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

Social Awareness

Competency

The educator will demonstrate the ability to understand the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

Key Method

The educator will develop and strengthen their social awareness and create a social 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 **social awareness**, reflect on how this competency is relevant to your work and personal life, and develop a plan for personal growth.

What is Social Awareness?

Social awareness is how we understand others, learn to take on different perspectives, and empathize with people, even those who are different. It also includes understanding how what's happening can influence us and how we create and feel a sense of belonging (CASEL, 2023).

Social awareness is critical to understanding and supporting your students and the adults connected to their lives. Examples of skills related to social awareness include:

- Understanding others' perspectives
- Recognizing strengths in others
- Demonstrating empathy and compassion
- Showing concern for the feelings of others
- Expressing gratitude
- Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones
- Recognizing situational demands and opportunities
- Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior (from CASEL, 2023)

For a more in-depth look at social awareness and its impact on you personally and professionally, consider three primary ways you likely rely on this competency: empathy and compassion, perspective-taking, and understanding social context.

Empathy and Compassion

Empathy and compassion refer to how we can understand how another person is feeling and act in a way that shows care for them. For example, we exercise empathy when we try to see a situation from a colleague's point of view, feel sadness when we see a student is going through a difficult time, or think about how to make a student's parent feel welcome at a meeting where we understand they may feel nervous or uncomfortable. When coupled with compassionate action that shows the other person we care about what they are experiencing and feeling, we can build trusting relationships.

Empathy also helps us see how our words or actions impact others. For example, imagine that you recognize that a remark you made toward a student embarrassed them, and now they are shutting down and refusing to participate. Because you realize how the student is feeling, you make the choice to apologize and ask how you can make things right. Or, have you ever noticed a look of pride and joy on a student's face when you notice something they have done well? Empathy and compassion motivate us to act on this information to become more effective educators – for example, designing instruction that builds on students' strengths and interests or taking a restorative approach to discipline.

Perspective-Taking

Perspective-taking is closely connected to empathy – both can be described as walking in another person's shoes. Beyond understanding others' emotions, perspective-taking is a skill we continue to build when we work to learn about the experiences of people who are different from us. Whether that is someone of a different racial or ethnic background, religion, gender, socioeconomic background, geographic location, or some other factor, understanding more about another person's experience helps us to see why they may read a situation differently than we do, or have a different opinion on an important topic.

Perspective-taking can help us understand a situation better. For example, consider the case of a community engagement team at a school that is disappointed about the low turnout at an event for parents. They might assume there was low interest, poor timing, or insufficient outreach beforehand. But they take the time to seek out the perspectives of others. They call several families and a community leader whose organization hosts well-attended events nearby. They learn that events that offer childcare and are hosted at community locations, like a park district building or public library, have had excellent turnouts in their community. They apply this new perspective to plan their next event and recruit a few community members to join their planning team.

Understanding Social Context

Understanding social context encompasses understanding social norms, situational expectations, and the systemic, historical, and organizational forces that shape the world.

Social norms and situational expectations can be implicit or explicit, varying from culture to culture and generation to generation. Our understanding of these norms and expectations influences our behaviors, for example, when we:

- Say please and thank you.
- Choose whether to say hello, smile, or avoid eye contact when passing someone on a path.
- Decide what to wear.
- Go to the back of the line instead of cutting in front of someone.

- Call to let someone know we are running late.
- Change how we speak and our words, depending on who we are talking to.
- Plan a social event.

Social norms can also be unjust. Prejudice, stereotypes, and many “isms” can often be connected to an insistence that others conform to one’s personal social norms and intolerance for those who do not.

To understand the social context, we must examine our privileges and power. Some people have more power or influence than others, and we all experience inclusion and exclusion based on our identities. It is often difficult to admit the benefits of some aspects of our social identities and to push ourselves to explore our privilege. It is also challenging to address the interplay between privilege and oppression in our relationships with students.
(Schniedewind & Davidson, 2006).

Think about your workplace.

- Who has the most power and influence? The least?
- What are the social norms that people are expected to adhere to? Are they inclusive of all cultures?
- What explicit policies relate to discrimination, equity, bullying, opportunities for hire, and promotion? If there aren’t any, why not, and how does that impact those who are the most marginalized?
- Do the structures in place promote trust, community, and collective efficacy (the belief that you can work together to accomplish shared goals)?

Our understanding of social context influences how we think and present ourselves, recognize injustice and exclusion, and advocate for those whose voices have not yet been heard. It can lead to deeper and richer relationships with people in our personal lives, colleagues, and students.

Supporting Rationale and Research

Social Emotional Learning

Bratton, V.K., Dodd, N.G. and Brown, F.W. (2011), "The impact of emotional intelligence on the accuracy of self-awareness and leadership performance," Leadership & Organization Development Journal, Vol. 32 No. 2, pp. 127-149. https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731111112971

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Gimbert, B. G., Miller, D., Herman, E., Breedlove, M., & Molina, C. E. (2021). Social-Emotional Learning in Schools: The Importance of Educator Competence. Journal of Research on Leadership Education, 19427751211014920. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/19427751211014920

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Yang, C. (2021). Online teaching self-efficacy, social-emotional learning (SEL) competencies, and compassion fatigue among educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. School Psychology Review, 50(4), 505-518.https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1903815

Social Awareness

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Resources

General SEL Resources

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- What is the CASEL Framework?| CASEL

Leadership Competencies | NEA

Social Awareness

Social Awareness | video from CASEL, Montgomery County ESC, and ThinkTVPBS

How SEL helps you as a teacher | Dr. Shivohn N. García | understood.org

Questionnaires for Connecting with Students and Families | understood.org

Empathy

Under The Surface | video from The Knowledge Center, Inc.

