

# Understanding the Research and Teacher Experience Behind the Refresh of Harmony Third Edition

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# Introduction

Harmony SEL is a social and emotional learning (SEL) program that empowers Pre-K–6th-grade teachers, counselors, and out-of-school instructors (collectively referred to as “educators”) to foster better relationships among their students. The program provides students opportunities to develop and apply a variety of social and emotional (SE) competencies, such as empathy, critical thinking, forming relationships with peers of diverse backgrounds, and identifying and managing emotions. Through a range of evidence-based SEL teaching strategies and fun, simple activities, the program gives students the tools they need to become accepting, compassionate, and caring adults. Initially developed at Arizona State University, elementary schools first received the instructional materials in 2008 with the goal of identifying practical methods for reducing relational conflicts in the classroom and other learning environments while building students’ confidence, relationships, and academic success.

In 2014, Harmony formed a partnership with the National University System (NUS), achieving significant success. Educator awareness and adoption of Harmony is now in over 50,000 schools and organizations. In just seven years, Harmony expanded to reach millions of students in Grades Pre-K–6 in the United States. NUS released several updates to the curriculum in the fall of 2019 to transform it into a digital program (which is accessible via an [Online Learning Portal](#)). The program currently

includes instructional resources for (a) Everyday Practices (Harmony Goals, Buddy Up, and Meet Up); (b) unit-based lesson materials (lesson plans and associated resources for explicit SEL skill instruction); (c) family connection materials (Harmony at Home, Home-School Connections, and translation of materials into Spanish); and (d) digital enhancements (e.g., game-based app, on-demand and live online trainings). The Harmony Game Room app provides digital versions of games as well as access to Quick Connection Cards and supplemental activities derived from the curriculum (e.g., “relaxation stations” and “brain break” exercises).

Recognizing the need to ensure the impact of the program is sustained, amplified, and reaches millions more students, Harmony is refreshing the program with expanded content and improvements to the user experience. “Harmony Third Edition” is designed to provide an integrated, relevant, and comprehensive Pre-K–6th-grade experience. With a range of refinements and updates that reflect the latest research on SEL practices along with suggestions from users, the program refresh will include topics and instructional models that are designed to improve the effectiveness and enhance the relevance of Harmony, in particular for student populations that are typically underserved. Within this document, the reader will receive information about the evidence-based decision points





regarding how to maintain the Harmony program while at the same time updating it to meet user needs.

## The Refresh Process

To refresh Harmony SEL, Harmony staff used a multi-faceted approach beginning with the discovery phase, development work, and utilizing an intensive quality assurance process. In the discovery phase, Harmony engaged in a comprehensive set of research activities to determine strengths and opportunities for growth (Jodl et al., 2020), which included (a) a synthesis of program evaluation research conducted by Johns Hopkins University (JHU, 2020); (b) a critical review of the program by expert reviewers to outline opportunities for content integration, alignment, and expansion; (c) a set of user focus groups; (d) a landscape analysis of the market for SEL program providers (Jones et al., 2021); (e) a literature review of core SE competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) currently within and to be used within the program (based on alignment to CASEL competencies and sub-competencies); and (f) comprehensive review of current Harmony curriculum materials, research studies, and book chapters that form the basis of the program (DeLay et al., 2016; Hanish et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2017; Miller et al., 2017).

Once Harmony developed a series of recommendations from the discovery phase, Harmony contracted with a curriculum developer, MPS, to determine which recommendations to implement, and MPS began to execute those recommendations to refresh the program. As MPS and Harmony staff were executing the recommendations, Harmony also obtained feedback, advice, and guidance from Harmony's Strategic Advisors — 21 national content experts (researchers and nonprofit leaders) and expert practitioners (district leaders and teachers) (see Appendix A for list of advisors). Along with our strategic advisors, Harmony leveraged a set of expert Harmony practitioners and staff to provide quality assurance of the refresh. Reviewers used a lesson plan audit form to ensure that the program maintained its theoretical roots and incorporated the updated principles identified in the discovery phase (see Appendix B for the lesson plan audit form). MPS incorporated the feedback with guidance from Harmony staff to ensure that the program was consistent, comprehensive, and incorporated strategies and activities that would allow all students to develop meaningful relationships within welcoming environments in schools and out-of-school time organizations.

# Components and Principles Maintained and Refreshed in Harmony Third Edition

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Based on the recommendations from the discovery phase, much of the program was to be maintained, as educators and experts saw the value and the effect Harmony implementation had with students. However, there were a series of recommendations Harmony and MPS considered in the context of maintaining the core pieces that educators came to know and trust. Below, we provide a high-level summary of what remains the same within the Harmony program, as well as how Harmony staff and MPS modified, refined, and enhanced features with Harmony Third Edition to ensure Harmony is an up-to-date, comprehensive, and consistent curriculum. In the remainder of this paper, we discuss the content that remained the same based on research from the initial

developers, as well as what was refreshed based on data from the discovery phase. We use the following categories to discuss the refresh: Theoretical Foundations and Goals; Everyday Practices; Units, Lessons and Activities; Storybooks; Games; Home-School Connections; Academic Integration; Educator SEL; Professional Learning; and Data and Measures.

