

# Gratitude is Essential: Adapting Microaffirmations to Social and Emotional Learning

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# Presentation Objectives

- 01 Identify examples of culturally-responsive social and emotional learning in the K-12 setting.
- 02 Examine the application of microaffirmations in social and emotional learning initiatives.
- 03 Discuss the correlates of microaffirmations and gratitude on promoting a positive school climate.
- 04 Demonstrate culturally-responsive microaffirmation and gratitude practices that can be adopted in the school and home settings.

# 01

Identify examples of culturally-responsive social and emotional learning in the K-12 setting.



# Conceptualizing SEL

Definition from CASEL and the National Center on Safe, Supportive Learning Environments

**Social and emotional learning (SEL)** involves acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to...

- Understand and manage emotions
- Set and achieve positive goals
- Feel and show empathy for others
- Establish and maintain positive relationships
- Make responsible decisions

# Culturally-Responsive SEL

Self-Awareness	Identifying emotions, assessing strengths, growth mindset
Self – Management	Self-regulation; handle stress, delay gratification, self-discipline, motivation
Social Awareness	Empathy, recognize differing perspectives
Relationship Skills	Cooperation, conflict resolution, communicating, problem solving
Responsible Decision Making	Making health choices based on respect from others and evaluating benefits/impact

Sequenced

Developmentally Coordinated

Active

Engagement

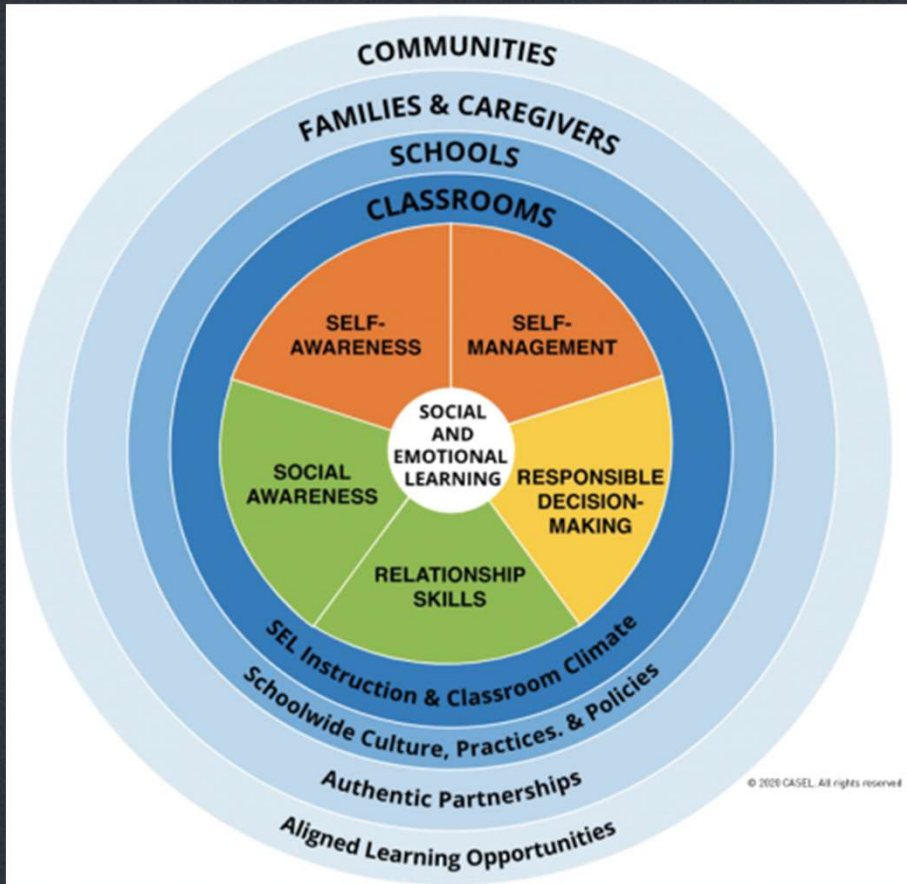
Focused

Intentionality

Explicit

Identified, Taught, Practiced

# Cultural Socialization and SEL



Learning about  
own ethnic-racial  
background

Facilitates  
Exploration and  
Identity  
Commitment

# 02

Examine the application of microaffirmations in social and emotional learning initiatives.

