

# Social-Emotional Learning at School

## Creating a Learning Environment that Promotes Well-being

Quality holistic learning for refugees  
and internally displaced children



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# AGENDA

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- Reconnection
- Building bonds *with your students*
- Establishing classroom rules *with your students*
- Playing *with your students*
- Facilitating and not leading discussions *with your students*
- Taking mental breaks *with your students*
- Taking care of yourself (for the sake of *your students!*)
- Closing reflections



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# Learning Objectives for today

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At the end of the day, you will be able to:

1. Discover and apply some practices to create a space conducive to quality holistic learning
2. Make the connection between the proposed activities, the well-being of the students and the development of their SEL skills.
3. Justify the importance of the well-being of teachers and propose some actions to support and encourage it.

# An object that grabs the attention & interest of students

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If you can make use of only one object, what would you use to grab the attention of your students and pique their interest?

Why?



Photo by [Santi Vedral](#) on [Unsplash](#)



# How do we ensure Quality Holistic Learning?



# Acknowledgments

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This material was developed using open resources, including:

- **Coach: Helping Countries Accelerate Learning by Improving In-Service Teacher Professional Development**

<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/teachers/brief/coach-helping-countries-accelerate-learning-by-improving-in-service-teacher-professional-development>

<https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/268121613971613659/foundational-teaching-skills>

- **Teachers in Crisis Contexts Training for Primary School Teachers (2016)**

<https://inee.org/resources/teachers-crisis-contexts-training-primary-school-teachers>

# Review

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**Social-emotional skills** allow students/people to manage their emotions, know themselves and interact with others.

These skills complement **academic skills** related to the ability to process information, problem solving and perseverance.

Research shows that these skills help students **achieve better** in school and have **more positive outcomes** in life.

What are the basic social-emotional competencies?



# Keep in mind!

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## You are the mirror of your students.

If you incorporate the daily practice of social-emotional skills into your own life you can transmit them well and accompany your students.

- Feel free to sing with them
- Feel free to breathe deeply with them
- Share your emotions and offer them a protective space to share their emotions and thoughts, too



# Building bonds with your students

# Group Discussion - Building bonds with the students

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- How can a strong relationship with a teacher help the student and teacher?
- What are you already doing in your classroom to build relationships with students?
- What helps you quickly learn your students' names?
- Why do you need to learn students' names?
- How do you learn names in overcrowded classrooms?

# Why do we need to connect with our students?

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Research shows that strong relationships with adults are one of the **protective factors** against the negative effects of persistent stress and trauma.



# Actions to connect with students

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In addition to **knowing their names**, it is important to:

-  **Greet**
  - Greet students by name when you see them.
-  **Know**
  - Get to know students more deeply by talking to them and asking them questions
-  **Encourage**
  - Congratulate students on their good performance
-  **Take an interest**
  - Show that you care about students' well-being, especially when you know that they need it

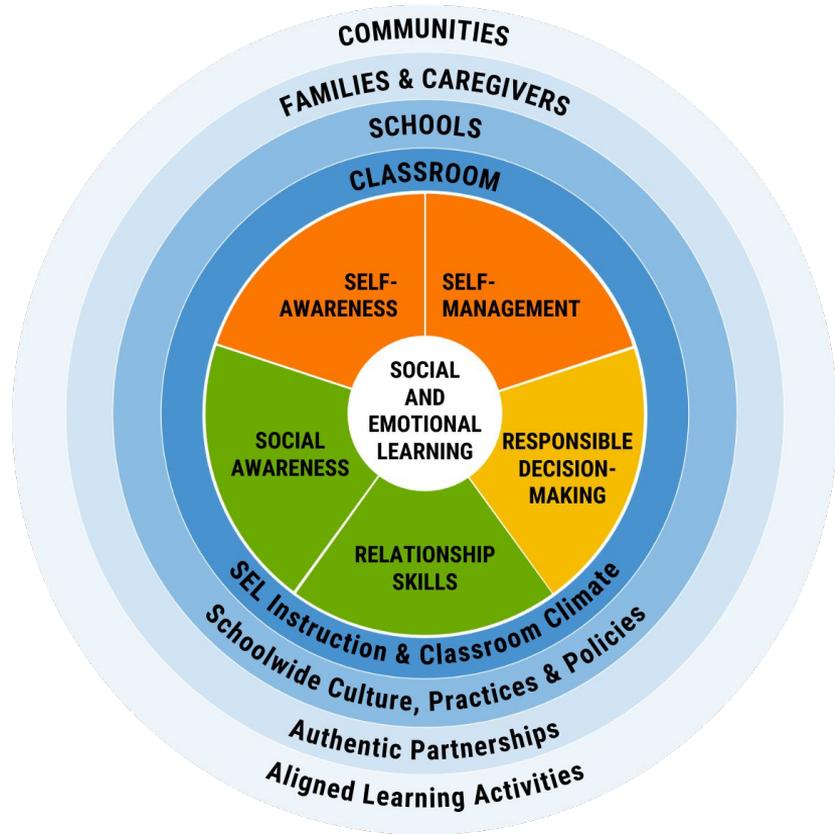
## Some activities to get to know your students better

