

# Social-Emotional Learning Process Executive Summary

Spectrum Innovates Pathway Program's (SIPP) social-emotional learning (SEL) and life skills learning process of concepts, skills, and attitudes occur by using short lessons, instructors creating a community of conscience, instructor models, naturalistic teaching opportunities, a feedback loop, student engagement through journaling, reflections, prompts, tools/guided worksheets, role-play situations, vignettes, and student self-monitoring. These techniques are all rooted in best teaching practices for social-emotional learning development. Not only will these components be included in free-standing SEL lessons, but the SEL content will be embedded into SIPP's academic content too.

SIPP's SEL learning process follows CASEL's (2020) most effective implementation strategies "(SAFE): (1) Sequenced-- connected and coordinated activities to foster skill development; (2) Active-- active forms of learning to help students master new skills; (3) Focused-- containing a component that emphasizes developing social-emotional skills; (4) Explicit-- targeting specific social-emotional skills" (Durak et. al., 2010, 2011).

Free-standing SEL lessons will begin with a short opening activity of a self-regulation practice for a few minutes. This can be breathing exercises, doodling, stimming, meditating, writing, and more. Students will be introduced to a range of strategies at the beginning of the year. As the year goes on, they will choose whichever self-regulation practice they want to engage in to start their social-emotional learning session. Students are encouraged to use their own self-regulation strategies in addition to the ones explicitly taught. This helps create a positive and relaxing learning environment and creates a regular schedule of opportunities to practice self-regulation.

The lessons will then progress into a short introduction of concepts and skills. Although the majority of SEL learning happens in real-time innovation hub activities, the feedback loop, and through self-reflection, it is crucial for students to have the concepts & language for the SEL content to achieve the competencies. Topics will be introduced to students by providing definitions and examples within a context that is relevant to the students' lives.

SEL skills and attitudes will be modeled by instructors, and instructors will [create a community of conscience](#) (Blake, C., 2021) where all students' voices, opinions, and ideas are respected and valued by the instructor and peers. With the instructor bringing attention to their own thoughts, emotions, behaviors, energy levels, self-regulation strategies, and more, students will gain a deeper understanding beyond just basic definitions and terminology for SEL concepts, skills, and attitudes. Models also serve as a live behavioral example for students to base their actions on. For example, instructors modeling necessary relationship skills such as clear and effective communication and collaboration will increase the likelihood that SIPP students will

engage in this. Instructors modeling responsible decision-making skills throughout various activities will provide concrete examples for students to refer to when engaging in their own decision-making process. Instructors will use active listening skills and a nonjudgmental, accepting, and curious attitude to create a community of conscience that values every member of the SIPP cohort.

Not only should instructors create a community of conscience and model the most competent level of skill, but they should also highlight when they fell short of this. Highlighting this will teach discrimination between what is competent and what is still developing, and also show students that it is okay to make mistakes and learn from them. This can be taught naturalistically as these teaching opportunities present themselves, or in a more contrived manner. Vignettes of different situations can be used for contrived teaching opportunities if natural opportunities are not occurring. Even with ample naturalistic teaching opportunities, working through a vignette can pinpoint a specific skill, concept, or attitude. Therefore, a combination of the two teaching approaches will occur.

During some lessons, students will have the opportunity to engage in role-play situations. This will likely be useful when practicing social awareness skills and relationship skills. This gives students a safe environment to work through these SEL skills before they practice them outside of the innovation hub. This also provides students with dialogue scripts for interactions. While not necessary for success, scripts can be helpful to ease the cognitive load that comes with social interaction and aid in navigating a neurotypical world as an autistic person.

At some point throughout the SEL lesson (likely the end, but this may vary depending on the topic), students will take time to reflect on a topic and/or fill out a topic-specific tool (e.g. Executive Functioning Strategies Masterlist, LevelUp Energy Regulation chart, Support Network Graphic Organizer, etc.). Students will engage with these reflection prompts and tools in their SEL journal. SEL journals are an ongoing tool that students record their reflections, written activities, various SEL tools, and self-monitoring of SEL skill progression. At the end of SIPP, students will leave with a copy of their SEL journals. Think of this as a social-emotional learning portfolio. The end product is a helpful tool for students to look back on as they continue using SEL skills in their daily lives. Along with the journal providing a plethora of resources, the process of creating this SEL portfolio teaches introspection, working through one's thoughts, emotions, behaviors, values, energy levels, etc., and provides students with concrete strategies to look back on when navigating life as issues arise.

Additionally, end-of-week prompts will encourage students to reflect on a time they used the newly introduced SEL skill in their daily lives outside of SIPP. This promotes skill transfer to life outside of time spent with instructors and SIPP peers. This also provides students with a space to engage in self-monitoring and provide themselves feedback within a feedback loop. Students will assess their own level of competence with a skill. This will then be compared to peer (when relevant) and instructor feedback on the same skill. It is useful to have multiple perspectives on student competence for a few reasons. It provides further confirmation that a student achieved competency, as well as provides students with the opportunity to see if their own perception of

their level of competence aligns with those around them. While it is not necessary to have exact matches between different perspectives, it can be helpful information for the student to consider when self-monitoring their own behavior, skills, and attitudes.