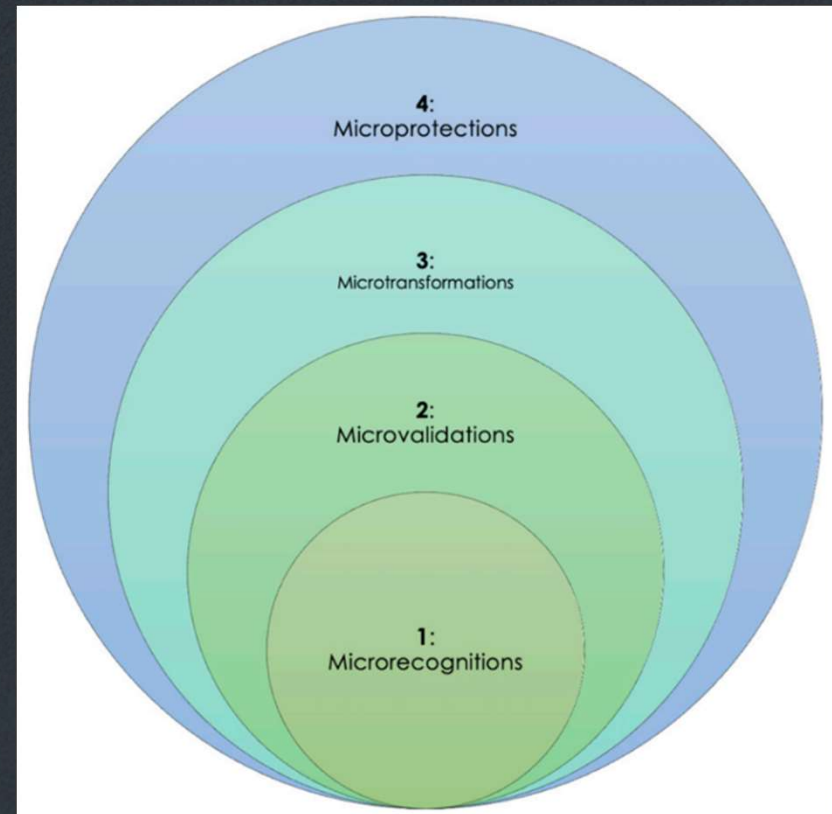


# Microaggressions → Microaffirmations

Prior research: focus on negative experiences (i.e., microaggressions)

Microaffirmations (Koch et al., 2022):

- Small and subtle acts
- Increase feelings of value and visibility
- Acknowledging a person's "value, culture, identity, and personhood"
- Intentional or unintentional
- Positive psychology lens



*Boyce-Rosen & Mecadon-Mann (2023)*



# Levels of Microaffirmations

- **Microrecognitions**
  - Recognition of identity
  - Visual or verbal
- **Microvalidations**
  - Recognition of identity
  - Active listening
  - Appreciative questioning
- **Microtransformations**
  - Facilitating a sense of belonging
- **Microprotections**
  - Disrupting and counteracting inequities
  - Social justice change agents

## Microaffirmations and SEL

### Shared qualities of microaffirmations and SEL:

- Learning about and respecting differences
- Respect for others
- Acknowledging others' feelings
- Reducing peer conflict
- Making students feel heard and seen

# Microaffirmations and SEL, cont'd.

## School Level

- Diverse perspectives in curriculum
- Culture of respect for identities of diverse students

## Individual Level


- Intervening against discrimination
- Validation and affirmation of differences

## Family and Community Level

- Inclusion of broader local community
- Incorporation at parent/neighborhood events

## District Level

- Professional development
- Implementation of microaffirmations as a tool



**How are these practices  
implemented in your schools?  
What are other examples that  
could be considered?**

# 03

Discuss the correlates of microaffirmations and gratitude on promoting a positive school climate.



# Gratitude



# Gratitude

## Cognitively-mediated, socioemotional process

- Results in a sense of :
  - Appreciation
  - Happiness
  - Joy
- Receiving something with “free and unrestricted intentions to give”
- Trait and state

Hussong et al., 2018

## Key Components

- Notice
- Attributions of giver’s intent
- Positive feelings with experience
- Express appreciation

Hussong et al., 2021

# Microaffirmation and Gratitude Correlates

## Microaffirmations

- Feeling recognized
- Feeling valued
- Sense of belonging
- Student engagement
- Inclusive culture

## Gratitude

- Positive well-being
- Traits: helpful, supportive, forgiving, empathic
- Relational satisfaction
- Self-reported GPA
- Life satisfaction



# 04

Demonstrate culturally-responsive microaffirmation and gratitude practices that can be adopted in the school and home settings.





What microaffirmation and  
gratitude activities are utilized  
in your school/district?

# Gratitude Activities

## Gratitude Thank You/Reading Notes

- On a sheet of paper student can:
  - Thank a peer or teacher
  - Write a gratitude journal entry
  - Reflect on experiences
- Writing prompts:
  - “Write down three people you’re grateful for and why.”
  - “Describe a moment when gratitude changed your perspective.”

## Gratitude Wall/Bulletin Board

- Create a space where students can post anonymous notes or drawings of people and things they are grateful for
- Examples:
  - Teachers and staff
  - Fellow students
  - Family members
  - Celebrations or holidays

# Microaffirmation Activities

## Compliment Cards

- Provide students with the opportunity to write compliments or positive affirmations about their peers
- Compliments cards can be anonymously distributed or shared openly
- Encourages an environment of support

## Diversity Show-and-Tell

- Have a day dedicated to celebrating diversity and unique strengths within the classroom
- Opportunity for students to share what they appreciate about other's:
  - Background
  - Talents
  - Perspectives

## Final Takeaways

Building Relationships is foundational to all effective interventions

Microaffirmations and Gratitude Activities Reinforce

- Positive Relationships
- Supportive School Climate
- Belonging
- Mental Health Wellness

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