Edgenuity + **P** URPOSE PREP

Social and Emotional Learning
Research Foundations

Edgenuity

The Challenge

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the "process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2019). Research shows that well-implemented SEL instruction can significantly improve student achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Osher et al., 2016; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, Weissberg, 2017), promote prosocial behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011; Jones & Kahn, 2017; Yeager, 2017), decrease suspension and discipline issues in school (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Wallberg, 2004), and reduce mental health and substance abuse issues and criminal activity as adults (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Data show that SEL programs can have a large impact on earnings (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017). A review of six SEL intervention programs showed that for every dollar invested, there was an economic return of $11 (Belfield et al., 2015).

While school leaders recognize the importance of providing targeted SEL programming to propel student success, many administrators struggle to find the funding and resources to do so. To address this issue, a growing number of educators and administrators are turning to technology to help scale and enhance social and emotional learning programs (Stern, Harding, Holzer, & Elbertson, 2015; World Economic Forum, 2016).

A Purposeful Solution

Recognizing the importance of SEL in supporting academic success, improved behavior and school culture, and social skills development for success in college, career, and life, Edgenuity® formed a partnership with Purpose Prep in 2018 to provide SEL curriculum options. Purpose Prep is a web-based course provider that offers SEL-focused curriculum and professional development resources for middle- and high-school students. It offers six online SEL courses that are designed to help students develop the productive attitudes and prosocial behavior needed for success in learning, careers, relationships, and life. Each evidence-based course is aligned to the five most critical SEL competencies outlined by CASEL (CASEL, 2019), building self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Because courses are online with a comprehensive set of video-based lessons, Purpose Prep's engaging, multimedia-rich curriculum can be flexibly implemented and delivered either in person and supported online or with in-person discussion. Purpose Prep courses have been implemented with students across 30 countries since 2010.

CHARACTER & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT	COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS	MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS
▪ Mission & Purpose ▪ Impacting Your Community ▪ Your Story ▪ Discover Your Identity ▪ Emotional Audit ▪ Compassion & Stilness	▪ Join the Workforce ▪ Which School Is Right for You? ▪ Job Preparation ▪ Traits of a Successful Student & Employee ▪ Personal Finance ▪ Disciplines That Lead to Success	▪ Anger Management ▪ Communication Skills ▪ Effects of Bullying ▪ Citizenship ▪ Peace Officers ▪ It's Not Your Fault ▪ Family Challenges ▪ Resiliency
PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL SUCCESS	UNLOCK YOUR PURPOSE
▪ Mentorship ▪ A Satisfed Life ▪ Who's In Control ▪ Needs & Limits ▪ Social/Emotional Health ▪ Growth Mindset	▪ Choosing Purpose ▪ Social Skills ▪ Healthy Relationships ▪ Successful Decision-Making ▪ Healthy Communication ▪ Knowing Yourself	▪ Map Your Future ▪ People & Problems ▪ Reasonable Response ▪ Frame Your World ▪ Silence & Questions ▪ Belonging

Figure 1. Purpose Prep Online SEL Courses

Theory of Change

Figure 2 provides a conceptual model of how Purpose Prep is intended to facilitate social and emotional development. The first column lists the resources that are needed (professional development, computers, headsets, and classroom space) to successfully launch Purpose Prep activities (online curriculum, scaffolded support, small-group instruction, family engagement) and generate the outputs (SEL awareness, behavior modification, minutes of instruction, and materials sent to parents on SEL skills) that lead to short-term outcomes (increased social–emotional competence, increased self-regulation, and increased communication, collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership skills). As SEL competencies increase, student engagement and classroom behavior improve. Ultimately, these short-term outcomes will lead to longer-term outcomes, such as reduced aggressive behaviors and disciplinary referrals, and improved academic achievement.

