

Redefining And Locating Culture Within Our SEL Practice

Alex Gist

Dr. Robyn Ilten-Gee

April 20, 2022

Welcome! We will begin the presentation shortly. Please note that your microphones have been muted and your cameras are turned off.



BC Children's Health Promotion and Health Literacy Team



What we do:

- Develop, adapt, curate, promote, and navigate resources
- Offer education, peer support, and professional development
- Build capacity across complex systems like schools, communities, and health organizations
- Grow provincial networks and partnerships



Speaker



Dr. Robyn Ilten-Gee

Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education
Simon Fraser University



Objectives

Participants will:

- Understand the importance of bringing a cultural lens to the classroom and to SEL
- Learn new ways to think about culture
- Explore how to apply a cultural lens to your SEL practice



Agenda

- SEL: What is it and why focus on it?
- Why bring a cultural lens to SEL? What is culture?
- An expanded definition of culture
- How to bring a cultural lens to SEL
- Q & A
- Wrap Up



“The work that we’re doing around transforming education so that it meets the needs of our learners today, so that it is inclusive all of, all learners, is uncomfortable work. When we challenge our assumptions, when we have to look at an uncomfortable history of Canada, when we have to look at systemic structures that promote, or help us maintain, poverty and racism, those are uncomfortable things to look at. We’re kidding ourselves if we think we’re going to get to a place of that being comfortable. If it’s comfortable, we’re not actually doing the work.”

Denise Augustine, Director of Aboriginal Education and
Learner Engagement at School District 79 Cowichan

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

What is Social Emotional Learning?

- A program

second
step®



EASE

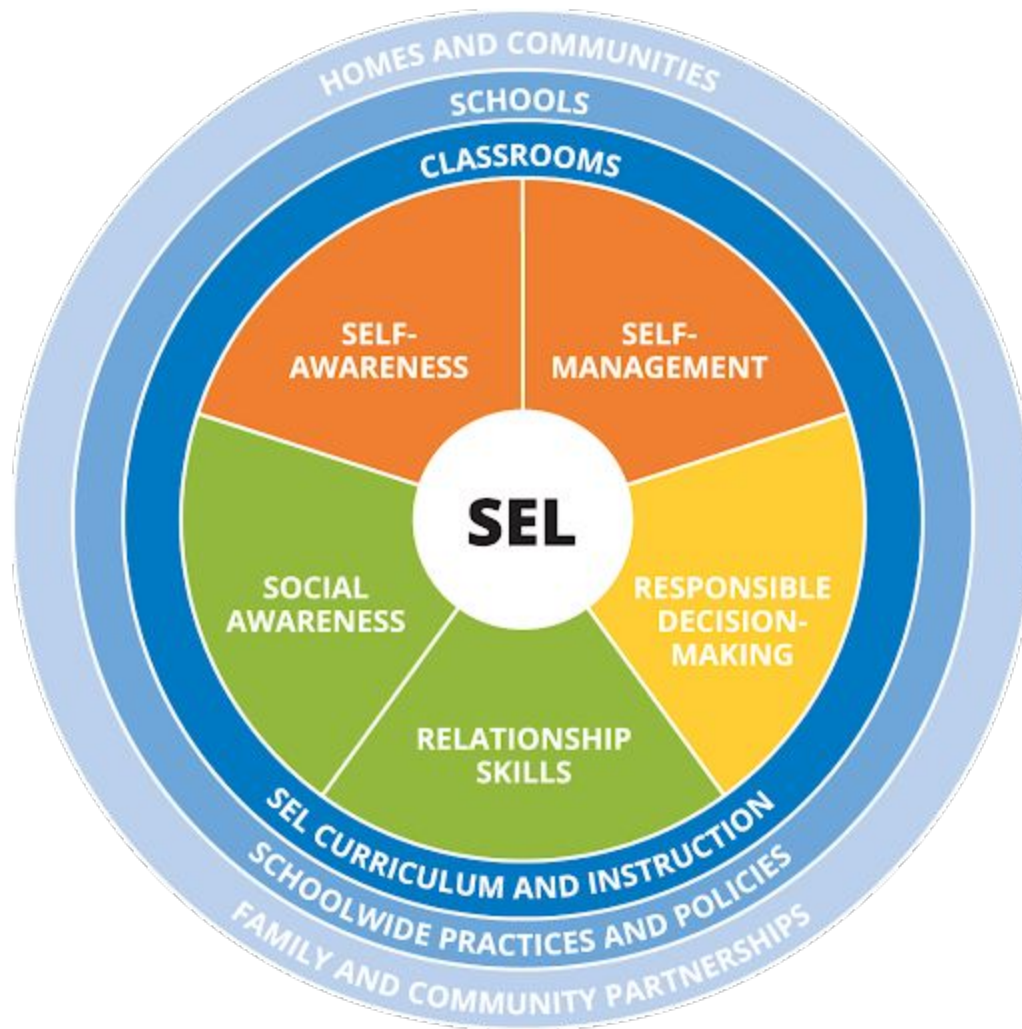
Everyday
Anxiety
Strategies for
Educators