## Theoretical Foundations and Goals of the Program

Harmony has a strong theoretical foundation (see Appendix C for a deeper review). A primary theoretical driver of the Harmony program is intergroup contact theory, which suggests that people of diverse backgrounds engage in purposeful activities and

interactions to form more positive peer relationships (Martin et al., 2017). Harmony is also guided by social-cognitive approaches, which suggest that student actions are guided by the intersection of cognition, emotion, and environment (Miller et al., 2017). Further, Harmony uses core principles of SEL, specifically, that students engage in sequenced, active, focused, and explicit units, lessons and activities to build their social and emotional competencies (Durlak et al., 2011). Harmony is distinct from other SEL programs in that it was also developed with consideration of the environment and context in which students learn (Miller et al., 2017). A primary goal, then, of Harmony is to leverage social and emotional competencies, relationship-oriented skills, and features of the school and classroom environments to promote healthy relationships and social harmony (Hanish et al., 2016).

The refresh of the program maintains intergroup contact theory, social-cognitive theory, SEL principles, and development of healthy relationships and harmonious environments as core elements and central to the program. The program continues to provide multiple opportunities through Everyday Practices and Units and Lessons so that peers of diverse backgrounds can interact with one another and appreciate differences and reveal commonalities. One of the most important recommendations made by Harmony users is to highlight *inclusion, representation, and instructional practices that meet the needs of students of diverse backgrounds* (Jodl et al., 2020). To further enhance these core goals, Harmony reviewed and refreshed program materials through trauma-informed principles and culturally responsive practices (Yoder, 2020). These additional principles ensure that students are able to authentically bring their lived experiences and participate in learning activities that allow students to recognize and build upon their own personal, family, and community strengths and assets.

## Everyday Practices

Arguably the program's most important attributes—flexibility and adaptability—appear to be primary motivators for its selection among decision-makers and its actual use among educators (JHU, 2020; Jodl et al., 2020). Core to that are the Everyday Practices of Harmony Goals, Meet Up, and Buddy Up, including the

use of Quick Connection Cards. Everyday Practices are a critical piece of a multi-method approach Harmony takes to promote positive relationships amongst peers of diverse backgrounds and create an inclusive learning environment (Martin et al., 2017). Everyday Practices are intended to be a schoolwide practice that educators can embed within the everyday life of classrooms to ensure that a consistent routine exists to practice the development and use of relationship skills (Martin et al., 2017). Overall, the Everyday Practices are staying the same. For instance, Meet Up will continue to include all four steps (Greeting, Sharing and Responding, Checking In, and Connecting), with the primary goal of creating a daily routine for students to share about themselves, learn about their peers, exchange ideas, and solve any problems that may occur in the classroom (Martin et al., 2017). Buddy Up will also stay the same, providing students opportunities to establish meaningful connections with peers they may not normally interact with by being paired up with a new buddy each week (Martin et al., 2017). To facilitate deeper connections, in the refresh, Harmony is expanding Quick Connection Cards across the three categories (Conversation Starters, Community Builders, and Collaborators) for upper and lower grades.

Harmony is enhancing Meet Up and Harmony Goals with three new features. First, research suggests that self-regulation and goal setting are critical skills for students to develop (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2013; Stafford-Brizard, 2016). To support personal goal setting, students will now be able to develop Personal Harmony Goals along with the Class Harmony Goals (which remain the same). This provides students opportunities to reflect on their own relationship-driven and social and emotional goals they want to achieve, providing them greater ownership and voice over their social and emotional development. Research also suggests the importance of checking in on the self and one's mindfulness practices as critical for engaging in school and caring for others (Black & Fernando, 2014). To support personal goal reflection and mindfulness practices, Meet Up will include two new sub-steps that help students focus on self in the context of relationships. Meet Up's first two steps remain the same (Greeting, and Sharing and Responding). The third step, Checking In, now allows

students to check in with the community (review of Class Harmony Goals as currently exists within Harmony) or check in with self (review of Personal Harmony Goals) as a new sub-step. The fourth step, Connecting, is meant to provide an energizing activity to prepare students to engage in academic tasks. Connecting will now offer two sub-steps. The first, Community Builder, is what currently exists in the program where students connect with others using Quick Connection Cards. The new sub-step, Mindful Minute, allows students to connect with themselves through suggested mindfulness activities.

## Units, Lessons, and Activities

As part of Harmony's multi-method approach to support healthy relationships, Harmony includes explicit instruction in SEL and relationship skills through five units (Martin et al., 2017). The five units include relationship-building lessons and activities that provide students opportunities to engage with one another in purposeful ways to both build their social and emotional competencies and create experiences that allow them to get to know one another and enhance their peer relationships. The relationship-building activities were organized across five sequential units focused on core areas needed to build supportive and inclusive relationships, including *Diversity and Inclusion*, *Empathy and Critical Thinking*, *Communication*, *Problem Solving*, and *Peer Relationships* (for a summary of the units, see Martin et al., 2017).

Although Harmony kept approximately 80% of the content from these units in the refresh, experts and practitioners alike felt that units were not always coherent, redundancies existed, and gaps existed for critical social and emotional competencies (JHU, 2020; Jodl et al., 2020; Jones et al., 2021). Specifically, educators and experts alike agreed that Harmony needed to align more fully to the 2020 definition of SEL from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), including their competencies and sub-competencies (CASEL, 2020). Along with refreshing the program with an eye for gaps in CASEL sub-competencies (Jodl et al., 2020), Harmony leveraged the analysis by Jones and colleagues (2021) of SEL programs. With both analyses, Harmony was very strong in the social domain and needed to be more intentional with lessons focused on the emotion

domain (recognizing and expressing emotions), as well as the cognitive domain (directing behaviors towards goals).

