NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Developed in collaboration with CASEL COLLABORATIVE FOR ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Self-Awareness

Competency

The educator will explore their understanding of their identity, thoughts, and feelings through personal reflection and self-assessment and reflect on how these factors influence their daily behaviors.

Key Method

The educator will develop and strengthen self-awareness and create a self-awareness action plan, including self-reflection, self-assessment, goal setting, and small action steps.

Method Components

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL):

"SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions." (CASEL, 2023)

CASEL's framework for SEL addresses five broad and interrelated areas of social and emotional competence:

- **Self-awareness**
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

In this micro-credential, you will explore aspects of **self-awareness**, reflect on how this competency is relevant to your work and personal life, and develop a plan for personal growth.

What is Self-Awareness?

Self-awareness is how we think about ourselves and who we are. It includes understanding our culture, thoughts and feelings, and what we believe we can do. It's also about understanding how these things can influence our behaviors and beliefs (CASEL, 2023).

For a more in-depth look at self-awareness and its impact on you personally and professionally, consider three significant ways you likely rely on this competency: emotional self-awareness, identity and self-knowledge, and a growth mindset and self-efficacy.

Emotional Self-Awareness

Emotional self-awareness refers to identifying and naming emotions as they arise, reflecting on the factors that contribute to them and their impact, and understanding how one's thoughts and emotions influence one's behavior.

Emotions come and go over various periods and range from mild to intense. There are no "good" or "bad" emotions; all feelings are entirely normal. Your reactions to your emotions determine the consequences for yourself and/or others.

Expanding your emotional vocabulary will help you make sense of what you are feeling and communicate your feelings with others. Naming your emotion with precision and reflecting on its root cause can help to release stress and resentment that may be building up. There are various tools to help you develop an emotional vocabulary in the resource section of this micro-credential. After you identify your emotions:

- Accept them without judgment.
- Think about the factors contributing to your emotions and what this tells you.

    - Are you nervous because of how much you care?
    - Are you frustrated because it is time to back out?
    - Is your anger overpowering you or causing you to take action?
- Recognize how your emotions show up in how you behave, what you say, and your thoughts. How does this impact you and those around you?
    - Did you respond to someone with irritation because you were feeling anxious?
    - Did you say yes to a big new responsibility because you were feeling enthusiastic?
    - Did your anger motivate you to take positive action to solve a problem?

The more you practice recognizing and thinking through your emotions, the better you will get at managing them and making responsible decisions.

Consider which activities help you process your emotions. Here are some ideas:

- Make art.
- Take a walk.
- Write in a journal.
- Use positive self-talk – talk to yourself the way a trusted friend would.
- Talk with a trusted friend, therapist, or family member.

Another way to develop awareness of your emotions is to practice mindfulness. Mindfulness is defined as purposeful awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment in the present moment. It is important to practice mindful awareness in a non-judgmental way. Mindfulness requires us to shut out distractions and judgmental thoughts. This can feel challenging at first, but you will get better at it with practice.

Before you try a mindfulness exercise, understand:

- It isn't realistic to expect to clear your mind completely -- your mind will wander, and your judge-y brain may try to take over.
- When your mind wanders, simply acknowledge your thoughts and return your attention to the present moment.

Here is an exercise you can try to get started:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes.

3. Put your hands on your belly.
4. Inhale through your nose and feel your belly expand.
5. Exhale through your mouth and feel your belly contract.
6. Focus on making your inhale and exhale slow and smooth.
7. Focus on the sensation of your hand as your belly rises and lowers.
8. Repeat 3-6 times, then return to normal breathing.

Identity and Self-Knowledge

In Beverly Daniel Tatum's book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, she writes, "The concept of identity is complex, shaped by individual characteristics, family dynamics, historical factors, and social and political contexts. All of which leads to the evolving question: Who am I?"

Awareness of personal identity (values, beliefs, cultural norms, implicit biases, etc.) and a commitment to recognizing and addressing bias and injustice are foundational to a culturally responsive and restorative environment. Identity and self-knowledge refer to knowing who you are and how you came to be that way, understanding your strengths and limitations, and recognizing how your views and beliefs are shaped by your identity and lived experiences.

Strengthening self-awareness may include examining one's own sociocultural identities and biases, empathizing with and adopting the perspectives of others, seeking feedback from students and colleagues to understand how one's self-perception compares to theirs, and assessing how one's actions impact equitable outcomes.