What is Social Emotional Learning?

- A program
- A set of skills and competencies



Students



Educators

(CASEL, 2022)

What is Social Emotional Learning?

- A program
- A skills and competencies framework
- Classroom based practices

What is Social Emotional Learning?

- A program
- A skills and competencies framework
- Classroom based practices
- A systemic approach



Explicit SEL instruction

Students have consistent opportunities to cultivate, practice, and reflect on social and emotional competencies in ways that are developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive.



SEL integrated with academic instruction

SEL objectives are integrated into instructional content and teaching strategies for academics as well as music, art, and physical education.



Youth voice and engagement

Staff honor and elevate a broad range of student perspectives and experiences by engaging students as leaders, problem solvers, and decision-makers.



Supportive school and classroom climates

Schoolwide and classroom learning environments are supportive, culturally responsive, and focused on building relationships and community.



Focus on adult SEL

Staff have regular opportunities to cultivate their own social, emotional, and cultural competence, collaborate with one another, build trusting relationships, and maintain a strong community.



Supportive discipline

Discipline policies and practices are instructive, restorative, developmentally appropriate, and equitably applied.



A continuum of integrated supports

SEL is seamlessly integrated into a continuum of academic and behavioral supports, which are available to ensure that all student needs are met.



Authentic family partnerships

Families and school staff have regular and meaningful opportunities to build relationships and collaborate to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.



Aligned community partnerships

School staff and community partners align on common language, strategies, and communication around all SEL-related efforts and initiatives, including out-of-school time.



Systems for continuous improvement

Implementation and outcome data are collected and used to monitor progress toward goals and continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices, and policies with a focus on equity.

Why Social Emotional Learning?

- Improved Academic Outcomes
- University and Career Readiness
- Mental Health and Well-Being

(AEI/Brookings-Institute, 2015; Durlak et al., 2011; Mattern et al., 2014; Moffitt et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2017; Weare, 2010; Wigglesworth et al., 2016)

Why Social Emotional Learning?

- Improved Academic Outcomes
- University and Career Readiness
- Mental Health and Well-Being
- Context in BC



Why Social Emotional Learning?