To meet these demands, Harmony refreshed the unit structure. The first of five units focuses on understanding self (including more skills from the emotion domain), then promoting interpersonal relationships in the next three units (with a stronger focus on using goal-directed behavior), and finally developing relationships within community in the last unit. The five units are: *Being My Best Self*, *Valuing Each Other*, *Communicating with Each Other*, *Learning from Each Other*, and *Supporting Our Community*. Further, Harmony developed a mini-unit, *Building Community: The First 10 Days of Harmony SEL*, which provides educators a way to introduce Everyday Practices within the first 10 days, as well as providing mini-lessons to help build a classroom community (see Appendix D for a description of each unit and corresponding CASEL competencies and sub-competencies).

The refresh also maintained most of the lesson structure, while ensuring consistent features across grades. In Harmony Second Edition, the beginning of each lesson included a lesson synopsis, learning goals, learning objectives, and key concepts and vocabulary; however, they were used inconsistently across grade bands. In the refresh, educators receive consistent lesson synopses and learning goals. In addition, Harmony adapted learning objectives into student-friendly success criteria and adapted key concepts/vocabulary into a vocabulary section within the lesson itself, with associated instruction. The Harmony program was initially developed to include play- and peer-based activities; incorporate games, music, stories, movement, and art (in Pre-K to Grade 2); and incorporate role-plays, hands-on activities, discussions, and interactive games (Grades 3–6) (Martin et al., 2017), all of which are consistent practices across SEL programs (Jones et al., 2021). The refresh continued the use of these instructional methods and attempted to diversify the instructional methods more across lessons and grade-levels (Jones et al., 2021). Furthermore, Harmony continued to incorporate variation in grouping type, recognizing that relationships across groupings were important (pairs, small group, whole group) (Martin et al., 2017), while also incorporating more

student voice and choice throughout lessons and activities. One way Harmony was able to increase instructional modalities was to move away from grade-banded lessons (two grades per unit) to grade-specific lessons (i.e., lessons were broken into specific lessons per grade), providing more opportunities for instructional activities.

As originally designed, the 20–25 lessons and activities (per grade band) required between 20 and 45 minutes (Martin et al., 2017). In the refresh, students across grade-levels receive a consistent number of lessons and activities, which include a unit introductory lesson plus five succeeding lessons per unit, for a total of 30 lessons per grade. Harmony developed an introductory lesson to help introduce unit concepts and facilitate student creation of unit-specific Personal Harmony Goals. The refresh incorporated a similar structure already used within Harmony—Harmony remains divided into three sections: set the stage, facilitate the activity, and reflect and review. Users also wanted shorter lessons (Jodl et al., 2020; JHU, 2020). Because of the important content within the program, Harmony kept lessons at 45–50 minutes, but ensured each of the three sections were more consistent and could fit within 10–20-minute segments educators could implement across three days or in one longer session.

Finally, users and experts wanted to ensure that all students could access the curriculum (Jodl et al., 2020; JHU, 2020). Harmony incorporated three strategies to improve access, including (a) a vocabulary section to ensure students had the language needed to really engage with the content; (b) a differentiation section for those students who needed additional support and those who needed challenge; and (c) a remote

learning option on how to adapt the lessons for virtual instruction.

## Storybooks

Harmony has traditionally included original storybooks in the Pre-K to Grade 2 curriculum, in which lesson concepts and skills were first introduced with guided discussions (Martin et al., 2017). Educators generally reported that the storybook’s primary character, Z, a space being who needed to learn how to be a good friend, was a favorite among students. Educators also recognized the storybooks needed a refresh (Jodl et al., 2020; JHU, 2020). To refresh the storybooks, Harmony decreased the wordiness of the stories, enhanced the layout, and sharpened the appearance of illustrations. Similarly, to lessons, Harmony refreshed stories so that they are grade specific for each lesson in Pre-K to Grade 2 and maintained alignment to core lesson SEL competencies and concepts. Because of the high demand for stories, even among upper elementary educators and students, Harmony added stories to introduce units for Grades 3 through 5. Finally, to be able to use stories through an intergroup contact theory lens (Cameron et al., 2006), Harmony adapted stories to incorporate a larger and more diverse set of storybook characters with more robust storylines for each character. The storybook characters thus have a unique group identity—Clubhouse friends—while also having their own unique experiences and backgrounds.

## Digital Games

Games have always been a core piece of the Harmony program (Martin et al., 2020) and continue to be included within the lessons and activities. However, educators wanted additional interactive games that students can





use through an app or web platform (Jodl et al., 2020), allowing students to practice using their social and emotional competencies outside of the explicit SEL instruction in Harmony. To meet these needs, Harmony previously selected games that were well-suited for an app and developed the Harmony Game Room app. To continue to meet the needs of educators, Harmony refreshed the games in the Harmony Game Room app, ensured that there was at least one game per unit, and developed a web-based platform where students could play the Harmony games, creating more digital options for students to practice their social and emotional competencies.

## Home-School Connections

In Harmony, educators receive a set of Home-School Connections. These resources provide communications to families with information about Harmony, as well as activities they can use at home (Martin et al., 2017). In the refresh, Harmony updated the Home-School Connections to align with the updated unit structure. In addition, Harmony developed a *Harmony at Home* resource in 2020 that provides additional resources and activities for families to use with their students when at home. In the refresh, Harmony updated Harmony at Home to align with the refreshed unit structure and enhanced Everyday Practices.