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- To know the names: ask each student to create a simple **personalized name badge** in large letters.
- An activity in a language course : **Write an "I am.." poem.**
- All year round : **Write a letter** (anonymous or not) to the teacher "**I want to tell you..**"
- All year round : **Establish contact with parents** as much as possible.



# Teacher/student connections and SEL skills



What are the **social-emotional skills** that develop when you create healthy connections with your students ?

What effects do connections have on student **well-being**?

# A mental break!

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*Try this for yourself !*

A brief activity such as a warm-up at the beginning of a course or to transition from one activity to another during the course.

Instructions :

1. Stand up and shake and release your arms.
2. Rub your hands vigorously for ten seconds and then cover your eyes completely with your hands. Repeat twice.
3. Rub again and then cover the ears, twice.
4. Sit back and observe how you feel

**Variation - If the weather is too hot,**

Simply ask to stand up and fan your face with a notebook or with your hands, or hand out sheets for them to make paper fans.

# Establish classroom rules TOGETHER

# Develop a class contract together

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## What?

- As a whole class, discuss rules, or rather **expectations, for the class**. Ensure students are heard!
- Create a charter, or contract, **together**.

## When?

At the beginning of the school year or during the first contact with students

*Periodically, remind students of the rules if you notice a breach, or show your appreciation if a rule is well respected.*

## How long will it take?

Depending on the number of students, plan an hour possibly over several periods

## What age group is this best for?

Possible with children from the age of 9

## How?



# Establishing a Class Contract Together - How to?

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It is up to the students to agree on the rules that they will then have to respect.

For the drafting of the contract, you can adapt the following procedure:

- Start by choosing the most important categories according to the students.
  - *Examples: Individual work - Work environment (sound and visual) – Management of Materials - Behaviour - Rewards and punishments, etc.*
- Form groups and invite each group to write one or two rules in one of the categories.
- Each group appoints a representative who presents the rules of its group. Write them down as you go on the board.
- Summarize all the rules on the board and ask students to write them down on the first page of their notebook.
- Identify a student or a small group who will create a large charter with the contract to hang on the wall.