IMPLEMENTATION			OUTCOMES		
Resources	**Activities**	**Outputs**	**Short-Term Outcomes**	**Medium-Term Outcomes**	**Long-Term Outcomes**
▪ Teacher professional development ▪ Computers ▪ Online curriculum and assessments ▪ Headsets ▪ Time set aside to use Purpose Prep instructional routines for whole-group instruction ▪ School or central office staff person to oversee the program	▪ Teachers use Purpose Prep regularly ▪ Students watch online videos ▪ Students receive scaffolded support ▪ Teachers provide feedback on written responses ▪ Teachers lead whole-group or small-group discussions ▪ Students engage in discussions and activities with caregivers or mentors	▪ SEL awareness ▪ Behavior modification ▪ Minutes of instruction ▪ Family engagement that reinforces classroom practices	▪ Increased social-emotional competence ▪ Self-awareness ▪ Self-management ▪ Social awareness ▪ Relationship skills ▪ Responsible decision-making ▪ Increased self-regulation ▪ Increased communication, collaboration, conscientiousness, conflict resolution, and leadership skills	▪ Improved student engagement ▪ Attendance ▪ On-task behavior ▪ Task completion ▪ Improved attitudes ▪ Improved classroom behavior ▪ Greater attachment to school	▪ Reduced aggressive behaviors ▪ Reduced disciplinary referrals ▪ Improved academic achievement ▪ GPA ▪ Standardized test scores ▪ Increased graduation rates ▪ Decreased dropout rates

Figure 2. Purpose Prep's Theory of Change

A Research-Based Solution

Researchers and practitioners have pinpointed five hallmarks of effective SEL programs. These research-based practices are incorporated into Purpose Prep.

1) SAFE (SEQUENCED, ACTIVE, FOCUSED, AND EXPLICIT) INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

A meta-analysis of 213 SEL studies reveal that SEL programs that have a sequenced, step-by-step training approach, use active forms of learning, focus sufficient time on skills development, and have explicit learning goals have a greater impact on student behavioral and academic outcomes than SEL programs that do not include SAFE practices (Durlak et al., 2011).

Purpose Prep Incorporates All Four SAFE Instructional Practices In Its Courses

- **Instruction is sequenced:** Purpose Prep lessons capitalize on a coordinated progression of activities designed to optimize and inspire student learning. Each course consists of 80 instructional videos led by dynamic experts from around the world. After students watch each brief video, they complete a Check on Learning task. To accelerate and transfer learning, students apply new knowledge in Call to Action assignments throughout the course and engage in rich discussions with teachers, caregivers, and peers. Readings and written response activities further hone students' self-reflection skills, often based on research or interviews.
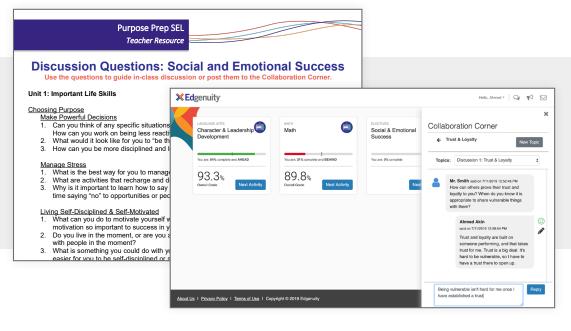

Figure 3. Purpose Prep includes questions to help teachers lead discussions face to face in classrooms or in the Edgenuity Collaboration Corner.

- **Instruction is active:** Purpose Prep capitalizes on compelling storytelling techniques to connect critical SEL skills to the emotional lives of students. A diverse group of experts uses personal experience and student-centered language to bring SEL content to life and make it relatable and relevant. For example, in one lesson, the on-screen expert describes how he was told that he would never amount to anything when he was young, so he began taking on that identity. He started selling drugs, joined a gang, and ultimately went to jail. He discusses how forgiveness and redefining his identity helped turn his life around. In another video, the on-screen expert discusses how his father hung an empty picture frame on the wall to teach him that every human has the power to draw or map out their own life.

  Engaging scenarios and assignments are designed to stimulate interest and curiosity. Students don't just passively watch; rather, they complete assignments that require them to curate, synthesize, and research information. The program allows students to collaborate with peers and teachers to think deeply about timely, relevant SEL topics that matter to them. Teachers are encouraged to engage students in Lightning Share activities in which students summarize course material and answer discussion questions in 60 seconds or less. In addition, Call to Action activities empower students to role-play and practice new behaviors, and enable educators to provide feedback on student reflections.

