Lesson Planning: Addressing Students’ Social and Emotional Needs When They Head Back to School

Across the country, educators are grappling with the extraordinary challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. A recent study\(^1\) predicts that students will experience a learning loss of 30 percent in reading and 50 percent in math as a result of the crisis. Left unchecked, it’s an academic setback that could derail the futures even of students who were previously on grade level—and would be disastrous for students who were already behind.

Yet learning loss is not the only challenge educators must consider as they plan for next year. Students will also need help coping with the trauma they’ve experienced during the pandemic, processing our national moment of reckoning with systemic racism, and readjusting to school. Those who have lost family members or friends will be grieving. Asian American students may have experienced racist physical or verbal attacks. Students who rely on structures and routines, have experienced trauma prior to the school closures, and/or have lost housing or economic security might struggle to return to school. Younger elementary students might have trouble being separated from their parents or siblings after spending so much time with them.

With those challenges in mind, TNTP and Providence Public Schools partnered together to design transition lessons for the first five days back at school that will help address the academic and social and emotional needs Providence students will have when they return. Collectively, the lessons span every grade level and cover math, English Language Arts, and social-emotional learning. In this resource, we share some guiding questions that you can use to craft your own transitional lessons that will meet the unique needs of your students, as well as an example of one of the high school lessons we designed.

Guiding Questions for Crafting Transitional Lessons

As you begin to craft transitional lessons for your students, consider these guiding questions:

1. How do these lessons connect to your district/school/classroom’s existing efforts to meet the social and emotional needs of students as they return to school this year? Do they expose any gaps?
2. In our research publication, *The Opportunity Myth*, we found that students need access to four crucial resources: grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations. How will your lessons provide access to those four resources?
3. What would it take to use lessons like these in your specific district/school/classroom context?
4. What support might teachers need to implement these lessons well?

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\(^1\) [https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf](https://www.nwea.org/content/uploads/2020/05/Collaborative-Brief_Covid19-Slide-APR20.pdf)
Sample Lesson Overview
A community-building and self-reflection activity, this lesson for the first day back focuses on student identifies and strengths. Students create their own "mirror" showing four things about themselves that they are proud of and want to remember when they look in the mirror. Students share their "mirrors" with classmates. At the end of the lesson, students recap what makes them special and what they learned about their classmates.

Sample Lesson: K-5 Social and Emotional Learning, Day 1

Lesson Plan

About the lesson
In today’s lesson students will engage in an activity titled “Mirrors”. This lesson is a community-building and self-reflection activity. At the end of the lesson, the class will discuss what makes them special and lessons learned about their classmates.

Students will create (drawing/construction paper etc.) their own “Mirror” showing four things about themselves that they are proud of and want to remember when they look in the mirror. Students share their “mirrors” with classmates.

Objective
Students will engage in a community-building and self-reflection centered activity and debrief lessons learned.

Standards
- SL.K.1, SL.K.3, SL.K.5, SL.K.6
- SL.1.1, SL.1.3, SL.1.5
- SL.2.1, SL.2.3,
- SL.3.1, SL.3.3
- SL.4.1

Culturally Responsive Framework Focus Areas
- Element A1- Socio-cultural/Self Awareness
- Element B1- Understanding Learners Individually and Collectively
- Element C.3.3- Collaborative Discussions (Discourse)

SEL Skills
- Self-Awareness 1D: I can demonstrate knowledge of my own personal strength, cultural, and linguistic assets.

Preparation
- Gather materials students will need to create their mirrors (including paper, writing utensils (pencils, makers, crayons), chart paper, mirror (optional)
- Create your own mirror as a sample for students
• Create a word wall (with pictures for multilingual learners and younger students) with keywords, phrases, terms they may use when creating their mirrors
• Group brainstorm ideas prior to beginning activity (if needed)
• Determine where students will complete their mirrors and in what group arrangement (at a desk, small group tables etc.) that is in line with safe distancing guidelines
• Decide how you will bring students back together and if you will choose to do a think-pair-share before bringing the group back together as a whole
• Determine if you will use a template provided or allow children to cut out their own mirror/use other materials. Make copies as needed.

Scaffolds for the Range of Learners
• Word wall
• Group brainstorm prior to beginning activity
• Sentence starters
• Vocabulary: similarities, differences, pride, proud

Assessment
• Walk around asking questions to students about what they are writing/drawing during the activity
• Listen to students during group share out
• Ask follow-up questions including (not limited to):
  o Who else chose something similar?
  o What are some similarities and differences we heard when people shared their mirrors?
• Take time for an Equity Pause. This pause will allow you to reflect on the lesson, focusing specifically on how the lesson went, as well as how your instructional decisions helped lead to equity for students.

Procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Actions</th>
<th>Student Actions</th>
<th>Supports for Multilingual Learners</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ignite</strong></td>
<td><strong>Student Actions</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activate &amp; Connect</strong></td>
<td><strong>Start by telling students that each student in our class is unique, different and special. Each student is good at different things, has special talents etc. and it is important for each person to know what makes them unique and special</strong></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>10 minutes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Think about what it means to be proud and identify something they are proud of</strong></td>
<td>• Unique</td>
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<td><strong>Share something they are proud of with a partner</strong></td>
<td>• Pride</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Share ideas with the class and listen to classmate responses</strong></td>
<td>• Proud</td>
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<td>• Talents</td>
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### SAMPLE TRANSITIONAL LESSON: ELEMENTARY SEL

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<tr>
<td>● Ask students to define pride/proud by asking what it means to be proud of something</td>
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<td>● What is something you are proud of about yourself? (Think-pair-share) (provide examples if needed)</td>
<td>● Call on 3-5 children to share out their answers with the entire group</td>
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<tr>
<td>○ Follow up: Why does that make you proud?</td>
<td>● While students are sharing out, record on chart paper so that students can reference it when working on their mirrors (group brainstorm)</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Prompts and Sentence Starters:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. What is something you are good at that makes you proud?</td>
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<tr>
<td>“(I am proud that) I am good at _______”</td>
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<td>2. When do you feel proud of yourself?</td>
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<td>“(I feel proud of myself) when I _______”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation: Collaboratively create a Frayer Model using the word proud. Identify examples/non-examples of traits or acts people may be proud of.</td>
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<td>Recommendation: If students are struggling, consider asking</td>
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<tr>
<td>● What do you love/like about yourself?</td>
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<td>● What makes you unique?</td>
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<td>● What does it look like when you feel proud of yourself?</td>
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<td>● Generate a word list of positive traits (honest, hard-working, friendly)</td>
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<td>● Tell students that today they will have a chance to create a mirror. (suggested term for younger students: “A Magic Mirror”). Remind them that when you look in the mirror you see yourself.</td>
<td>● Look at example and ask any clarifying questions</td>
<td>Vocabulary:</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Tell students that the special mirror they will make today does not show what they see when they look in the mirror (their face), rather this special mirror shows things that are special about them that they cannot see in the mirror (examples: a good reader, kind, great friend etc.)</td>
<td>● Begin working on their mirror</td>
<td>● Mirror</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Display your mirror using one of the templates provided, or create your own (call out to students that you didn’t write/draw things you see when you look in the mirror)</td>
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<td>● Reflection</td>
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<td>● Tell students that they will be able to choose 4 things about themselves that make them proud and draw/write those 4 things down on their mirror.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Explain to students that first they will create their mirror (if not using template) and then they will draw/write the 4 items</td>
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<td>● Share what materials they have/can use</td>
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<tr>
<td>● While students are working on their mirrors, you should circulate and call out the great things you are seeing</td>
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**Chunk**

**Introduce New Information**

15 minutes

**Vocabulary:**

- Mirror
- Reflection

**Prompts and Sentence Starters:**

Use the same sentence starters from IGNITE to support students with writing.
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| **Chew**  
**Process New Information**  
5 minutes | ● Call on 1-2 students to share with they have done so far  
● After students share, have students continue to work, adding any details or changing anything  
● Use the following questions to help them thoughtfully finish the activity  
  o Did you choose 4 things you are proud of?  
  o Did you illustrate or write words/sentences identifying what each thing is? | ● Continuing to complete their mirror, ensuring to have identified 4 things they are proud of (using pictures, sentences, paragraphs etc.) |  |
| **Review**  
**Apply New Information**  
15 minutes | ● Invite each student to share their mirror and the 4 things they are proud of  
  o It may be helpful to ask all students to hold questions, comments until everyone has an opportunity to share  
  o If someone does not want to share, it is okay. You may ask those students if it is okay for you to share it for them.  
● After everyone has shared, ask the following question:  
  o Is there a classmate that had similarities to you in what they are proud of? | ● Share their mirror and actively listen to others, as they share |  |

**Vocabulary:**  
- Similarities, same  
- Differences, different

**Prompts and Sentence Starters:**  
Use the same sentence starters from IGNITE to support students with writing.

1. ____ and I BOTH ______
2. ____ and I are SIMILAR because ________
3. One way we are DIFFERENT is_______
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<td>o What are some differences we heard when people shared their mirrors, showing us how unique we all are?</td>
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<tr>
<td>● End the lesson by reminding students that this lesson gave you all an opportunity to learn about one another and determine all the similarities and differences amongst the students in the class. State how you are so lucky to be part of a class with so many unique individuals!</td>
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### Equity Pause

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<th>Teacher Reflection After the Lesson</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Overall, how did the lesson go? From your perspective? From your students' perspective?</td>
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<td>● Which of your students engaged fully in the lesson? Who did not? How do you know?</td>
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<td>● How might your instructional choices have affected the experiences of your students with different identities during the lesson?</td>
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<td>● What are the implications for your next steps for relationships and community building? For responsive instruction?</td>
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### Student Materials

The following materials accompany the lesson plan:
Mirror Templates:
I am proud of: