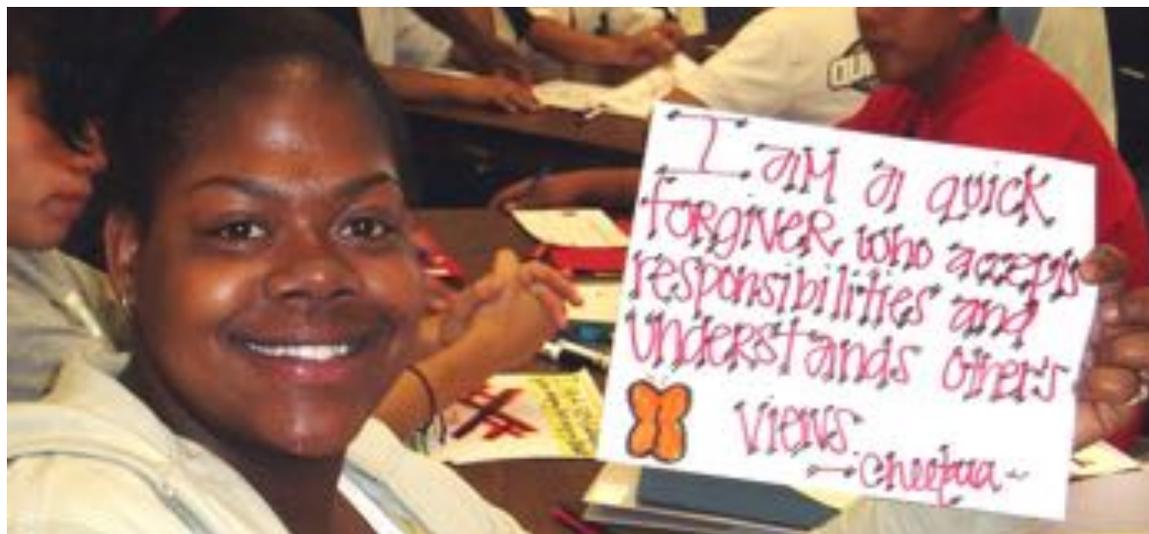


Promising Activities, Practices, and Resources

PROMOTING SEL AND CHARACTER SKILLS IN EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAMS

By Sam Piha and Rozel Cruz, Temescal Associates



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Able Data	LDS.org
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Greater Good Science Center	Classroom Circles
Inner Explorer	WINGS For Kids
Kimochi Dolls	Youth Institute/YMCA of Greater Long Beach
LA's BEST	

ABOUT

 Temescal Associates is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who are serious about improving the lives of young people. Our clients include leaders of youth serving institutions and organizations, school and youth program practitioners, public and private funders, intermediary organizations, and policy makers. Their work ranges from building large scale youth and community initiatives to providing services to young people on a day-to-day basis.

 Expanded learning: 360°/365 is a collaborative project dedicated to promoting the development of critical skills beyond academics that research has identified as essential to young people's success in school, work, and life. The Expanded Learning: 360°/365 project partners have designed a number of [supports](#) for educators and leaders of expanded learning programs.

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INTRODUCTION

There is now a strong consensus that young people need more than reading and writing skills if they are to be successful in school, work, and life. According to the California Department of Education’s Expanded Learning Division, “there is a growing body of research proving that social and emotional learning (SEL) is fundamental to academic success, and must be woven into the work of every teacher in every classroom and every after school and summer enrichment program, if we truly want to prepare all our students for college and careers.” (When we refer to “SEL”, we are also referring to social emotional skills). As noted in figure 1, all states have developed SEL educational standards or goals.



Figure 1 (Credit: CASEL)

Beyond teachers in a classroom, youth workers should provide opportunities for students to learn social emotional and character skills. According to Julia Rugg at WINGS for Kids, “we believe that afterschool programs are well-positioned to directly teach social-emotional skills like self-awareness and responsible decision-making. We see both value and opportunity in using the hours after school to help teach these critical skills to our most vulnerable kids—the students who need them most. We take advantage of the flexibility that afterschool offers to not only teach social-emotional skills but use the additional time it affords for kids to practice them and apply them in social and academic settings.”

The concept of social emotional learning has come to a frenzy in the past couple of years. Where does afterschool fit in to all of this? You would hope that we’d be right at the forefront. We’ve been doing this for years we know how to do it. – Karen Pittman, Forum for Youth Investment

ABOUT THIS PAPER

While we hear a lot about the “why” of SEL and character building, little is heard about the application (the “what” and “how”) within afterschool programs. Expanded learning practices need to be uplifted so that the field can begin to see what good character/SEL looks like.

This paper provides an overview of social emotional and character building skills. It goes on to provide examples of activities and practices for expanded learning programs provided for, and by, Expanded Learning Programs and Technical Assistance organizations. To identify expanded learning practices and activities, we reached out to organizations across California.

Each example will include a description of the submitting organization, a contact person within the organization, and a description of the practice or activity (i.e. purpose, time needed/frequency, target audience, and supporting resources).



To accompany this paper, we recommend reading the guide published by Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) entitled, *3 Signature SEL Practices Playbook*. This is an excellent companion piece that features tips for getting started, as well as SEL activities in 3 areas: Welcoming Rituals/Inclusion Activities, Engaging Practices, and Optimistic Closures.

DEFINITIONS AND FRAMEWORKS

There are several popular terms related to SEL and character skills including non-cognitive skills, soft skills, growth mindsets, grit, and citizenship. In addition, there are many definitions and frameworks related to SEL and character skills.

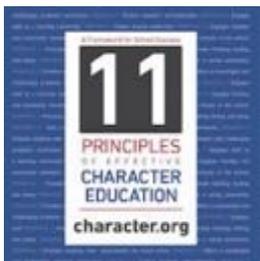
The most widely known SEL framework is used by [CASEL](#). They define SEL as “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.” See figure 2.