- **Instruction is focused:** Purpose Prep recognizes that targeted practice is a fundamental requirement for building fluent social-emotional abilities. In each lesson, students focus on building one of the following skills:
  - Self-awareness: Students complete writing assignments where they label their emotions, think deeply about what triggers their emotions, and reflect on how their emotions affect others. Students are tasked with completing mindfulness exercises where they identify their own strengths and limitations, identify values and interests, and build self-esteem. For example, in the Learn to Date Yourself activity, students are tasked with completing an activity alone. They go for a walk or to a coffee shop, restaurant, movie theater, or museum to get to know themselves. They then document their experience, noting what they like, what they don't like, what they want, and where they are headed.
  - Self-management: Students create vision boards that present a collage of words and pictures that represent their goals and dreams. Students practice setting SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based) behavioral and academic goals, and develop strategies to overcome obstacles to meeting those goals. Students also try out grounding techniques to manage stress, develop optimism, and display grit and perseverance.
  - Social awareness: Students learn to identify, predict, and evaluate other people's feelings and reactions. Historical and current events are used to teach the importance of diversity and understand a variety of points of view and perspectives. For example, in one Call to Action assignment, students analyze how Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s respect for others, social awareness, perspective-taking, and empathy skills created a movement and brought greater equality to the United States.
  - Relationship skills: Students learn strategies to navigate peer pressure and negotiate conflict constructively. They also work on communicating clearly, listening actively, and building empathy. For example, in the 5 Minute Connect activity, students practice expressing gratitude and appreciation toward peers. In the activity, each student is paired with a partner. The students take turns completing the following sentences aloud:
    - I appreciate you because…
    - My favorite thing about you is…
    - I'm thankful for…
    - I trust you because…
  - Decision-making: Students learn how to think critically and analyze decisions based on moral, ethical, and safety standards. Using case studies, students learn how individual decisions can affect others.
- **Instruction is explicit:** All Purpose Prep lessons have explicit learning goals. Each unit begins by presenting the objectives and specific skills students are expected to learn. Goals are written in student-friendly language and are directly connected to assignments and tasks.

Essential Question, Learning Objectives & Success Criteria

Learning Objectives:	Success Criteria:

What is mindfulness, why is it important, and how can I practice it within my everyday life?

1. Learn what it means to be "conscious" in our decisions and life and how to engineer mindfulness in every area of our living.
2. Understand the importance of mindfulness practices and principles and how to apply them in life.
3. Evaluate different forms of communication, and understand how communication can affect our relationships to become healthy or unhealthy.
4. Learn how to explore and know yourself inside and out through self-awareness and different tricks to evaluate yourself.

Figure 4. Purpose Prep clearly articulates the learning objectives and success criteria for every unit.

2) DEVELOPMENTALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTION

Children's cognitive and social–emotional skills develop and become increasingly sophisticated with a child's age and abilities. For example, in the elementary school years, students are focused on learning to build the neural connections needed to remember and store rote academic facts (Semrud-Clikeman, 2014). They are building foundational knowledge and are just beginning to identify emotions, control impulses, and build reciprocal relationships (Denham, 2018). In middle school, neural connections increase, and inferential thinking becomes more prominent. Students begin to gain more autonomy, comprehend complex emotional situations, and resolve conflicts within groups (Denham, 2018). Throughout high school, students make significant gains in abstract thinking, exhibit improved social cognition, and are increasingly motivated to experiment with new interests and establish their own identities and values (Steinberg, Vandell, & Bornstein, 2011; Williamson, Modecki, & Guerra, 2015). During this developmental period, there is a marked shift toward reward-seeking and succumbing to peer and academic pressure, while self-regulation skills decline (Steinberg, 2008; Williamson et al., 2015). Because elementary-, middle-, and high-school students' social and emotional needs are so different, researchers agree that effective SEL instruction must be developmentally appropriate (Durlak et al., 2011).

Experts also agree that SEL is unlikely to be effective if it is not culturally sensitive and responsive (Cressey, 2019). Studies show that students learn best when they can connect what happens in school to their cultural contexts and unique heritage, lived realities, and the issues they care about (Darling-Hammond, Flook, Cook-Harvey, Barron, & Osher, 2019; Muñiz, 2019; Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013). Research indicates that culturally responsive instruction (using cultural referents to impart knowledge) improves students' self-efficacy, self-esteem, attachment to school, and student achievement (Steele & Cohn-Vargas, 2013; Muñiz, 2019).