## Group Discussion - What would you do differently for creating the class contract?

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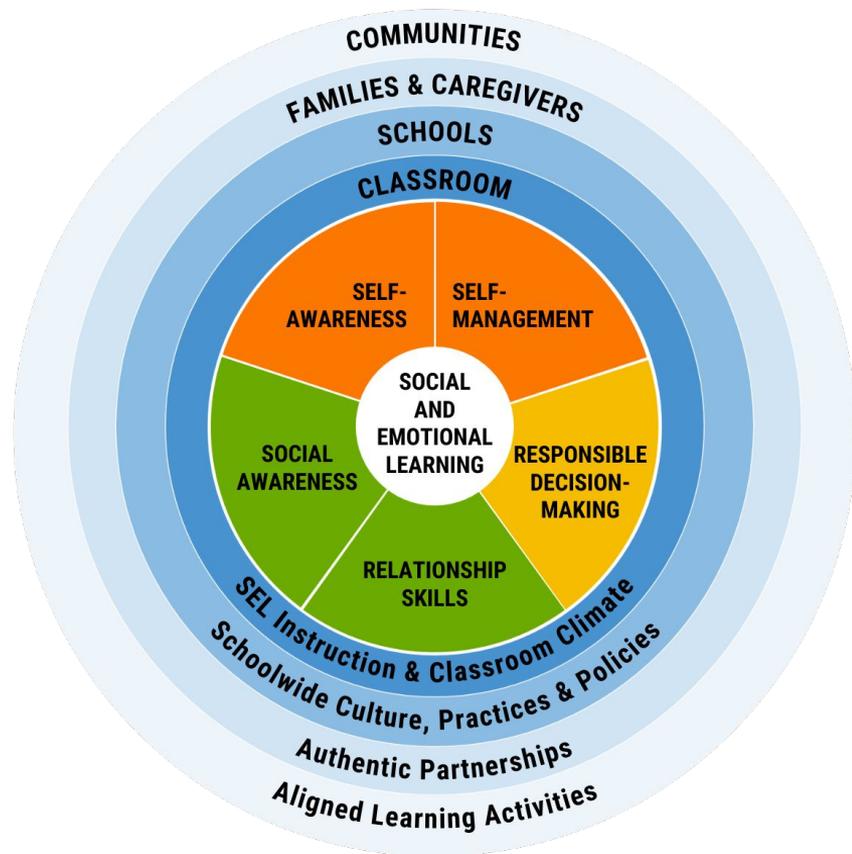


Chat in small groups :

- Specify the difficulties of setting up the activity.
  - E.g. The large number of students, cultural constraints, students' understanding...
- Think together about possible solutions

Share your ideas with other groups

# Co-creation of a class contract and SEL competencies



What are the social-emotional skills that develop when you discuss class rules and expectations together with students?

# Learning through play

## Reflection- How useful is play for child and adolescent development?

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Think of a game or a playful activity from your childhood or adolescence.

*Specify where, when, with whom and with what?*

In your opinion, what role do games and play, more generally, have in learning?

# What type of play, or game, are we talking about?

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According to the Committee on Children's Rights :

*Play for children and adolescents is any behavior, activity or process **initiated, controlled and structured by young people themselves**; it takes place whenever the opportunity arises.*

- Play is an essential component of **holistic development**: physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual.



# The role of playing in child development

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According to the American Academy of Pediatrics:



The game stimulates mental and physical health.



Play increases student engagement.



The game promotes the development of executive function.

Additional details on the Lego Foundation website: <https://learningthroughplay.com/why-play/>

## And in crisis contexts?

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Play has a significant therapeutic and rehabilitative role in helping children recover a sense of normality and joy

- It helps displaced children and children who have experienced trauma to overcome emotional pain and regain control of their lives
- It can restore a sense of identity and self-esteem
- It offers children an opportunity to engage in a shared experience,
- It allows students to explore their own creativity and to achieve a sense of connectedness and belonging.

# Learning through Play in East Africa

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And that's fundamental to a learning process.

# Example of a game - Simon Says

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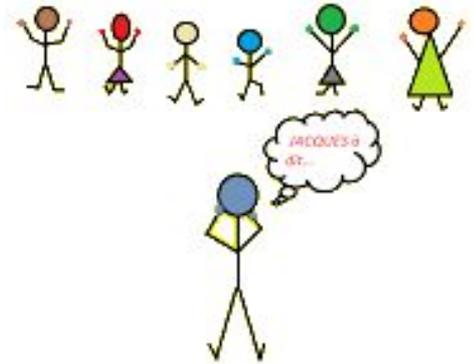


This is an "elimination" game: a designated player, "Simon" will give instructions, and then the rest of the group should follow the instructions as quickly as possible or risk being eliminated.

- Simon stands in front of the group and begins to give instructions for simple tasks.  
*examples: "touch your nose", "turn", "shake hands"*
- An instruction is **valid**, if it is preceded by the phrase "Simon says...".
- Otherwise the instruction is **invalid** and players should not follow the command.
- Those who follow an **invalid** instruction are eliminated.
- The game continues until there is only one player left, the winner!

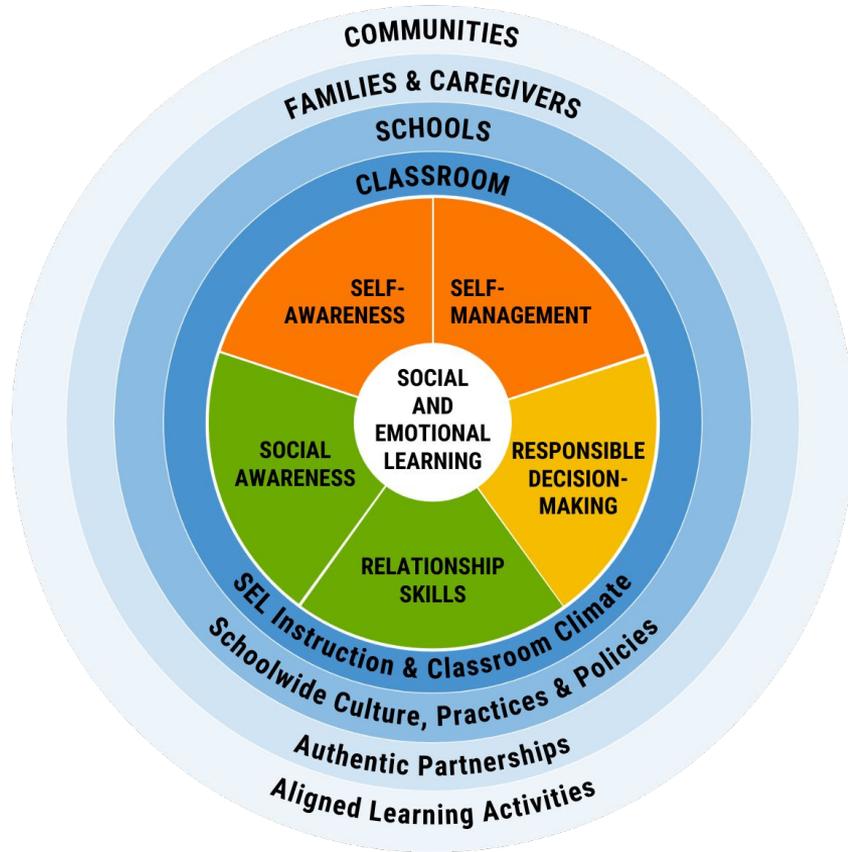
# Example of a game – Simon Says - Variations

- In overcrowded classrooms: Divide students into **groups**. Possibly have a group play each period in front of the rest of the class.
- Play the game in **another language** (in French: "Jacques a dit") to practice some action verbs or body parts, etc.
- To make it more difficult and practice a little **spelling**:
  - Simon says touch your t-o-e-s
  - Simon says j-u-m-p up and down



*Have fun with your students inventing other variations!*

# “Simon Says” and SEL competencies



What are the social-emotional skills that develop when students play this game?

# Some examples of games in the school setting

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In small groups:

Everyone take a moment and think of a game that you can play with your students and then, share your ideas with each other.

- Explain why you are interested in this specific game.
- If you already practice it, explain how you adapt it to your context.

## More resources about play at school

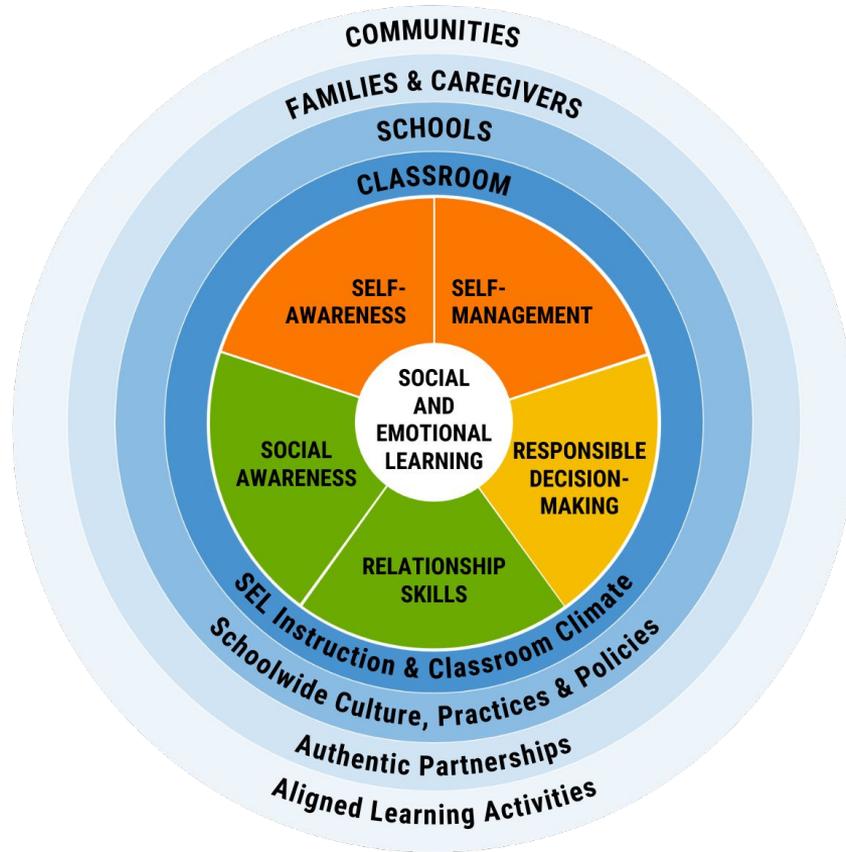
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Lego Foundation spearheads the integration of Play as an effective approach for holistic learning, also in crisis and low-resource contexts

