

Harmony and Learning Design and Instruction

When educators implement learning design and instructional practices, they create helpful emotional and social support for active participation that accurately challenges students individually and in community. Learning design and instructional practices include six (of the 10) [practices that promote social, emotional, and academic learning](#), which we will explore in this guide:

- Cooperative Learning
- Group Discussions
- Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection
- Balanced Instruction
- Expectations and Rigor
- SEL Competency Building

Learning design and instructional practices allow educators to create authentic opportunities for students to actively participate, engage in risk-taking, and explore content through rigorous instruction. As educators use these practices, they create spaces where students use their communication skills; take new perspectives; and plan, monitor, and reflect on their own progression. Educators apply these integrated practices in the context of [affirming learning environment practices](#) and warm, caring relationships. Learning design and instruction encourages educators and students to apply all [four taxonomy approaches](#), for example:



EXPLICIT SKILL ALIGNMENT

When educators engage in academic lessons, they recognize the standards that are also social and emotional skills. In other words, when educators have students participate in such practices as *cooperative learning*, *classroom discussions*, or *self-assessment and reflection*, that promote, for example, speaking and listening in English Language Arts, or recognizing biases in science experiments, they are also teaching social and emotional skills.



EXPLICIT STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

To engage in content-specific practices (e.g., mathematics and science and engineering practices), students need to leverage their social and emotional assets. For instance, multiple content standards require students to participate in *cooperative learning*, *inquiry-based learning*, and *self-assessment and reflection*. These practices require students to share and learn from others' perspectives, and create and monitor their goals, among other social and emotional skills.

Harmony Curriculum activities and practices assist educators and students as they co-construct learning environments in which all students feel comfortable sharing their perspectives, backgrounds, and cultures. But how can Harmony do that? This tool helps you connect Harmony and six learning design and instructional practices that further student growth in social, emotional, and academic learning. More specifically, for each practice you will find (a) a description of the practice, (b) the mindsets and strategies that educators can use to successfully support the practice, and (c) example Harmony activities and practices (including Harmony Learning Goals) that facilitate learning design and instructional practices and nurture students' and educators' social, emotional, and academic skills (*note: many Harmony activities and practices align with multiple learning design and instructional practices and these are just examples*).

You can also use this tool alongside our [subject-specific tools](#), which provide additional guidance and support on how to adapt Harmony practices to support English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies.

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Cooperative Learning

DESCRIPTION

Cooperative learning refers to instructional tasks for which educators have students work together in diverse groups (e.g., related to skill, interest, race, and gender, among others) toward a collective goal. To facilitate cooperative learning, educators develop mindsets and use strategies to facilitate student groups, thus increasing individual and group learning, and fostering a sense of belonging. Educators can use cooperative learning for a variety of purposes, including to (a) facilitate students' ability to learn specific knowledge, (b) cognitively process what and how they learn, (c) engage in inquiry-based or problem-solving projects, participate in higher-order thinking, and (d) develop a group product or performance—all requiring students to use their social and emotional assets.

As students engage in cooperative learning, they learn how to see diversity as an asset during cooperative groups by (a) encouraging each other's successes, (b) holding each other accountable, (c) using collaborative problem-solving, and (d) reflecting together on how they are working together to reach their group and individual goals. Through cooperative learning, students also co-create learning experiences that encourage them to work together to share resources, assume complementary roles, and interact effectively to reach group academic and social and emotional goals.



EDUCATOR MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Understand that past experiences influence how students interact.
- Believe students can work together productively and gain valuable insights from each other.
- Value diverse expressions and experiences.

STRATEGIES

- Be intentional in how students engage in cooperative learning.
- Provide formal (for more complex tasks) and informal opportunities for cooperation.
- Ensure collaboration and individual accountability is needed for success in the group.
- Help students provide each other feedback and support.
- Monitor how groups work together and make progress towards goals.
- Help students process how they are working together and the role everyone is playing.
- Encourage diverse perspectives and promote anti-bias education.
- Assign roles and responsibilities that help break down stereotypes.

