

ALL IT TAKES®

A TRUSTED SPACE®

Beyond Worksheets

AMPLIFYING STUDENT VOICE

By Building SEL Muscles

Discussion Prompts & Recommended Delivery



Film Overview

Step into the next episode of Meeting The Moment, made to spark conversations with your students. In this episode, we confront the unspoken struggles of young minds grappling with unprecedented challenges—ranging from pandemic-induced isolation to the constant fear of school violence. This candid dialogue-starter includes students, educators, and professionals shedding light on the solutions to social isolation and angst in these complex times. This short film unveils the immense value of emotional support networks and the power of collective student agency in affecting change.

A TRUSTED SPACE

Beyond Worksheets

**AMPLIFYING
STUDENT
VOICE**

We underscore the need for trusted atmospheres within educational settings, spaces where students and teachers can bridge gaps, dissolve barriers, and connect on a human level. By doing so, we highlight ways the education system can evolve to serve the holistic needs of students, addressing not just academics but also their emotional and mental well-being. Don't miss this episode if you're yearning for an education system that cares about its students as complex, evolving individuals who deserve to have voice in the arenas they inhabit and will inherit. This episode is part of our ongoing commitment to bring forth substantial conversations that can drive positive change, made possible by CalHOPE and the California Department of Health Care Services.

Recommended Delivery

(Adults and Secondary Students)

Spark the conversation by sharing this film with your students, and work together to manifest a more empathetic, responsive, and inclusive learning environment.

1. We invite you to watch this film first and reflect on your own response to it.
2. Make a plan to show it to your students with time given for conversation - prompts included.
3. Teach the Youth SEL Muscles. Tangible tools youth can use amplify their voice productively and constructively. Based on time, break up the Muscles and teach individually or all at once.

Our goal is to support students so they elevate their impact on things that matter most to them in a time when feeling hopeful is compromised at record levels.

Time

20-45 minutes

10 minutes to view the film + 10-30 minutes for Muscles Lesson & Interactive discussion

Longer discussion time is always a good thing!

Set Up

1. Have students break into small groups - give each group a large piece of poster paper, tablet, or other means for them to collectively make notes that can be shared with the larger group later in the activity.
2. Breaking them up into small groups is best when randomized, giving all of your students a chance to converse with those outside of their 'choice' group.
3. One way to do this:
 1. Divide the number of your students by 4-6 depending on how small or large you want your groups to be. For this example we are using a class of 30, with groups of 5 desired.
 2. Have all students gather in groups of five of their choice. Once in groups have them sit down in seats or on the floor/grass/etc.
 3. Ask the groups to have each student choose one of the following (or any other 5 things - stay away from sports teams, etc)
 - Water
 - Fire
 - Air
 - Earth
 - Sun
 4. Ask all the Air students to stand and send them to their discussion area. Do the same for all the others. Watch for defectors, once they catch on some will try to change. There are powerful gains in them doing this with fidelity. If you start with them all standing you will not see all those who try to defect :).
4. Once in groups, share with them your choice of the following prompts to respond to. Have them note their shared insights on paper for sharing if time allows.



Tips to ENGAGE Student Interaction:

1. Believe they will - this is the number one tip - students will often bristle and push back against situations that encourage them to to engage with each other. Go the distance, they really are seeking this even when they do not know it. More often than not they will surprise you with their engagement with one another, even after initially pushing back.
2. Mix the groups up, design groups to be randomly selected, go the distance regardless of their initial push back on being in a group they don't want to be in.
3. Make sure the groups are not too large (4-6 is ideal) and give them a means to respond to the reflections, i.e. poster paper with markers. Doing this gives a creative outlet to the group to manage their responses any way they wish on the paper. Also, it gives the group a chance to choose roles like sharing out to the larger group, being the scribe, etc. Finally, this size group makes it hard for students to hide and the value of the reflections are about them and there is more interest in sharing.

Giving this a try? How did it go? What support could you use? We want to hear from you so we can create better versions of our work!

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Discussion Prompts

At the end of the video, Lori Woodley-Langendorff says:

“The education system wants to hear from you.

They can be better listeners, and they need you to be more powerful sharers about what you need, what works, and what needs to be solved.”



1. As a group, discuss and create a list of agreed upon topics that you would like to share with education system leadership (teachers, counselors, admin, board of education, etc). What do you want to change? What’s going wrong? What would make things better for you?
2. Lori also says **“And we need to know [your thoughts] in constructive ways.”**

Introduce and Discuss the SEL Muscles **“Wants VS Needs”, “Ask VS Tell”, “Reasons VS Excuses”** and **“Perseverance VS Resistance”**, each a useful tool that will help you share your thoughts in powerful, constructive ways.

As a group, discuss and write down a couple examples of ways you can share what you need. What kinds of words do we use? What kind of tone should we approach with? What are examples of times you’ve tried to raise your voice and it didn’t land as intended? What can we do differently to be more powerful sharers?



"Wants vs Needs" serves as a powerful tool for students to engage in constructive dialogue with adults and educational leaders. The focus here is not just about distinguishing surface-level wants from deeper needs, but also about uncovering the fundamental conditions that our wants are pointing towards. This nuanced understanding enables students to communicate more powerfully and propose solutions that address the root of their issues.

Everything We Want is a Symptom of What We Need.

