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, 2020)

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, how we learn to take on different perspectives and have empathy for people, even those who are different from us. 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 what social awareness is and how it impacts you personally and professionally, consider three major 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 are able to 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 are able to 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 made them feel embarrassed, and now they are shutting down and refusing to participate. Because you recognize 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 with the idiom of walking in another person's shoes. Beyond an understanding of others' emotions, perspective-talking 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 make assumptions that there was low interest, poor timing, or not enough 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 one's understanding of social norms and situational expectations as well as the systemic, historical, and organizational forces that shape the world we live in.

Social norms and situational expectations can be implicit or explicit, and they vary 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 we will 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 the words we use, 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 need to look at our own privileges and power. Some people have more power or influence than others, and we all have experiences of both inclusion and exclusion based on our identities. It is often difficult to admit the benefits received from some aspects of our social identities and to push ourselves to explore our privilege. It is also hard 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 are the explicit policies that 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, as well as how we recognize injustice and exclusion and advocate for those whose voice is not yet heard. It can lead to deeper and richer relationships with people in our personal lives, our colleagues, and our 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

Caldwell, Cam and Anderson, Verl (2021) "Moral Identity, Self-Improvement, and the Quest for Greatness: A Leadership Responsibility," The Journal of Values-Based Leadership: Vol. 14 : Iss. 2 , Article 4.
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Marie, K. S. T. S., & Cook-Cottone, C. (2022). MINDFUL SELF-CARE TO MANAGE THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA, BURNOUT, AND COMPASSION FATIGUE IN EDUCATORS. Trauma in Adult and Higher Education: Conversations and Critical Reflections, 129.
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Rajoo, H. H. (2021). The role of Mindfulness and Positive Psychology interventions in job crafting for educators: A diagnostic and prescriptive approach to supporting educators through Mindfulness and Positive Psychology during a crisis. Asia Pacific Journal of Developmental Differences, 8(1), 61-97 https://www.das.org.sg/images/publications/apjdd/vol8no1/APJDD-V8-1-RAJOO.pdf .

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

Gorski, Paul & Swalwell, Katy. (2015). Equity literacy for all. Educational leadership: journal of the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, N.E.A. 72. 34-40. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279318154_Equity_literacy_for_all

Kunnanatt, J. T. (2004). Emotional intelligence: The new science of interpersonal effectiveness. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 15(4), 489. https://drive.google.com/file/d/17-T97G8kJvHS-cSiYrKuxLd1sJhIditv/view?usp=sharing

Tollmar, K., Sandor, O., & Schömer, A. (1996, November). Supporting social awareness@ work design and experience. In Proceedings of the 1996 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work (pp. 298-307). https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/240080.240309

Wegner, D. M., & Giuliano, T. (1982). The forms of social awareness. In Personality, roles, and social behavior (pp. 165-198). Springer, New York, NY. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-4613-9469-3_6

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

Developing Community Agreements | National Equity Project

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](#)

[Empathy Interviews | High Tech High Graduate School of Education](#)

[Brené Brown on Empathy | video from RSA](#)

Recognizing and Appreciating Diversity

[Dimensions of Difference and Similarity Reflection | Open Circle | via Greater Good in Education](#)

[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

[Imagining Equity Literacy | Paul Gorski | Learning for Justice](#)

- [Ten Principles of Equity Literacy | Paul Gorski](#)

[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](#)

[System Map Template - The Commons Social Change Library](#)

[We asked thousands of women what's holding them back. Here's what they had to say | Fortune](#)

[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](#)

Submission Guidelines & Evaluation Criteria

> *To earn this micro-credential, you must receive a passing score in Parts 1 and 3 and receive a proficient 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 social awareness and what does that look like in your daily life?
2. How do you think increased social awareness will enhance your personal and professional life?
3. In what ways does your identity (race/ethnicity, social class status, gender, language, learning abilities, strengths, interests, etc.) inform who you are as an educator?

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 explain current thoughts around belonging, perspective-taking, and empathy. Personal examples are included in the responses.

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

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

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 show care for others when I see that they have been harmed in some way.				
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, but take some time to reflect by responding to the following prompts.

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. How has social awareness helped you manage a difficult situation and achieve a positive outcome for yourself and/or others? Provide a specific example?
5. How has a lack of social awareness caused harm to yourself and/or others? Provide a specific example.?

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

*Photo of your hand written 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. Showing concern for the feelings of others (Other Compassion Meditation)
5. Understands and expresses gratitude (Practicing and Expressing Gratitude)
6. Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones (Identifying Diverse Social Norms)
7. Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior (Systems Map)

Save as a PowerPoint or PDF and upload.

Part 2 - Use this template to complete a S.W.O.T. analysis for the same focus area you used for the previous artifact,

Save as a PowerPoint or PDF and upload.

Artifact 3: Social Awareness Growth Plan

(200-400 words)
You can write in a journal or use a digital format to create a social awareness growth plan.

1. Include one goal
2. Describe any anticipated challenges to reaching your goal.
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 specific 3 steps you will take to get started.
5. Thoughtfully explain how you will move forward and track your progress.

Part 2. Rubric

	Proficient	Basic	Developing

Artifact 1: Reflecting on Your Social Awareness	All questions are answered entirely with a full explanation and examples Introspection is evident	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 an Area of Personal Growth and S.W.O.T. Analysis	All parts of the activity are completed with essential details. 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
Artifact 3: Social Awareness Growth Plan	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 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?

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

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 really well for you?

Passing: Reflection provides evidence that this activity has had a positive impact on 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.

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