Figure 2

A leading resource for character education and skills is [Character.org](https://www.character.org). While they tend to focus on schools, much of the work is relevant to expanded learning programs.



They define **Character education** as “addressing many tough issues in education while developing a positive school climate. Educators from a diverse array of schools have transformed their school cultures, reduced discipline referrals, increased academic achievement for all learners, developed global citizens, and improved job satisfaction and retention among teachers. Character education includes and complements a broad range of educational approaches such as [whole child education](#), service

learning, social-emotional learning, and civic education. All share a commitment to helping young people become responsible, caring, and contributing citizens”.

Many expanded learning programs rely on the skills framework developed by the Partnership for Children and Youth and the Expanded Learning 360°/365 project, which integrates research on SEL, character education and youth development. Their framework presents three areas of skills: We Are, We Belong, We Can. See Figure 3.





Figure 3 (Credit: Partnership for Children and Youth)

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADULT STAFF AND THEIR OWN SKILLS

Dr. Dale Blyth, University of Minnesota, emphasizes that social emotional skills are “taught” through direct instruction and “caught” through adult modeling and the program values and culture. We know that the success of any program to promote social emotional and character skills is partially dependent on the social emotional and character skills of the adult leaders.

Below is a reflection from Stu Semigran, Founder of EduCare Foundation, on the importance of adult staff and their social emotional skills.

We can only truly teach or impact our students in the value and competencies of SEL to the degree that SEL is becoming part of our own repertoire... our own way of being. As we commit to our personal SEL self-development, this naturally influences our instructional practices, programs, and decisions.

SEL becomes more than a collection of lesson plans, activities, or programs. It becomes a way of teaching... a way of being... a way of living. Then we as role models can deeply assist our students as they evolve in their own mastery of SEL. This has implications for how we hire and provide professional development.

“Whoever our students may be, whatever subject we teach, ultimately we teach who we are.” - Author, Educator and Activist Parker Palmer

There are a variety of valuable SEL skills that can be addressed through staff professional development. EduCare Foundation teaches “Eight Skills for Heartset® Education”. Some of these include tools for self-awareness, mindfulness, self-forgiveness, and empathetic listening. When these and other SEL skills are personalized and become our baseline, then we are more equipped to create an SEL styled climate with SEL curriculum and activities that can really “stick with” and impact our students. Perhaps the first step in this ongoing process of the adult leaders as students of SEL is taking care of ourselves. As we develop a deeper positive regard (honoring and caring) for ourselves, then we can have a mindset and a heartset that really sees the best in our students and their aspirations. This personal foundation of SEL leads to becoming a more effective SEL spark and influencer for our kids.

“With SEL-focused training that helps providers better understand and develop their own SEL skills, they can intentionally model SEL for kids, find teachable moments in everyday activities, and simply be the supportive and caring adult that all kids need.”- National AfterSchool Association

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

In *Kernels of Practice for SEL: Low-Cost, Low-Burden Strategies*, the authors state, “A number of barriers undermine efforts to bring SEL programming to scale and these barriers are likely exacerbated in low-income and low-resource contexts.” Below we list some of the challenges and barriers faced by expanded learning programs that seek to promote SEL, many of which are cited in this paper.

- **Expanding Expectations:** As we learn more about the needs and challenges faced by young people, and the skills needed to succeed, our expectations of expanded learning programs continue to grow. Due to this, and the increased access to information via the internet, program leaders are becoming increasingly overwhelmed.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Due to poor fidelity and an inability to implement program initiatives as designed, programs are becoming inconsistent.
- **Limited Local Buy-in:** Due to lack of autonomy and communication with parents and other stakeholders, there is limited local buy-in.
- **Lack of Financial, Personnel, and Structural Resources** (e.g. high cost of materials, extensive time required for adult training/PD): According to Brandon Sportel, The Rio Lindo After School Program, “A challenge is lack of funding to pay for trainings. Many after school programs are not budgeted for additional training hours. This is unfortunate because opportunities to meet and analyze data, create action plans, and provide new systems of prompting greatly impacts student benefit.”
- **Poor Integration into Program Practice:** Often SEL and character building are seen as “extra-curricular” or as an add-on to existing programs. Eric Gurna at LA’s BEST states, “We believe you have to weave SEL into everything we do – rather than look at SEL as a stand-alone activity or club. We have incorporated SEL activities within many trainings and meetings we provide, as a means to also explore the connections we share among staff and colleagues.”
- **Low Sustainability:** Often SEL and character building initiatives in expanded learning programs are not continued or used consistently over time. Sustainability requires a serious commitment of provider organizations and program leaders. See below.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMITMENT AND IN-DEPTH PLANNING

To address many of the challenges and barriers cited above, it is important for the provider organization to commit to the work of focusing their programs on social emotional learning and character building. The approach to infuse SEL and character building into all facets of the organization requires more than a one-shot training or staff discussion. Rather, this requires a longer process that includes:

- **Building Awareness and Understanding** – To do this, it is important that program leaders select a framework (see above) and its language before efforts to build awareness. Program leaders may wish to review [Student Success Comes Full Circle](#). It details six social emotional and character skills that expanded learning programs can help develop in young people.
- **Naming Skills and Exploring the Meaning of These Skills** – Can you specifically name the social-emotional and character skills that are important to the program—skills that the program is committed to? How important are these things and to whom are they important? Can leaders and staff write down three things a young person would say or do if they were practicing these skills? Are these skills best “[taught](#)” or “[caught](#)”? These are just some of the questions a program should explore when discussing SEL and character skills.
- **Building on What You Do** – Can leaders and staff name program activities and practices that already support specific social-emotional and character skills? You can make use of this [online self-reflection survey](#) for your staff.
- **Aligning with Quality Standards** – Several organizations and state networks have developed quality standards for expanded learning programs. In California, implementing the [quality standards](#) brings about SEL/Character skills. Ask: how do our quality standards align with the social-emotional and character skills? For instance, how do efforts to create a safe and supportive environment support social-emotional and character skills?
- **Collecting and Using Data** – Many programs collect data to provide feedback regarding program quality. Feedback can be in the form of observations, reflections, and/or self-assessments completed by program staff. Data can also be collected from youth participants, their families, and/or other stakeholders and partners. What does your data on program quality tell you about the state of social-emotional and character skills in your programs?
- **Program Improvement** – As expected, improving a program requires planning and identifying and implementing new strategies. For example, organizations can introduction of new program activities, revise a mission statement, add additional staff development, amend hiring practices, and so forth. Institute intentional changes and determine if they make a difference.

Leaders who are designing programs to promote SEL and character building would be advised to review the work of researchers Joseph Durlak and Roger Weissberg. They identified four characteristics of effective afterschool programs that promote social and emotional learning. The four characteristics (SAFE) are:

- **Sequenced**- an intentional, step-by-step and sequential approach
- **Active** - emphasizes active forms of learning so that youth can practice new skills
- **Focused** - an intentional focus specific time and attention on skill building activities
- **Explicit** - clearly defined SEL goals

“We’ve aligned our program to the SAFE framework to ensure we are infusing intentionality throughout our activities and our curriculum”. – Julia Rugg, WINGS FOR KIDS

You can view their full report [here](#).

RESOURCES

In addition to the resources recommended by those who submitted activities and practices, we have gathered many resources (e.g. blogs, reports, videos), which can be found [here](#).



SEL ACTIVITIES, PRACTICES, AND RESOURCES

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

[EduCare Foundation](#) implements comprehensive daily Extended Learning Programs on the campuses of 18 high schools and 1 middle school, serving over 30,000 students in the greater Los Angeles area each year. In addition, EduCare implements 3-day ACE Student Success Program at 35 schools throughout Los Angeles, reaching over 5,000 youth each year.

Contact Person Stu Semigran; stu@educarefoundation.com

Activity Purpose Using creative visualizations and positive statements (affirmations) to create a growth mindset and support self-awareness and self-regulation.

Target Audience Youth, grades 6-12, as well as our staff, classroom teachers, and parent groups

Activity Description Guided Visualizations around a particular theme: there are a variety of mindfulness and centering practices we enjoy using and have found valuable.



Examples/themes include:

- **Gratefulness**- students close their eyes and review on an imaginary movie screen, images of who and what they are grateful for or appreciate - friends, family members, their health, people who support or inspire them, opportunities they have at school or elsewhere, etc.
- **Performance Success**- using the technique of “Mental Dress Rehearsal”, similar to what high performing athletes and performers do as they prepare for a performance event. The students close their eyes and bring awareness to relaxing their breathing and then move onto a simple internal awareness check of how they were presently doing - physically, with feelings (emotionally), and with the flow of their thoughts (mentally). On an imaginary movie screen, each would be invited to imagine themselves prior to their performance event (athletic competition, high stakes test, etc.). They would see on the screen their typical responses: body tightening up; stomach knotting up; breathing tensing up; negative mental chatter like “ I am about to fail”, etc. In their imagination, they then walk over to their imaginary screen and see themselves placing a big “X” across that fixed mind set image. Instantly that image would be replaced by one of seeing themselves as relaxed, prepared, and even enthused prior to the performance event. Where previously there was anxiety, they now see themselves with full confidence.

Time Needed/Frequency 3-5 minutes each

Resources/Materials

[Making the Best of Me: A Handbook for Student Excellence and Self-Esteem](#)

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

The [Ever Forward Club](#) works with boys and young men to promote greater self awareness and awareness of others - both critical components to social emotional learning and character building. Their efforts include work in schools and trainings of educators and youth workers. They were also featured in a documentary entitled *The Mask You Live In*.



Contact Email everforwardclub@gmail.com

Activity Purpose The purpose of this activity is to promote self-awareness, a sense of belonging, and greater awareness of others. (This activity is a part of the #100kMasks Challenge. This global campaign is awakening people all over the world to realize that they are not alone and to see and learn how much we have in common but we often miss because we keep it locked away inside. To participate in this campaign, see below).

Target Audience Adolescents, grades 6-12

Activity Description Youth are given a handout (see [website](#)) and asked to follow 3 steps anonymously. They are also asked to keep their eyes on their own paper.

1. Draw a mask on the left side.
2. Write 3 words on the front of the mask that represent qualities they let people see.
3. Write 3 words on the back of the mask that represent the things they don't usually let people see.

Adult leaders collect the masks and then have a few volunteers read a few of the responses anonymously. Youth are then invited to share how it felt hearing about the front and back of the masks of their peers. This would be a good time to discuss their commonalities and differences. Deeper processes can be created depending on the level of safety that has been generated in the room.

NOTE: If the adult leader feels that the class is not prepared to share out masks based on the level of safety that has been generated then the adult leader can collect the masks and show masks from all over the world from our [website](#).

Time Needed 10 minutes - 30 minutes (depending on time available and depth of conversation)

#100kMasks Challenge This campaign has been facilitated across the world and regardless of the country, age, gender, or the socio-economic background of the participants, we are clear that there are parts of ourselves that we do not share with others, and many of those things are the blockages between building healthy relationships and communities.

To participate, adult leaders who use this process are asked to submit all their masks by [email](#); by Text (510-854-6794); or by Postal Mail (Ever Forward - 100kMasks, 1714 Franklin St. #100-337, Oakland, CA 94612-3409).

How Does This Impact Programs? The impact on adult leaders around the world is that their students gain a new sense of connection and realization that regardless of what they are going through... They Are Not Alone!

Resources/Materials

[Learn more](#)

[Mask Gallery](#)

[The Mask You Live In Documentary Trailer](#)

[#100kMasks Launch Video](#)

[Taking Off The Mask Workshop](#)

**Thousands of masks are in...
from all around the world!**

Will you join the movement?

everforwardclub.org/100kmasks

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

Camp EDMO is a Pre-K-8th grade STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) and SEL (Social Emotional Learning) program that implements the latest research-informed methods of whole-child development. The core character traits we aim to build are Curiosity, Courage and Kindness. In order to achieve this goal, kids learn to develop four mindsets and practice six SEL skills while they engineer buildings, code applications, or hike through nature.

