

Relationship Skills

Relationship Skills: The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.

Relationship skills are critical to success in life and work. Having the ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships, communicate effectively, resolve conflicts, resist peer pressure, and collaborate are essential in all human interaction. These skills are fundamental to success in school and in work.

Overall, conflict should be framed as a healthy indicator of democratic society and inclusive school community. To teach about handling conflict, educators can center conflict as a learning opportunity; center the assets and needs of all in the school community in examining conflict and be responsive to the presence of language, culture, and perspectives in examining conflict.

Ideally, educators integrate evidence-based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) practices across all subject areas to help students develop their social emotional skills or competencies. For the Relationship Skills competency, we've developed three learning goals, set measurable grade band benchmarks, identified sample activities for each grade band and identified where select Minnesota Academic Standards connect to the benchmarks. The sample activities are suggestions that educators can use to teach the benchmarks – the activities are not meant to be complete lessons. The intent is for students to reach mastery of each benchmark by the end of the grade range; however, teachers may want to revisit the earlier skills periodically.

Learning Goals

1. Demonstrates a range of communication and social skills to interact effectively.
2. Cultivates constructive relationships with others.
3. Identifies and demonstrates approaches to addressing interpersonal conflict.

Learning Goal 1

Demonstrates a range of communication and social skills to interact effectively.