Purpose Prep Instruction for Grades 6–12

Purpose Prep offers courses that focus on college and career readiness, unlocking purpose, character and leadership development, personal development, mental health and wellness, and social and emotional success. The focus of course content, however, varies based on a student's grade level. For example, in grades 6 through 8, the program addresses middle-school students' experience of increased autonomy and perspective-taking abilities by targeting **personal development, character and leadership development**, and teaching students **how to find their unique purpose**. Students learn how to document their goals, dreams, skills, interests, and values. They are taught how to make informed and responsible decisions, as well as hone individual leadership styles, and enhance their abilities to grow and sustain healthy relationships. The goal is to help students take control of their future and successfully transition from middle school to high school.

In grades 9 through 12, the focus of the curricula shifts to emphasize identity development, resilience, risk prevention, and empathy. Courses target the development of healthy **social and emotional skills**, **mental health and wellness**, and **readiness for life beyond high school.** Activities equip students to be able to manage their emotions and balance them with a meaningful and vibrant social life, as well as cope with and overcome adversity and trauma. Courses help students understand the consequences of substance use and abuse, and empathize with others to create long-lasting relationships. Interactive activities help students reflect on circumstances and possible solutions to problems, build a framework for citizenship, embrace the value of diversity, and appropriately use their voices to fight injustice.

Purpose Prep is committed to delivering culturally responsive instruction. Before courses are published, a team of experienced classroom teachers and experts review instructional materials for bias and sensitivity. Careful efforts are taken to ensure students with a variety of socioeconomic and geographic upbringings can access and relate to the material.

Published courses are taught by 80 content experts who hail from a variety of industries and walks of life (i.e., mental health professionals, social figures, educators, athletes, philosophers, celebrities, CEOs, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs).

Diversity (what it is, why we need it, how to embrace it, and how to combat prejudice), inclusion (how to build bridges with people who are different), and respecting people's differences are reoccurring themes in Purpose Prep's online lessons.

Figure 5. Purpose Prep Courses are taught by a diverse array of content experts.

SHORT WRITING ANSWER

Lesson: Know Yourself, Love Yourself

Prompt:

In this module, Herman talks about knowing and loving yourself. This can be difficult, but the more we practice it and learn to appreciate our lives, the better we get at it and the easier it becomes.

Your culture plays a vital role in your identity and self-esteem, Herman said. Your culture includes your parents, peers, and others who help lay the foundation of your life.

Evaluate the statement above and share whether you agree with it. Reflect on your upbringing and the people who have influenced you. Do you agree that culture plays a vital role in who you are and the level of self-esteem you develop as you mature? Share whether you agree with the reasoning of his statement, and then provide evidence to support your opinion.

Identify whether you believe any of these statements are false, and then explain why. Please write in complete sentences.

Figure 6. In both online and offline activities, Purpose Prep challenges students to analyze their own beliefs and biases, listen to others, and reflect on the broader ethical consequences for intragroup, intergroup, and institutional relations.

Purpose Prep's professional development also strives to be culturally responsive. Educators are taught strategies for how to acknowledge the contributions of all students, regardless of culture. They are also given tips on how to open the lines of communication so that they can directly support students.

3) ACCOMMODATIONS TO MEET THE NEED OF ALL LEARNERS

Neuroscientists have identified two types of memory that support learning: working memory (where we consciously process information) and long-term memory (a much larger body of connected information). Practice (when a motor or cognitive skill is repeated over time) transfers knowledge from working memory to long-term memory. Research shows that students learn more effectively if cognitive load—the burden placed on working memory—is reduced so that working memory can be devoted to important learning tasks (Sweller, 2008). Experts recommend using instructional scaffolding (supports such as prompts, cues, or interactive tools) to accommodate students of all learning styles and abilities (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2011).

Purpose Prep Supports for Diverse Learner Needs

Purpose Prep includes a variety of supports to meet the needs of all learners:

▪ Videos are chunked into sections, and captions and transcripts are available for all content.