Contact Person Eduardo Caballero, Executive Director, ed@campedmo.org

Activity Purpose Build empathy, emotion vocabulary, emotion management.

Target Audience We do them in groups of 15-20 kids in grades Pre-K-5th grade.



Activity Description Kimochi Dolls - We use Kimochi dolls with all our age groups. Each doll has a personality archetype that kids can relate to. The dolls come with curriculum and additional tools to help kids build vocabulary around their feelings, and empathy for others

Feeling Pillows: The Kimochi kits come with a bag of plush little pillows, each that have a face and an emotion word. Kids pull out a pillow from the bag and the other kids try to guess what feeling they are conveying with their face and body language. Kids explain why they think they are that feeling. What are the clues. The "feeling" child then reveals their feeling. You can take the activity further by then leading a discussion about when is an instance in your life that actually made you feel that way. This activity can be done even without the kit. You can write a bunch of feeling words and put them in any container.

Time Needed/Frequency We do Kimochi activities for about 20 minutes each day at camp. They are typically done sitting in a circle. We usually use them to start our "Team Time" hour of the day when we focus on doing activities that build SEL skills and teamwork.

Resources/Materials You can learn more about how to use and purchase the Kimochi dolls and the related curriculum [here](#).

How Did This Impact Your Program? We noticed kids were able to regulate their emotions better, resolve or avoid disputes, and play nicer with each other after using the dolls.

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

LA's BEST is an after school enrichment program serving 25,000 elementary students ages five to twelve in 198 schools in the most economically distressed neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles.

Contact Person Zachary Wilson, Director of Staff Development, zacharyw@lasbest.lausd.net

Activity Purpose The use of Sanford Harmony cards enhances the emotionally safe environment that LA's BEST strives to provide and sustain across all aspects of our programming. These resources allow for our students to share their thoughts and feelings in a safe, healthy setting that they may not be comfortable sharing anywhere else.



Target Audience Youth Pre-K through 6th grade

Activity Description Sanford Harmony Everyday Practices and Quick Connection Cards provide engaging questions and activities to explore with a "buddy". The students then get to know each other and connect, which prepares them to handle future challenges and conflicts and opportunities to collaborate in a meaningful and constructive way. Sanford Harmony also provides recommendations

of how and why to pair students together. The "Meet Up" strategy provides a way to strengthen a program's daily routine by incorporating practices that allow the entire group of students to explore how they treat each other and how they communicate with one another.

Time Needed/Frequency Each activity can vary in length, ranging from 5 to 20+ minutes, depending on if/how the facilitator/staff is comfortable expanding. We do these activities every day or on a regular, consistent basis (e.g. 2-3 times per week) – again varies per site/staff.

How Did This Impact Your Program? We have heard stories from students using this program, that they enjoy carrying the questions, conversations and activities into their interactions with friends and families at home.

These resources have been most valuable to LA's BEST, because they have allowed us to enhance how we weave SEL into everything we do – rather than look at SEL as a stand-alone activity or club. With this program, staff are able to integrate these resources within their programs, and innovate with them beyond our initial recommendations. For example, staff now utilize the cards to support transition times – when groups of students move from one activity or space to another. Staff have also found the cards beneficial during homework time, when some students get done with their assignments before everyone else is finished.



Target Audience Adult Workers Sanford Harmony Cards have also supported our organizational goal of providing professional development opportunities for staff, in which they are able to experience first-hand the power of self-reflection and the benefits of exploring the Sanford Harmony questions and activities. Various internal teams/departments at LA's BEST have included Sanford Harmony Cards within team/department meetings to establish the tone (a.k.a. ice-breaker).

We have integrated this program as part of our basic staff trainings, specific to establishing positive learning environments, activity planning (e.g. program development) and homework support – in addition to some of our leadership focused trainings that involve establishing teamwork and a sense of belonging. Senior leadership has used it with their development team as a way to get to know each other and highlight a site practice.



Time Needed/Frequency We typically do this at least once a month at our Staff Development Team meetings.

Resources/Materials Sanford Harmony Everyday Practices and Quick Connection Cards - [Sanford Harmony](#) is a social emotional learning program, cultivating strong relationships between elementary students with SEL education. Sanford Harmony has been APPROVED by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, & Emotional Learning (CASEL) as a "SElect" program for Pre-K through 6th grades. Click [here](#) to view the Sanford Harmony Evaluation Guide 2018.

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

Rio Lindo After School Program was created through partnerships between schools and local community resources to provide literacy, academic enrichment and safe constructive alternatives for students in grades 2nd – 5th grade.

Contact Person Brandon Sportel at helloyelloteam@gmail.com

Activity Purpose Provide every student with a confidential line of communication to at least one trusted adult in our program. Research shows that every student must have at least one adult in their lives that they can trust to reach their potential for positive growth and achievement. In addition, the practice of identifying and being aware of feelings supports the student's ability for emotional regulation, reasoning, and using resources to get their needs met.

Target Audience Students in grades 2nd – 5th grade

Time Needed/Frequency The Check In System is versatile and can be implemented to meet the unique needs of each site. Students are able to check in whenever they want, and many sites also have a regularly scheduled check in, 2-5 times per week. We recommend students be encouraged to check in during their regular school day but not from home.



Activity Description Using the HelloYello (HY) Check In App, we have successfully provided every student with a confidential line of communication to at least one trusted adult in our programs. Students now have a voice in their programming, safety, and achievement. By allowing students to be heard, we have ensured that each child has an adult mentor that they can contact at anytime to express their daily experiences, struggles, and accomplishments.

Most of the check in submissions need only a silent gesture or a few words of encouragement to close the loop. Several typically result in a brief one-on-one talk to sort through a difficult experience, and a very few require a team approach. One challenge is lack of access to technology. Although the HY Check In system also provides pencil/paper versions, the web application allows for a more immediate response.

