SEL Integration Quick Reference Guide

The approach on one page, a lesson planning template, and sentence stems and look-fors for each competency

For: Classroom teachers, instructional coaches and grade-level or department teams planning academic lessons

The approach in brief

SEL integration means teaching a social or emotional skill on purpose inside an academic lesson, because the academic task already requires it. One competency per lesson. Name it, practice it, reflect on it.

1. **Start from the standard and the task.** Write the academic task concretely.
2. **Find the competency the task requires.** Discussion needs relationship skills; multi-step problems need self-management; evaluating sources needs responsible decision-making; perspective-taking needs social awareness; noticing confusion needs self-awareness.
3. **Write a paired objective.** One academic, one social-emotional, both visible to students.
4. **Frame (2 minutes).** Name the skill, say why it matters for this work, give sentence stems or a plan.
5. **Coach during the task.** Circulate with two or three look-fors. Coach the skill by name, alongside the content.
6. **Reflect (2 to 3 minutes).** One academic question and one skill question on the same exit ticket.
7. **Assess lightly and adjust.** Read the skill reflections for planning. Never grade them.

The three places SEL lives in a lesson

Layer	Your job
Climate and routines	Predictable entry, greeting, group norms, transitions and an intentional close. Built once, used daily.
Explicit instruction	A short mini-lesson that teaches the skill before you ask students to use it. Five minutes is often enough.
Academic integration	Paired objective, framing, coaching and reflection inside the content lesson. Two to five minutes of lesson time.

Lesson planning template

Planning question	Your plan
Academic standard and task	
The social or emotional demand of the task	
Competency (choose one)	
Paired objective, as students will hear it	
Framing: skill name, why it matters here, stems or plan	
Two or three look-fors while circulating	

Planning question	Your plan
Coaching prompts I will use	
Reflection question (skill) on the exit ticket	
What I will change if most students did not use the skill	

Sentence stems and look-fors by competency

Self-awareness

Use when the task requires students to notice confusion, frustration or a shift in their own thinking.

Sentence stems	Look-fors
"I am confused about ____."	Students say they are stuck before the teacher notices.
"I used to think ____. Now I think ____."	Written reflections name a specific change in thinking.
"The part that frustrated me was ____, and I handled it by ____."	Students connect a feeling to a specific moment and a response.
"I am strongest at ____ in this kind of task."	Students identify a strength with evidence, not a general label.

Self-management

Use when the task is long, multi-step or likely to produce frustration.

Sentence stems	Look-fors
"When I get stuck, my first move is ____."	Students try a plan step before raising a hand.
"I am going to break this into ____ parts."	Visible chunking: numbered steps, a checklist, a drawn plan.
"I need a reset."	Students use an agreed reset (pause, breathe, rejoin) without a prompt.
"I am going to try ____ before I ask for help."	Time on task continues after an error.

Social awareness

Use when the task involves perspectives, characters, sources, cultures or people unlike the student.

Sentence stems	Look-fors
"The character probably felt ____ because ____."	Explanations of motivation, not just labels of behavior.
"Who wrote this, and what did they want the reader to think?"	Students name the author's position when comparing sources.
"From ____'s point of view, this looks like ____."	Accurate restatement of a view the student does not hold.
"Someone with a different experience might see ____."	Students raise perspectives not represented in the group.

Relationship skills

Use when the task involves partner talk, group work, discussion or peer feedback.

Sentence stems	Look-fors
"I agree with ____ because ____."	Students build on a peer's idea rather than restarting.
"I see it differently. I think ____ because ____."	Disagreement names the idea, not the person.
"Can you say more about ____?"	Follow-up questions before responses.
"Your strongest point is ____. One place a reader might push back is ____."	Feedback includes a strength and a specific suggestion.
"Let me make sure I understand. You are saying ____."	Restatement that the speaker accepts before the reply.

Responsible decision-making

Use when the task requires weighing evidence, choosing a method, evaluating sources or considering consequences.

Sentence stems	Look-fors
"The evidence that supports this is ____. The evidence against it is ____."	Both sides stated before a conclusion.
"One piece of evidence that would change my mind is ____."	Students name conditions for revising a position.
"I chose this method because ____."	Justification refers to the problem's features, not habit.
"If we did ____, the effect on ____ would be ____."	Consequences considered for more than one party.

Three-week starter plan

Week	Focus
1	One subject, one competency, every day. Same stems posted all week. Reflect on the skill in every exit ticket.
2	Same competency, add a second subject. Ask students which stem they used most and which they never used.
3	Keep both subjects. Introduce one new stem. Complete the SEL Integration Teacher Self-Check at the end of the week.

Reminders

- One competency per lesson. Breadth comes from the year.
- Teach the skill explicitly before you coach it.
- Secondary students respond to disciplinary framing: how scientists argue, how historians weigh sources.
- Students learn more from how you handle a wrong answer than from any stem on the wall.
- Skill reflections are for planning. They are never graded or displayed.

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