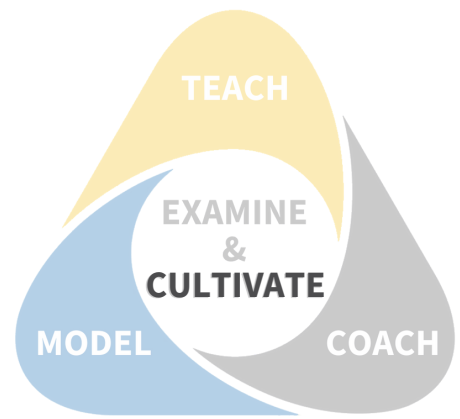# TRANSFORMING EDUCATION'S
SEL Integration Approach
Companion Guide

CULTIVATE a learning environment in which all community members are valued, can enact their agency, build meaningful relationships, and experience a strong sense of belonging.

TEACH

EXAMINE & CULTIVATE

MODEL

COACH

RESEARCH SHOWS

Cultivating a rich learning environment in which students feel valued and a sense of belonging is critical for their social-emotional development.[1] For example, when teachers cultivate strong relationships with their students, it allows students to more deeply engage with the material and feel safe making mistakes and learning from them, which in turn promotes social-emotional skills such as growth-mindset and self-efficacy.[2] When teachers cultivate environments in which students are given ownership over their learning through scaffolded experiences, it fosters the skills that allow students to develop into agentic learners.[3] And, in environments in which students are able to "experiment, try out roles and behaviors, and receive feedback," it can support the development of their identity, or a "sense of internal consistency of who one is across time, across place, and across multiple social realms."[4]

Furthermore, studies suggest that warm and trusting teacher-student relationships, in classrooms where students experience belongingness, are associated with positive school outcomes for all students, and particularly students of color.[5] In supportive learning environments, teachers can reinforce high academic and behavioral expectations, and appropriately scaffold challenging material to help all students in their classroom meet these expectations.[6] Finally, when every student sees themselves represented in the physical space, and feel welcome to bring their whole selves to school every day, they are more likely to thrive.[7]

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Think about the students with whom you have positive relationships. Why is that? What actions do you take to cultivate relationships with these students?

- Think about the students with whom you do not have positive relationships. Why is that? What actions do you take or not take to cultivate relationships with them?

- How do you cultivate (plan, create, maintain) a learning environment that is a safe space for all learners, particularly those who hold marginalized identities? How do you create a learning environment that is inclusive and affirming of students' different identities?

- If you are from a different community or background than your students (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender), how do you ensure you honor their community and identities, while responsibly exposing them to others?

READ	WATCH	PRACTICE
Relationships Briefs	Cultivating Trust with One-on-One Time	Strategies for Gathering Student Feedback
Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education: Classroom Culture	The Power of Being Seen	

transforming education

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION'S
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> *"When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful."*
>
> **BELL HOOKS**
> *Teaching Critical Thinking*

LOOK FORS

Educators who cultivate environments that intentionally promote agency and belonging…

Attend to materials, accessibility, and the physical environment by:
- Publicly displaying student work, both exemplars and works in progress, to celebrate the learning process.
- Reflecting the multi-layered identities of the school community through displays, texts, projects, and speakers or special guests.
- Arranging and choosing furniture that meets the needs of all body types and physical abilities.
- Ensuring that every student has access to essential technology and materials, both at home and at school, to enable their learning.
- Creating a schedule that leverages learning science and includes opportunities for movement, brain breaks, and a variety of daily experiences.

Build and maintain strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues by:
- Orienting towards optimism, applying an asset-based lens, and approaching situations with compassionate curiosity as ways to disrupt inequitable and deficit-based views.
- Exploring who students are as individuals outside of the classroom by learning about their interests, passions, goals, and dreams.
- Pairing critical feedback with messages of rigorous expectations, confidence about students' abilities to meet those expectations, and supports to help students meet their goals.
- Incorporating personal check-ins and tracking the frequency of interactions to ensure that all students receive regular touchpoints with at least one caring adult.
- Communicating with families in bidirectional and responsive ways at times that best fit parent/guardians' preferences and needs.
- Supporting colleagues in their times of need and leveraging peer support when challenges arise.

Establish structures and routines that build a caring community by:
- Co-constructing and regularly revisiting classroom norms, and ensuring that those norms incorporate the viewpoints, concerns, and aspirations of all students.
- Employing instructional practices (e.g. rubrics, peer-feedback, and conferencing) that normalize making mistakes, the process of revising, and asking for help.
- Making resources (i.e. terminology, protocols) available to students that they can use to communicate and solve problems with one another.
- Processing and resolving conflicts using community-oriented and restorative practices that have previously been taught, modeled, and coached.

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