How Did This Impact Your Program? Just by simply "knowing" what a student is experiencing in their daily life provides a unique bond. Students who experience a trusting relationship will let the adult know when they need advice. Allowing the student to decide leads to empowerment and independence. Amazingly, relationships build in trust with only a few strategic staff actions.

The overall difference in the programs since the implementation of the HY Check In App is improved school climate and student "connectedness" to the program. In addition, students have learned how to be aware of their feelings and needs, and how to get those needs met. Evidentiary data is being provided to help students with counseling needs, resulting in additional resources for the program. Data is also being provided to make changes based upon student interests and qualities, such as mindfulness, arts, science, and sports activities.

The students demonstrate increased personal empowerment and higher levels of trust in their relationships with program staff. They express feeling safe, confident, and cared for. They are motivated to check-in because it's confidential. The program is better at meeting the social-emotional needs of students. Students are opening up about their feelings, thoughts, and experiences. In addition to increasing levels of trust, this has resulted in potential conflicts between students being handled proactively, e.g. bullying, perceived slights, and "group drama".



Target Audience Adult Staff To prepare adult staff to successfully use the Hello Yello app, staff participate in three trainings. The first training teaches staff the function and logistics of using the web app and optional paper forms. It also prepares them in how to provide an introductory lesson for students. The second training is focused on: how and when to respond to submissions, using actual student submissions from the school site as examples. A range of possible responses are reviewed and discussed, from quick gestural prompts to emergency situations when other team members need to be involved. The focus is on how "closing the loop" with an interpersonal response creates positive, trusting relationships, and how the adult response motivates students to continue checking in. The third training provides a model for staff on forming a data team to analyze responses and create action plans, as well as teaching how to elicit specific data from students by using customized writing prompts for students.

Time Needed/Frequency Implementing the Check In System requires three, one-hour training modules. We usually suggest that the trainings be spread out over 3 months to allow teams to grow with each successive step.

How Did This Impact Your Program? The staff is able to maximize teaching opportunities when students let them know the social and emotional issues they are facing before problems develop to the point of forcing a disciplinary response. They are also able to demonstrate increasing confidence in supporting students and are excited to see themselves growing in their role as adult mentors. They have expressed that they feel more connected to their students, and have more understanding and empathy toward the "whole child" and able to serve as positive adult role models

Challenges Ensuring that staff have time to follow through and meet each student's social-emotional and academic needs is a frequently expressed concern for the Check In system; The app is designed to make it easy for staff to complete the entire communication loop without taking time away from performing regular duties.

Advice for staff Have an open mind about responding to student needs. A person may have to let go of stereotypes and beliefs about child behavior associated with their own experiences within their families, communities, and schools to accept student differences. Also, be ready to get feedback from the students. In some cases the feedback is positive and encouraging, but it can also expose areas of improvement for your program. Having an open mind is essential for taking your program to a higher level of excellence.

Resources/Materials You can learn more about the Rio Lindo After School program [here](#). You can learn more about the Hello Yello app [here](#). You can view a list of videos [here](#). Teaching how to prompt for more specific info:

- [Check in prompts](#)
- [Ten ways to use the Check-In system](#)

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

After-School All-Stars is a national after-school workforce development program in supporting Title 1 middle school youth. We strive to help youth continue to develop growth mindsets after school, whether in their interpersonal social relationships and/or in their career exploration. We ask them how they can support each other and contribute to the communities they are a part of. We help guide them towards a potential path of action to take in bringing them closer to reaching their goals and dreams.

Contact Person Namrata Gupta; ED; ASAS Bay Area; namrata.gupta@afterschoolallstars.org

Activity Purpose This practice promotes self-awareness, social awareness, and team building. In terms of character building, it teaches members to be independent, proactive, and problem-solvers as well as collaborative. They adopt growth mindsets and it increases their sense of self- efficacy.

Target Audience Middle School Youth

Activity Description Youth Advisory Board - We have a Youth Advisory Board (Yabbies) at each of our school sites that is comprised of youth leaders, who work together to enhance the experience of our after school programs. Eight students sit on the board (four 8th, two 7th and two 6th graders). They help our site coordinator plan events and advocate for their peers.

We recommend that a selection criteria and application be developed so that students are clear of the expectations of sitting on the board. And that students from different sub-communities in your program are scouted to apply, in an effort to insure that all students feel represented. We also recommend looking at the existing student leadership structures at the school-site to ensure that different students are chosen to lead-not on both the Student Council and Youth Advisory Board.

Time Needed/Frequency

The Youth Advisory Board meets weekly on Wednesdays for 45 minutes. Site coordinators help train and support our Youth Advisory Board members.

How Has This Impacted Your Program? Our Yabbies have helped build culture and awareness of our program by inviting student input into our programming model and providing leadership opportunities to keep our program relevant to the needs and desires of our student community.

Resources/Materials

From Temescal Associates –

- [Creating and Sustaining a Thriving Youth Advisory Council](#)
- [YOUTH POWER! Starting a Youth Advisory Council](#)
- Advocates for Youth [Tips for Creating Effective Youth Advisory Councils](#)
- San Diego District Attorney – Community Programs [A Youth Advisory Board Handbook](#)



EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

WINGS For Kids operates direct service programs in elementary schools and serves 1,100 amazing kids every day through our afterschool program. We seek to empower others with social emotional learning best practices through professional development workshops and partnership opportunities. Our evidence-based approach fosters the mindset, skills, and confidence children need to behave well, make good decisions, and build healthy relationships.

Contact Email hello@wingsforkids.org

Activity Purpose Integration of SEL throughout program

Target Audience K-5

Activity Description Our staff first explicitly teach, then model and reinforce, a social- emotional skill each week. This intentional naming of the social emotional skill of the week is key! Next, kids learn, then practice and discuss, the new skills through program activities. As an example, let's use one of our objectives in the self-management competency—helping kids focus their attention inward in order to limit outward distraction.