## Academic Integration

In the initial development of Harmony, there was widespread recognition of the importance of social experiences to student academic success (Hanish et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). In fact, research on Harmony found that students who participated in Harmony achieved better results academically compared to students who did not (DeLay et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). Student academic achievement could improve for three reasons: (a) students develop closer social relationships with their peers that could facilitate greater collaboration in learning; (b) educators could

spend less time on behavior and more time on instruction; and (c) students utilize academic skills during Harmony lessons and activities, including writing, reading comprehension, active listening, collaborative problem solving, presentation of ideas, and identifying cause and effect (Delay et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). Even with these academic improvements, educators stated that they wanted more concrete strategies to infuse social and emotional competencies throughout the academic curriculum and the school day (Jodl et al., 2020). This recommendation aligns with recent advancements in the science of learning and development, which demonstrates the foundational role and the inextricable link between social, emotional, and academic development (SoLD Alliance, 2020).



To build on this recommendation, Harmony took a multi-pronged approach for academic and SEL integration. First, Harmony continues to incorporate the use of academic skills within lessons and activities as noted previously. In addition, Harmony is updating the alignment between Harmony SEL competencies with mathematics and English Language Arts standards. Third, in the refresh, Harmony was more intentional about incorporating a vocabulary element within each lesson to build a social and emotional vocabulary for students. Further, Harmony Second Edition incorporated Everyday Moments within select lessons to support educators as they infuse the skills, concepts, and strategies throughout the school day (Martin et al., 2017). In the refresh, Harmony incorporated Everyday Moments consistently across lessons and across grade levels. Harmony also added an SEL in Action section at the end of each lesson. This section helps students think about how they can use the skills learned in other parts of their day, including their Personal Harmony Goals.

Sixth, at the unit level, Harmony provides an Academic Integration section. In this section, Harmony provides a rationale for how the skills learned in the unit



support skills students need in order to engage in academic learning. This section also provides concrete lesson examples of how educators can use skills students learn in Harmony within academic lessons, while also providing instructional strategies educators can use to encourage the connection between social, emotional, and academic learning (Yoder et al., 2022).

Finally, Harmony, in collaboration with Doug Fisher (a leading expert in literacy instruction), developed *Literature Alignment Guides*. The Guides identified common literature across grade levels and aligned to each unit. Within each of the Literature Alignment Guides, Harmony provides the aligned social and emotional competencies, a text summary, questions and activities that provide student reflection and use of their social and emotional competencies, and opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding of the text and of their competencies.

## Educator SEL

Although not explicitly named when Harmony was developed or within Harmony Second Edition, Harmony has incorporated aspects of educator SEL. Educator SEL includes both educator social, emotional, and cognitive *competencies*, as well as their *capacities* to support student social and emotional development (Yoder et al., 2020). Harmony Second Edition built educator capacities to support students through deepening educator knowledge about why the social and emotional competencies and concepts are important (Martin et al., 2017) in a *Relevance* section (by unit in Grades 3 to 6 and by lesson in Pre-K to Grade 2). In addition, Pre-K to Grade 2 built educator competencies through a *Think on It/Act on It* section, which provides thoughtful questions for educator reflection and suggested actions that educators can take to further develop their own competencies in service of students. In their 2020 [Guide for Evidence-Based SEL Programs](#), CASEL encourages programs to provide additional supports for educator SEL as they note that to effectively support students,



educators need to first start with themselves (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2020).

In the refresh, at the unit level, Harmony updated the *Relevance* section. Now titled, *Relevancy: Building Our Knowledge*, this section adds additional literature to ensure the program incorporates the most up to date literature to build educator SEL capacities for supporting their students. Further, Harmony extended the educator competency sections to be more comprehensive and aligned with CASEL's Guide to Effective SEL Programs (Skoog-Hoffman et al., 2020). Specifically, Harmony enhanced supports for educators to deepen knowledge of their own assumptions about social and emotional competencies and how students and adults use them (*Think on It: Reflecting on Our Assumptions* section) and understanding the context in which students develop their competencies (*Act on It: Understanding Our Students in Context* section). Further, to continue to build educator SEL (competencies and capacities), Harmony provided point-of-use professional learning through its sister program, Inspire Teaching & Learning.

## Professional Learning

Harmony creates professional learning opportunities that build educators knowledge and tools to successfully implement the Harmony program as well as embed the Harmony SEL competencies throughout students' experiences to create safe and welcoming learning environments and develop positive peer interactions and relationships (Martin et al., 2016). Even with this goal, users requested greater professional learning and support in their use of the program (e.g., deeper training on the program, follow-up training after implementation, more examples of teacher implementation, a Harmony network of educators, criteria to evaluate their own implementation, and principal support) (Jodl et al., 2020; JHU, 2020).

In the refresh of the program, Harmony continues to provide similar professional learning on product training (maintaining 80% of the content in

those trainings). Harmony also leverages knowledge of effective professional learning to get educators excited about the program and its use in student learning environments, communities, and at home (Attebury, 2018; CASEL, 2019). Harmony is developing deeper professional learning experiences to support both unit-specific knowledge for educators and grade-specific professional learning to capture the nuances of student development. Harmony is also developing academic integration professional learning to help deepen connections of Harmony skills throughout the school day. These professional learning opportunities will be offered throughout the academic year as follow-up training to our product training to deepen content expertise and build excitement with educators. Harmony is also developing a coaching model, leveraging the observation tools developed, as well as leadership support. Finally, Harmony is extending the partnership with Inspire Teaching & Learning to provide deeper professional learning and support on SEL broadly, as well as educator SEL. Harmony will continue to identify professional learning needs of educators, leaders, and out-of-school time professionals to be able to meet their needs.

