



*Developed in collaboration with*



COLLABORATIVE FOR  
ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND  
EMOTIONAL LEARNING

# Relationship Skills

## Competency

The educator will strengthen their abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships through clear communication, collaborative problem-solving, managing conflicts, and effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups.

## Key Method

The educator will develop and strengthen relationship skills and create a relationship building action plan that will include 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 **relationship skills**, reflect on how this competency is relevant to your work and personal life, and develop a plan for personal growth.

## What are Relationship Skills?

Relationship skills are how we get along with others and how we form lasting friendships and connections. This includes communicating clearly, solving problems together, managing conflicts and disagreements, and standing up for ourselves and others ([CASEL, 2023](#)).

For a more in depth look at relationship skills and how they impact you personally and professionally, consider three major ways you likely rely on this competency: communication; building relationships and teamwork; and conflict management.

## Communication

Your communication skills include both the way you articulate thoughts and ideas and the way you actively listen to others. You exercise these skills when you think about how best to explain or describe something to another person so they will understand your meaning, and also when you focus as a listener to fully understand someone else's idea or perspective.

Communication skills are put to the test in moments where you need to discuss topics that carry emotion for you or those you are speaking with. For example, when we are upset with someone, our first impulse may be either to bottle up our anger and say nothing, or to respond with an angry tone and use language that places blame on them. We use communication skills when we take time to cool down and think through our feeling, then speak in a way that is less likely to trigger a defensive reaction for the other person: with a thoughtful tone, blame-free language, and openness to hear their version of events.

Communication skills also come into play when there is not a conflict. For example, you use communication skills to show someone that you value them and want to hear more about them. You also use communication skills when an important or challenging topic comes up in a group – while it would be easier to hang back and stay silent, you choose instead to be open and honest and receptive to those with different views or new information.



## Building Relationships and Teamwork

You exercise your skills in building relationships and teamwork when you find ways to connect and collaborate with others across differences, whether the difference is related to age, identity, cultural background, or life experience. You already may use these simple, daily actions that can strengthen relationships:

- Greet students and colleagues by name.
- Go out of your way to make a connection with someone you don't usually interact with, such as a new staff member, a student who is especially quiet, or the clerk at the grocery store.
- Share a story about yourself to allow others to get to know you, within your individual comfort level and appropriate boundaries.
- Ask questions to get to know others, within your individual comfort level and appropriate boundaries.
- Give and receive constructive feedback.
- Model fairness, respect, and appreciation for others.
- Acknowledge the efforts of others with encouragement and affirmation.

The Search Institute's [Developmental Relationships Framework](#) describes five ways people build strong relationships with others that support resilience and growth. They are:

- Express care (show another person that they matter to you)
- Challenge growth (push them to keep getting better)
- Provide support (help them complete tasks and achieve goals)
- Share power (treat them with respect and give them a say)
- Expand possibilities (connect them with people and places to broaden their world)

For a more in-depth look at these five essential elements of relationships, see [Developmental Relationships Help Young People Thrive](#).

Your ability to connect with others and foster relationship building among others contributes to a sense of trust, which is foundational to being able to work as a team to achieve goals. Consider how the quality of relationships strengthens the capacity for teamwork among:

- Educators and students
- Among students
- Educators and families
- Among educators
- Friends and family members

When trusting relationships are present, people are:

- More open to trying something new.
- More committed to providing mutual support.
- More confident in sharing knowledge and expertise.
- More receptive to feedback for improvement.
- More willing to have authentic discussion and change views or practices in



response to new information.

([Bryk & Schneider, 2003](#); [Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007](#); [Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012](#); [Donohoo, Hattie, & Eells, 2018](#)).

