

# SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Responsible Decision-Making Module Facilitation Guide

## Introduction

Administrators, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders can use this facilitation guide to provide school staff with professional development on social and emotional learning (SEL), specifically on the responsible decision-making competency. The guide is part of a larger online professional learning system, “SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life,” which includes an “Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning” module as well as five other online modules, each focused on one of the five core SEL competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

This guide provides facilitators with a script, facilitation notes, activities, and a PowerPoint deck that will help the educators with whom they work to understand what SEL is, why it is important, and how it supports student success in school, work, and life. The information, knowledge, and tools included here can be used by professional learning communities focused on SEL and by administrators or other leaders or coaches to support the social and emotional competencies of their educators and students. Facilitators can also use this guide in a group context. If individuals want to engage in this learning on their own, it is recommended they watch the online video version of the training, which can be found on the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) website [Keeping Our Kids Safe, health & In School: Social and Emotional Learning](https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) webpage, (https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/).

### Module Objectives

This module is the fifth of six in the series and focuses on a specific social and emotional competency: responsible decision-making. If you have not already engaged in the “Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning” module, you are encouraged to do so. The series is intended to be a source of professional learning about SEL so that participating educators, in turn, can support SEL for their students. The objectives for participants in this responsible decision-making module are the following:

1. Define responsible decision-making and how responsible decision-making develops over time.
2. Highlight research on the importance of responsible decision-making.
3. Learn educator strategies to explicitly support student development of responsible decision-making.
4. Identify ways to embed support for responsible decision-making into general teaching practices.
5. Develop action steps to begin to implement practices that support students’ responsible decision-making.

### How to Use This Facilitation Guide

Given that SEL is intrinsically a social endeavor, this module is best used in a group context. Such group settings may include school wide professional learning sessions, grade-level or content-based team meetings, or professional learning communities. A facilitator may use this guide, including the embedded script and activity notes, along with the accompanying PowerPoint slide deck, to guide participants through the content, activities, and opportunities for reflection.

The online module can take between 30 minutes and three hours, depending on how you use the module: individually or in a group, completing all activities or not, and completing the entire module in one session or across multiple sessions. The module can be customized to fit the learners’ needs and school’s schedule. A facilitator can split the module into segments, completing them with the group as time allows. The facilitator can also modify the module to fit the schedule of the educators engaged in the learning experience. In addition, if there is an activity, slide, or discussion that does not seem relevant for a given context, or that is redundant or similar to the group’s prior learning, the facilitator can skip that section of the module. To help determine if and how to modify the module to meet the needs of participants, facilitators should complete the module first on their own, using the online version.

Furthermore, notes throughout this guide provide the facilitator with background information and guidance on how to facilitate the module’s activities. The guide also includes links to videos, describes activities, and provides discussion prompts to make the training in a group setting more interactive, which is especially important when facilitating professional learning opportunities related to SEL.

### Materials:

Depending on whether participants will have access to computers during the session and be able to read handouts online, a facilitator may want to print copies of the handouts beforehand and share them with participants for the purpose of each activity.

* PowerPoint Slides: SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Responsible Decision-Making
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 1a: Developmental Indicators Activity
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 1b: Developmental Indicators Activity – Answer Key
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 2: Student Vignettes
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 3: Educator Self-Reflection
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 4a: Educator Vignettes
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 4b: Educator Vignettes – Example Responses (optional, for use by the facilitator)
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 5a: SEL Lesson Planning Tool
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 5b: SEL Lesson Planning Tool – Sample Indicators and Teaching Strategies
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 6: Academic Integration Lesson Planning Tool
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 7: Observing Teaching Practices
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 8: Action Planning
* Responsible Decision-Making Handout 9: Resources and References
* Pen and paper for notes
* Internet, projector, audio speakers

As this module also includes links to online videos, facilitators will want to have the videos prepared prior to engaging in the facilitated session.