## Data and Measures

When originally testing the efficacy of Harmony, researchers developed and used Harmony-specific research tools. Specifically, they developed implementation measures (teacher logs and observation rubrics), program satisfaction measures (for students and educators across all five units), and student quizzes to test knowledge of Harmony concepts (Miller et al., 2017). Although these tools did not become part of the core curriculum, Harmony educators see significant value in the use of a multi-pronged approach to assessment, specifically more formative measures that they could use to guide their instruction with students. For example, some teachers encouraged self-reflection and performance-based measures to guide student learning. They thought that if students were given the agency for their own development and provided with authentic learning opportunities to demonstrate their progress, they would be more likely to take ownership for their learning (Jodl et al., 2020).

In the refresh of the program, Harmony is taking a multi-pronged approach to measurement. First, Harmony is including student goal setting and reflection through Personal Harmony Goals and journal writing in the SEL in Action section (noted previously). Harmony, in collaboration with the American Institutes for Research (AIR), also developed an implementation rubric that can be used for observations and self-assessment. Third, Harmony developed a data-dashboard that will provide evidence on which Harmony units and lessons were completed and will provide a quick satisfaction button after each lesson. Finally, for those educators who want to use more robust measures, Harmony, in collaboration with AIR, developed a measurement guide of aligned and validated student social and emotional competency measures and school climate measures that educators and researchers can use to test the efficacy and impact of the program.

## Next Steps

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Through Summer 2022, Harmony will continue to refresh program components defined above. Harmony will also continue to add to the professional learning services to meet the needs of users in their implementation of the Harmony program. Further, it will be critical for Harmony to continuously engage in research to both understand the impact of the program, and to deepen understanding about how the program works in classrooms and out-of-school time organizations to ensure that the program is allowing all students to access the program and engage in healthy relationships in their learning environments.

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# Appendix A. Strategic Advisors

Member	Position	Organization
David Adams	Chief Executive Officer	The Urban Assembly
Dr. Simyka Carlton	SEL Coordinator	Metro Nashville Public Schools
Dr. Jen DePaoli	Senior Researcher	Learning Policy Institute
Alejandro Diasgranados	Teacher	DC Public Schools
Dr. Donna Elder	Interim Dean	National University
Pia Escudero	Executive Director, Student Health and Human Services	Los Angeles Unified School District
Dr. Doug Fisher	Professor of Educational Leadership	San Diego State University Health Sciences High and Middle School
Brandon Frame	Director of SEL	The Urban Assembly
Dr. Frances Gipson	Clinical Associate Professor of Education	Claremont Graduate University
Eric Gurna	Former President and CEO and Senior Advisor	LA's BEST
Heidi Ham	Chief Operating Officer	National After School Association
Marie Izquierdo	Chief Academic Officer	Miami-Dade County Schools
Vivianne Jenkins	SEL Support Specialist	Broward County Public Schools
Dr. Tish Jennings	Professor of Education	University of Virginia
Tyrone Martinez-Black	Practice Integration Specialist	Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)
Dr. Clark McKown	Founder and President	xSEL labs
Dr. Deborah Moroney	Vice President	American Institutes for Research
Janna Moyer	SEL Specialist	Washoe County School District
Dr. Kecia Ray	Strategic Advisor	K20 Connect
Dr. Sara Rimm-Kaufman	Commonwealth Professor of Education	University of Virginia
Dr. Debbie Rivas-Drake	Stephanie J. Rowley Collegiate Professor	University of Michigan

## Appendix B.

# Harmony SEL Lesson Plan Audit Form

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*Directions.* Rate each lesson (including materials) using the following core components (and the associated ingredients). Components include those aspects of the lesson that need to be present, as well as the quality of those components. The rubric is divided into two parts. The first part incorporates those pieces that are directly incorporated into the lesson. The second are those pieces/principles that should be incorporated throughout the lesson. For each component, please rate it on a scale from 1-3, using the following criteria. As you rate the lesson, please provide notes on ways to improve upon the lesson.

1. Does not meet descriptors. The lesson does not represent quality design and does not adequately capture the bullets or descriptions.
2. Sometimes meets descriptors. The lesson is designed with quality, but it may not result in students meeting objectives in an equitable way; there is some evidence for meeting some aspects of the descriptions.
3. Mostly meets descriptors. The lesson is designed with high quality and will result in students meeting objectives in an equitable way; there is evidence for meeting almost all aspects of the descriptions.

As you review the lessons, ensure that the lessons, activities, and materials are developed in a way that helps create the environments and promotes the development of skills that all students need in order to thrive in their contexts. Students are provided opportunities to feel agentic and that they belong, and to feel affirmed in who they are, their lived experiences, and the personal, family, and community assets that they bring. The lessons should provide opportunities for all students to engage.

