



Rebuilding Our Communities

**Resources for
Supporting Educators
and Instructors**

harmony
SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING

inspire
TEACHING LEARNING

www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org

Many communities are coming back to their classrooms after a year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic while navigating uncertainty and far-reaching social inequities as well as personal and community trauma. For some students and staff this will be the first time in the school building in over a year, and for others it will be their first time ever in the building. This makes it incredibly important to refocus schools and learning environments not only on academic rigor but on the relationships and community that enhance learning and make it more relevant and purposeful for students and adults.

In the **Educator and Instructor Toolkit**, you'll find on-demand webinars, professional learning modules, and SEL practices that can be accessed online and shared and implemented as an individual or group. These resources can equip you and your team to address key questions about strengthening connections, rebuilding community, and fostering social and emotional well-being. We have developed these recommendations in response to four timely questions. Click each resource title for access.

- As we create a renewed sense of community and return to campus, how can we ensure all adults feel welcome and included?
- How can we promote self-care for educators to help them be at their best for themselves, their colleagues, and their students?
- How can we strengthen the connection between educators, families, and other community members?
- How can educators and staff gain the competencies and perspectives to support diversity and inclusion in their classrooms and advocate for justice and equity in their communities for students, colleagues, and themselves?



Access these recommendations and other no-cost SEL tools and professional learning opportunities from **Harmony SEL** and **Inspire Teaching & Learning** in the Online Learning Portal to implement and share with students and colleagues.

www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org

Follow Harmony and Inspire on social media and join the conversation!



As we create a renewed sense of community and return to campus, how can we ensure all adults feel welcome and included?

Reconnecting with colleagues and members of your school or organizational community will support your social and emotional well-being and help you be more prepared to rebuild a classroom community. It will be important to take the time within faculty meetings, in the hallways, and in other formal and informal settings to reconnect with colleagues and find additional opportunities to collaborate and support one another. To deepen a sense of community, you can engage in activities with your team that help you get to know each other better, open communication, share ideas, collaborate, and approach the new year together.

1. Try making space for Harmony Everyday Practices in your team settings, such as faculty meetings, PLCs, grade level meetings, family nights, etc.

- Create and monitor **Harmony Goals** as a community to establish how everyone wants to interact and be treated.
- Build a sense of community with **Meet Up** and foster peer relationships with **Buddy Up** using these **Quick Connection Cards**:

Community Builders

FRIENDSHIP WEB

Sit in a circle with one person holding a ball of yarn. The person with the yarn holds the end, gives someone a compliment, and rolls the yarn to that person. The person who received the yarn thanks the person for the compliment, holds onto a section of the yarn, and continues rolling the yarn along with a compliment.

Materials: yarn

harmony Quick Connections

Conversations



If you could spend the whole day with just one person, who would it be? What would you do?

harmony Quick Connections

Collaborations



FRIENDSHIP ART

Paint or draw a friendship mural with your buddy.

Materials: large paper, crayons, markers, or paint

harmony Quick Connections



www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org

Follow Harmony and Inspire on social media and join the conversation!



As we create a renewed sense of community and return to campus, how can we ensure all adults feel welcome and included?

2. **Set the tone for a new school year by prioritizing relationships** and appreciating the unique experiences of educators and instructors. Some of our recent [webinars](#) acknowledge the lessons learned during a disrupted year and help you prepare for the year to come with SEL strategies from other dedicated educators.

It's Time to Celebrate What We've Accomplished and Be Inspired for the School Year Ahead!

Take inventory of your SEL knowledge and practice to approach the challenges that lie ahead. You'll feel prepared and ready for a successful year with Harmony SEL and other social and emotional learning resources.



Inspire Strategy:

Principal Dr. Monica Loyce recommends making a plan to meet your students where they're at academically, behaviorally, socially, and emotionally when they return to the classroom, and honor the voices of students, students' families, and staff members.

Maintaining Professional Relationships with Colleagues

Learn how to maintain professionalism with colleagues, including fellow teachers, mentor teachers, or administrators. This module covers ways professionalism can break down and provides strategies you can activate to take on an asset-based perspective with colleagues, practice reflexivity, and build rapport.



Inspire Strategy:

When communicating with colleagues, stay open-minded and ask clarifying and probing questions to better understand someone else's actions, beliefs, or perspective.



How can we promote educators' self-care to help them be at their best for themselves, their colleagues, and their students?

We have learned the importance of self-care and providing the tools, resources, and time for educators to be able to take care of themselves. Self-care benefits educators and instructors and can lead to more positive learning outcomes for the students we instruct. Although we know the importance of self-care, it can be difficult to integrate self-care into our professional life and learning community due to competing demands, lack of time, or focusing on our students and their families. For some, processing social and emotional well-being with colleagues may be challenging or uncomfortable. As you begin to rebuild your community, remember you are a key member and that taking the time to engage in self-care will help you be a better community member.