**About Terminology in This Module:** The importance of students and adults being socially and emotionally competent — and, therefore, the importance of SEL — is widely accepted. However, even as the field matures, the terminology used in speaking and writing about this important concept continues to vary among and between educators, researchers, and policymakers. The two most commonly used terms for social and emotional strengths in the broadest sense are **skills** and **competencies***.* Each is used as an umbrella term for a particular set of related knowledge, skills, and attitudes that contribute to someone being socially and emotionally competent in particular dimensions. In this context, New Jersey uses **competency**as the broadest term. In the context of these modules, the term **skill** is reserved for use only in its most granular sense — as something that contributes, along with knowledge and attitudes, to an individual’s social and emotional competency. These contributing factors of skills, knowledge, and attitudes are referred to here as **sub-competencies**,also in line with terminology in New Jersey.

**A Note About Pronunciation:** SEL, the acronym for social and emotional learning, is pronounced in the field by its three individual letters — *S-E-L*, not “cell.”

**Assessment and Evaluation:** Throughout the module, participants will be expected to engage in self-assessment and self-reflection exercises to evaluate the effectiveness of their own practices and their impact on student engagement and outcomes. In addition, the module provides a link at the end to obtain participants’ feedback on the module.

**Audio Option:** The PowerPoint deck is available in two versions. The first version (available on the NJDOE website) has a voice-over narration that a facilitator may opt to use. The audio option does not include optional activities; however, the facilitator can still use them if desired. The second version has no voice-over and is intended for facilitators who wish to provide their own narration by following or adapting the script provided in the “Suggested Language for Facilitator” column in the following table.

## Responsible Decision-Making Facilitation Guide

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| **Slide Number/ Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 1** | **SEL Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Responsible Decision-Making**Imagine that you’re halfway through cooking dinner when you realize you don’t have a key ingredient for the recipe you’re preparing. You could run to the store, do without the ingredient, or think about a possible substitute. You have young children with early bedtimes — delaying dinner too long can impact their sleep schedules — but you aren’t sure whether your idea for a substitute ingredient will work. You end up deciding to just leave the ingredient out, which means dinner is on time and you didn’t chance a risky last-minute experiment with the meal. In this scenario, you walked through a thoughtful decision-making process in just a few seconds. You noticed the problem, analyzed the situation, and thought about possible solutions. You weighed the consequences of solutions, considered the impacts of your decision on others, and then came to a conclusion and took the next step. While individual decisions can have very different content and context, the skills that an individual needs to walk through a responsible decision-making process are transferable. As educators, we can support our students to develop the skills that allow them to tackle diverse challenges with intention, consideration for others, and an understanding of the possible consequences. This module is designed to help educators as they help students develop responsible decision-making, an important social and emotional competency.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 2** | **Introduction to the Module Series**This professional learning module is the fifth in a series of six online professional learning modules supporting educators as they integrate academic, social, and emotional learning to support development of student competencies that are essential for school, work, and life. All modules in this series were created by NJDOE in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and the Mid-Atlantic Comprehensive Center. The NJDOE has adopted a framework of five core social and emotional competencies, including responsible decision-making, as well as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship skills, modeled after the five core competencies developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Each competency is comprised of a set of sub-competencies — skills, knowledge, and attitudes — that guide student behavior. Research and practice demonstrate that when schools and educators intentionally promote the development of social and emotional competencies, students gain academically, become more engaged in classrooms, and form more meaningful relationships, thereby enhancing their learning experience and outcomes. The research base behind social and emotional learning or “SEL,” the key components of SEL, and strategies to support SEL in the classroom, including adult social and emotional competencies, are described in more detail in Module 1, “Competencies for School, Work, and Life: Introduction to Social and Emotional Learning.” | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 3** | **Objectives of This Module**In completing this module, you will define responsible decision-making with special attention to how students develop this competency over time. You will also learn about research supporting the importance of responsible decision-making for students and adults.You will explore teaching strategies to promote students’ development of responsible decision-making, both through explicit instruction and by embedding responsible decision-making strategies into academic instruction. Lastly, you will develop action steps to implement teaching practices that support student responsible decision-making. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 4****Activity**  | **Activity: Thought Starter** Prior to digging into the material, we want you to do a quick reflection about how you think responsible decision-making is used in the classroom, both by educators and by students. Individually or in pairs, reflect on the following two questions:1. In what ways do you need responsible decision-making to be an effective educator?