The day begins with *Community Unity*, the coming together of all staff and kids in grades K-5, for announcements and a social-emotional skill-building lesson. This part of the day offers an opportunity to talk in a focused and active way about the week's objective and engage in a brief, fun activity that relates to it. For example, WINGS Leaders may lead an exercise on active breathing, and the program director starts a focused large-group discussion and asks staff and kids to share examples of when they have gotten distracted.

Choice Time is an enrichment activity that students select each semester and where social-emotional lessons are woven in. During a kickball game, for example, a WINGS Leader might talk about how to concentrate on ignoring the shouts from the sidelines to better focus on the game. This also gives kids the chance to continue practicing other skills they've previously learned, such as sharing supportive comments after a bad kick and keeping a positive attitude even if their team is losing. In this way, Choice Time encourages kids to apply both new and recently developed social emotional skills.

Time Needed/Frequency 3 hours per day, Monday-Friday, throughout the entire school year

How Has This Impacted Your Program? WINGS has instituted a thorough evaluation of their program. Click [here](#) for an interim report of their RCT evaluation.

Resources/Materials For resources and free materials, click [here](#). Here is the link for our "[A Day in the Life](#)" video.

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

The **POWER program at Pioneer school** is a program designed to encourage the individual growth of every child through a variety of diverse learning styles. Our goal is the development of the **WHOLE** child, one who has learned the skills necessary to succeed in a variety of academic and physical activities, and one who appreciates the value that education and wellness brings to their quality of life.

Contact Person Erika Chavez, EChavez@duesd.org

Activity #1: Purpose Self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness

Activity #1: Target Audience 2nd- 8th grade

Activity #1: Description I have been practicing mindfulness with my students for 3 years now. Mindfulness is a mental state achieved by focusing one's own awareness on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.



I needed a visual way for my students to understand what mindfulness was and the purpose it had. It all began with an activity from *Mindfulness in Afterschool: A 16-Session Curriculum* that involved a pretty Fiji water bottle full with water and glitter. I showed them the still water bottle with the glitter resting at the bottom of it. I asked them if they were able to see through the water bottle and of course their response was "yes" since the water was clear and calm.

After I shook the entire water bottle, I then asked them again, "can you see through the water bottle now?" They all responded "no" with such wonder in their eyes. I then explained to them how that water bottle was our brain and the glitter represented our thoughts. When I introduced mindfulness to them, I explained how it was a powerful tool to help us calm that glitter down in our brains so that we could be able to clear our waters in order to make wise decisions. They then understood how it all worked and they were all motivated to calm their glitter. [See "[Just Breathe](#)" video].

Activity #1: Time Needed/Frequency

I would recommend at least a minimum of 25-30 minutes. I like to engage the students while introducing this new concept to them and also answer any questions they might have.

Activity #1: How Did This Impact Your Program?

Best part is seeing them tell one another, "calm your glitter, you need to relax and make better choices". I've seen them grab the water bottle and take it to that student so they can be reminded of what's going on. It's seriously amazing!

Activity #1: Resources/Materials

[New Horizon - Meditation & Relaxing Music](#)

[Mindfulness in Afterschool: A 16-Session Curriculum](#)

[Inner Explorer](#)



Activity #2: Purpose The purpose of this mindfulness activity is to center the kids back to a state of awareness, it allows them to unwind and relax down. This then results in a better focus when returning back to our learning activities and an improved behavior.

Activity #2: Target Audience 2nd- 8th grade

Activity #2: Description I have them all lay down on the floor with their eyes closed and focus on their breathing. At first, there was one or two students who couldn't stay calm but what's new, right? However, those few students who couldn't seem to settle down began to slowly sink into the activity.



Activity #2: Time Needed/Frequency 15 minutes

Activity #2: How Did This Impact Your Program? Mindfulness has allowed us as a group to come together and form a bond of understanding, kindness and support. Now they even come to me asking if we can please meditate! Especially when they're hyper, that's when I realize they ask for it the most. I've seen some students mature, others striving to be better, and I've heard others open up with very intimate things that were weighing them down.

Activity #2: Resources/Materials Children guided meditations and also Mindful Games activity cards (can be found on Amazon).

[New Horizon - Meditation & Relaxing Music](#)
[Mindfulness in Afterschool: A 16-Session Curriculum](#)
[Inner Explorer](#)
[Greater Good Science Center](#)

I would recommend a water bottle with glitter and also a "Mindfulness Bell", which helps incorporate a better awareness to their breathing.

EXPANDED LEARNING PROGRAM

[Oakland Leaf](#) provides intentional programming to support youth's: physical, social and emotional well-being, academic success, and ability to be active and effective leaders in their community.

Contact Person Johanna Masis, Program Director, Oakland Leaf Foundation

Activity Purpose Cyphers are used as a space to do intentional community building in the form of having a discussion on any topic. The Cypher is meant to serve as an emotionally safe place for each participant to say their piece without interruption or judgment.

Target Audience K-12 grades

Activity Description

Participants are gathered in a circle for the Cypher. To break the ice, they can share a value they wish bring to the first few Cyphers. People do not have to speak but are expected to hold the talking piece for 5-10 seconds before passing the talking piece. If youth are



reluctant to share because of the social dynamics, then "passing" should be adjusted to mean that we will come back to them as opposed to not hearing from them at all. If there are people absent on the day of a Cypher, then a place is still held for them in the circle.

Make sure that if chairs are used, then everyone must have a chair. If you are sitting on the floor, then everyone sits on the floor. Everyone should be able to see each other. Sitting in the circle diminishes hierarchy and overall power dynamics. Include: a centerpiece where youth may focus their attention; a talking piece that can be brought by the facilitator or made by the group; and something from nature (a plant, glass/bowl of water) to remind us that we are connected to the earth. I have seen youth bring a toy or a picture of their families to the circle as an offering to the group during the Cypher.