## Core Components of Lesson

Component	Definition	Score (1-3)	Notes
<b>Front Matter</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Title</li> <li>· CASEL competencies</li> <li>· Learning Goals</li> <li>· Materials</li> <li>· Lesson Synopsis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provides an engaging Title.</li> <li>· Includes 1-2 CASEL Competencies/skills using CASEL language.</li> <li>· Defines Learning Goals in ways that are easy for teachers to understand and breaks down CASEL skills into developmental components.</li> <li>· Provides Materials and activities that are implementable with no more than 5–10 minutes of preparation (requires little adaptation for educators before use). Materials are easy to find, not expensive.</li> <li>· Includes a Lesson Synopsis that identifies the concepts, how the associated activities help students meet those concepts, and associated background/prior knowledge needed for students.</li> </ul>		
<b>Set the Stage</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Hook and Background Activation</li> <li>· Success Criteria</li> <li>· Vocabulary Instruction</li> <li>· Lesson Purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Includes a Hook and Background Activation that grabs student attention, helps connect to student background knowledge, and/or builds needed student background knowledge (can be cultural, linguistic, personal experience).</li> <li>· Incorporates action words in Success Criteria, which are also engaging for that age group, provides opportunities for making personal or academic connections, and is age appropriate.</li> <li>· Includes Vocabulary Instruction, identifying needed language to engage in lesson (i.e., includes a vocabulary term or two in lesson to accomplish task that should be emphasized).</li> <li>· Explicitly states the Lesson Purpose with students and why it is important.</li> </ul>		
<b>Facilitate the Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Overall</li> <li>· Set Up Activity</li> <li>· Give Directions</li> <li>· Engage in the Activity</li> <li>· Differentiation Options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Connects Overall the success criteria with the activity. The skills are targeted productively, with appropriate pacing. Occurs within 15–20-minute time slot or is easily segmented.</li> <li>· Includes Set Up of Activity that provides high-level overview. The set up makes it appear that the game will be fun, interesting, and informative.</li> <li>· Gives Directions that are easily understandable for students and provides them some level of choice or voice within the activity itself. Includes instructions that are clear and easy to follow.</li> <li>· Engage in the Activity provides sufficient teacher prompts to create interactions between teachers and students or among students related to the material (e.g., prompts for questions, reflections, feedback).</li> <li>· Includes Differentiated Options to easily adapt the activities to meet the full range of needs/skills in the classroom. Provides 2–3 actions educators can take to adapt, modify, or more fully integrate all learners into the lesson.</li> </ul>		

<p>Reflect and Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Reflection Questions</li> <li>· Review</li> <li>· Everyday Moments</li> <li>· SEL in Action</li> <li>· Remote Learning Options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Provides Reflection Questions that allow students to collectively reflect on the goals of the lesson and connect the importance of the skills/knowledge that they learned.</li> <li>· Incorporates visual representation of the success criteria to Review, asking students how they knew they learned the strategies.</li> <li>· Includes Everyday Moments that allow educators to promote key skills and concepts at different parts of the school day.</li> <li>· Includes SEL in Action journal prompts that help students transfer skills to other domains of life/contexts and helps them to reflect on their growth towards their personal goals.</li> <li>· Provides Remote Learning Options that incorporate portions for using the lesson during remote instruction.</li> </ul>		
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## Embedded Principles Throughout Lesson

Component	Definition	Score (1-3)	Notes
<p>Culturally Responsive Practices, including Language Considerations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Creates opportunities to share about everyday lives, families, and cultures so it builds from real-life experiences.</li> <li>· Builds from student strengths, not deficits.</li> <li>· Includes literature/images of people of color, multiple cultures, or social identities.</li> <li>· Supports diverse ways of knowing, being, and communicating throughout lesson.</li> <li>· Incorporates games/activities that allow all students to engage.</li> <li>· Provides opportunities for students to collaborate and feel that they are valued and that they belong.</li> <li>· Scaffolds intentional use of language, particularly for language needed in the lesson (e.g., audiovisual; visual; role-playing; charts; groups; discussion stems; word banks; opportunities for students to paraphrase; or other modalities).</li> <li>· Incorporates precise and understandable language (grade-level appropriate and ELL-friendly).</li> </ul>		



<p>Trauma Informed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supports student collaboration and gives students an opportunity to build relationships with their peers (e.g., create sense of belonging, trust, sense of community).</li> <li>• Includes non-triggering language (e.g., uses families or adults, rather than parents).</li> <li>• Avoids language that suggests students need to be “fixed,” but rather includes language about understanding student needs.</li> <li>• Includes regulation strategies that allow students to manage their physical and emotional responses (e.g., includes brain breaks, provides images, transitions, or centering strategies).</li> </ul>		
<p>Student Voice and Choice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involves some student choice (in an age-appropriate way) that is authentic and meaningful to students.</li> <li>• Amplifies the ideas and perspectives of students, allowing time for them to listen and speak.</li> <li>• Provides choices that are meaningful and relevant to students.</li> <li>• Builds in varied ways of engaging (e.g., children who are shy can write ideas prior to saying them).</li> <li>• Allows for multiple ways to demonstrate skill.</li> <li>• Helps students internalize that they themselves are change agents.</li> </ul>		
<p>Intergroup Contact Theory/Socio-cognitive Theories</p>	<p>Intergroup Contact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities focus on building harmonious relationships and develop positive affective and structural experiences in which to engage with one another.</li> <li>• Activities create authentic experiences to connect with their peers.</li> <li>• Activities prepare students to form and maintain a classroom identity with their peers.</li> <li>• Activities help students develop the skills needed to form authentic relationships and resolve conflicts.</li> </ul> <p>Socio-cognitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities help students identify ways in which their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interconnected.</li> <li>• Activities help students recognize the situational influences on their interactions and feelings.</li> <li>• Activities help students understand relevant social cues.</li> </ul>		

# Appendix C.

## Theoretical Foundations and Supporting Research

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Researchers initially developed Harmony using a strong theoretical basis (Hanish et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2017). The program and associated activities are predominately driven by Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), which states that groups of diverse individuals will more likely develop relationships when they are provided opportunities to connect with one another, establish common goals, obtain equal status, and are broadly supported by institutions (for review, see Delay et al., 2017 and Pettigrew et al., 2011). In other words, through the Harmony program, educators attempt to create a deeper sense of classroom unity and create a common classroom identity amongst students, which should then reduce relational conflict and promote positive interactions with peers of diverse backgrounds in the learning environment (Miller et al., 2017).