Benchmarks, Sample Activities and Related Academic Standards by Grade Band

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Take turns and share with others.	<p>Have students play a game that includes sharing and taking turns.</p> <p>Help students with strategies for taking turns during conversations and class discussions. For example, tell them: “take a deep breath if you feel like you want to speak when it is not your turn and listen to your partner with your eyes and ears.”</p>	<p>Social Studies, 0.1.1.1.1, Demonstrate civic skills in a classroom that reflect an understanding of civic values.</p> <p>Social Studies, 2.1.4.7.1, Compare and contrast student rules, rights and responsibilities at school with their rules, rights and responsibilities at home; explain the importance of obeying rules.</p> <p>Science, 0.1.1.2.1, Use observations to develop an accurate description of a natural phenomenon and compare one’s observations and descriptions with those of others.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Use facial expressions, body language and tone to effectively communicate thoughts, feelings, emotions and intentions.	<p>Have students draw pictures of faces showing different emotions and display the pictures around the room.</p> <p>When reading stories, have students stop and reflect on which of the emotions characters may be feeling.</p>	<p>English language arts (ELA,) 0.8.1.1.c, Listen to others and name emotions by observing facial expression and other nonverbal cues.</p> <p>ELA, SL1, Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>Arts, 0.1.1, Demonstrate knowledge of the foundations of the arts area.</p>
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Practice sharing genuine encouraging comments to support peers.	<p>Routinely model how to give encouraging comments to others. Say out loud what you are doing. For example, “I wanted her to know that I could see how excited she was to hold the bunny, so I’m saying: don’t worry, you’re going to get a turn, too!”</p> <p>Routinely provide authentic feedback when you observe a student encouraging others. For example, “I saw the way you encouraged everyone running the race. That was really kind of you!”</p>	<p>Social Studies, 0.1.1.1.1, Demonstrate civic skills in a classroom that reflect an understanding of civic values.</p> <p>Social Studies, 2.1.4.7.1, Compare and contrast student rules, rights and responsibilities at school with their rules, rights and responsibilities at home; explain the importance of obeying rules.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Listen to others when they are speaking.	<p>Have students brainstorm what it looks, sounds and feels like when they are paying attention to a speaker.</p> <p>Routinely encourage students to practice during story time or other listening time. Routinely provide authentic feedback when you observe students listening well.</p> <p>Routinely provide opportunities for students to repeat what their peers said, in their own words, such as when they consider a classmate’s math reasoning.</p> <p>Routinely invite students to repeat instructions or new learning in their own words to check for understanding.</p>	<p>Social Studies, 0.1.1.1.1, Demonstrate civic skills in a classroom that reflect an understanding of civic values.</p> <p>Social Studies, 2.1.4.7.1, Compare and contrast student rules, rights and responsibilities at school with their rules, rights and responsibilities at home; explain the importance of obeying rules.</p> <p>ELA, SL1, Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>ELA, 0.8.1.1.c, Listen to others and name emotions by observing facial expression and other nonverbal cues.</p> <p>ELA, 1.8.1.1.d, Listen to others’ ideas and identify others’ points of view.</p> <p>Common Core Math Standards, SMP (Standards for Mathematical Practice) 3, Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Recognize how groups behave differently than individuals and affect an individual’s emotions, attitudes and behaviors.	<p>Have students participate in a group challenge. After the challenge, discuss how they worked in a group. Discuss ways they could have improved their team effort.</p> <p>Routinely invite students to reflect on how they worked as a team in cooperative learning or project-based learning.</p>	<p>Science, 5.4.4.1.1, Give examples of beneficial and harmful human interaction with natural systems.</p> <p>Science, 5.3.4.1.3, Compare the impact of individual decisions on natural systems.</p> <p>Arts, 4.2.1, Create or make in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.</p>