A few online resources and courses:

- A web site <https://learningthroughplay.com/>
- An online course on Future Learn: **Coping with Changes: Social-Emotional Learning Through Play**  
<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/coping-with-changes>
- An online course on Kaya: **Learning Through Play in Education in Emergencies**  
- <https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=3055>

# Play, well-being and SEL Competencies



- What effects does play in the school setting have on the **well-being** of students?
- What are the social-emotional skills that develop when you integrate play into your classroom practices?

# A mental break!

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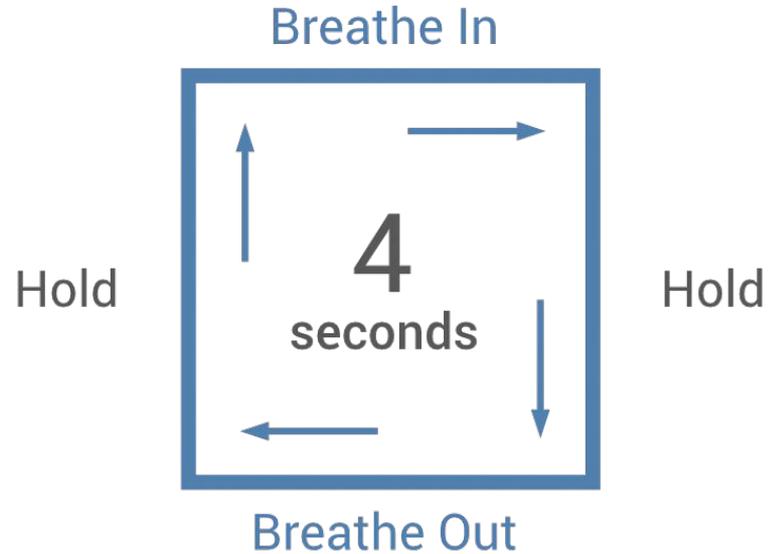
## "Square" breathing:

I will accompany you, counting for you,

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position.
2. Inhale through your nose for four seconds.
3. Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
4. Exhale through the mouth for four seconds.
5. Keep the lungs empty for 4 seconds.

Repeat four times.

Share how you feel after the fourth breath.



**Let your students  
own the discussions!**

# How do you organize discussions in your class?



## Group Discussion

Share with your colleagues how discussions work in your classrooms.

- Do you respond/comment after each students' contribution?
- Who is the central person who leads the discussions?
- Who answers questions most often?
- Do your students tend to tell you what they think you want to hear?

Do your discussions with students suffer from the "Boomerang effect"?! 

# How to *facilitate* a discussion instead of *directing* it?

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What do you think is the difference between **facilitating** and **directing** ?

Why **facilitate** rather than **lead and direct** ?

How ?

# How to *facilitate* a discussion instead of *directing* it?

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What do you think is the difference between facilitating and leading?

Why **facilitate** rather than **lead and direct**?

- Students will feel more valued in the class community and in the discussion.
- They will feel that they are actively contributing to their own learning.
- They will learn to listen to each other.
- Facilitation reinforces the group learning experience.