EXAMPLE HARMONY ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LEARNING GOALS

Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<p><u>Collaboration in Action</u> (G3, U3, L5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students practice using Communication Boosters and avoiding Communication Bloopers during a teamwork activity. • Students practice using teamwork, communicating with a team, and using planning and organizational skills. 	<p>Students engage in a teamwork activity where they determine, as a group, five items they would take to a desert island. This requires them to utilize communication skills as they work collaboratively to problem solve and achieve a common goal.</p>	<p>Communication is critical for students to collaborate and engage in teamwork. Offering students the chance to practice effective communication skills while collaborating toward a shared objective enables them to recognize the value of communication in cooperative groups.</p>
<p><u>People Match Game</u> (G5, U2, L3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identify how stereotypes can influence thinking and behavior toward others. • Students use a framework for critically evaluating information, recognizing there are multiple ways of being. 	<p>In this activity, students work in groups to try to match a list of people with the descriptions provided. Students then consider how stereotyping may have influenced their guess, discussing the concerns associated with stereotyping.</p>	<p>Encouraging students to become aware of stereotypes in their environments promotes critical thinking skills and allows students to avoid the negative consequences of stereotyped thinking when participating in cooperative groups.</p>
<p><u>Buddy Up</u> (Everyday Practice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnerships and practice communication and collaboration skills. 	<p>In student buddy pairs, they have multiple opportunities to get to know one another, form connections, collaborate, and learn together through daily, short activities.</p>	<p>By pairing students with different buddies each week, Buddy Up promotes ongoing interaction between diverse peers that enhances students' sense of connection, shared motivation, and social responsibility toward each other—what students need to engage in cooperative groups.</p>

Group Discussions

DESCRIPTION

Group discussions—when planned with meaning and purpose—provide students with opportunities to communicate their ideas and learn from their peers and educators. In effective discussions, students and educators (a) build upon each other’s thoughts, (b) elaborate on their own thoughts, (c) explain their perspectives, and (d) listen to others. As students engage in discussions, educators examine the social dynamics within learning environments (e.g., examining who is and who is not speaking), and provide guidance to students on ways to more effectively apply their social and emotional skills to respond helpfully to one another).

As students participate in group discussions, they express their perspectives and process multiple points of view with their peers by noticing and naming concepts, perspectives, and experiences. Students answer critical questions, as well as ask crucial questions of their peers. When students engage with multiple perspectives, they grapple with issues and ideas that are meaningful and relevant to them— helping them deepen how they make meaning of their learning. Participating in these activities requires multiple social and emotional skills; for example, (a) listening with curiosity, (b) examining one’s own thoughts and perspectives, (c) perspective taking, (d) communicating one’s viewpoint; and (e) advocating for one’s ideas and thoughts.

EDUCATOR MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Believe in the importance of empowering students to communicate their ideas.
- Recognizing that power and privilege influence how students engage in discussions.
- Believe students should take an active role in discussions.
- Believe in the importance of students noticing and naming their experiences and emotions as core to learning.
- Reflect on one’s own biases, assumptions, and perspectives.

STRATEGIES

- Plan discussions in advance based on learning objectives, ensuring students have sufficient background knowledge to participate.
- Encourage perspective taking and sharing to deepen understanding.
- Encourage students to build on, question, or challenge others. .
- Ask open-ended questions that promote critical thinking.
- Allow students to formulate questions.
- Create norms that allow for student disagreement and ensure students seek to understand differing perspectives.
- Monitor participation so all voices are equally valuable.