Describe a time when you had to consciously model a thoughtful decision-making process as part of your instruction. 1. In what ways do your students need responsible decision-making to be effective learners?

Describe a time when your students had to use an intentional decision-making process in the classroom. How did your students describe the steps they took to make the decision?  | **3 minutes****Facilitation note:** This activity is a warm-up for participants to start thinking about responsible decision-making and recognizing that it is needed not only for students but also for educators. The warm-up helps participants begin thinking about what they and their students need to be aware of in a classroom context. Participants do not have to use the language of the competencies, as the warm-up is more to tap into their background knowledge.  |

## Understanding Responsible Decision-Making

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 5** | **Understanding Responsible Decision-Making**Responsible decision-making is our ability to make respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others. Developing responsible decision-making is an ongoing process — the skills students require and the types of decisions they are asked to make change dramatically with different life experiences, in different academic situations, and as students progress through school. There are multiple ways that we as educators can support students throughout their school experience as they work to develop responsible decision-making competence and transfer their learning to their lives in and outside of the classroom. Before we explore how teachers can support student development of responsible decision-making in the classroom, let’s develop a common understanding about what responsible decision-making is and the importance of developing responsible decision-making.  |  **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 6** | **Defining Responsible Decision-Making**As an individual, whether a student or adult, develops responsible decision-making, they develop a combination of underlying attitudes, knowledge, and skills, or what New Jersey calls “sub-competencies.” Based on the available research, the NJDOE identified three responsible decision-making sub-competencies that individuals develop over time. These sub-competencies may be used differently depending on an individual’s context and culture. The three sub-competencies are: * **Develop, implement, and model effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills**, which includes the ability to identify that there is a problem, analyze the situation, and decide on a clear and rational set of next steps to resolve the challenge or take action.
* **Identify the consequences associated with one’s actions in order to make constructive choices**, which includes understanding the natural consequences of an action and using this understanding to identify positive and constructive action steps.
* **Evaluate personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions**, which includes the ability to reflect on the personal effects of one’s actions, as well as the effects on others and on the well-being of the group or society overall.
 | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 7** | **The Importance of Responsible Decision-Making** As students develop, we expect them to grow in independence and to begin to steer their own life in meaningful ways. Responsible decision-making builds off of other SEL competencies, especially self-awareness and self-management, to make up the suite of skills students need to successfully transition through major life steps, including new grade levels, college, independent living, and careers (Carter et al., 2008). Field and colleagues (1998) name the capacity to direct one’s own life in ways that are valued by society and personally satisfying as “self-determination.” Carter and colleagues (2008) found that a variety of skills and sub-competencies associated with responsible decision-making, including problem-solving, choice-making, self-advocacy, and leadership skills, are positively associated with increased self-determination. These two groups of researchers found that self-determination is associated broadly with an increased quality of life in school and later in life, as well as higher postsecondary achievement and economic attainment. Responsible decision-making is essential to the success and self-determination of students as they develop and move through school and beyond. In addition, this competency is critical to the development of youth as leaders and as productive, contributing members of various groups, including their schools, families, and communities. The ability to solve problems, resolve conflicts with collaborative partners, and consider