How?

- Use open-ended questions to include more than one possible answer.
- Encourage and give time to other students to answer their classmates' questions.
- Do not approve or make criticisms before students finish contributing.
- Use generic questions to broaden the debate or point to a correction of information.

# How to *facilitate* a discussion instead of *directing* it? – continued

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Some broad and neutral prompts to facilitate and develop class discussions:

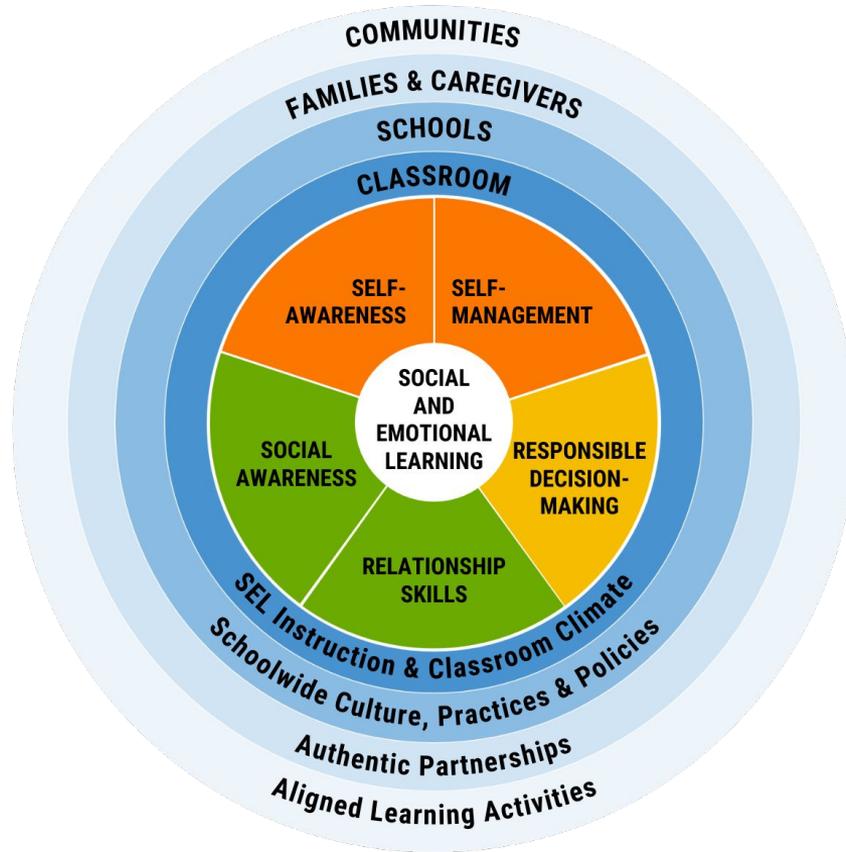
## Prompts to invite contributions from other students:

- What do others think of this idea?
- Let's listen to someone else provide additional evidence.
- What are other ways of thinking about this?
- Can someone rephrase the question/idea?
- How could we add, revise, reformulate, or build on this idea?

## Prompts to guide students to correct misinformation or clear up confusion in a discussion:

- What might be revised to improve the accuracy of this contribution/idea?
- What do we know that can help us solve this problem?
- Where can we find more information?
- How can we answer this question?
- Consider [concept]. How does this affect your thinking?

# Facilitated discussions and SEL Competencies



What are the social-emotional skills that students develop through facilitated discussions?

# Warm-up and Mental Breaks for All!

# Recall some examples

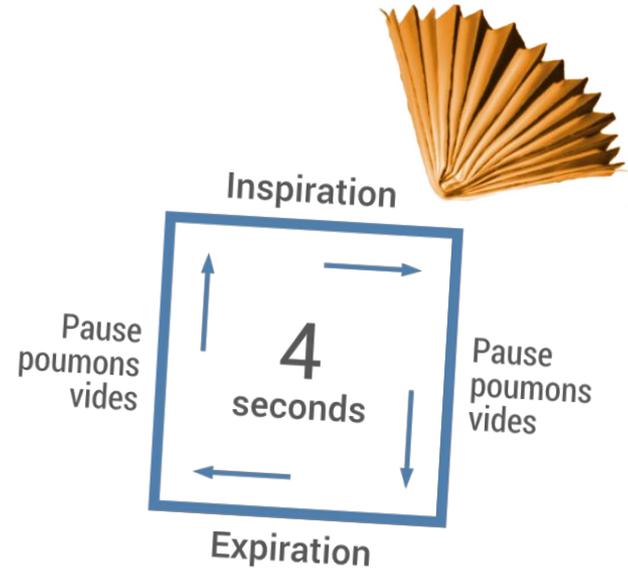
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We have already tested a few activities:

- Hand rubbing or standing face ventilation
- Deep breathing and square breathing
- Shaking and loosening of the arms and neck while standing

What do you think of :

- Singing a song (possibly in English)?
- Passing a small ball/soft toy between students for some review questions/answers?
- Telling an anecdote related to the theme studied?



# Proven effects of conscious (and deep) breathing

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"It works like magic!", the testimony of a Syrian refugee teacher, initially skeptical about PSS activities.

## Why?

Pauses and short breathing exercises help students and teachers to

- Break the monotony,
- calm down, and
- to focus again.

## When?

They are suitable at the **beginning** as well as during a period **before** fatigue/boredom sets in.

## Group Discussion - What would you do differently in these transition activities?

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Chat in small groups :

- Specify the difficulties of setting up such activities
  - *E.g. Time, cultural constraints, students' understanding ...*
- Think together about possible alternatives

Share your ideas with the other groups through a **facilitated discussion**

# Mental breaks, well-being and SEL Competencies



- What effects do mental breaks have on the **well-being** of students?
- What are the social-emotional skills that develop when you integrate mental breaks into your classroom practices?

# Well-being for all: *Students and teachers*

# Your well-being and the well-being of your students

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## Self-reflection and discussion in small groups

**Q1.** What are the factors that impact your own well-being?

**Q2.** Name three groups of people who may also be affected by your condition.

**Q3.** Identify common factors with your students. For example:

- Are you also a displaced person?
- Do you fear for your safety?  
etc..

**Q4.** How does your well-being affect your performance in the classroom?

**Q5.** To what extent does your well-being affect the well-being of your students?

## Activity - Assess your stress level

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Fill out the printed grid and estimate your stress level.

It is an activity to be repeated periodically to observe well-being over time and detect stress triggers.

# Suggest some activities to overcome your stress

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Discuss a few solutions in small groups and write them down on the board for an overall discussion.

Here are some proposals, it's up to you to develop them and propose others:

Ask for help

Schedule your tasks

Talk to a friend or colleague

Take breaks

Breathe deeply

# Final Reflections

## 3-2-1 Reflection

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Think about and write on a piece of paper the following:

- **3 new concepts** you discovered today
- **2 activities** that you think you can apply tomorrow
- **1 question** or concern that remains to be overcome

Discuss your answers with a colleague next to you and then all together in the group.

## Final Thought: What can I do now as a teacher?

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*Discuss in small groups and come up with some actions to share with others*

As teachers of refugee and internally displaced (or disadvantaged) students,

- What would be **your role** in ensuring a welcoming environment and quality learning?
- What **steps** can you take now?
  - To provide appropriate psychosocial support
  - Introduce social and emotional learning into your lessons
- What would you do to **promote the practices** introduced during this training in your school or more widely in your community?

## For further action...

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- Learn about other resources from our project, co-created with teachers in Kenya and Lebanon
- A guide to integrating SEL into school:

[https://inee.org/system/files/resources/usaid\\_howtointegratesocialandemotionallearning\\_final.pdf](https://inee.org/system/files/resources/usaid_howtointegratesocialandemotionallearning_final.pdf)

# Are our Learning Objectives achieved?

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On a score of 1-10 how would you rate your mastery of today's objectives?

To what extent are you able to

1. Discover and apply some practices to create a space conducive to quality holistic learning
2. Make the connection between the proposed activities, the well-being of the students and the development of their ASE skills.
3. Justify the importance of the well-being of teachers and propose some actions to guarantee it.

Do you have any suggestions for improvements?

# Thank you for your participation!

Send your questions and remarks to  
[clipmail@ceinternational1892.org](mailto:clipmail@ceinternational1892.org)



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