Grades 4–5	Recognize how facial expressions, body language and tone impact interactions.	<p>Have students’ role-play different scenarios with contrasting non-verbal cues. Discuss how they impact conversations.</p> <p>In preparation for oral presentations and as part of authentic feedback, discuss how facial expression, body language and tone affect the presentation and interaction with the listeners.</p> <p>During literacy instruction, have students think about how the author’s use of language and tone conveys what characters are like, and how the character’s language and tone impacts interactions with other characters.</p>	<p>Arts, 4.2.1, Create or make in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Demonstrate different ways to provide feedback to peers.	<p>Lead a lesson on how to give and receive feedback appropriately.</p> <p>Routinely invite students to provide feedback to one another as part of cooperative learning, project-based learning or oral reports.</p> <p>Consistently model respectful ways of giving and receiving feedback, and hold everyone to the same norm.</p> <p>Routinely provide authentic feedback when you observe students giving or receiving feedback well.</p>	4.3.1, Perform or present in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Use attentive listening skills to foster better communication.	<p>Play a game with multiple steps. Give all instructions without repeating.</p> <p>Encourage students to agree or disagree with statements made by their peers, either socially or academically.</p>	<p>English language arts (ELA), SL1, Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>ELA, 4.8.1.1.c, Pose and respond to specific questions to clarify or follow up on information, and make comments that contribute to the discussion and link to the remarks of others.</p> <p>ELA, 5.8.1.1.d, Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.</p> <p>Common Core Math Standards, SMP 3, Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Understand the different roles in a group, such as leader, facilitator, and follower and how these roles contribute to failure or success in group efforts.	<p>Students use group roles to complete a task. This can be done through any subject area.</p> <p>Assign classroom roles and small group roles that change every week to give students practice with different roles and opportunities for leadership.</p>	
Grades 6–8	Monitor how facial expressions, body language and tone impact interactions.	<p>Have students watch video clips and analyze how non-verbal communication impacts relationships.</p> <p>In literature, routinely ask students questions that draw their attention to the way facial expressions and other body language are described in text, and how expressions and body language provide implicit messages about how someone is feeling and how it impacts others.</p>	Arts, 6.2.1, Create or make in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Students are able to respond with positive action steps from feedback.	Students practice providing constructive feedback to one another on their writing. Students are also given a chance to reflect on how feedback impacted them. Provide developmentally appropriate supports, e.g., sentence stems.	
Grades 6–8	Differentiate between passive, assertive and aggressive responses from others.	<p>Teach a vocabulary lesson that includes the words, passive, assertive, and aggressive.</p> <p>Lead a discussion about how passive, assertive and aggressive may be different depending on the situation – such as when they’re with friends, in class, at home with siblings or with adults in public.</p> <p>Ask students to develop role-play scenarios or otherwise demonstrate where the person responding is either passive, assertive or aggressive.</p> <p>Ask students to demonstrate passive, assertive or aggressive postures.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Create positive group dynamics to move group efforts forward.	<p>Use project-based learning across multiple subjects.</p> <p>As part of social studies, ask students to identify a community need and carry out a service learning project. Ask students to reflect on their progress throughout.</p>	ELA, 9.9.1.1.a, Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
Grades 9–12	Apply non-verbal skills to create productive outcomes during positive and negative interactions.	<p>Contrast and compare role playing of non-verbal negative responses and non-verbal neutral responses. Follow up with how each person felt.</p> <p>Ask students to respond to journal prompts about how non-verbal behavior influences others.</p>	
Grades 9–12	Demonstrate ability to adapt to a variety of contexts, audiences, tasks and feedback from self and others.	Students practice providing constructive feedback to one another on their writing. Students are also given a chance to reflect on how feedback impacted them. Provide developmentally appropriate supports, e.g., sentence stems.	ELA, 9.9.6.6, 11.9.6.6, Adapt speech to a variety of contexts, audiences, tasks, and feedback from self and others, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Use assertive communication to get needs met without negatively impacting others.	<p>Have students work together to demonstrate asserting a need without being hurtful.</p> <p>Have students identify a community need and carry out a service learning project, practicing assertive communication throughout, to accomplish team goals.</p>	Science, 9.4.4.2.4, Explain how environmental factors and personal decisions, such as water quality, air quality and smoking affect personal and community health.