Growth Mindset and Self-efficacy

Another essential piece of self-awareness is your ability to recognize your strengths and areas for growth. A growth mindset refers to the understanding that abilities can be developed through effort (Dweck, 2013) and can be a helpful frame for young people and adults as they work through challenges and respond to setbacks. People with a growth mindset will often see challenges or setbacks as an opportunity to learn. As a result, they respond with constructive thoughts (e.g., "Maybe I need to change my strategy or try harder"), feelings (such as the thrill of a challenge), and behaviors (persistence).

Self-efficacy refers to confidence in one's ability to successfully meet challenges and complete tasks. Self-efficacy can significantly impact how people feel, think, behave, and motivate themselves. People who have a heightened sense of self-efficacy:

- See challenging problems as tasks to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided.
- Develop greater intrinsic interest and focus on their activities.
- Set challenging goals and demonstrate a stronger sense of commitment to them.
- Quickly recover their self-efficacy following setbacks and disappointments (Bandura, 1994).

Here are some simple strategies for developing self-efficacy:

- Set aside time in your routine to reflect on your "wins" from the day and celebrate them.
- When gathering with friends or colleagues, take turns sharing and discussing a challenge and what you've tried so far to overcome it.
- Write down your goals, both big and small, and revisit them. Recognize how you are progressing and accomplishing them or how your goals shift over time.

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection on our SEL competencies benefits us at all stages of life. Self-reflection is a process that starts with observing and analyzing yourself to deepen your understanding of why you think, feel, and act in specific ways. Reflective practices are part of social-emotional learning and growth. There are many tools and approaches to self-reflection; the more you practice it, the better you will become.

Self-reflection may have some of the following benefits:

- Better relationships
- Deeper self-awareness
- Stronger decision-making skills
- Self-acceptance and compassion

One of the best ways to practice consistent self-reflection is to keep a journal. You can keep a journal digitally, on paper, use an art journal, or use audio/visual tools to record your thoughts. Find one that fits your routine and works well for you. Below are some tips to get you started:

- Set aside a specific, consistent time to journal. If you find making this part of your routine challenging, commit to a sentence or two daily.
- Find a quiet, peaceful spot.
- Set aside your phone or other distractions.
- Try stream-of-consciousness journaling *and* using journal prompts to find the style you like best.

- Let go of perfection, expectations, and judgment.

Supporting Rationale and Research

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Yeager DS, Dweck CS. What can be learned from growth mindset controversies? Am Psychol. 2020 Dec; 75(9):1269-1284. doi: 10.1037/amp0000794. PMID: 33382294; PMCID: PMC8299535. https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8299535/

Resources

General SEL Resources

CASEL

- What is the CASEL Framework? | CASEL

Leadership Competencies | NEA

Emotional Intelligence in Leadership: Why It's Important | HBS Online

22 Mood Tracker Printables to Understand Yourself Better - Happier Human

How to Express Feelings... and How Not To | Psychology Today

How We Feel | App from The How We Feel Project, Inc.

Self-Assessment Checklist – Cultural Competence | National Association of School Psychologists

Growth Mindset and Self-Efficacy

Carol Dweck: A Summary of Growth and Fixed Mindsets

Growth Mindset and Enhanced Learning

Self-Efficacy

Self-Awareness

Brief Body Scan | Greater Good in Education

How Self-Awareness Enhances Teaching | Dr. Robin LaBarbera | medium.com

64 Journaling Prompts for Self-Discovery | Psych Central

Emotions Tracking Tools

Identity

JOHARI Window | video from HR Squared

JOHARI Window Worksheet

Radical Cultural Self-Awareness | Denise Soler Cox | TEDx Talks

Promote Equity Using SEL in Your School | CASEL

Self-Awareness Growth Plan

How to Write a SMART Goal

Setting SMART Goals as A Teacher

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and a proficient rating for all components in Part 2.

Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(200-300 words)
Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessors understand your situation. Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

1. Describe your current educational role and environment.
2. How are you currently practicing self-awareness, and what does that look like in your daily life?
3. Why have you chosen this micro-credential? How do you think increased self-awareness will enhance BOTH your personal and professional life? Provide examples for each.
4. Identify and describe at least three aspects of **your** identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, social class status, gender, language, learning abilities, strengths, interests, etc.). How do these factors influence your instructional approach and how you connect with students or colleagues? Please provide specific examples from your professional experiences.