EXAMPLE HARMONY ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LEARNING GOALS

Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<p><u>Meet Up, Step 2: Sharing and Responding</u> (Everyday Practice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share and respond to relevant self-generated topics. 	<p>Within the Everyday Practice, Meet Up, for Step 2: Sharing & Responding, invite one or two students to share or express a personal experience. Then prompt that student to call on two or three students to respond or ask relevant questions.</p>	<p>The Sharing & Responding practices provide students a predictable routine to practice perspective taking, building on what others have to say, and deepening understanding through asking questions.</p>
<p><u>Identify the Buddy Problem Activity</u> (G2, U4, L1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students consider a problem from someone else’s perspective. • Students foster awareness and acceptance of others’ feelings and thoughts. 	<p>In this activity, students work with a buddy to identify and name interpersonal problems. They review a scenario and determine why there might be a problem, how the character might feel, and what they want in the situation.</p>	<p>In group discussions, students will likely encounter “problems” as they navigate multiple perspectives. Guiding students to think through multiple perspectives in a real-life scenario helps them understand that people may experience the same event differently, and that is okay.</p>
<p><u>Communication Boosters: Listening and Supporting</u> (G3, U3, L1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students practice and implement listening and supporting strategies to promote more positive group interactions. • Students practice listening and supporting one another with eyes, ears, their words, and body language. 	<p>In this activity, students work in buddy pairs to practice the communication boosters of active listening and supporting.</p>	<p>For students to engage in constructive and supportive group discussions, it is critical that they learn effective communication skills. Providing students with a definition and example of what it means to be an active listener, as well as how to offer support to one another, will empower students to take an active role in discussions and communicate their ideas and perspectives.</p>

Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection

DESCRIPTION

Self-assessment and self-reflection are two distinct yet interrelated educator practices. When educators implement them, they guide students to identify gaps in knowledge and skills and determine strengths (self-assessment), as well as refine helpful strategies that lead to success now and into the future (self-reflection). When educators provide students opportunities to authentically self-assess and self-reflect, they nurture students' skills to critically examine who they are, determine their assets and areas of growth, and understand how their context, resources (including people), and strategies influence the progress made towards their goals.

Through self-assessment and self-reflection, educators help students answer three questions, "Where am I going, where am I now, and where to next?" When educators provide timely feedback as a part of self-assessment, this helps students understand that learning is cyclical, and they can revise and enhance their work. To engage in this process, students develop and refine a variety of social and emotional skills, including goal setting, emotion management, awareness of strengths and gaps, and resource management.

EDUCATOR MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Reflect on how one maintains clear, consistent, and co-created performance standards.
- Believe that context influences how one learns and develops.
- Remember that revision and reflection are crucial parts of the learning process.
- Believe in the importance of student agency in their learning process to promote long-term growth.

STRATEGIES

- Create well-defined learning targets (e.g., academic, social, and emotional, as well as learning strategies).
- Enable students to assess their own work against clear standards of performance (e.g., rubrics or checklists).
- Facilitate student revision of their work based on educator or peer feedback.
- Highlight student progress toward their goals.
- Facilitate students to evaluate their work and identify strategies to move the work forward.
- Help students identify learning strategies (e.g., resource identification, editing, feedback) that were helpful.
- Empower students to critically examine their role in society, interpersonal and institutional barriers, and to develop skills they need to enact change.

EXAMPLE HARMONY ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LEARNING GOALS

Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<p><u>Personal Harmony Goals</u> (Everyday Practice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Group and Personal Goals to form harmonious relationships. 	<p>Students establish Personal Harmony Goals at the start of the year. Students revisit them at the beginning of each Unit Intro based upon what the individual student hopes to achieve in relation to the unit theme. Students then monitor their progress toward their goals throughout the unit’s duration or during Meet Up.</p>	<p>Creating and monitoring Personal Harmony Goals provides students with a sense of agency in their learning. Through the support and guidance of an educator, students develop well-defined goals for themselves, and then engage in reflection and self-assessment around their progress toward the goals they’ve set.</p>
<p><u>Feel, Think, Act Activity</u> (G2, U1, L3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students describe how thoughts influence feelings and actions. • Students describe different feelings, thoughts, and actions that may occur in response to a situation. 	<p>In this activity, students work with a buddy to reflect on situations, determine how they think they would feel, think, and act in response, and then compare their responses.</p>	<p>Engaging students in role-playing scenarios that prompt them to explore varying emotions and their influence on thoughts and actions, offers students a valuable opportunity for reflection. Self-reflecting on the ways in which emotions influence their actions allows them to take pause and choose helpful actions.</p>
<p><u>Caterpillar Thoughts Activity</u> (G4, U1, L5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students change from a fixed mindset, or Worm thoughts, to a growth mindset, or Caterpillar thoughts, leading to more helpful actions. • Students determine that challenges and mistakes can be learning opportunities, helping improve skills and relationships. 	<p>In small groups, students work together to transform Worm thoughts into Caterpillar thoughts about a situation and consider the actions that may occur because of the swap.</p>	<p>An important component of self-reflection and self-assessment is the understanding that people can learn, grow, and evolve. This activity allows students to reflect on their own power to shift toward a growth mindset and consider how a growth (versus fixed) mindset impacts their ability to achieve the goals they’ve set for themselves.</p>

Balanced Instruction

DESCRIPTION

Balanced instruction combines problem- and inquiry-based tasks with direct instruction to encourage students to obtain a deep conceptual understanding of content. When educators create balanced instructional experiences, they nurture (a) emotional support for active participation and risk-taking, (b) social support through connections and feedback, and (c) cognitive support through exploration, while simultaneously ensuring students have sufficient content knowledge.

Balanced instruction requires educators to use multiple instructional strategies based on student needs, interests, and background. The aim of implementing a practice is to create authentic learning experiences for students. Further, educators allow students to effectively engage with content while seizing opportunities to apply their social, emotional, and academic competencies as they learn, explore, and problem-solve. For instance, students develop self-efficacy as they master new skills and knowledge, self-management as they set and monitor learning goals, and relationship skills as they proactively engage with their peers to learn and explore new content and skills.

EDUCATOR MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Encourage conceptual understanding in teaching and learning.
- Believe in connecting learning experiences with students' history, culture, assets, and other funds of knowledge.
- Believe in the importance of nurturing students' academic, personal, and social identities in teaching and learning.
- Recognize there is no one correct way to use a social and emotional competency.

STRATEGIES

- Incorporate varied instructional tasks that blend active learning (e.g., projects, games, plays), problem-based tasks, and direct instruction.
- Use direct instruction as a tool to engage students more fully in project-based learning.
- Provide consistent and positive emotional support to help students engage thoughtfully with content.
- Incorporate opportunities for meaningful participation, inquiry, and choice for students, individually and cooperatively.
- Include rigorous, differentiated, and scaffolded learning opportunities that extend student thinking and increase responsibility in their learning.
- Use students' assets and interests to create driving questions and projects that allow them to gather information, test ideas, and obtain feedback.
- Provide guided opportunities for goal setting, monitoring, and evaluation.

EXAMPLE HARMONY ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LEARNING GOALS

Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<p><u>Buddy Up</u> (Everyday Practice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in partnerships and practice communication and collaboration skills. 	<p>In student buddy pairs, they have multiple opportunities to get to know one another, form connections, collaborate and learn together through daily, short activities.</p>	<p>When students meet during Buddy Up, they are provided an opportunity to engage in meaningful dialogue and work collaboratively to complete a task. This provides a consistent space to engage with content while simultaneously building relationships with their peers.</p>
<p><u>Appreciating Others</u> (G3, U2, L1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students identify and appreciate their own skills as well as those of their peers. • Students contribute to others' learning by teaching a skill that brings value to the classroom. 	<p>In this activity students work in buddy pairs to teach one another a skill that they excel in and that their buddy wishes to learn, allowing students to explore the diversity within their classroom.</p>	<p>This activity provides a meaningful opportunity for students to connect learning with their personal assets. As students work with one another to play the role of both teacher and learner, they gather new information, test out their ideas, and then obtain feedback from one another. Also, students learn to better understand the diversity of strengths within their classroom.</p>
<p><u>STEP It Up! To Resolve Conflict</u> (G5, U4, L3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn a step-by-step approach for effectively resolving conflict. • Students understand the importance of learning from others in the conflict resolution process. • Students practice the "STEP It Up!" approach to resolving conflicts. 	<p>In this activity, students work in buddy pairs as they read through scenario cards involving conflict and then apply the "STEP It Up!" approach to offer solutions.</p>	<p>Effective collaboration and conflict resolution are skills that require time and practice. In this activity, educators teach students the "STEP It Up!" approach, offering a framework for navigating conflicts. Students then engage in a problem-based learning task, using the "STEP It Up!" approach to find solutions to provided conflicts. This skill benefits students by resolving peer conflicts in the classroom and in various social and academic situations.</p>