1. Practicing mindfulness and modeling mindful habits is an approachable way to reduce stress and anxiety and infuse a healthy perspective into your classroom and professional culture. These resources provide an introduction and opportunities to begin or refresh your mindfulness practice:

- Learn more about the benefits of everyday mindfulness and how you can increase engagement and emotional intelligence in your classroom with the webinar, [“Mindfulness for Educators,”](#) presented by Dr. Christopher S. Reina.
- Fit focus games and breathing exercises into your busy schedule with Relaxation Stations on the Harmony Game Room app. You can download the app at no cost for [Apple iOS](#) or [Android](#) devices.



www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org

Follow Harmony and Inspire on social media and join the conversation!



How can we promote educators' self-care to help them be at their best for themselves, their colleagues, and their students?

2. Think about the different aspects of your self — physical, emotional, social, spiritual, etc. — and identify which aspect you want to focus on. Identify strategies within that domain that you can enact to help take care of it. When you identify strategies, identify when, where, and how you will carry out those strategies.

3. Prioritize your best self and healthy relationships with your colleagues with the following resources. These asynchronous professional learning modules from Inspire provide the flexibility to learn and reflect as an individual or as a team:

Coping with Teacher Stress

Examine the causes and symptoms of teacher stress and explore a variety of strategies to help cope with it. This webinar covers relaxation strategies, exercise and nutrition, and positive self-talk developed to support the specific needs of educators and instructors.



Inspire Strategy:

Monitor your emotions and fill out a go-to strategy sheet in the module Resource Bundle to implement stress management practices that work well for you.

Shining a Bright Light on Educator SEL

Dr. Patricia (Tish) Jennings, Professor of Education at the University of Virginia, moderates a panel with our award-winning teachers to share the importance of SEL for educators and the ways in which the pandemic and social unrest in our communities have influenced educator well-being.



Inspire Strategy:

Implementing self-care often begins with acknowledging that self-care is not a “spa day” but a way of life and an awareness, acceptance, and prioritization of our needs. Keeping a journal can help you maintain this awareness and keep track of things that help or hinder your well-being.



How can we deepen connections among educators, families, and other community members?

Partnering with your students' families and caregivers can lead to their academic success and social and emotional well-being. Every family is different, so creating and strengthening those connections will require multiple strategies and an appreciation for each student's background and social context. For many, "family" extends beyond the household and into the community, where students and their caregivers can form relationships and receive and develop social and emotional support. Being intentional about getting to know families early in the year will help you establish open communication and better understand the assets your students bring with them to class each day.

1. **Include families and community members in SEL** with Harmony Everyday Practices. Get to know the important people in your students' lives by inviting them to join **Meet Up** and **Buddy Up** during Family Nights, parent-teacher conferences, and other school events. **Harmony Everyday Practices** can help you open communication, build rapport, and have fun getting to know others.

Community Builders

CATEGORY CALL OUT

Someone announces a category (e.g., favorite color), and everyone forms groups as fast as possible based on their answers (e.g., all of the greens in one group, all of the pinks in one group, etc.).

harmony Quick Connections

Collaborations



WHO AM I?

Write the name of someone famous on a sticky note and place it on your buddy's forehead (so he or she cannot read it). The buddy with a note on his or her forehead asks yes or no questions until he or she can correctly guess the name on the paper.

Materials: sticky notes and pencils

harmony Quick Connections

2. **Start building and managing healthy Home-School Connections** early in the school year.

Let families know what you and your students are working on to support student social and emotional development. You'll find printer-friendly documents to share with students' families on the landing page for each unit in the Online Learning Portal.

- Introduce families and caregivers to the Harmony SEL program with the **Harmony SEL Family Letter**.
- Share a grade-level-specific **Family Letter** at the beginning of each Harmony unit to explain the concepts and skills you will be learning in class.

www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org

Follow Harmony and Inspire on social media and join the conversation!



How can we deepen connections among educators, families, and other community members?

- Engage families in your students' SEL journey with the **Home Activities**, full of games and conversation prompts for each unit and grade band.
- Let them know about the **Harmony Game Room** app to play SEL games with family members of all ages.

3. Develop strong cultural competence and strategies for partnering with parents and caregivers, including linguistically diverse families and families whose backgrounds are different from your own. Each of these Inspire modules can help you fine tune your teaching practice:

Linking Identity and Achievement Through Cultural Competence

Help culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students develop knowledge and pride in their own culture while preparing them to navigate the mainstream.