Passing: All questions are answered thoroughly. The responses justify the reason for choosing this micro-credential to address a specific need. Responses reflect current thoughts about your skills with self-awareness. Specific examples are included in the responses.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following three artifacts as evidence of your learning. *Please do not include any information that will make you or your students identifiable to your reviewers.*

Artifact 1: Reflecting on Your Self-Awareness

Please consider each statement and how easy or difficult it is for you. **You will not turn in this table.**

Self-Awareness		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS	I can identify and name my emotions in the moment.				
	I use self-reflection to understand the factors that contribute to my emotions and how my emotions impact me.				
	I recognize when my emotions, thoughts, and biases influence my behavior and my reactions to people and situations, both negatively and positively.				
IDENTITY AND SELF KNOWLEDGE	I know and am realistic about my strengths and limitations.				
	I recognize and reflect on ways in which my identity is shaped by other people and my race, culture, experiences, and environments.				
	I recognize and reflect on ways in which my identity shapes my views, biases, and prejudices.				
GROWTH MINDSET AND PURPOSE	I believe I will continue to learn and develop skills to better support all young people to succeed.				
	I believe I can influence my own future and achieve my ambitions.				
	I can see how I have a valuable role in my work, my family, and my community.				

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(400-800 words)
Your responses to the items above are for you alone. Your responses to the statements below will be submitted.

1. **Strengths and Interactions**
   Review the statements you marked as "easy" or "very easy." How do these areas of strength positively influence your interactions with young people and peers? Share specific examples from your life of how these strengths have helped build your self-awareness, navigate challenges, or support others effectively.
2. **Challenges and Growth Opportunities**
   For areas marked as "difficult" or "very difficult," how could growth in these areas improve your self-awareness? What specific strategies or tools could help you develop in these areas? Provide specific examples.
3. **Self-Awareness and Confirmations:**
   As you reflect on your responses, were there things that surprised you? Were there things that confirmed what you already know about yourself? Provide specific examples.

4. **Outcomes from your Self-Awareness:** Share a specific example from your life where strong self-awareness helped resolve a conflict or achieve a positive result. Share a different example from your life when a lack of self-awareness caused harm.
5. **Commitment to Growth**
   Based on your reflections, what actions will you take to build on your strengths **and** address your challenges with self-awareness? Provide specific examples.

Turn in your responses to these 5 prompts. You may turn this in via the following formats:

*Photo of your handwritten response (must be legible)
*Voice recording
*Digital document

Artifact 2: Explore an Area of Personal Growth

Choose **one** of the following options that you wish to focus on. In your submission, please state WHICH OPTION you have chosen.

OPTION 1 - Recognizing, Identifying, and Expressing Your Emotions

Please note that Option 1 has three parts. You will need to complete all three parts if you choose this option.

Part 1-Meditation

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to sit.
2. Take a long, slow, deep breath, inhaling and exhaling through your nose.
3. Keep breathing slowly - inhaling and exhaling through your nose.
4. Pay attention to any sensations you feel in your body—just notice without judgment.
5. Now, begin to pay attention to your emotions. Find the emotion you are feeling right now or recall a recent emotion.
6. Notice if the emotion felt pleasant or unpleasant.
7. Look for words that describe this emotion.
8. Keep watching and describing this emotion. If other thoughts wander in your mind, gently refocus and continue to watch and describe this emotion.
9. Notice any changes you feel with this emotion. Is it getting stronger or lighter? Reflect on what that is like.
10. If your emotion changes, just keep watching and describing it.
11. Stay with it until you notice your emotions change or diminish.
12. Repeat this at least once per day for one week.

Part 2 - Emotions Tracking Tool

- Choose one of the emotions tracking tools that suits the way you feel and think.
- Track your emotions 3-4 times a day for 1 week.

Part 3 - Choose either a Journal Entry or Artwork

(100-200 words)

Take a moment to journal about your meditation experience in a non-judgmental way.

- What emotion(s) did you encounter during the meditation?
- What did you see, think about, or experience?
- What impact did it have on you, once you ended the meditation?

OR

Use your creative muscles to express your emotions from your meditation experience. Below are a few artistic ideas. Help your reviewers understand your emotions with captions, titles, or labels.

- Write a poem.
- Write a song. Record your music.
- Create a collage with a medium of your choice.
- Draw a cartoon.
- Paint/Draw a picture.
- Complete a photo collage.