## Conflict Management

Conflict is to be expected in any relationship, and our ability to manage conflicts and maintain positive relationships is another key skill set. Working through a conflict requires self-awareness and self-management to be able to understand and productively communicate your own needs, social awareness to understand the needs of others, and relationship skills to be able to ensure all those who are involved feel safe to express their perspective and feel heard and respected. Here are some skillful ways that educators can support their students or their school community to work through conflict:

- Create opportunities for group decision-making. Open dialogue engages students, parents, and staff in a democratic process in which compromise rather than competition is crucial to making decisions.
- Democratize the space. Alter the orientation of the room by repositioning the front, moving all the desks, seats, or tables to the side, or having groups sit on the floor in a circle. Set guidelines for sharing so that everyone has a say, especially those who have less positional authority (e.g., the group leader waits to speak until others have spoken).
- Use reflection and writing time to help everyone organize their thoughts, allow them to share through visual art without using language, or via partner or small group discussion. Focus on ways for the writer, the thinker, the talker, and the visual artist to share their ideas.
- Normalize conflict around issues. When discussing issues, lean into complexity rather than seeking to simplify. Taking different sides of an issue—not to compete and win, but to come to a collective decision—creates a democratic experience that demonstrates the messiness and complexity of the process.

Educators also practice conflict management when they are involved in a personal conflict. For example, you may use this skill when you tell someone how their actions impacted you and communicate and maintain clear boundaries. You also use this skill when you recognize moments that you have caused harm to others, apologize, and take action to restore your relationship.



# 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.  
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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.  
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# Resources

## General SEL Resources

[Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning](#)

- [What is the CASEL Framework? | CASEL](#)

[Leadership Competencies | NEA](#)

## Relationship Skills

[Relationship Skills | video from CASEL, Montgomery County ESC, and ThinkTVPBS](#)

[The Developmental Relationships Framework | Search Institute](#)

- [Relationships Matter: The 5 Elements of Developmental Relationships | video summary from Search Institute](#)

[How SEL helps you as a teacher | Dr. Shivohn N. García | understood.org](#)

[Community-building Circles | CASEL](#)

[Relationship Mapping Strategy | Harvard Graduate School of Education](#)

[The 'How' of Building Deeper Relationships with Students | Hoa Nguyen | Edutopia](#)

[To Be Happier at Work, Invest More in Your Relationships | Rob Cross | Harvard Business Review](#)

[The Power of Relationships in Schools | video from Edutopia](#)

## Communication

[What is Active Listening? | Arlin Cuncic | Verywell Mind](#)

[5-Minute Chats with Students | CASEL](#)

[10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation | Celeste Headlee | TEDx Talks](#)

[Getting Started with Constructivist Listening | National Equity Project](#)

[Can We Talk? Tips for Respectful Conversations in Schools, Workplaces, and Communities | ADL](#)

[Build don't break relationships with communication | Amy Scott | TEDx Talks](#)



## Collaboration

[36 Questions to Increase Connectedness at School | Dr. Arthur Aron | via Greater Good in Education](#)

[Develop Team Working Agreements | CASEL](#)

[Staff Meeting Rituals that Build Trust and Community | Oakland USD | via Greater Good in Education](#)

## Managing Conflict

[How to build \(and rebuild\) trust | Frances Frei | TEDx Talks](#)

[Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools](#)

[The Secret of Successful Relationships: Rupture and Repair | video from The School of Life](#)





# Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

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

## Part 1. Overview Questions (Provides Context)

(200-300 words)

*Please answer the following contextual questions to help our assessor understand your current situation. Please do not include any information that will make you identifiable to your reviewers.*

1. How are you currently practicing relationship skills and what does that look like in your daily life?
2. How do you think increased relationship skills will enhance your personal and professional life?
3. What efforts do you make to get to know your students, their families, and your colleagues? How do you invite them to get to know you?

**Passing:** All questions are answered completely. Responses provide reasonable and accurate information that justifies the reason for choosing this micro-credential in order to address a specific need and explains current thoughts around communication, collaboration, and relationship-building. Personal 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 Relationship Skills**

Think about each statement and consider how easy or difficult each item is for you personally. **Do not turn this in.**

Relationship Skills		Very difficult	Difficult	Easy	Very easy
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	I stay focused when listening to others and carefully consider their meaning.				
	I can articulate ideas that are important to me in ways that engage others.				
	I can have honest conversations about race and racism with young people, their families, and other community members.				
<b>BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND TEAMWORK</b>	I connect meaningfully with young people, their families, colleagues, and community members who are of a different race, culture, or socioeconomic background than I am.				
	I get to know the people around me.				
	I work well with others and generate a collegial atmosphere.				
	I make sure everyone has had an opportunity to share their ideas.				
<b>CONFLICT MANAGEMENT</b>	When I am upset with someone, I talk to them about how I feel and listen to their perspective.				
	I openly admit my mistakes to myself and others and work to make things right.				
	I can work through my discomfort when dealing with conflict, listen to feelings from all parties, and help them understand different perspectives.				