Along with intergroup contact theory, researchers used social-cognitive theories of development, as well as core principles of SEL (Miller et al., 2017). Social-cognitive theories recognize the intersections of emotions, cognitions, and environments on student actions and interactions (Friedberg & MacClure, 2015). Within Harmony, students engage in activities that facilitate student learning about how their emotions, thoughts, and environments intersect and ways they can direct or redirect them to produce better outcomes. Researchers also included core principles of SEL (Miller et al., 2017). Specifically, SEL recognizes the importance of structured activities that explicitly teach SEL competencies in which activities are SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit) (Durlak et al., 2011). These structured activities ultimately develop core competencies, create supportive learning environments, and prevent underlying issues that may cause problem behaviors (Greenberg et al., 2003).

Guided by a strong theoretical basis, Harmony's active ingredients—intentional efforts to bring peers of diverse backgrounds (based on, for example, gender,

race, interests) together through explicit skill building (i.e., units and lessons) and everyday moments to promote positive and supportive relationships and environments (i.e., Everyday Practices)—define the mechanisms that matter most within the curriculum (Martin et al., 2017). Harmony targets the SEL competencies that promote positive social interactions, overcome barriers to productive social interactions (e.g., problem solving and conflict resolution), and that create positive norms of interactions, particularly with those who may have diverse views and opinions (Hanish et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2017). Harmony further provides opportunities for students to learn, rehearse, and obtain feedback on their SEL competencies (Frey et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2014). With these active ingredients, Harmony is similar to other SEL programs in that it explicitly develops core social and emotional skills, but is different in that it centers on peer influence and interactions (Miller et al., 2017; Rimm-Kaufman & Hulleman, 2015). In other words, researchers who developed Harmony recognized the importance of nurturing the social-environmental factors that influence student success, specifically positive connection to the learning environment and to their peers, making it distinct from many SEL programs (Miller et al., 2017).

Harmony seeks to bring together peers of diverse backgrounds in positive situations that help them learn from and with each other. Students become comfortable with peers who may be different and reveal similarities and common goals (Martin et al., 2017). The initial researchers sought to balance the best strategies to bring out differences, but also to not stereotype groups of students, with a specific focus on gender, while recognizing similarities and differences across multiple groups (Martin et al., 2017). Further, the structure and design of the activities—a combination of dyadic, small group, and large group—were intentional so that there was a specific focus not just

on building skills but understanding them in context of multiple types of relationships (Martin et al., 2017). Harmony also intentionally begins in Pre-K, recognizing that students begin to develop peer norms and socialize with like others at a young age (for example, gender segregation begins around ages 2–3), building a strong foundation for relationships later in life. Recognizing that subtle but lasting changes in language and environment produce strong effects for students, the researchers developed a program that was developmental in that skills continuously built on each other to create a holistic experience for youth (Martin et al., 2017).

## Recent Advancements in SEL

Student development of SEL competencies are complicated and intertwined with broader human development (SoLD Alliance, 2020). Social and emotional development depends not only on their individual knowledge, skills, and beliefs, but is influenced by the various environmental contexts students engage in. Recent advances in SEL and systemic SEL recognize the complexity of SEL development and the need to take into account multiple factors in nurturing student holistic development (Mahoney et al., 2022). Given these advancements, in the refresh, Harmony further takes into account the following additional principles in order to meet the needs of all students: development, culturally responsive practices, academic integration, positive learning environments, trauma-informed care, data for continuous improvement, and educator SEL (Yoder, 2020).

## Outcomes of the Harmony Program

Harmony SEL has a strong research base, in which a full range of students have engaged with the program, including English Language Learners and traditionally underrepresented populations. Since the program's inception in 2008, researchers have conducted rigorous evaluations of Harmony SEL components—providing sufficient evidence to be a CASEL SElect program. Researchers at Arizona State University (ASU) pilot-tested the program, as well as engaged in rigorous evaluations prior to its migration to National

University System. Initial research indicated positive results, including improvements in student academic achievement and empathy, as well as a decrease in aggression and stereotyping. Research—through a quasi-experimental design of fifth-grade students from a diverse population (with over 40% students of color)—found that students who engaged in Harmony received positive impacts on their peer relations when compared to control groups. Specifically, researchers found that engagement in Harmony improved student relationships, student connection to school, development of friendships among peers of diverse backgrounds, academic achievement, and decreased aggressive behavior (DeLay et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2017). Further, in a quasi-experimental design in a pre-kindergarten classroom, students who engaged in Harmony practices interacted with peers more often and with a wider variety of peers than students who did not participate in program components (Hanish et al., unpublished manuscript).

In addition to the experimental studies, researchers from Johns Hopkins University (JHU) Center for Research and Reform in Education (CRRE) conducted multiple formative evaluations of Harmony to promote continuous improvement. First, a broad sample of representative program teachers (n=999) completed a survey on their uses of, experiences with, and reactions to Harmony. Researchers found that when Harmony components are implemented within schools, teachers find Harmony effective at improving classroom climate and student behavior, and they felt the program was adaptable and flexible to meet their student needs (Morrison et al., 2019). These results were confirmed in a follow-up study that included a case study approach with five elementary schools across the United States, representing a diverse group of students. In this study, researchers found variability in the implementation of Harmony; however, those who engaged more with the program through training and implementation were more favorable of the program and believed it had a greater effect on students (Morrison et al., 2019).