Submit your:

1. **Emotions tracker**
2. **Journal entry OR poem, song, collage, drawing.**

OPTION 2 - Reflecting on Identity with the JOHARI Window

Use the directions on this worksheet to complete the JOHARI window exercise. You may need to download and print a copy of the worksheet, fill it out, then upload your responses.

Submit your completed JOHARI worksheet.

OPTION 3 - Reflecting on Identity with a Social Identity Word Cloud

Use an online word cloud generator or draw a self-identity word cloud. Include at least 10 words that describe your identity. Make the words different sizes based on what is most important to you. The larger the word appears, the more important that concept is for you.

Complete a social identity wheel, such as this one, to decide what to include in your word cloud. Reflect on how your social identity impacts how you feel and think in

different settings.

Submit your:

1. **Word cloud**
2. **Social identity wheel**
3. **Reflection**

Artifact 3: Self-Awareness Growth Plan

(200-400 words)
Write in a journal or use a digital format to create a personal growth plan to improve **your** self-awareness. In your writing, please:

1. Include one goal, written in a SMART goal format (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound). Address each SMART element as you create your goal. See RESOURCES. Be sure to write a goal that addresses **your** self-awareness.
2. Describe any anticipated challenges to reaching your goal. How will you address those challenges?
3. Describe any supportive people you can rely on or routines and structures you can implement to help you achieve your goal.
4. List at least three specific steps you will take to get started.
5. Explain how you will track your progress. Start with the beginning status of your goal, then describe how you will track your progress as the plan is implemented. This may include a specific tracking tool, data that you keep, or journal entries that monitor your progress. What will you do if you discover something isn't working as planned?

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	**Basic**	**Developing**
Artifact 1: Reflecting on Your Self-awareness	All questions are fully answered with complete explanations and specific examples. Introspection is evident. Responses are clear and well-organized, and the submission is legible and understandable.	All questions have been answered, but examples are missing. and/or Introspection was not evident. Responses are clear and well-organized, and the journal or submission is legible and/or understandable.	Not all questions are answered. and/or Introspection was not evident. and/or Responses are unclear or well-organized, or the journal is not viewable.
Artifact 2: Explore an Area of Personal Growth	All parts of the activity are completed with thoughtful details. Information is authentic and reflects a high level of self-awareness. Directions are fully followed, and the submission aligns with the purpose of the activity.	Most parts of the activity are completed with thoughtful details. and/or Details are missing. Information may lack authenticity or depth. and/or Some directions were not followed.	Very few parts of the activity are complete. and/or Details are missing. and/or Directions were not followed.

Artifact 3: Self-awareness Growth Plan	The plan includes a clear SMART goal that is specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. Each of these elements is explained. The goal focuses on improvement for the **educator's** self-awareness. Anticipated challenges are identified with thoughtful strategies to address them. At least three specific, actionable steps are provided with a clear timeline for tracking progress and strategies for adjustments, as needed. A clear plan for progress monitoring is provided, with strategies for adjustments, if needed. The plan reflects introspection, intentionality, and alignment with responsible self-awareness principles.	The plan includes a goal, but it may lack specificity or detail. Anticipated challenges are identified, but strategies may be incomplete or vague. Support systems and routines are mentioned but not fully developed. Fewer than three steps are outlined, or the steps lack clarity or specificity. A plan for progress monitoring is included but may lack depth or adaptability.	The plan lacks a clear goal, or the goal is vague or unrealistic. Challenges are not identified, and/or strategies to address them are missing.. Support systems and routines are unclear or not mentioned. Few or no actionable steps are outlined, or steps are incomplete. A plan for progress monitoring is missing or unclear.

Part 3 Reflection

(300-500 words)
Write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. A strong reflection describes:

- your personal experiences working toward understanding and application of the concepts in this micro-credential,
- specific moments that supported your learning,
- examples of how you will apply your learning to your unique context.

For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:
How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?

Include your responses to the following questions in your submission:

1. How did implementing your growth plan strengthen your self-awareness?
2. What are your next steps in strengthening your self-awareness?
3. What will you do differently, or what is working well for you?

Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has positively impacted your self-awareness. Specific examples are cited directly from personal or work-related experiences to support claims. Also included are specific, actionable steps that demonstrate how new learning will be integrated into future practices.