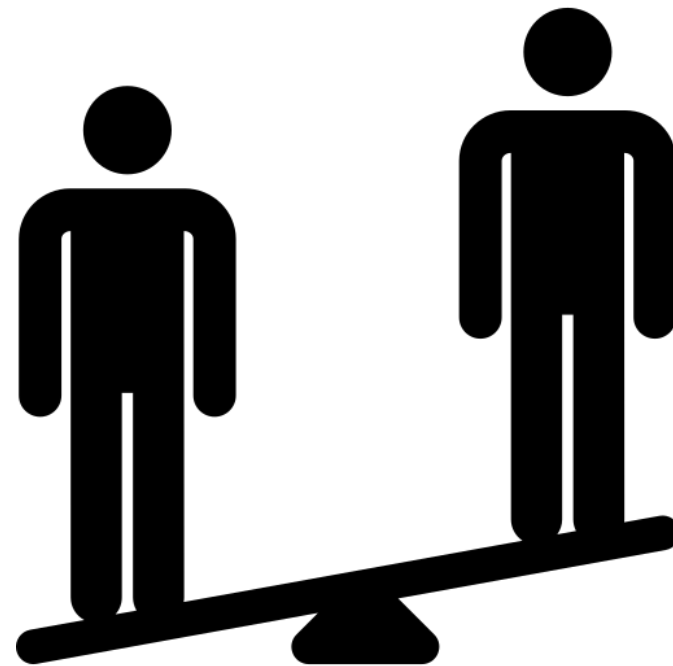
- Improved Academic Outcomes
- University and Career Readiness
- Mental Health and Well-Being
- Context in BC



(BC Ministry of Education, 2020)

Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health



(Czyzewski, 2011; Kim, 2019; Nelson & Wilson, 2017; Paradies et al., 2015; Williams, 2018)

Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health
- Criticism of SEL

(Aspen Institute, 2018; Hoffman, 2017; Jagers, 2016; Jagers et al., 2018 Kirchgasler, 2018)

Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health
- Criticism of SEL
- Updated Definitions of SEL



Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health
- Criticism of SEL
- Updated Definitions of SEL
- Improved SEL Practice



Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health
- Criticism of SEL
- Updated Definitions of SEL
- Improved SEL Practice
- The Context in BC



Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

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- The Context in BC

“Students understand that they are unique and are a part of larger, and often multiple, communities. They explain how they are using their strengths and abilities in their families, their relationships, and their communities.”



Why Apply a Cultural Lens to SEL?

- Racism, Discrimination, Colonialism and Mental Health
- Criticism of SEL
- Updated Definitions of SEL
- Improved SEL Practice
- The Context in BC

“Students understand that their relationships and cultural contexts help to shape who they are. This includes culture in its broadest sense, including how one identifies in terms of ethnicity, nationality, language(s), abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, geographic region, and religious or spiritual beliefs. Students explore who they are in terms of their relationship to others and their relationship to the world (people and place) around them.”





Redefining and Locating *Culture* in our SEL Practice

Robyn
Ilten-Gee

Simon Fraser
University



**Land
Acknowledgement**

Overview

1. Key ideas from *culturally sustaining pedagogy* (Paris & Alim, 2017)
2. Examples of complicating culture
 1. Three illustrations of SEL practices through a culturally sustaining lens
 - a) Morning Meetings
 - b) Breathing Exercises
 - c) Conflict Resolution
 2. **Teacher Takeaway:** Questions for Reflecting on Your SEL Practice

Where to start...



Complexity

In order to incorporate culture in the classroom, we have to understand culture in a complex way.



Caution

Otherwise, culture can be reduced to one festivity, cuisine, or type of dress.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris & Alim, 2017)

“...[CSP] requires that they support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence....[CSP] has as its explicit goal supporting multilingualism and multiculturalism in practice and perspective for students and teachers.”

— Paris, 2012, p.95



Cover Art by Favianna Rodriguez for *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies* (Paris & Alim, 2017)



Ideas from *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy*:



(Paris & Alim, 2017)



**Heritage and
Community Practices**



Evolving, Not Static



**Critiqued, Updated, &
Remixed**



**Goes Beyond Ethnicity
and Race**

Multicultural Days



This Photo by Unknown author is licensed under CC BY.

How is
culture
represented?

- Students may feel pigeon-holed into a stereotypic representation of their ethnic-racial group.
- Students may feel alienated if they don't identify with heritage practices
- Students may feel obligated to represent cultural practices as unproblematic

Mikey Harris | @Dizzyfeet | Sagkeeng First Nation



slido



What are some ways that you blend heritage and community practices in your life? Past and present-oriented dimensions of culture?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

01

Morning Meetings

With a culturally sustaining lens



Morning Meetings



Facilitate a complicated understanding of culture

- Have students bring an object that is special to them to share with the group.
- If students speak more than one language, ask them to teach the class the name of the object in that language.
- Ask students to reflect:
 - Is your object connected to your family? Your friends?
 - Is your object connected to a place? (your neighborhood, the land, your home)
 - Is your object connected to a personal passion?

Teacher Reflection Questions on Culture as:

Past and present

How does this activity acknowledge both heritage and community-oriented cultural practices?



Evolving

How does this activity treat culture as evolving and changing?



Multi-dimensional

How does this activity encourage students to explore the various cultural groups they participate in (ethnic-racial, subcultures)?



Non-reductive

How does this activity avoid stereotypes and cultural appropriation?



Morning
Meetings

02

Breathing Exercises

With a culturally sustaining lens



Breathing Exercises



Actively sustaining community and heritage practices, stories, and languages

- Brainstorm: When do we notice our breath in our lives? Encourage students to think about their family / community contexts.
 - E.g. singing, praying, playing musical instruments, reading to siblings, laughing, running, rapping, blowing bubbles
- Using these ideas, create a collective "breath playlist" by soliciting a favorite song, poem, or sound from each student that is connected to breath.
- Play a selection from the playlist before each breathing exercise.

Breathing Exercises



Actively sustaining community and heritage practices, stories, and languages

- Brainstorm: How does breath show up in story / poetry? Encourage students to think about family and community stories in multiple languages.
- Ask students to remember or research a story or poem about breath.
- Create a library of these texts and choose one to read before each breathing exercise.

Everyone Knows What a Dragon Looks Like



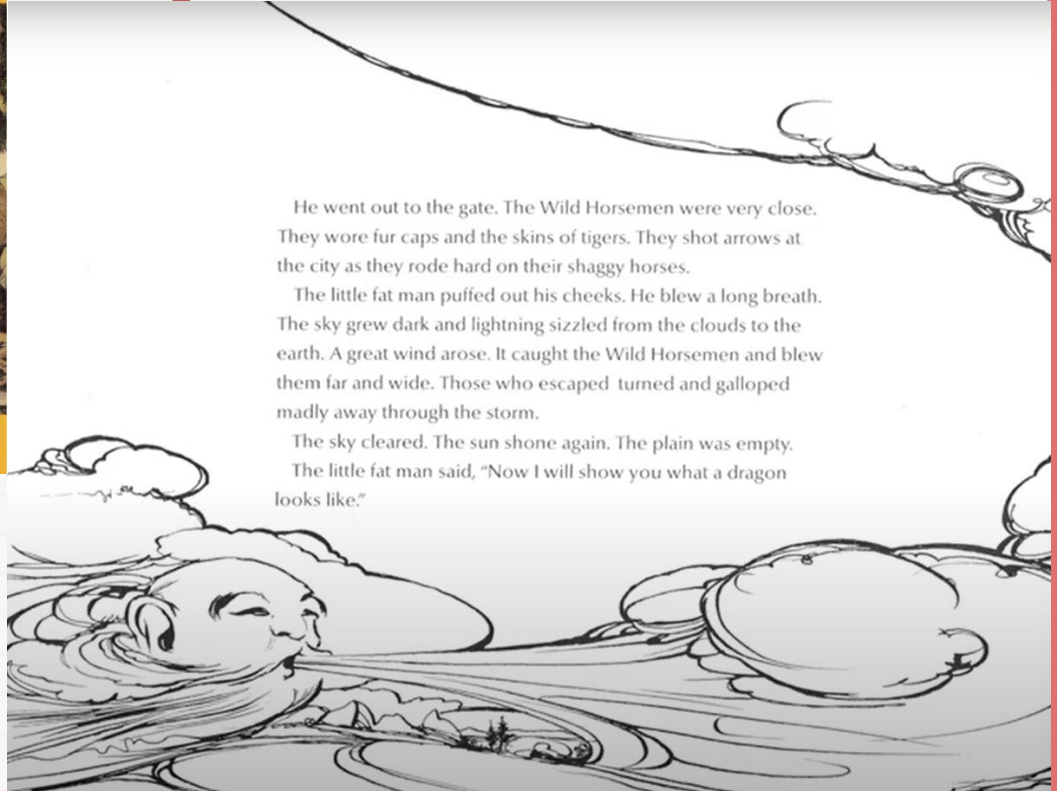
written by Jay Williams illustrated by Mercer Mayer