Empathy Techniques for Educational Equity | Stanford d.school

Recognizing and Appreciating Diversity

Just Belonging: Finding the Courage to Interrupt Bias | Kori Carew | TEDx Talks

Questions for Reflective Practice | Learning for Justice

The Benefits of Inclusion and Diversity in the Classroom | American University School of Education

Understanding Social Context

10 Ways Educators Can Take Action in Pursuit of Equity | Cult of Pedagogy

Implicit Bias and Structural Racialization | Kathleen Osta and Hugh Vazquez | National Equity Project

What are structural, institutional and systemic racism? | video from ABC News

Marley Dias talks Institutional Racism | video from National Education Association

Dismantling White Supremacy in Education | Noelle Picara | TEDx Talks

Helping Traumatized Children Learn | Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative

Social Awareness Growth Plan

How to Write a SMART Goal

Setting SMART Goals as A Teacher

S.W.O.T Template PDF (you will need to make a copy of this in the artifact section)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and proficiency 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. **Your Teaching Environment:** Describe your current educational role and environment.
2. **Current Practice**: How do you show understanding and empathy towards others in your daily life? Please provide specific examples from BOTH your personal and professional life. Why have you chosen this micro-credential? What do you hope to gain?
3. **Future Impact**: In what ways do you think improving your social awareness could benefit your personal growth and effectiveness as an educator? Please provide specific examples from your professional experiences.
4. **Identity and Perspective**: 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 social awareness. Specific examples are included in the responses.

Part 2. Work Examples/Artifacts/Evidence

To earn this micro-credential, please submit the following 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 Social Awareness

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

Social Awareness		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
EMPATHY AND COMPASSION	I can grasp another person's perspective and feelings.				
	I pay attention to the feelings of others and recognize how my words and behavior impact them.				
	I care for others when I see they have been harmed somehow.				
PERSPECTIVE TAKING	I work to learn about the experiences of people of different races, ethnicities, or cultures.				
	I learn from those who have different opinions than me.				
	I ask others about their experience and perspectives before offering my version of events.				
UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL CONTEXT	I understand the systemic, historical, and organizational forces that operate among people.				
	I appreciate and honor the cultural differences within my school community/workplace.				
	I recognize the strengths of young people and their families and view them as partners.				

Reproduced from CASEL's Personal SEL Reflection (2021), with permission.

(400-800 words)
Your responses to the items above are for you alone. Reflect on the exercise by responding to the prompts below, which will be submitted.

1. **Strengths and Interactions:** How do the areas you marked as "easy" or "very easy" enhance your interactions with students, peers, and others? Provide specific examples from your life where these strengths have contributed to creating a supportive, respectful, or innovative environment.
2. **Challenges and Growth Opportunities:** For areas marked as "difficult" or "very difficult," how could growth in these areas improve your social awareness skills? What specific strategies or tools could help you develop in these areas? Provide specific examples.
3. **Surprises 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 of Your Social Awareness Skills:** Share a specific example from your life where strong social awareness skills helped resolve a conflict or achieve a positive result. Share a different example from your life when a lack of strong social awareness skills 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 social awareness skills? 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

Part 1 - Select **one** area below to explore. Directions for each activity are on the first slide of each presentation.

1. Taking others' perspectives (I Want-They Want)
2. Recognizing the strengths of others (Spotting Strengths in Others)
3. Demonstrating empathy and compassion (Empathy Map)
4. Understands and expresses gratitude (Practicing and Expressing Gratitude)
5. Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior (Systems Map)

The link below will ask you to create your own copy of the analysis page. It will be saved into your Google Drive. Once completed you will download it as a PDF or PowerPoint to share with your assessor.

Part 2 - Use this template to complete a SWOT analysis in the area of social awareness. In the space for "SEL Competency", please type the **same focus area** you used for Part 1. Be sure to include at least four comments in each box.
PDF Version

Save Parts 1 and 2 as a PowerPoint or PDF and upload.

Artifact 3: Social Awareness Growth Plan

(200-400 words)
Write in a journal or use a digital format to create a personal growth plan to improve **your** social awareness skills. 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** social awareness skills.

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 Social 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 are answered but examples are missing. and/or Introspection was not evident.	Not all questions are answered. and/or Details are missing. and/or Introspection was not evident.
Artifact 2: Explore One Area of Personal Growth and S.W.O.T. Analysis	All parts of the activity are completed with essential details. The focus area for Part 1 matches with your SWOT Analysis. Information is authentic and thoughtful. Directions are followed and completed. (See directions in the notes section of each slide).	Most parts of the activity are completed. 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.

	Four elements are written in each box of the SWOT Analysis.		
Artifact 3: Social 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** social awareness skills. Anticipated challenges are identified with thoughtful strategies to address them. Support systems and routines are described in detail, demonstrating alignment with the goal. At least three specific, actionable steps are provided with a clear timeline for tracking	The plan is missing parts. and/or Answers lack details. and/or No introspection is evident.	Most parts of the plan are missing. and/or Answers are incomplete. and/or No introspection is evident.

	progress, and strategies for adjustments, as needed. The plan reflects introspection, intentionality, and alignment with responsible social awareness principles.		

Part 3 Reflection

(200-400 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 social awareness?
2. What are your next steps in strengthening your social 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 social 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.