social science activities that educators could incorporate with their TSEL practices include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Identity and Political Beliefs/Values</u> ● <u>Social Media and Mental Health</u> ● <u>Empathy, Resilience, Responsibility, and Self-care</u> 		●	●

<p><u>Facing History and Ourselves Social Studies, Civics, and History Units</u></p> <p>Facing History and Ourselves has a resource library that draws on history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate. It provides classroom facilitation guidance around race, racism, and civics. There are 24 unit plans and accompanying materials for social science teachers that integrate Transformative SEL competencies. Resources include::</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <u>Identity and Community: An introduction to 6th Grade Social Studies</u> ● <u>Developing Media Literacy for Well-Being, Relationships and Democracy</u> ● <u>Discussing Race and Racism in the Classroom</u> 		<p>●</p>	<p>●</p>
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Conclusion

Having now seen a variety of integrated activities and model units or lesson plans, teachers can next use **Step 4 of the [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#)** to plan Signature Practices that aim to move their instruction, student relationships, and the overall classroom culture and climate toward Transformative SEL.

As Transformative SEL is a process and approach rather than a discrete strategy or program, there is no singular, correct way to implement the approach in your classroom. Instead, Transformative SEL should be embedded throughout your content area learning and school day interactions. This guide and its accompanying tool are designed to demonstrate the several different entry points and strategies teachers can adapt to build a Transformative SEL ecosystem in their school. Transformative SEL invites adults in the educational ecosystem to see themselves as co-learners alongside youths by learning about and critically reflecting on their own social, emotional, and cultural competencies (Jagers et al., 2019). As co-learning is essential to Transformative SEL, teachers might consider who they would identify as the members of their learning community and invite them to collaboratively explore this guide and tool.



Step 4 of the [Transformative SEL Lesson Spark Tool](#) provides space for teachers to design their own Signature Practices

References

CASEL. (n.d.) *SEL 3 signature practices playbook*. <https://signaturepractices.casel.org/>

Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (SEL): Toward SEL in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 162–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1623032>

Oregon Department of Education. (2023). *Oregon’s transformative social and emotional learning framework and standards*. [https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/SEL/Documents/ODE_Oregon%27s%20Transformative%20SEL%20Framework%20%20Standards_FINAL%20\(2\).pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/SEL/Documents/ODE_Oregon%27s%20Transformative%20SEL%20Framework%20%20Standards_FINAL%20(2).pdf)

Ball State University. (n.d.). *Square breathing*. https://www.bsu.edu/academics/centersandinstitutes/practicum/community-resources#accordion_mentalhealth

APPENDIX A:

Crosswalk of Oregon Social Science and Transformative SEL Standards

This crosswalk includes examples of alignments between the Oregon Social Science Essential Disciplinary Practices and the Transformative SEL practices. The alignments depicted are not intended to be exhaustive; rather, they include areas that are likely to be natural matches in instruction.

SOCIAL SCIENCE: ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES	EXAMPLE ALIGNMENT WITH TSEL STANDARD
1 – Develop questions for social science inquiry (pg. 6).	<p>Practice 4B: Demonstrate empathy and affirm other’s perspectives during teamwork and collaborative problem solving.</p> <p>Practice 5A: Demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness while using critical thinking skills across various situations and environments.</p> <p>Practice 5B: Make informed choices and identify solutions for personal and social injustices after analyzing all types of information.</p>
2 – Use chronological thinking skills, connecting the past with the present to recognize continuity and change in human history (pg. 6).	<p>Practice 5A: Demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness while using critical thinking skills across various situations and environments.</p>
3 – Collect, interpret, evaluate, and apply information from primary and secondary sources to better understand and create historical narratives distinguishing between fact and opinion (pg. 6).	<p>Practice 1C: Reflect on and evaluate how one’s emotions, thoughts, and perspectives (including values, biases, and prejudices) can influence behavior.</p> <p>Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices.</p> <p>Practice 5B: Make informed choices and identify solutions for personal and social injustices after analyzing all types of information.</p>

SOCIAL SCIENCE: ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES	EXAMPLE ALIGNMENT WITH TSEL STANDARD
<p>4 – Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.</p> <p>Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices.</p> <p>Practice 4B: Demonstrate empathy and affirm other’s perspectives during teamwork and collaborative problem solving.</p>
<p>5 – Evaluate and assess how discrimination, racism, and inequality shape historical narratives, individual perspectives, intersecting identities, and diverse understandings of the past and present (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.</p> <p>Practice 3B: Apply social skills (i.e., empathy, compassion, etc.) to develop and maintain healthy relationships that collectively achieve mutual goals while affirming identities and perspectives.</p> <p>Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices across situations and environments.</p>
<p>6 – Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 2A: Manage and express thoughts, emotions, impulses, and stressors in ways that affirm one’s identity.</p> <p>Practice 5A: Demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness while using critical thinking skills across various situations and environments.</p> <p>Practice 5B: Make informed choices and identify solutions for personal and social injustices after analyzing all types of information.</p>
<p>7 – Cultivate global awareness and cultural understanding to effectively engage with the interconnected world, diverse cultures, and perspectives (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 1D: Analyze personal and social intersectional identities and positionality, and how they relate to one’s interests, purpose, and sense of belonging.</p> <p>Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices across situations and environments.</p> <p>Practice 4A: Form authentic relationships that encourage autonomy while building cultural awareness and empathy through various forms of communication.</p>