Expectations and Rigor

DESCRIPTION

Expectations and rigor are two distinct but highly interrelated practices. Expectations are the beliefs that educators hold about students, specific to content, behavior, and skills. Rigor, sometimes called academic press, refers to how educators implement meaningful and challenging course work, including the way educators encourage and support students in accomplishing tasks. Expectations influence educator actions, speech, and non-verbal cues—in both conscious and unconscious ways—informing student perceptions of their actions, skills, and values. Thus, educators must reflect on the expectations they set and how they manifest in behaviors and actions with students (e.g., Is wait time consistent? Is tone of voice similar across students? Do all students receive feedback that will help them progress?). At the same time, educators can ask students if they feel both challenged and supported in their learning environments.

To meet high expectations that are rigorous, educators ensure that students have the necessary scaffolded support to meet those expectations and build relationships with their students to better understand what they can do academically and how they respond to challenging work. For instance, students learn the assets (personal, social, and cultural) they can leverage to meet high expectations, develop a growth mindset when provided the needed supports, and direct their emotions to help them overcome challenging work.

EDUCATOR MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Believe that all students can meet your high expectations.
- Recognize that students' sense of self and feelings of belonging are influenced by educator's perceptions and actions.
- Reflect if one's beliefs about students align with one's actions (e.g., tones, words, body language, wait time, and tasks).
- Believe that considering how students respond emotionally and cognitively to challenging work is important.
- Reflect on one's power and privilege in the learning environment.
- Reflect on why (i.e., reputation, experience, records, or relationships) one has specific expectations.

STRATEGIES

- Communicate confidence to all of your students that they can achieve.
- Develop a sense of responsibility and urgency with students to accomplish challenging goals.
- Build relationships with students to better understand their cultures, assets, and capacity to navigate challenging work.
- Ask students how they perceive educator's actions.
- Use multiple engagement strategies to meet the needs of students (e.g., call on students equally, listen fully, direct student questions to other students).
- Provide consistent and clear feedback and support based on students' needs.
- Affirm all students who participate (and help them move towards correct answer if incorrect).
- Incorporate strategies that promote intrinsic motivation and self-directed learning.
- Provide rigorous coursework based on student strengths, interests, and areas of improvement.

EXAMPLE HARMONY ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND LEARNING GOALS

Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<p><u>Self-Talk and Scenario Cards</u> (G5, U1, L5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students recognize that their self-talk affects thoughts, feelings, and actions. • Students use an optimistic mindset when it is helpful. 	<p>In this activity, students work in buddy pairs to create helpful self-talk in response to a challenging situation or a mistake that might have evoked some unpleasant emotions.</p>	<p>When maintaining high expectations, it is important that educators communicate confidence in their students' abilities to achieve. In this activity, educators are communicating this confidence by having their students explore optimistic self-talk, letting students know that they trust them to succeed and that they are capable of success (even if they make a mistake).</p>
<p><u>Class Harmony Goals</u> (Everyday Practice)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Group and Personal Goals to form harmonious relationships. 	<p>Class Harmony Goals reflect how everyone in the class wants to interact with and be treated by one another. These goals are established collaboratively and collectively, with students exercising their voice.</p>	<p>Class Harmony Goals establish accountability within the classroom. Crafted by students, these goals tap into intrinsic motivation, and students take responsibility for upholding them. Both the class and the educator collaboratively set expectations for interactions, and then actively engage in feedback sessions to assess progress toward meeting their goals.</p>
<p><u>Empathy in Action</u> (G3, U2, L1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn the definitions and components of empathy. • Students practice decoding how others are feeling and why they might feel that way. 	<p>In this activity, students will work in small groups as they role-play various situations, acting out the emotions they might feel in those situations. Students then work to guess the emotions being demonstrated.</p>	<p>To meet high expectations and engage in rigorous coursework, students need necessary support—from their educators and their peers. Thus, it is important to help students develop empathy for their peers and how the peers might experience instructional tasks so that students can provide and/or ask for needed support.</p>