- Students can learn at their own pace, pause and rewind videos, mark up text, and take electronic notes.
- Teachers have options to customize the course settings (e.g., adjust the time allotted for assessments; change the grade weights for quizzes and written assignments) to make the level of challenge more appropriate for individual students.
- Read-aloud and translation tools help students with language needs.
- A digital notebook called eNotes enables students to take notes, record, synthesize, and organize their thinking.
- A dynamic glossary and a word look-up tool help students build their academic vocabulary, while transcripts and video captions enable students to follow along with the on-screen expert.
- Relevance is optimized through topics that are relevant to students' lives and application to real-world situations.

4) SCHOOL–FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Experts agree that "families are a child's first teacher and an essential factor in the cultivation of social and emotional competencies throughout a child's life" (CASEL, 2017, p. 2). Research shows that promoting parent-child interaction in SEL learning activities is associated with improved academic achievement and behavioral outcomes (Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2007; Albright & Weissberg, 2010; Durlak et al., 2011; Garbacz, Swanger-Gagné, & Sheridan, 2015).

Purpose Prep Lesson Activities to Support School–Family Partnership Development

Purpose Prep recognizes the importance of school–family partnerships. Each course includes four caregiver/mentor activities that provide opportunities for students to apply and extend the skills they have learned and to practice at home. Activities focused on the home aim to connect family members to the school community by engaging in discussions that foster deep reflection on SEL competencies. For example, in a lesson on self-awareness, students ask caregivers/mentors about a time in their life when they struggled with self-esteem and what they did about it. They also ask whether they ever had angry or extreme emotions that made them feel out of control and what they did about it. Students then share one of their strengths and weaknesses and something they learned from the lesson. After students have the conversation at home, they provide an outline of the conversation and share it with the classroom, building home-school connections.

Figure 7. Purpose Prep extends learning into the home by including activities that ask students to work with a parent, guardian, or mentor.

Lesson:	Wrap-Up: Relationships
Prompt:	**Ask your parent, guardian, or mentor the following questions:** What relationships are valuable to you and why? How have you built those relationships over time? How do you build loyalty and trust in your relationships? **Now it's your turn to tell your parent, guardian, or mentor a few things you've learned in this unit:** One thing that would make me feel more supported by you in our relationship is... I feel safe with you when... **Provide a summary of your conversation in the comments section below.**

5) ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Research confirms that the success of SEL programs depends on whether the essential elements are delivered with high quality and the intended frequency (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Experts agree that implementation quality is determined in large part by the training and ongoing support school staff receive (Wanless, Groark, & Hatfield, 2015). As Jennings & Frank (2017) note, high-quality professional development should instruct teachers in the "program's theory, principles and strategies and to help them become familiar with required curricular activities, so that they can deliver the intervention with a high degree of fidelity" (p. 424). They also need ongoing support to integrate SEL concepts as they continue to implement programs throughout the year (CASEL, 2017).

Purpose Prep Expanded Professional Development Options

Purpose Prep delivers high-quality professional development that prepares teachers to cultivate and grow students' social and emotional development skills. Purpose Prep implementation consultants bring together district officials, school leaders, and teachers to determine how Purpose Prep will be integrated, positioned, and advocated for at each school. Purpose Prep consultants help stakeholders create an implementation model, set measurable benchmarks (e.g., 90 minutes per week), and create a plan to achieve goals. During in-person training, educators learn about the program's theory of change, as well as how to navigate content both inside and outside of the learning management system. Teachers walk away with practical classroom management strategies, as well as best practices for growing relationships with students, facilitating interactive discussions and activities, and using data to drive instruction.

A detailed facilitator's guide provides a practical framework to coach and empower students using the SEL curriculum. Teachers learn how to guide students to discover their purpose, identify areas for improvement, and unleash their limitless potential. A three-pronged instructional routine helps students learn how to 1) be active watchers and listeners; 2) have safe and socially aware discussions; and 3) activate prior knowledge and engage in critical thinking.

Figure 8. Purpose Prep Routines and Facilitation Guides strengthen educators' social and emotional skills, and, as a result, enable SEL classrooms to flourish.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Purpose Prep, provided in partnership with Edgenuity, translates the best research in online learning, neuroscience, pedagogy, and educational psychology into its instructional design. The program's engaging curriculum, targeted support for diverse learners, family engagement elements, and focused professional development ensure that students develop the productive attitudes and prosocial behavior needed for success in school, work, relationships, and life.

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