SOCIAL SCIENCE: ESSENTIAL DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES	EXAMPLE ALIGNMENT WITH TSEL STANDARD
<p>8 – Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 4A: Form authentic relationships that encourage autonomy while building cultural awareness and empathy through various forms of communication.</p> <p>Practice 4B: Demonstrate empathy and affirm other’s perspectives during teamwork and collaborative problem solving.</p> <p>Practice 4C: Recognize and acknowledge when there is harm to self and others and identify when support, agency, and practices to repair and restore are needed.</p> <p>Practice 4D: Restore relationships through actively engaging with others, working collaboratively, and affirming cultural and social perspectives.</p>
<p>9 – Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities (pg. 7).</p>	<p>Practice 4A: Form authentic relationships that encourage autonomy while building cultural awareness and empathy through various forms of communication.</p> <p>Practice 4B: Demonstrate empathy and affirm other’s perspectives during teamwork and collaborative problem solving.</p> <p>Practice 4C: Recognize and acknowledge when there is harm to self and others and identify when support, agency, and practices to repair and restore are needed.</p> <p>Practice 4D: Restore relationships through actively engaging with others, working collaboratively, and affirming cultural and social perspectives.</p>
<p>10 – Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action (pg. 8).</p>	<p>Practice 2C: Plan, evaluate, and achieve personal and collective goals and aspirations.</p> <p>Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices.</p> <p>Practice 5B: Make informed choices and identify solutions for personal and social injustices after analyzing all types of information.</p>

APPENDIX B:

Social Science Lesson Sparks

Grades K–5

SIGNATURE PRACTICE		Engaging Strategy: “Who’s in my family tree?”	
Context In a civics unit on identity, roles, and responsibilities (or a geography unit on human interaction and interconnection), students create a family tree.			
Learning Outcome Students reflect on their families, values, and traditions by creating a family tree to share with their peers and teacher.		Classroom Format Whole group	Time 15–20 minutes
Teacher Moves <ul style="list-style-type: none">Share that students will learn about themselves and the different people that make up their communities over the next few weeks. In this activity, the class will be thinking about those who are closest to them—their families. Highlight that not all families consist of members who are biologically related or the typical mother–father–children dynamic. Families may look different and that’s okay.Ask students to respond to the following prompts:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Who are some of the people that are in a family? (Allow one or two students to share with the group.)What are some things that families do together? (Allow one or two students to share with the group.)Ask students to create a family tree, showing how the people they love are connected to each other. Students will work on this at home and share it with the class the next day.			

Student Experiences & Identities

Draw on students' prior understandings or familiarities with what a family tree is. Provide an opportunity for students to think about how their identities shape who is in their family, what family means to them, the things they do with their family, and how their family may or may not look different from that of others.



Content Connections

K.C.IR.2: Recognize and develop an understanding of the components of a person's identity including race, gender, family, ethnicity, culture, religion, and ability.

1.G.HI.5: Demonstrate understanding that people from various parts of the world can have diverse ways of living, customs, and languages and all deserve respect.

Transformative SEL Connections

Practice 1D: Analyze personal and social intersectional identities and positionality, and how they relate to one's interests, purpose, and sense of belonging.

Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.

Grades 3-5

SIGNATURE PRACTICE

Inclusive Welcome: Civic Engagement Morning Greetings

Context

In a 3rd grade civics unit, students enter the classroom by responding to a guiding prompt about how they can promote democratic values in their school or local community.

Learning Outcome

Students consider how they can promote democratic values in school or their local community and feel encouraged to act in alignment with those values.

Classroom Format

Individual

Time

1 minute per student

Teacher Moves

- Greet and welcome students at the classroom door.
- As each student arrives, ask them
 - “What is one thing you will do today to make your school or local community a better place to be?” Model a response: If I see someone being bullied, I will ask the bully to stop.
- Listen to each student’s response and engage with them. For example, affirm them—“I believe you can do it!”—or give them a fist bump or high five).
- After this, allow the student to enter the classroom.
- If a student does not know or does not feel up to answering, give them an opportunity to think on it and follow-up the next morning.

Student Experiences & Identities

Draw from observations of social dynamics between students, knowledge of community events or issues, and information gained from previous interactions and relationship-building with students around their identities, values, interests, and concerns.



Content Connections

3.C.IR.2: Explain the differences between allies and bystanders exploring how individuals can promote democratic values such as liberty, equality, and justice when they see someone targeted for who they are.

3.C.IR.5: Describe the responsibilities of people in their community and state.