SEL Competence Building

DESCRIPTION

SEL competence-building instruction leverages students’ social and emotional competence development throughout the instructional cycle. In other words, educators intentionally model and nurture students’ social and emotional skills when they (a) establish goals/objectives of the lesson, (b) introduce new material/modeling, (c) provide group and individual practice, and (d) incorporate a conclusion and reflection—helping students experience SEL connections in all components of the lesson.

As educators purposefully implement SEL competency building, they should be mindful that social and emotional competencies are developed and expressed through socially and culturally mediated ways. For instance, educators should promote social and emotional competencies through connecting to students’ funds of knowledge and relevant references. Further, educators can help students understand how the competencies used in academic settings can apply or look in other learning environments and contexts in which youth find themselves (e.g., school clubs or sports).

MINDSETS AND STRATEGIES

MINDSETS

- Remember that context matters, and students’ behaviors are socially and culturally motivated.
- Reflect on the relational experiences and emotional tone within the classroom.
- Believe that students express social and emotional competencies differently in other learning environments and contexts.
- Believe that social and emotional competency development is a lifelong process.
- Believe in the importance of actively teaching and integrating social and emotional competencies.

STRATEGIES

- Provide explicit social and emotional goals and objectives.
- Be purposeful and intentional with the social and emotional competencies taught and reinforced..
- Introduce what social and emotional competencies (knowledge, skills, and mindsets) are and what they look like.
- Help students connect their social and emotional competencies to everyday experiences.
- Model social and emotional competencies for students within and outside of the classroom.
- Provide engaging activities for students to authentically apply their social and emotional competencies.
- Check in with students about their social and emotional competencies during classroom meetings.
- Provide feedback and support on their social and emotional competencies.



Harmony Activities, Practices, and Learning Goals	Description	Rationale
<u>Harmony Curriculum</u>	The Harmony Curriculum is a Pre-K–6th Grade SEL program that helps educators work with students to cultivate strong relationships among and between all students.	Through Harmony Curriculum’s Everyday Practices and the Units, Lessons, and Activities, educators receive support to provide both SEL routines and explicit instruction (to use all aspects of the instructional cycle) to their students in intentional ways. In other words, the full curriculum promotes SEL competence building.
Everyday Moments	<p>Everyday Moments are daily opportunities that allow students to incorporate the social and emotional competencies they are learning in the Harmony lessons. These moments provide a natural platform for fostering intentional SEL development in the learning environment.</p> <p>They can be found in the Everyday Moments suggestion box near the end of every lesson.</p>	These daily opportunities seamlessly integrate social and emotional competencies into the learning environment, offering engaging ways for students to apply what they are learning. By identifying Everyday Moments, social and emotional competencies are purposefully reinforced.
Educator SEL	Every Harmony Curriculum Unit offers suggestions of Harmony Professional Learning that can be used to continue building educators’ capacity. This learning comes in the form of on-demand modules that support educator development of social and emotional competencies and practices. They can be found on the unit’s landing page.	Students’ social and emotional competencies are further supported by educators who are also invested in developing their own social and emotional competencies. By taking time to engage in the asynchronous modules, educators demonstrate value in lifelong learning of social and emotional competence and develop strategies to support their own instruction.

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