Inspire Strategy:

Provide opportunities for students to study and learn about the history, heritage, and people of their cultural group(s), and their contributions to your content area. Include examples of people (particularly people who share your students' cultural background(s)) resisting and challenging oppression.

The Importance of Working with Parents Module

Review research-based benefits of parental involvement and explore the different ways parents can be involved in their children's education.



Inspire Strategy:

Activate a variety of strategies (phone, email, text messages, newsletters) to communicate with parents and caregivers, establish a system for proactively communicating with them about their academic progress, and view them as partners in their student's education.

Strategies for Communicating with Parents

Discover some helpful "dos and don'ts" for effective teacher-family communication in all types of conversations, not just difficult ones.



Inspire Strategy:

The module **Resource Bundle** includes several helpful tips, such as:

Do: Operate with sensitivity; understand that parents may have strong feelings about issues related to their child.

Don't: Ignore the parent's perspective and move forward with your own plan/agenda.

Addressing Barriers to Parent Involvement

Explore strategies to overcome bias and communicate effectively with a wide range of parents, making them feel valued and welcomed.



Inspire Strategy:

Understand that parents may have different norms and beliefs about involvement than you, and that they may be engaged in their children's education in ways you do not recognize.

How can educators and staff gain the competencies and perspectives to support diversity and inclusion in their classrooms and advocate for justice and equity in their learning communities?

We appreciate that many educators and organizations have reached out to ask this question and seek tools to develop these competencies. Putting equity and inclusion at the center of your teaching practice takes reflection and difficult inner work as well as courage and diligence. Teachers and youth instructors can be agents of change in their students' lives and communities when equipped with knowledge and effective strategies. Developing critical consciousness and recognizing systems of oppression are important steps toward building a safe, supportive learning community for students and colleagues. This will influence not only the content that you teach, but the ways in which you select and present content and activities relevant to your students.

1. **Develop critical consciousness and learn to challenge racial bias** and other systemic inequities in your community. This will help you grow in your understanding of students' and colleagues' lived experiences and the historical contexts in which these experiences take place.

Using Critical Consciousness to Challenge Inequity

This module provides strategies to develop and guide students in developing critical consciousness that allows them to identify and question forces that produce inequity.



Inspire Strategy: This module sparks engaging conversations. If you are going to discuss the module in a group or professional learning community, establish some norms before beginning the discussion such as these and other examples

provided in the [Coaching Guide](#):

- Speak your own truth, but do not attempt to speak on behalf of others.
- Consider the impact of your words on others.
- Seek to understand the perspectives of others.

Working Against Racial Bias

Develop sociocultural consciousness recognizing that worldviews are shaped by experiences and identity to help you combat racial bias in the classroom.



Inspire Strategy:

Engage with self and colleagues about your own worldview and how you can recognize implicit biases and potential ways they may unintentionally show up.

How can educators and staff gain the competencies and perspectives to support diversity and inclusion in their classrooms and advocate for justice and equity in their learning communities?

2. **Develop culturally responsive instruction practices** and apply an asset-based learning perspective to support and motivate your students with instruction that is engaging and relevant to them.

Teachers as Agents of Change

This module provides strategies for challenging inequity by making instruction responsive to students with content that is relevant to them, methods that involve them in constructing knowledge, and relationships that demonstrate empathy and understanding.



Inspire Strategy: Engage students in problem-posing and critical inquiry. Ask yourself these and other key questions:

- How can I encourage students to use the academic skills of my content area to study problems in their social world and propose solutions?
- How can I position students to question assumptions and examine topics from multiple perspectives?

Valuing Bilingualism

This module presents the consequences of restrictive English-only education policies and provides strategies to support emerging bilingual students' academic success.



Inspire Strategy:

Extend an asset-based perspective to your interactions with linguistically diverse family members. This includes confirming the availability of an interpreter or translator for parents and caregivers who communicate more proficiently in another language.

3. **Practice, model, and teach empathy** in your classroom and among colleagues and school families.

Teaching Students Empathy

Promote a culture of empathy in your learning community that will continue to foster understanding and a sense of compassion.



Inspire Strategy:

Access the reading list in this module for books that promote perspective taking and give students the opportunity to observe other experiences and feelings.

Using Warm Demand to Build Student Achievement

Using warm demand balances discipline and care to support all students in reaching high expectations. Discover some “warm demander” core beliefs and strategies, and then do your own reflection and planning.



Inspire Strategy:

Seek ways to reconnect disengaged students to their learning. Set the expectation that students stay focused and on-task, but in a way that conveys a commitment to their success rather than a demand for compliance.

Explore continuing education options in SEL to support your community on the [National University SEL Resource Hub](#).



www.harmonysel.org | www.inspireteaching.org
Follow Harmony and Inspire on social media and join the conversation!