Table 1 - Relationship Skills, Learning Goal 1: benchmarks, sample activities and related academic standards by grade band.

Learning Goal 2

Cultivates constructive relationships with others.

Benchmarks, Sample Activities and Related Academic Standards by Grade Band

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Recognize how various relationships are different.	Students draw a picture of the various people in their lives. Ask students to present their picture and describe their relationship with the person pictured in small groups or to the whole class.	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Identify the qualities others, such as friends, have that you would like to see in yourself.	<p>Lead a discussion about what makes a “good friend.”</p> <p>Routinely ask students to reflect on when they are being a good friend to others.</p> <p>Ask students to create art projects or write simple essays about how they show they are a good friend.</p> <p>Routinely provide authentic feedback when you see students being a good friend to others by showing kindness, sharing, waiting their turn or inviting others to join.</p>	
Kindergarten– Grade 3	Demonstrate ability to develop positive peer relationships based on shared activities/ interests.	<p>At recess, develop team-building strategies that increase play.</p> <p>Book buddies with an older grade.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Recognize the difference between positive and negative relationships and identify behaviors that contribute to each.	<p>Talk about the impact of social media on relationships.</p> <p>Ask students to respond to a journal prompt and then share in pairs or in small group about the difference between positive and negative relationships.</p> <p>Lead a group discussion that asks students to identify behaviors that contribute to positive and negative relationships.</p>	
Grades 4–5	Recognize the value of friendships with a variety of individuals.	<p>Understand the difference between safe and unsafe behaviors in a relationship.</p> <p>Ask students to interview family members and develop a report on their friendships.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Identify a problem in a relationship and know how to seek appropriate assistance such as asking for peer mediation or adult assistance, etc.)	<p>Teach a lesson on a conflict resolution strategy: stop and calm down, take turns stating the problem using I-statements, consider options and together choose one and try it out.</p> <p>Encourage students to use the conflict resolution strategy any time there is a conflict. Assist them in working through the process.</p>	
Grades 4–5	Demonstrate capacity to engage in cooperative learning and working toward group learning goals with peers.	Group game that has a common goal that students work toward together as a team.	<p>ELA, SL1, Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</p> <p>ELA, SL8, Communicate using traditional or digital multimedia formats and digital writing and publishing for a specific purpose.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Distinguish between positive and negative peer pressure.	<p>Teach a lesson on peer pressure – negative and positive. Brainstorm examples of peer pressure with students.</p> <p>Ask students to respond to a journal prompt about a time they experienced positive or negative peer pressure.</p> <p>Routinely provide authentic feedback when you notice students exerting negative or positive peer pressure.</p> <p>Routinely encourage students to encourage their peers in positive ways.</p> <p>Routinely discourage students from urging their peers to engage in risky or negative behaviors.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Demonstrate strategies for resisting negative peer pressure.	<p>Write, role play and watch videos on strategies of how to avoid peer pressure.</p> <p>Brainstorm with students about ways to say no or in another way effectively resist negative peer pressure, while keeping their friends. Allow students to demonstrate their favorite examples in role plays in small groups. Ideally the teacher plays the role of the individual exerting negative peer pressure.</p>	
Grades 6–8	Identify and demonstrate ways to be involved in constructive, prosocial activities with others.	<p>Provide authentic feedback to encourage students to get involved in positive ways in their school and in their community.</p> <p>Help students organize and execute service-learning projects.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Understand the potential consequences of safe and unsafe behaviors in relationships.	<p>Explore appropriate and inappropriate use of social media.</p> <p>In small groups or teams, have students develop written and oral reports about safe and unsafe behaviors in relationships.</p> <p>Have students develop public service campaigns about safe and unsafe behaviors in relationships.</p>	
Grades 6–8	Demonstrate ability to develop relationships with peers that are effective and supportive.	<p>Ask students to respond to journal prompts and share in pairs or groups their answers to the question: “What are the qualities a good friend?”</p> <p>Model good friendship skills.</p> <p>Provide authentic feedback when you see students behaving in a positive way toward their peers.</p>	
Grades 9–12	Demonstrate ability to develop romantic and non-romantic relationships with peers that are effective, supportive, and can be stable over time.	<p>Practice setting limits for themselves and others (i.e., boundaries).</p> <p>Individually or in teams, write a report that discusses healthy relationships.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Identify the qualities and benefits of someone who is or might be a mentor.	<p>Role playing related to 1) giving voice to feeling confused or not sure and 2) knowing that when we are not sure, it is typically wise to give ourselves time to wait and reflect until we come to know what really feels right or wrong.</p> <p>Lead discussions to identify the importance and qualities of mentors. Ask students to think (or respond to a journal prompt about people who are or could be mentors in their lives. Ask students to interview adult family members on the topic of who their mentors were when they were younger. Ask them to report back or write a report.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Demonstrate capacity to provide leadership roles in cooperative learning.	<p>Provide students with opportunities to demonstrate leadership in cooperative learning or project-based learning. Provide support and guidance as needed.</p> <p>Provide authentic feedback when you observe students exhibiting leadership.</p> <p>In lessons, ask students to write about leaders in their community, identifying the qualities of those leaders.</p> <p>Students are able to differentiate between someone who is famous versus someone who has the characteristics they need to achieve life goals.</p>	

