

Masterclass Educator Guide

SEL in the School Elementary School Day

Introduction

Educators and schools have an important role in shaping how students see themselves, engage with their peers, and interact with the world around them. Providing educators with a framework of support that includes practical strategies that help guide academic success, emotional well-being, and a critical consciousness in their students can be a valuable tool.

This three-part collection of Master Class videos features educators who teach in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms where they discuss why Social-Emotional Learning is critically important to educating the whole child. Throughout the videos, these educators provide valuable perspectives by:

- Highlighting the importance of intentionality in building relationships, creating safe spaces, and amplifying student voice.
- Focusing on core practices and strategies that authentically prioritize student inquiry, collaboration, and create engagement through a critical consciousness.
- Prioritizing a holistic approach to supporting students with Social-Emotional Learning that leverages all of the stakeholders in a child's life such as family, community, teachers, and friends.

Note: The master class videos, when coupled with the activities and discussion in this educator guide, can be used as a professional learning activity independently or with a group of educators interested in incorporating more of the SEL Center resources into classrooms. Facilitators may wish to incorporate discussion activities to encourage teachers to engage in open dialogue around Social-Emotional Learning.



Social-Emotional Learning

Social-Emotional Learning is often described as the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. Discovery Education's SEL Center presents a curated collection of hundreds of resources designed to help educators integrate SEL into core instruction and to help all students develop social and emotional competencies, cultivate self-confidence, manage stress, look at situations and issues from a variety of perspectives, and maintain their well-being so everyone can thrive.

Important Themes in This Video

1. Building positive relationships with students is central to a safe and inclusive classroom environment.
2. Allowing students to lead with their identity builds trust and increases opportunities for students to thrive.
3. Students need a curriculum that is challenging, responsive, and representative.

Video Overview: Rodney Crouse

Featured Educator Background

Rodney Crouse has taught K-5 in public schools for 17 years. Currently he serves Grade 4 students at Reedy Fork Elementary and is working on a Post Masters Add-on Certificate for administration at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He was first introduced to Discovery Education in 2014 through the DENAmbassador Program and later attended his first DENSI in 2015. Mr. Crouse has spent the last several years taking professional development courses and learning how to connect with the Whole Child so that student voice can be heard and valued in the education that will shape the rest of their life outcomes. Mr. Crouse serves on the Teacher Advisory Council for Guilford County Schools, the Teacher Learning and Professional Development team for his district, is a DENStar, STEAMInThePark Ambassador, Freckle Ambassador, MIEExpert, and Learning Leader with Tata Consulting Services and Ignite My Future.

How and Why He Embeds Social-Emotional Learning in His Classroom

Rodney is committed to providing opportunities for his students to succeed in and out of his classroom. To best support his students, Rodney recognizes that he must model the traits that create success, including authenticity and vulnerability. To build on these skills, Rodney uses every opportunity to build trust so that when challenging situations or conversations arise, his students are willing and prepared to participate. Another way that Rodney integrates Social-Emotional Learning is by prioritizing student identities. By creating space for students to lead with their identities,

“When you integrate students' stories, they feel valued, and you affirm that THEY matter. When you allow a student to feel like their story matters, they are going to trust you and move mountains.”

—Rodney Crouse

including their backgrounds and lived experiences, he can create a rich and diverse space for students to learn more about themselves and from one another.

Rodney's Three Tips for Evolving Your SEL Practice

1) Get to know your students, 2) Be Consistent, 3) Make sure to follow-up. Beginning to incorporate social-emotional learning strategies into your instruction and school day can seem overwhelming. Rodney provides three ways to start building trust in the classroom. By creating opportunities for students to share who they are and how they are feeling, educators normalize empathy and understanding. This is reinforced by following-up with students, doing regular check-ins, and listening to student's needs, successes, and frustrations.

Questions to Consider and Discuss

- Rodney speaks about using practical strategies each day, like the “emotion wheel” to check-in on his students. What strategies do you incorporate into your daily instruction that help students share their feelings and emotions in positive ways?
- Student's always have a voice. What opportunities do you create in your classroom to amplify that voice?
- During the video, Rodney shares his belief that students are not taught in a vacuum. Why is it important to use current events in the classroom? How might creating opportunities for students to share their experiences or opinions add to richer discussions and deeper thinking?

Ideas to Explore

Now that you have heard from Rodney about his journey and ongoing process of supporting students, hopefully you are considering ways in which you can continue to strengthen classroom trust and relationships, amplify student voice, and place a critical lens on the types of resources you use with students.

Below are some next steps to consider as you work towards weaving Social-Emotional Learning into your instruction.

- Analyze your current practice and curriculum to evaluate how inclusive and responsive the resources and strategies are for the students you teach.
- Introduce relationship building strategies to your students by scaffolding collaborative learning opportunities during class time.
- Consider times in your instruction where students can reflect on their learning and feelings.
- Connect with your colleagues to collaborate on creating resources and learning opportunities that build student inquiry skills.