He went out to the gate. The Wild Horsemen were very close. They wore fur caps and the skins of tigers. They shot arrows at the city as they rode hard on their shaggy horses.

The little fat man puffed out his cheeks. He blew a long breath. The sky grew dark and lightning sizzled from the clouds to the earth. A great wind arose. It caught the Wild Horsemen and blew them far and wide. Those who escaped turned and galloped madly away through the storm.

The sky cleared. The sun shone again. The plain was empty.

The little fat man said, "Now I will show you what a dragon looks like."



Teacher Reflection Questions on Culture as:

Past and present

How does this activity acknowledge both heritage and community-oriented cultural practices?



Evolving

How does this activity treat culture as evolving and changing?



Multi-dimensional

How does this activity encourage students to explore cultural groups they participate in (ethnic-racial, affinity groups, subcultures)?



Non-reductive

How does this activity avoid stereotypes and cultural appropriation?



Breathing
Exercises

03

Conflict Resolution

With a culturally sustaining lens



Conflict Resolution



**Acknowledge power dynamics
within the school context and
society**

- Student Reflection:
 - How would this conflict play out in your community / at your home?
 - How would you act?
 - What would be said?
 - How would you feel?
 - What would be the consequences?
- Find shared cultural practices and use these to facilitate emotional reflection.

Conflict Resolution

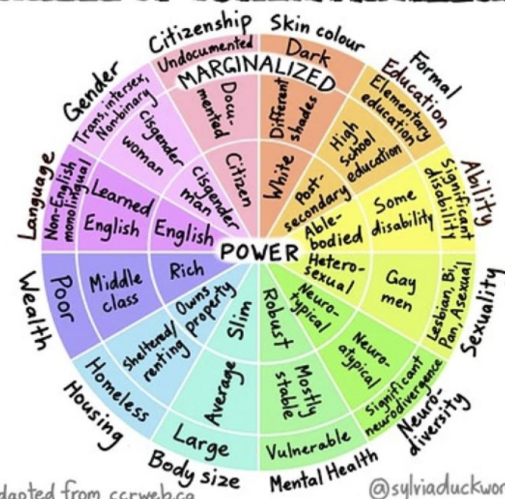


Acknowledge power dynamics within the school context and society

- Help students reflect on whether there are structural or systemic forces at play in the conflict.

Use a visual tool like the Wheel of Power / Privilege to help students reflect on aspects of their identity that feel threatened.

WHEEL OF POWER/PRIVILEGE



Adapted from ccrweb.ca

@sylviaaduckworth

Teacher Reflection Questions on Culture as:

Past and present

How does this activity acknowledge both heritage and community-oriented cultural practices?



Evolving

How does this activity treat culture as evolving and changing?



Multi-dimensional

How does this activity encourage students to explore cultural groups they participate in (ethnic-racial, affinity groups, subcultures)?



Non-reductive

How does this activity avoid stereotypes and cultural appropriation?