Table 2 - Relationship Skills, Learning Goal 2: benchmarks, sample activities and related academic standards by grade band.

Learning Goal 3

Identifies and demonstrates approaches to addressing interpersonal conflict.

Benchmarks, Sample Activities and Related Academic Standards by Grade Band

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Describe what conflict is and feelings associated with it.	<p>Differentiate between conflict, bullying, harassment and intimidation.</p> <p>Define the word “conflict” as part of a vocabulary lesson. Ask students to talk about how conflicts make us feel. Teach a simple formula for handling conflicts and post it in the classroom. One such formula follows. Stop and calm down, take turns stating the problem, brainstorm possible solutions, together identify a way to deal with the problem and agree to try that way out.</p> <p>Routinely support students who have a conflict by helping them work through the classroom procedure for handling conflicts.</p> <p>Create a peace corner where students can go to calm down or work together to solve a problem. Assist students through the classroom procedures for handling conflicts.</p>	Arts, 0.1.2, Demonstrate knowledge and use of the technical skills of the art form, integrating technology when applicable.

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Demonstrate understanding of the other’s point of view when there is conflict.	<p>Teach students how to formulate a simple I-statement and routinely invite them to practice when they are experiencing a problem or conflict.</p> <p>Stating how they feel using an I-statement to articulate their emotions and being able to discuss possible solutions.</p>	Common Core Math Standards, SMP 6, Attend to precision.
Kindergarten–Grade 3	Identify potential solutions to the conflict.	<p>Routinely practice a simple conflict resolution formula anytime there is a conflict.</p> <p>Engage in restorative practices to repair harm done to others.</p>	
Grades 4–5	Identify conflicts as a natural part of life.	Discuss various conflicts that occur among peers.	Social Studies, 3.3.3.8.1, Identify physical and human features that act as boundaries or dividers; give examples of situations or reasons why people have made or used boundaries.
Grades 4–5	Demonstrate the ability to state the problem from multiple perspectives.	Routinely encourage students to work through the steps of a conflict resolution formula, so that they gain experience stating and hearing a problem from multiple perspectives.	<p>Social Studies, 3.4.1.2.2, Compare and contrast two different accounts of an event.</p> <p>ELA, R6, Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 4–5	Identify solutions to interpersonal conflict that meet needs of self and others.	<p>Brainstorming session with students about solutions to interpersonal conflict – what are some ways that we can help solve conflict that will help everyone involved?</p> <p>Routinely encourage students to practice a classroom conflict resolution formula.</p>	<p>Arts, 4.3.1, Perform or present in a variety of contexts in the arts area using the artistic foundations.</p> <p>ELA, 4.8.1.1.e, 5.8.1.1.e, Cooperate and problem solve as appropriate for productive group discussion.</p>
Grades 4–5	Demonstrate ability to state the problem using I-statements.	Model and practice affective statements individually and in small groups.	
Grades 4–5	Understand differences between our intent and the impact of our actions/words.	<p>Ask students to write an essay about the difference between intent and the impact of our actions or words.</p> <p>Lead a discussion about the difference between intent and actual impact.</p> <p>During discussions of characters in literature, or figures in history, ask about the difference between what those people intended, and what actually happened as a result of their actions.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Reflect on their role in conflict.	Ask to reflect and write about a conflict situation and how they acted and the response. What could they have done differently to get a positive result?	Social Studies, 6.1.1.1.3, Address a state or local policy issue by identifying key opposing positions, determining conflicting values and beliefs, defending and justifying a position with evidence, and developing strategies to persuade others to adopt this position.
Grades 6–8	Identify how all parties in conflict might get their needs met – a win-win situation.	Teach conflict resolution skills. Develop a peer mentoring or conflict resolution program.	<p>Social Studies, 7.4.4.22.3, Compare and contrast the involvement and role of the United States in global conflicts and acts of cooperation.</p> <p>Social Studies, 7.4.4.23.2, Analyze the changing relations between the United States and other countries around the world in the beginning of the 21st century.</p> <p>Social Studies, 8.4.3.14.4, Analyze how Pacific Rim countries have achieved economic growth in recent decades.</p>

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 6–8	Apply conflict resolution skills to de-escalate, defuse, and resolve differences.	<p>Teach a lesson that introduces various types of conflict resolution.</p> <p>Choose a conflict resolution formula to use any time students have a conflict.</p> <p>Routinely encourage students to use the conflict resolution strategy and provide authentic feedback when they do.</p>	<p>Social Studies, 7.4.4.22.3, Compare and contrast the involvement and role of the United States in global conflicts and acts of cooperation.</p> <p>Social Studies, 7.4.4.22.2, Analyze the social and political effects of the Cold War on the people of the United States.</p>
Grades 6–8	Identify positive support people to seek out in a conflict situation.	Ask students to develop a list of supports in and out of school. Ask them to write about the people they can seek out when they face a conflict.	
Grades 9–12	Evaluate and reflect on their role in a conflict and use this information to inform their behavior in the future.	Routinely use a conflict resolution formula with students.	Social Studies, 9.3.3.8.2, Describe the effects of nationalism and supranationalism on the establishment of political boundaries and economic activities.

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Demonstrate an ability to co-exist civilly in the face of unresolved conflict.	<p>Explore literature and biographies of characters who have dealt with unresolved conflict. Routinely ask students how these characters or figures co-existed civilly in the face of unresolved conflict.</p> <p>Show various videos about unresolved conflict and how people can co-exist with it.</p>	<p>Social Studies, 9.4.4.19.6, Outline the federal policies of war-time and post-war United States; explain the impact of these policies on Southern politics, society, the economy, race relations and gender roles.</p> <p>Social Studies, 9.4.4.19.7, Describe the content, context, and consequences of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments; evaluate the successes and failures of the Reconstruction, including the election of 1876, in relation to freedom and equality across the nation.</p>
Grades 9–12	Access conflict resolution resources.	<p>Ask students to research resources in their school to help resolve conflicts.</p> <p>Create a list of resources available to students.</p>	

Grade Bands	Benchmarks	Sample Activities	Related Academic Standards
Grades 9–12	Describe and apply negotiation skills.	<p>Model good negotiation skills.</p> <p>Have students do a research project on effective negotiation. Present reports to class. Together as a class, identify a simple and effective negotiation formula. Allow students to role play using the negotiation formula. Post the formula in class.</p> <p>Encourage students to use the negotiation strategy when they need to negotiate. Provide authentic feedback when you notice them using good negotiation skills.</p> <p>Students engage in debate on various topics that students choose.</p>	Social Studies, 9.1.1.1.1, Demonstrate skills that enable people to monitor and influence state, local and national affairs.

Table 3 - Relationship Skills, Learning Goal 3: benchmarks, sample activities and related academic standards by grade band.