broader ethical and societal consequences of one’s actions are all essential leadership qualities, both in school and later in life. Responsible decision-making also relates to a sense of civic or social connectedness, which can help move students from thinking about ideas to taking action on behalf of or in partnership with others. In helping to meet the needs of others, young people start to develop an interest in and connection to the common good and the promotion of democratic values (Redmond & Dolan, 2016; Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2009).Social and emotional competence is tied to the development of positive skills or qualities like leadership and self-determination. The ability of social and emotional competence to *protect* students from developing negative skills or qualities is also important. Wolff and Crockett’s (2011) research into adolescent decision-making found that the ability to use a “systematic, deliberate process when choosing a course of action” is negatively associated with self-reported risk behaviors for youth. In other words, young people who are able to problem-solve and think critically, a responsible decision-making sub-competency, make more positive and fewer risky choices in their teenage years.  | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 8** | **The Importance of Responsible Decision-Making in the Learning Process**Research has also demonstrated the importance of responsible decision-making for students specifically in school environments. When students are engaged in the learning process, responsible decision-making provides the foundation for how students set academic goals for themselves, engage with and persevere through challenging content, solve problems, and reflect on and evaluate their own actions and decisions. Responsible decision-making skills are tied to overall academic success for students. Zins and colleagues (2004) and Elias (2006) state that to succeed in school, students need to be able to persevere through challenges and to make responsible decisions about how to self-manage. The researchers found that students who are able to use problem-solving skills to overcome obstacles and who make responsible decisions about studying and completing homework do better academically overall.Academic success is defined in different ways across the country and in different school environments. However, developing a student’s ability to think critically, a responsible decision-making sub-competency, is often listed as a central goal of K–12 education in the United States. Willingham (2007) argues that in order to employ critical thinking, students need to develop a set of specific metacognitive strategies and content knowledge. These strategies are all related to responsible decision-making and include reasoning, making judgements and decisions, and problem-solving. In the classroom, students’ ability to think critically affects how they learn new skills and content, how they process information, and how successfully they are able to retain and transfer new information and skills.Finally, the third responsible decision-making sub-competency — the ability to evaluate the impact of a decision — is a self-reflective process that engages students in thinking about a decision and its implications after it is made. The ability to reflect and evaluate is essential to learning new content. As students engage with new information, they need to continually reflect on their own level of understanding, determine where they have gaps or mistakes, and then make a plan to fill in the gaps in knowledge (Landmark Outreach, 2017). | **3 minutes** |
|  | **Optional Activity: Responsible Decision-Making and Youth Leadership**Remember that two sub-competencies of responsible decision-making are the connected abilities to identify the consequences of decisions as well as to evaluate the individual and societal implications of decisions. When students’ decisions reflect a thoughtful understanding of potential consequences, those decisions are more likely to be positive and prosocial, or intended to promote the best interests of those around them.View this 3-minute [**video**](https://youtu.be/kUKQ1pn94Zk) from Edutopia [Teaching Wellbeing: Helping Students Tackle Social Issues](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nralkrM43uQ) (https://youtu.be/nralkrM43uQ) of high school students engaging in school governance through a student-led site council.* What do you hear students say that relates to responsible decision-making?
* What are the various ways these students engage with and develop responsible decision-making through their participation in the site council?
 | **3 minutes****Facilitation note:** View video and have participants discuss the two accompanying questions as a group. |