Transformative SEL Connections

Practice 3C: Foster a sense of belonging that cultivates acceptance, support, inclusion, and encouragement of others within a diverse community, while addressing the impact of systemic injustices across situations and environments.

Practice 5C: Anticipate, reflect, and evaluate the impacts of one's choices and contributions in promoting personal, family, and community well-being.

#

- Prompt students to answer the following reflection questions:
 - How does the word, phrase, and sentence you chose connect to your experiences, interests, or identities?
 - What did you learn about your classmates' experiences, interests or identities?

Student Experiences & Identities

Draw on how students' beliefs and values (shaped by factors such as religious and cultural upbringing) inform their moral codes and social understandings of right and wrong and good and bad.



Content Connections

6/7.C.PI.4: Analyze the origins, purpose, and influence of diverse religions, philosophies, and legal systems on the development of modern governments and the concepts of individual, civil, and human rights, equality, equity, and justice over time and on multiple continents.

Transformative SEL Connections

Practice 5C: Anticipate, reflect, and evaluate the impacts of one's choices and contributions in promoting personal, family, and community well-being.

Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.

Grades 9–10

SIGNATURE PRACTICE

Engaging Strategy: Human Barometer

Context

In a 9th grade lesson on democratic principles, students practice taking a stance on a topic while observing the stance of their peers by lining up along a continuum.

Learning Outcome

Students defend their beliefs about democratic foundational ideas and values while actively listening to their classmates' differing beliefs.

Classroom Format

- Whole group
- Partners

Time

25–30 minutes

Teacher Moves

- Ask students to help create a space in the classroom (or a space outside the classroom) where they can stand or sit in a line. Place “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” signs on opposite walls.
- Prepare students for this discussion format by informing them that they will have the opportunity to take a stand on different statements by physically moving to a location on the continuum that represents their current opinion. The activity goal is to practice learning from people with different perspectives and use reasoning to share about personal beliefs.

Partners

- Remind students guidelines you established and to take care of themselves and each other during this discussion by asking them to reflect on the following prompts:
 - What would help you listen to your peers today?
 - What would help you listen to yourself (mind, body, and heart)?
 - How can we take care of each other as a class during this discussion?
- Give students a chance to pair-share before moving on to the activity.

Whole group

- Offer students the prompts below to encourage them to reflect on some of democracy's foundational values. (Have the prompts on slides so students can read them one at a time.) With each prompt, give students 30 seconds of think-time before encouraging them to pick

a place on the continuum that represents their current stance on the statement (somewhere between “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree”).

- Having the freedom to do what you want is more important than making sure everyone is treated the same.
 - Freedom of speech should be absolute, allowing individuals to express any opinions without censorship.
 - People’s private lives should be kept secret, even if sharing some information might help keep everyone safe.
 - In a fair democracy, wealthy individuals should not exert more influence over political processes than the average citizen.
 - Keeping the country safe should come first, even if it means some personal freedoms are taken away.
 - A law favored by the majority should always be implemented, even if it infringes on the rights of some people.
- ◎ Once students have chosen where to stand, invite them to turn and talk to the people next to them and to share their reasoning with each other.
 - ◎ Invite representatives from different parts of the continuum to share their thinking with the whole class, making sure you invite many different voices to share. Encourage students to move to a new place on the continuum if they change their mind.
 - ◎ Gather students for a reflective discussion to close the activity:
 - What did you learn from your classmates today?
 - What is an example of how your perspective shifted today?
 - To what extent did we take care of each other as a learning community today? What did we do well? What might we do better next time?

Student Experiences & Identities

Draw on how students’ own beliefs and values (shaped by factors such as religious and cultural upbringing) inform their perspectives on contemporary issues and ideas foundational to democracy. Use information gained from previous interactions and relationship-building with students around their identities, values, interests, and concerns. Specifically, for the pair-share aspect of the activity, draw on this information when deciding how to create dyads (e.g., put students together who have not interacted much before).



Content Connections

HS.C.DP.13: Argue and defend positions on contemporary issues in which foundational ideas or values are in tension.

Transformative SEL Connections

Practice 5A: Demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness while using critical thinking skills across various situations and environments.

Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.

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transformational power by picking one of these sentence frames to complete in a whole-class whip-around discussion:

- I access my power within by ...
- I find power with ...
- I have the power to ...

Student Experiences & Identities

Draw on students' experiences with power (situations where they felt empowered and those where they felt powerless). Build on students' experiences by asking how their identities (and those of others) impacted their experiences.



Content Connections

HS.C.IR.9: Describe the civic behaviors that promote and strengthen a pluralistic democracy.

Transformative SEL Connections

Practice 2D: Develop personal and collective agency by using various forms of communication (i.e., verbal, body language, written, etc.) to make choices and take initiative.

Practice 3A: Demonstrate awareness and understanding of the similarities and differences that define, influence, and affirm personal and collective identities.

References or Attributions

- Just Associates' definition of [transformational vs. dominating power](#)
- TED-Ed video ["How to Understand Power"](#) by Eric Liu