Reproduced from CASEL’s [Personal SEL Reflection](#) (2021), with permission.

(400-800 words)

Your responses to the items above are for you alone, but take some time to journal as you reflect on your responses.

1. Review the statements you marked as “easy” or “very easy.” How do these areas of strength affect your interactions with young people and peers?
2. Review the statements you marked as “difficult” or very difficult.” How might enhancing these areas of challenge benefit your interactions with young people and peers?
3. When looking at your responses, were there things that surprised you? Were there things that confirmed what you already know about yourself?
4. Provide 2 examples from your life that illustrate how relationship skills helped you manage a difficult situation and achieve a positive outcome for yourself and/or others.
5. Provide 1 example of how a lack of relationship skills has caused harm to yourself and/or others.



Upload your journal entry. This can be a photo of your written journal, a voice recording, or a digital document.

## **Artifact 2: Explore an Area of Personal Growth**

Choose **one** of the following areas that you wish to focus on.

### **OPTION 1: Expressing Care and Building Trust Through Community Agreements**

Follow the directions on this document: [Developing Community Agreements](#)

(500-800 words)

Respond to the following questions about your process:

- How did you frame your discussion?
- How did you engage people in the process?
- What were your agreements?
- How did this change the relationships within this group?

### **OPTION 2: Providing Support Through Active Listening**

Use [this protocol](#) to practice active listening with someone to whom you wish to provide support. Then reflect on the following questions.

(500-800 words)

- Describe the setting in which you completed this activity. (Place, time of day...)
- What verbal communications strategies did you use?
- What non-verbal communication strategies did you use?
- How did you encourage sharing?
- Were you able to be present and listen with an open mind? What were the challenges to this?
- How was your support received? How do you know?

### **OPTION 3: Collaboration and Communication**

Create a collaborative vision board with at least one other person and reflect on the experience. Your vision board should:

- Help clarify what you want to accomplish together.
- Include a timeframe for your vision (1 month-1 year-5 years...).
- Include images and/or words that represent your vision.
- Make an emotional connection to your vision via images and words.
- Be kept somewhere visible to all of the people who share this vision.

(500-800 words)



- How did you determine your shared vision? Were there compromises that were needed?
- How did you each contribute to the vision board?
- Where will you keep your vision board?
- How will you use your shared vision board to achieve your goals?
- How did this activity strengthen your relationship(s)?

### Artifact 3: Relationship Skills Growth Plan

(200-400 words)

You can write in your journal or use a digital format to create a relationship skills growth plan. In your journal, please:

1. Include one SMART Goal (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-bound).
2. Describe any anticipated challenges to reaching your goal.
3. Describe any supportive people you can rely on, or routines and structures you can put in place to help you achieve your goal.
4. List at least specific 3 steps you will take to get started.
5. Thoughtfully explain you will move forward and track your progress.

*\*SMART Goal example:*

*This week I will practice active listening for at least 5 min. per day with different 4 individuals to show them that I am listening, encourage sharing, and strive to understand the speaker so that I can establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships.*

## Part 2. Rubric

	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Basic</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>Artifact 1: Reflecting on your Relationship Skills</b>	All questions are answered completely with a full explanation and examples  Introspection is evident  Journal is legible and/or 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



			and/or Journal is not viewable or legible
<b>Artifact 2: Explore an Area of Personal Growth</b>	All parts of the activity are completed with important details.  Information is authentic and thoughtful.  Directions are followed and completed.	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
<b>Artifact 3: Relationship Skills Growth Plan</b>	Plan includes: -SMART Goal -A plan or tool to track progress -Answers to all questions  Answers illustrate a clear plan to accomplish the goal  Introspection is evident	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



## Part 3 Reflection

(200-400 words)

Write a personal reflection about your work on this micro-credential. A strong reflection describes your personal experience working toward the micro-credential, specific moments that supported your learning, and examples of how you will apply what you have learned to your unique context. For tips on writing a good reflection, review the following resource:

[How Do I Write a Good Personal Reflection?](#)

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

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

**Passing:** Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on your thinking about relationships. 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.