Engaging in this reflection process should create self-awareness. As self-awareness develops, self-management comes into play. When students have the self-awareness surrounding their thoughts, behavior, emotions, values, energy levels, support needs, etc., they can create effective self-management skills and plans. These self-management skills develop through brainstorming a plan for a skill (e.g. executive functioning, regulating energy levels, etc.), implementing the plan, assessing how the plan worked (effectiveness), reflecting on what can be done better next time and what was done well, and implementing these changes next time around. This is an ongoing process that students will engage in a few times during SIPP and will continue to engage in throughout their lives. A big part of living life as a neurodivergent individual is identifying your needs and wants and learning to meet these in ways that may seem unconventional, but allow you to thrive in the environment of your choice as your authentic self. Self-management is an essential component to this for long-term success.

Simultaneously, as students are working on their self-awareness and self-management, they will be practicing their social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making through innovation hub challenges. The innovation hub challenges will occur in pairs and small groups over a week or two. This will provide multiple opportunities for students to translate the concepts learned in the lesson portion of SEL lessons to skills and attitudes in practice. The innovation hub challenges will provide opportunities for bringing awareness to various social topics, require collaboration to complete a project, and will use a wide range of responsible decision-making skills. This is a main component of the SIPP learning process and it is where the crucial integration of SEL content into academic content occurs.

Through lessons, reflections, activities, naturalistic teaching opportunities during academic activities, instructor models, the feedback loop (self, instructor, & peer), and self-monitoring prompts, students will engage in the process of bringing awareness to different aspects of themselves, learn to manage themselves, gain a higher awareness of different social topics, learn to collaborate with others, and make responsible decisions so that they can successfully transition into adulthood, choose a career path that is best suitable for their interests and skillset, and ultimately live a thriving life of authenticity and autonomy as an autistic adult.

## [Framework for SEL Lessons](#) Original Document

### SEL process Bulleted First Draft Version:

- Passive lesson = lecture, information presentation

- Students will use journaling and answering reflection questions to relate new SEL info to their own lives
- Instructors will model SEL skills - bringing attention to their own thoughts, emotions, behaviors, etc., outlining their self-management strategies, bringing attention to various social topics, modeling relationship skills such as collaboration & communication with other instructors & when engaging in conversation with students, and highlighting responsible decision-making skills throughout various activities
  - Model competent skill level & also provide an example of not yet developed skill level
    - Teaches discrimination between competent (aka receive a badge) and what needs improvement
    - Useful to teach this naturalistically (instructor owns their mistake in real-time and models a correction) and contrived (provide scenarios/vignettes for students to work through; may also create "role play" scenarios with opportunities for students to step into a role of someone who is self-aware, etc.)
- This will create self-awareness of various things:
  - Thoughts
  - Emotions
  - Behavior
  - Values
  - Energy levels
  - Executive function
  - Self-advocacy
  - & more
- Once their self-awareness is developing, they can begin to engage in self-management of these things
- Work with SEL instructor (and other instructors) to create plans for their self-management of:
  - Thoughts
  - Emotions
  - Behavior
  - Values
  - Energy levels
  - Executive function
  - Self-advocacy
  - & more
- Process of finding self-management strategies that work for each individual student will be some trial and error:
  - Implement the plan

- Assess effectiveness through observed outcomes (self, instructor, peer feedback) & reflections
- Make any necessary changes
- Implement revised plan & continue to assess effectiveness
- Simultaneously as they engage in developing their self-awareness and self-management, they will also be working on their social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making through group activities in the innovation hub
- Innovation hub challenges will provide opportunities for bringing awareness to various social topics, require collaboration to complete a project, and will use a wide range of responsible decision-making skills (problem-solving, etc.)
- Weekly journal entries (self-monitoring prompts) of students incorporating their SEL content/skills/concepts/attitudes into their life outside of SIPP → promotes generalization to other environments and integration into the rest of their life
  - Provides evidence for data collection
    - Ex. hard copy of a tool used, a summary of social interaction, using a learned strategy to work through a conflict/situation, etc.
  - Ensures students are self-monitoring without instructors present
  - Goal = students contact direct natural reinforcement of how this skill/concept/attitude helped them
- Through the lectures, reflections, activities, instructor models, the feedback loop (self, instructor, & peer), and self-monitoring prompts → students will engage in the process of bringing awareness to different aspects of themselves, learn to manage themselves, gain a higher awareness of different social topics, learn to collaborate with others, and make responsible decisions → so that they can successfully transition into adulthood, choose a career path that is best suitable for their interests and skillset, and ultimately live in authenticity and autonomy as an autistic adult

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