Conflict
Resolution



Final thoughts

Reflection

- What one idea from today did you connect with and want to try?
- What is one thing that challenged you? Or that you want to learn more about?
- What is one thing you want to share or dig into with a colleague?

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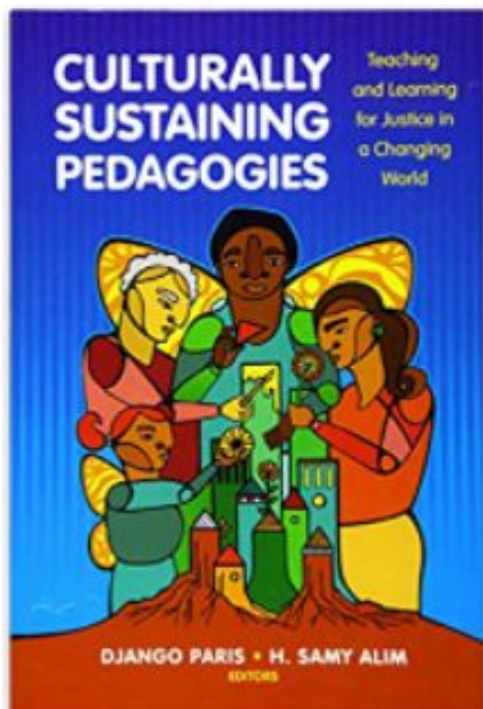
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Questions for the speaker?

Submit via Zoom “Q&A” icon

Further Reading



ACADEMIA

Accelerating the world's research.

What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward

Django Paris

HARVARD EDUCATIONAL REVIEW

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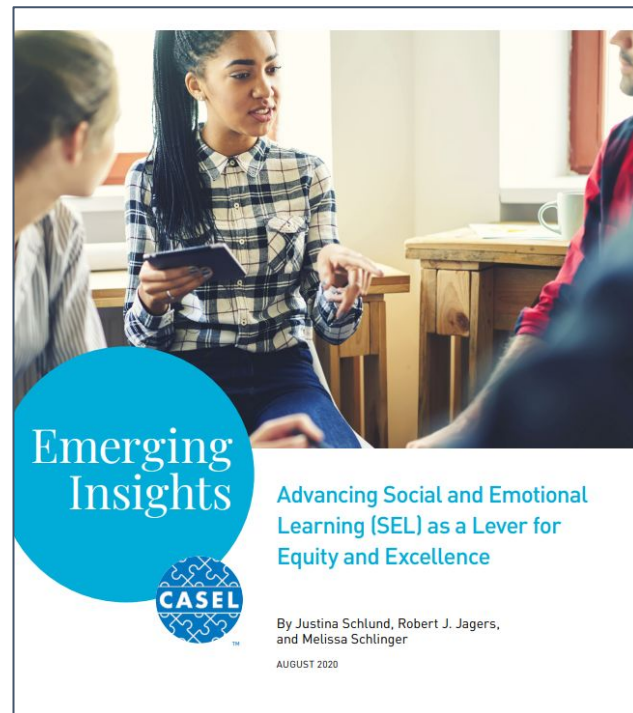
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SEL with a Cultural Lens Webinar Series

Part 2: Trailblazing Indigenous Pathways Through Social and Emotional Wellness

- Coming in Mid-May

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre



Kelty
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Resource Library

School Professionals

The BC Children's Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre provides resources and information to people working in the school community including teachers, counsellors, administrators, and support staff.

In this section, you will find resources for teaching and learning about mental health and well-being in school communities. This includes key resources and lesson plans for supporting social emotional learning in your school community, information on teaching students about

Get Support



Kelty Mental Health Newsletter for School Professionals

Be the first to know mental health information for BC school communities delivered straight to your inbox.



Stay Connected

Join our newsletter to get the latest on resources, news and upcoming events.

Your name

Email

I am a

- ☐ Parent/Caregiver
- ☐ Health Professional
- ☐ School Professional
- ☐ Other

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Thank-you for joining

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