Time Needed/Frequency Cyphers are encouraged to happen at least once a week and many of our programs calendar them in so that youth know when they will occur.

How Did This Impact Your Program? The benefits of this practice include increased familiarity with people's stories, empathy building, idea sharing, harm repair, healing for the individual who is hurting, and compassion building. We have seen the culture of programs completely shift to be more inclusive, communicative, and forgiving as a result of implementing these practices. Youth eventually come to name the need and will request a Cypher or lead Cyphers on their own. Our afterschool staff have been asked to lead Cyphers during the regular school day because they have seen how it has impacted our youth in such positive ways.

Resources/Materials

[Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice](#)

[SEEDS: Cultivating community, transforming conflict](#)

[Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth](#)

[Learning in Afterschool & Summer \(LIAS\) Blog](#)

[Restorative Justice at Oakland's Fremont High School \(video\)](#)

ORGANIZATION OFFERING TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

Coaching Corps is an intermediary organization that believes that every young person living in underserved communities deserves a trained, caring coach. We are building a movement of coaches across the country by partnering with after school programs and recruiting volunteers. All our coaches receive evidence-based training in youth development, coaching skills, and social emotional learning, as well as ongoing support through mentoring.

Contact Person Suzanne Sillett, Director of Education and Quality;
suzannes@coachingcorps.org

Activity Purpose Our Coaching for Character training and support program specifically focuses on four character attributes - persistence, optimism, self-regulation, and empathy.

Target Audience Adult Staff



Activity Description Coaching for Character begins with a coach participating in our 2.5 hour training. In this training, coaches first learn the four POSE (persistence, optimism, self-regulation, and empathy) character attributes and how to identify the attributes in their athletes. Next, coaches are introduced to the character building framework and participate in a coaching demonstration to fully experience it in action. Finally, coaches apply the framework by planning their own practice so they can immediately go back to their team and implement this new knowledge.

We provide our support virtually in order for coaches to be able to access it at any time that is convenient for them. We have a network of coaches who have attended the training who then join our Coaching for Character Facebook group. In the group coaches get support from our Coach Development Staff and also can connect with fellow coaches. We are currently in the process of building our own Coach Portal where coaches will access mentoring support, discussion groups and resources.

Time Needed/Frequency 2.5 hour training

How Did This Impact Your Program? “Even after just one practice, there have been a number of parents offering highly complimentary feedback for the use of skills that we received in the Coaching for Character training. It was also quite enjoyable to see the players responding to the use of these skills in such a positive fashion. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to experience the Coaching for Character training and have been utilizing it for more than just basketball or sports and included those skills in our home family life and in other aspects of my life as well.” - Coach & Parent Zac, training participant Chico Area Recreation Department

ORGANIZATION OFFERING TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

CalSAC helps build an out-of-school time workforce (such as before school, afterschool and summer learning) that is filled with strong mentors and highly skilled practitioners who reflect the communities they serve. Through collaboration and innovation, our network creates ripple effects of opportunity, equity and transformation throughout California, both for professionals and the young people they serve.

Contact Person Selena Levy, Program Manager; slevy@calsac.org

Activity Purpose This practice contributes to staff and youth's interpersonal skills. It creates an opportunity for everyone to learn more about one another and create community.

Target Audience This practice can be applied to both youth and adults.

Activity Description Regular Check Ins is an intentional space created for staff and youth to share how they are showing up in that space. Participants typically sit or stand in a circle during the check in. We typically ask for a volunteer to start and then choose a direction for us to go in that order (right or left). The information shared allows everyone in the room to understand what may be going on for them and honor that each individual may be coming into the space with varying life experiences. This allows everyone to see each other more wholly and create safety for people to be authentic in the space. We recommend creating an opportunity for everyone to lead the check-in. (From Temescal Associates: It is recommended that each speaker holds a talking piece, such as a feather or item chosen by the group. The talking piece is held by the person speaking and then passed around the circle. Those not holding the talking piece are engaged in active listening.)



Time Needed/Frequency The practice of regular check-ins can be before the start of program or a meeting and last 10-15 minutes.

How Did This Impact Your Program? We've seen youth providers better able to respond to youth's needs or behaviors based on understanding how they are showing up in programs. Similarly, we've seen supervisors better able to support their staff when they are more fully aware of what a staff person is bringing in to the program. It also helps create a safe and supportive environment when space is created for folks to share about what is happening in their life and how it's impacting how they are showing up in their work and/or program.

Resources/Materials

[Learning in Afterschool & Summer \(LIAS\) Blog - The Power of Sharing Circles](#)

[Learning in Afterschool & Summer \(LIAS\) Blog - Sharing Circles: Cyphers](#)

[Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles](#) - This is a comprehensive curriculum guide that offers an overview, prompts, lesson plans, and other resources.

[What is Morning Meeting?](#)

[Morning Meeting Book](#)

[Sample Prompting Questions/Topics for Circles](#)

[Tribes Learning Community](#) - This website offers a number of useful books and other resources.

ORGANIZATION OFFERING TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE

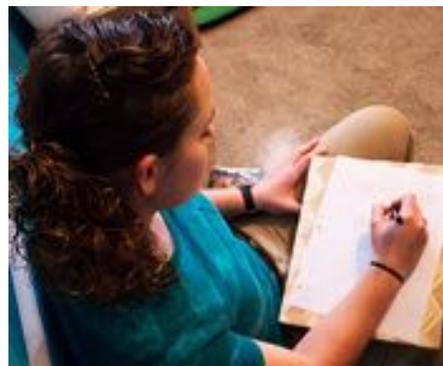
[The Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley](#) (GGSC) sponsors groundbreaking scientific discoveries—and turns them into stories, tips, and tools for a happier life and more compassionate society. Not only does it foster groundbreaking scientific research into social and emotional well-being, it also helps people apply this research to their personal and professional lives. **Note:** This material originally appeared on [Greater Good in Action](#), a product of the [Greater Good Science Center](#) at UC Berkeley.

Contact Email greater@berkeley.edu

Activity#1: Purpose Beyond helping students *recognize* the good, Three Good Things invites them to reflect on how they help bring it about, fostering a sense of personal control.

Activity#1: Target Audience Ages 8-11, but it can be adapted to other age groups.

Activity#1: Description Three Good Things In this activity, guide students to complete the [Three Good Things](#) practice. Explain to students that they will be keeping a diary for a week in which they will record three good things that happened to them each day and an explanation of how they achieved or contributed to the good things. Try to encourage them to really think deeply about these positive things.



First, ask students to think about “three good things that have happened to you today.” If they are having difficulty focusing their attention on positive experiences, you can prompt them by directing them to situations where they tried their best, overcame a difficulty, helped a peer in a certain way, or did well in class. (You can also suggest a quick brainstorming session in pairs or groups of three.) Some possible prompts include:

- “Think about when you helped a friend today”
- “Think about when you did something nice for someone or someone did something nice for you”
- “Think about when you tried your best at something today”
- “Think about something you did that made you feel really good about yourself”
- “Think about a difficult situation that worked out well in the end”

Then, ask the students to write down what they did in each instance that contributed to the “good thing.” For a full write up of this activity, its full impact, and relevant research, click [here](#). If there is time, after students have written their three good things and their explanations in their diaries, they can talk about one of the good things that happened to them with a peer. This will hopefully encourage them to focus on why the good thing happened and reinforce positive thinking.

Activity#1: Time Needed/Frequency This activity is designed to take one week but this can be amended. Time needed per day is 30 minutes.

Activity#1: How Did This Impact Your Program? By writing down good things that happen to them each day, students are effectively practicing how to remember and recall positive experiences. This could help positive memories come to mind more easily and spontaneously, researchers speculate. Many positive experiences involve other people, so Three Good Things may also remind students of the fun, supportive, and kind people in their life.

Activity#1: Resources/Materials For a full write up of this activity, its full impact, and relevant research, click [here](#).



Activity#2: Purpose Assist young people in becoming aware of and expressing gratitude.

Activity#2: Target Audience This activity is suitable for students in grades 3-12, although you may choose to adapt the instructions for younger age groups.

Activity #2: Description Gratitude Letter: In this activity, you will guide students to complete the Gratitude Letter practice, where they write a letter of thanks and then try to deliver it in person.



To introduce the activity, the following script may be helpful:

Most everyone enjoys thanks for a job well done or for a favor done for a friend, and most of us remember to say “thank you” to others. But sometimes our “thank you” is said so casually or quickly that it is nearly meaningless.

In this activity, you will have the opportunity to express your gratitude in a very thoughtful manner. Think of the people—parents, friends, coaches, teammates, and so on—who have been especially kind to you but whom you have never properly thanked. Choose one person you could meet individually for a face-to-face meeting in the next week.

Your task is to write a gratitude letter (a letter of thanks) to this individual and deliver it in person. The letter should be specific about what he or she did that affected your life. Make it sing! It is important that you meet him or her in person. Don’t tell this person, however, about the purpose of this meeting. This activity is much more fun when it is a surprise to the person you are thanking.

Activity#2: Time Needed/Frequency In studies, students worked on their Gratitude Letters for about an hour, spread across five different days in a two-week period. The writing could also be completed on a single day.

Activity#2: How Did This Impact Your Program? When we’re grateful toward others, we experience many benefits. Not only do we focus on and savor the good things in our life, but we also realize that someone cared about us enough to provide it for us. That can inspire us to feel better about ourselves, as well as strengthening our relationship to that person.

Activity#2: Resources/Materials For a full write up of this activity, its full impact, and relevant research, click [here](#).



Activity#3: Purpose Assist young people in becoming aware of and expressing gratitude.

Activity#3: Target Audience Grades 6-7, but it can be adapted to other age groups.

Activity#3: Description Gratitude Journal: While it's important to analyze and learn from bad events, sometimes we can think too much about what goes wrong and not enough about what goes right in our lives. A gratitude journal forces ourselves to pay attention to the good things in life we might otherwise take for granted. In that way, we start to become more attuned to the everyday sources of pleasure around us—and the emotional tone of our life can shift in profound ways. What's more, actually writing about these events is key: Research suggests translating thoughts into concrete language makes us more aware of them, deepening their emotional impact.

In this activity, you will guide students to complete the Gratitude Journal practice, where they make a list of things they feel grateful for.

To introduce the activity, the following prompt may be helpful: *Grateful or thankful is the feeling we get when something good happens to us. Many of us feel grateful for family, friends, or pets. Feeling grateful could also come from a time when someone helped you. An example could be that you were having difficulty understanding your homework. You asked your older brother or sister or a parent to help you. They spent some time with you helping you to understand the assignment. Think back over the past day and write down up to five things in your life that you are grateful or thankful for.*



Note: When teaching about gratitude in a school setting, it is important to keep in mind that students differ in terms of culture, race, socioeconomic status, and religious background. This may mean that they also differ in the way they express and practice gratitude, including verbal expressions, gestures, acts of kindness or caring, rituals, or gifts. Welcoming discussion of these and other differences will deepen students' understanding of gratitude.

In addition, the experience of gratitude may be challenging for children facing personal struggles, community suffering, or systemic inequality. Rather than simply encouraging them to “look on the bright side,” researchers Jeffrey Froh and Giacomo Bono suggest listening deeply, empathizing, and acknowledging their feelings. This can help them cultivate resilience, which—along with other qualities like self-compassion and hope—could help plant the seeds for gratefulness.

Activity#3: Time Needed/Frequency 20-30 minutes daily for at least one week

Activity#3: How Did This Impact Your Program? Students who have tried out this activity tend to express their gratitude for a variety of things, including friends and family, their teachers and school, and basic needs like food and clothing.

Activity#3: Resources/Materials For a full write up of this activity, its full impact, and relevant research, click [here](#).