



Social-Emotional Learning & Equity Pitfalls & Recommendations

| Potential Pitfall | Recommendations |
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| <p>Understanding the purpose of SEL for students of color from a deficit mindset with a focus on developing skills that they do not possess as a result of something missing from them or their families.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead and teach with the understanding that all learning is social and emotional for all students. • Situate any initiative, effort, or program in the historical, socio-political, racialized context of education for students of color and students living in poverty in the United States. • Locate the problem we are trying to solve with SEL work not in individual students, but in our collective response to the conditions of learning we create for students of color and students living in poverty. |
| <p>Over-emphasis on self-management and self-regulation and under-emphasis on the meaningful development of student agency to lead change and contribute to new, more humanizing and equitable structures of teaching and learning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use SEL approaches to draw out and build on student assets to facilitate understanding and learning • Begin with listening and valuing of student experience and personal narratives • Build empathy through story-telling and sharing. |
| <p>De-valuing student resistance to structures and practices that they experience as unwelcoming, hostile, or dehumanizing; interpreting this resistance as “non-compliance” or “defiance” and evidence of poor self-management skills.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deconstruct expectations, cultural norms of schooling, and ways of communicating to expand the definition of success and normative behavior to include the experiences, cultural ways of knowing, and aspirations of students of color and their families. |
| <p>Asserting colorblind and identity neutral principles and values.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the notion of self-awareness to include the acknowledgement and understanding of social identities with regard to race, class, gender, nationality, family structure, and how each contribute to one’s sense of power and agency in various contexts. • Normalize the practice of talking about race and understanding events and experiences through the lens of race, culture, and power. |

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| <p>Avoiding the topic of race or leading with the assumption that only students of color need to talk about and understand race.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage SEAD concepts and practices to build communities of learning that talk about and reflect on the experience race, including racialized events occurring in the present across our country in and our communities. • Include the building of “racial literacy” among all students as a critical dimension of SEL competence. • Build social awareness and empathy skills through students sharing of their lived experiences in their communities and schools. |
| <p>Underestimating the power of the unconscious to lead us to take actions that are at odds with our stated values.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include explicit strategies aimed at mitigating the effects of implicit bias and stereotype threat through values affirmation activities. • Use what we know about social-emotional learning to acknowledge, address, and heal from the ways we have all been impacted by racism and systemic oppression and to create inclusive, liberatory learning environments in which students of color and students living in poverty experience a sense of belonging, agency to shape the content and process of their learning, and thrive. |