Wants: The Symptoms

Wants are immediate, specific desires that usually are the first thing that comes to mind when we think of what's wrong. These are the "symptoms" of a deeper need that may not be immediately apparent. For example, a student may say, "We need school to start later because I'm tired." Whereas, this isn't a need - it's a want that will help alleviate what the student actually needs.

Needs: The Diagnosis

Needs are the conditions or states of being that give rise to wants. They are the "diagnosis" behind the "symptoms." Usually, the base need is something that is lacking. If a student is tired in class, what they need in that moment is defined by what they are lacking in that moment. What they need is energy.

Once the base need is identified, it's much easier to list actionable solutions that can fulfill that need. For instance, more sleep, a more balanced after-school routine, or even an energizing micro-dance party at the beginning of class to shake things up!

Tie It Back In:

- Using the list of concerns you've compiled to share with school leadership, dig deeper and identify any deeper needs behind your wants. How might this alter your communication strategy when sharing your concerns? Would your voice become more compelling if you jumped straight to sharing your needs instead of getting tied up in your wants?



Ask vs Tell helps us to discern what we need and to place language around it.

Asking is Problem Solving, Telling is Complaining.

With this, we can ask for what we need, rather than tell people what we don't have.

When we can articulate what we need, (to belong, to be seen, to be heard, to be valued, to be appreciated, to be understood, to be believed in, etc.), we can ASK for these needs to be met. We can ASK to be listened to, ASK to be included, ASK to be supported, etc.

Asking for what we need is a powerful way to get what we need. It develops trust and empathy, it creates a desire to be supportive. When we use telling (complaining) as a way to get what we want it turns others off and degrades relationships.

Discussion Questions:

- What are some examples of how often our own friend groups complain about what is wrong rather than discuss what we need to do about it? How does this make you feel? Productive or stuck?
- What are the consequences of this way of communicating? What positive outcomes could be realized if more people asked for what they need rather told what's wrong?

Tie It Back In:

- Small groups have already identified a few important things they agree on to share with leadership in education. What would these shares look like if they were presented as an 'ask for what we need', instead of a 'tell what is wrong'?



REASONS VS EXCUSES

Reasons VS Excuses defines the difference between explaining and justifying when it comes to our behaviors, our attitudes, our words and our outcomes.

Taking ownership of the outcome, even if it goes wrong.

It is easy, especially when we are upset, to give excuses for our reactions, for instance, starting a rumor to get even for a painful thing that happened. Or, when we fall short on things, (humans do that!), for instance, doing poorly on a test, being habitually late to class, or leaving a friend out of something important to them. We often use blame as the excuse for what we create.

When we can articulate what we need, (to belong, to be seen, to be heard, to be valued, to be appreciated, to be understood, to be believed in, etc.), we can ASK for these needs to be met. We can ASK to be listened to, ASK to be included, ASK to be supported, etc. Asking for what we need is a powerful way to get what we need. It develops trust and empathy, it creates a desire to be supportive. When we use telling (complaining) as a way to get what we want it turns others off and degrades relationships.

Examples of Excuses:

"You didn't wake me up on time so I was late to class."

"You started a rumor first."

"You didn't teach me so I failed the test."

Those are all excuses for outcomes that hurt us or someone else, often both. What is powerful is when we understand and embrace that there are reasons for our hurt, our slip ups, our upsets, and that while reasons are our truth they are not an excuse to create blame filled outcomes. There is always a reason for an upset, there is never an excuse for hurtful behaviors, words, and attitudes. Using the examples above, here are redirected responses that offer Reason and Accountability:

Examples of Reasons:

"I didn't wake up on time and I was late to class."

"I felt hurt when I was the target of a rumor and to get even I started a rumor about her."

"I didn't understand the material and I didn't ask for help and then I failed the test."

Tie It Back In:

In small groups, look over the list of 'Shares' you've agreed upon that would be important for educational leadership to hear. When communicating these ideas, how can you reframe what's going wrong as a reason instead of an excuse?



PERSEVERANCE VS RESISTANCE

Perseverance vs Resistance helps us discern when it is important to persevere through tough situations and obstacles to get to our goals and when to resist situations that may be detrimental to those goals.

Identify if you need to Persist or Resist in order to Achieve Goals

When analyzing our goals, it's important to distinguish whether that goal is something we're *working towards*, or if something we're *resisting against*. Depending on the situation, both are necessary in life. However, advocating for what you want requires a different set of tools than combatting against what you don't want. Think "The Little Engine That Could" VS "Hodor". Usually situations are complex and require a bit of both.

Perseverance: (Moving Towards)

Determination: This is the willpower and resolve to keep going no matter what obstacles you face.

Endurance: The capacity to sustain effort over a long period is vital when you're pushing toward a long-term objective.

Adaptability: This skill helps you tweak your approach when faced with roadblocks, so you can find another path towards your goal.

Resistance: (Standing Against)

Fortitude: This is emotional strength and resilience in the face of adversity.

Conviction: Conviction gives you the moral or ethical backbone to stand against something you disagree with.

Discernment: Allows you to decide wisely when and how to resist, picking your battles based on a thorough understanding of the situation.

Reflection Questions:

- In what areas of your life do you persist even when things feel challenging? In what areas do you resist? What are the outcomes of each?
- When thinking about those in your circle, do you have others who demonstrate what it takes to persevere? Do you see them achieving goals for themselves? What hurdles do you think they overcome to get to those goals?

Tie It Back In:

Looking at your groups' list of goals to communicate, distinguish which goals will require persistence and which goals will require resistance to achieve.