

## **“Do You Know What I Mean?”**

### **Teaching communication through SEL**

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#### **Project Description**

Based on our observations and experience, we created this project to address issues we have identified in our school.

First, we noticed discrepancies regarding how teachers evaluate the ELA Competency 4\* as well as the FSL Competency 1\*\*, as they relate to communication. We felt this was due to the fact that some teachers rely mostly on prepared oral presentations for evaluation, while others consider their students' informal interactions as well. Furthermore, teachers at our school did not use any common rubrics.

The second issue is that teachers often want to teach their students social emotional skills, but with so little time to teach everything, find it hard to justify including these lessons in our schedules as we feel it is taking time away from core subjects.

Lastly, we felt it was imperative that we address our perceived decrease of students' social and communication skills, over the last years. Our students experienced periods of isolation during formative years, accompanied by a significant increase in the use of technology to communicate and learn. The best way to counter this, in our opinion, is to explicitly teach the social skills we feel they are lacking. As many of these social skills revolve around communicating appropriately (ex. working in a team, asking for help, addressing an adult) we wanted to find a way to teach SEL lessons, without “taking time away” from other subjects.

To address these issues, we had two main goals. Creating a framework for evaluation and to integrate Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as part of our ELA Competency 4\* and FSL Competency 1\*\*.

Our team met for six full days, during which we worked together to explore existing rubrics, as well as many SEL programs. Our ideas started taking direction when we discovered the “Be Good People” website. This collection of lessons on social, emotional and communication skills was exactly what we were looking for. From that point on, we worked on finding the rubrics we felt best suited our needs for evaluating the ELA C4\* and FSL C1\*\*, while using the “Be Good People” lessons to teach social, emotional and communication skills. After enlisting the help of our resource teachers, we tested out the rubrics with specific lessons. We then met with the resource teachers to listen to their comments, especially regarding the usability of our rubrics, as well as analyzing the results. At our following meeting, we adjusted the rubrics based on our observations and our colleagues' comments. As we promote bilingualism at our school, we worked to align our ELA and FSL programs since we feel it will be beneficial for students to address the same social skills in both languages at the same time.

Lastly, we worked on creating a PowerPoint presentation that we hope to present to our colleagues, to explain the framework we would like to bring to our school. We also printed all useful documents and gathered them in a binder, which we hope will be distributed to all teachers at our school. We believe this is the best way to create a uniform way of evaluating students in these competencies.

\* To use language to communicate and learn

\*\* Interagir en français en se familiarisant avec le monde francophone

### **Project Goals**

Overall, we felt we achieved most of the goals set out with this project. Mainly we wanted to find common ways of evaluating the ELA Competency 4\* and ELA Competency 1\*\*. We also wanted to find explicit ways of teaching social emotional skills, as well as appropriate communication skills. We feel the outcomes of this project meet these goals, specifically the schedule to teach the Be Good People lessons, accompanied by the framework for evaluation we created. Unfortunately, due to lack of time, not all rubrics were translated to French. This could still be done as a collaboration between teachers, should our school choose to use these rubrics to create common evaluations.

We also failed to develop a specific plan for sharing student profiles and outcomes as they move up the grades through our school. However, we hope this will become less essential as we implement a more structured way of evaluating these competencies. Should we decide these student profiles could be useful in the future, a school team could discuss the best way to implement this practice.

### **Project Outcomes**

Our research led us to create a presentation for school staff that underlines the ELA C4\* and FSL C1\*\*. We stress that this competency entails much more than simply evaluating students' prepared oral presentations. With this presentation, we hope to enlighten staff on the importance of Social Emotional Learning in the classroom and how this can be used to evaluate students' daily structured and unstructured interactions. We aspire to create consistency in which this competency is evaluated by all staff.

- A Google Slides Presentation
- A weekly schedule of the "Be Good People" SEL program to guide teachers and their teaching sequence.
- An oral rubric for summative assessments (ELA and FSL).
- An oral English skills checklist for tracking students' daily social interactions at school (summative).
- An oral interaction rubric for teachers to use while observing all students during small group interactions (summative).
- An oral self-assessment for the students.
- A list of English and French books for all elementary grade levels that accompany the SEL themes.
- A list of activities and board games to integrate into the classroom to develop oral interaction.

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### **Reinvestment**

The main way we will be sharing our findings will be through the presentation mentioned above. Within this presentation we have included all the links to our resources, as well as the links to the websites we used. This presentation could be the starting point for any school who wishes to implement our project, with everything in one place for easy use. Our hope is that we will present this to our school staff at the start of the school year so that all new and current staff use the same evaluation tools.

Lastly, we created binders containing hard copies of the resources we gathered and created. One binder will be given to our principal as a prototype of what we would like all teachers at our school to use in the coming school year. We also made binders for the three resource teachers who helped us, by taking the time to try out our rubrics and meet with us to give us their comments and suggestions. These three teachers are currently at our school on contracts, and it is likely they will work at different schools in the future. We hope they will be ambassadors for our project and share it with their future colleagues. While these were created with our school in mind, we hope it can be used in different contexts, or adapted as needed for different schools. These binders will be equipped with a QR Code on the cover, so that anyone can easily scan it and have direct access to our Google Drive folder with all the electronic documents, links, and the presentation we prepared to explain this project.

We strongly encourage other teachers to take on similar projects for their school, in order to create a framework for evaluation, as well as to find ways to integrate the teaching of social, emotional and communication skills in core subjects, specifically the ELA C4\* and FSL C1\*\* as we did. We are certain all students could benefit from being taught these skills explicitly and we hope to have shown teachers a way to do so, without taking the away from other subjects.

**Here is where you can find all our resources. Click the link or scan the QR Code!**

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CF19eUhrPaijjLaLKMmR-dZ1BGYgBE2y?usp=sharing>



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