# Appendix D. Unit Descriptions and CASEL Alignment



Unit	Description	CASEL Competencies and Sub-competencies*
First 10 Days: Building Community	This 10-Day pre-unit provides community building activities designed to support harmonious peer relationships. Students learn to engage in Harmony's Everyday Practices of Meet-Up, Buddy-Up, and Harmony Goals as well as in mini-lessons to establish a common classroom identity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SA: Developing Interests and a Sense of Purpose</li> <li>SA: Identifying Personal, Cultural, and Linguistic Assets</li> <li>RS: Developing Positive Relationships</li> <li>SM: Setting Personal and Collective Goals</li> <li>SM: Using Planning and Organizational Skills</li> <li>SM: Identifying and Using Stress-Management Techniques</li> <li>SoA: Understanding and Expressing Gratitude</li> </ul>
Being my best self	Students learn to recognize and name their own emotions and those of others, and how emotions, thoughts and actions are connected. They learn strategies to regulate their emotions, engage in healthy and optimistic self-talk, and develop a growth mindset when they encounter challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SA: Identifying One's Emotions</li> <li>SA: Linking Feelings, Values, and Thoughts</li> <li>SoA: Understanding and Expressing Gratitude</li> <li>SoA: Showing Concern for the feelings of others.</li> <li>SM: Managing One's Emotions</li> <li>RDM: Anticipating and Evaluating the Consequences of One's Actions</li> <li>SA: Having a Growth Mindset</li> <li>SM: Exhibiting Self-Discipline and Self-Management</li> </ul>



<p>Valuing each other</p>	<p>Students learn to recognize and appreciate each other's emotions, perspectives and contributions while reflecting on the value of different lived experiences. They learn to support each other in helpful ways including effective ways for handling bullying situations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· SA: Identifying Personal, Cultural, and Linguistic Assets</li> <li>· SA: Integrating Personal and Social Identities</li> <li>· SoA: Recognizing Strengths in Others</li> <li>· RS: Developing Positive Relationships</li> <li>· SoA: Taking Others' Perspectives</li> <li>· SoA: Demonstrating Empathy and Compassion</li> <li>· SoA: Showing Concern for the Feelings of Others</li> <li>· SA: Examining Prejudices and Biases</li> <li>· RS: Demonstrating Cultural Competence</li> <li>· RS: Standing Up for the Rights of Others</li> <li>· RS: Seeking or Offering Support and Help When Needed</li> <li>· RS: Resisting Negative Social Pressure</li> </ul>
<p>Communicating with each other</p>	<p>Students learn a range of social and communication skills including ways to support effective communication and ways to avoid communication mishaps. They learn about verbal and non-verbal communication and how to adapt to different settings, including when participating in teamwork.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· RS: Communicating Effectively</li> <li>· SM: Demonstrating Personal and Collective Agency</li> <li>· RS: Seeking or Offering Support and Help When Needed</li> <li>· RS: Practicing Teamwork and Collaborative Problem Solving</li> </ul>
<p>Learning from each other</p>	<p>Students learn about different approaches to resolving interpersonal conflict and a step-by-step problem-solving approach. They discover that they can learn from each other by considering alternate perspectives and empathizing with others and that making amends for mistakes contributes to healthier relationships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· SoA: Taking Others' Perspectives</li> <li>· SoA: Recognizing Situational Demands and Opportunities</li> <li>· RS: Resolving Conflicts Constructively</li> <li>· SM: Setting Personal and Collective Goals</li> <li>· RDM: Identifying Solutions for Personal and Social Problems</li> <li>· SM: Demonstrating Personal and Collective Agency</li> <li>· RS: Practicing Teamwork and Collaborative Problem Solving</li> <li>· RDM: Demonstrating Curiosity and Open-Mindedness</li> <li>· SA: Experiencing Self-Efficacy</li> <li>· SA: Demonstrating Honesty and Integrity</li> <li>· RDM: Anticipating and Evaluating the Consequences of One's Actions</li> </ul>

<p>Supporting our community</p>	<p>Students learn strategies to support their community. They learn about developing and repairing trust among community members as well as strategies to promote inclusive community involvement, roles we can have in our community, and collective goal setting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· RDM: Evaluating Personal, Interpersonal, Community, and Institutional Impacts</li> <li>· RDM: Identifying Solutions for Personal and Social Problems</li> <li>· RS: Showing Leadership in Groups</li> <li>· SoA: Identifying Diverse Social Norms, Including Unjust Ones</li> <li>· RDM: Reflecting on One's Role to Promote Personal, Family, and Community Well-Being</li> <li>· RDM: Recognizing How Critical Thinking Skills are Useful both Inside and Outside of School</li> <li>· RDM: Learning to Make a Reasoned Judgment after Analyzing Information, Data, and Facts</li> <li>· SM: Demonstrating Personal and Collective Agency</li> <li>· SoA: Understanding the Influences of Organizations/ Systems on Behavior</li> <li>· SM: Showing the Courage to Take Initiative</li> </ul>
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\*SA—Self-awareness; SM—Self-management; SoA—Social awareness; RS—Relationship skills; RDM—Responsible decision-making