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| **Slide 9** | **The Importance of Responsible Decision-Making in Learning Content**The role of responsible decision-making within academic content areas may be less obvious than in the learning process, but the most recent learning standards across the country require social and emotional competencies, certainly including responsible decision-making, more than ever before. In STEM subjects, the responsible decision-making sub-competency relating to problem-solving and critical thinking is connected to how we expect students (and adults) to engage in learning. In science, we use the scientific method or the inquiry model to structure our approach to learning new content and pushing the boundaries of what we know and understand about how the world works. The scientific method is essentially a problem-solving or decision-making cycle. First, students define a problem, a question, or a conjecture (the hypothesis). Next, students collect information; take action by testing, examining, or observing; come to a new understanding, question, or problem; and then evaluate or reflect on their results (Institute for Inquiry, 2019). Throughout this process, students use their decision-making skills to guide their learning, as well as to evaluate and engage with the end result or consequences.In math the connection to responsible decision-making is explicit. Consider two of the Mathematical Practices presented in the [New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Math](https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/math/) (https://www.state.nj.us/education/aps/cccs/math/). Math Practice 1, “Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them,” requires students to make meaning of a problem, demonstrate grit, and engage in action steps toward a solution. Math Practice 3, “Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others,” requires students to understand their decision-making process in order to effectively communicate it in discussion with others.In literacy-related subjects, students need responsible decision-making to persist in the rigors of close reading of complex text. Students continually make decisions when choosing which reading and comprehension strategies to employ. In regard to interpretation of content, students are required to evaluate and make written claims based on evidence, mimicking the kind of context analysis required for responsible decision-making in other applications. It is important to think of responsible decision-making not only as it relates to the student as a consumer of written information, but as its producer as well. As students grow in their writing skills, they must make intentional choices about the purpose, context, and intended audience of their writing. As they gain the power (and responsibility) of writing and speaking, students should be challenged to apply responsible decision-making processes to choices about when, where, and how to share their messages in ways that contribute value to their communities and society.We will learn more about responsible decision-making related to academic content and specific strategies to embed this competency-building in academic instruction later in this module. | **5 minutes** |
| **Slide 10** | **Developmental Nature of SEL Competencies**As discussed in previous modules, individuals continually develop and refine social and emotional competencies, in context, over time.Let’s consider the developmental nature of responsible decision-making by discussing one of its sub-competencies: evaluating the personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions. Small children are still learning the basics of social interactions and norms — they are beginning to understand how their own actions impact themselves and others and beginning to be able to reflect on some of those impacts. Children may still be surprised when their actions have consequences, as when a kindergarten student hits a friend and makes the friend cry. At this age, educators play a key role in helping students to reflect on what they decided to do, what happened afterward, and why this might have happened. As children grow older, they begin to have a greater understanding of their own role in a group culture (such as a classroom) and to be more aware of and intentional about how their individual behavior creates external impacts. By the teen years, young people should begin to be able to independently reflect on their decisions and take personal responsibility for the consequences. They should also have developed a nuanced sense of ethical behavior and should be able to apply ethical standards to their own decision-making processes.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 11****Activity**Handouts 1a and 1b | **Activity: Developmental Progressions Related to Responsible Decision-Making**Let’s consider in more depth how students’ skills, knowledge, and attitudes that comprise responsible decision-making might develop over time.Listed on Handout 1a are developmental indicators related to sub-competencies within the responsible decision-making competency. For each sub-competency, each column represents a different grade band, but the grade bands are not necessarily given in order from youngest to oldest. Your task is to read each row and, at the bottom of each column for that row, mark which grade band you believe the indicators in that column represent. The first sub-competency is already completed as an example. After completing Handout 1a, use Handout 1b to check your answers. Your thoughts may differ from the answer key in some ways. That is okay! Note and/or discuss your thought processes. Also using Handout 1b, engage in the following reflections and, if in a group, discuss your responses: * Did your answers differ from the ones on the Handout 1b answer key? Discuss your thought processes.
* As students develop, how might they be expected to display each responsible decision-making sub-competency in their classrooms at each grade band?
* Identify how the developmental indicators might change based on environmental context — at school versus at home versus with peers. Do you see your students differ in the use of these skills across contexts? How?
* Reflect on how students may develop, apply, or demonstrate developmental indicators differently based on their cultural context. How might these differences appear in your classroom?
* Reflect on how students may develop, apply, or demonstrate developmental indicators differently based on their cultural context. How might these differences appear in your classroom?
 | **20 minutes****Facilitation note:** The purposes of this activity are to:1. Pause to reflect thoughtfully on the developmental progression of indicators of each responsible decision-making sub-competency;
2. Illustrate how the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills related to responsible decision-making may progress as students grow; and
3. Introduce Developmental Indicators: SEL in the K-12 Classroom compiled by the NJDOE.

Remember, although social and emotional competencies have developmental indicators, individuals are constantly learning and relearning competencies based on the context. |
| **Slide 12** | **Context Matters**While students develop responsible decision-making over time, it is also important to recognize that individuals may exhibit responsible decision-making knowledge, skills, and attitudes differently depending on the environmental context they are in and the cultures to which they belong.An individual may or may not exhibit a particular social and emotional competency in one set of conditions, but that may not be a full representation of the individual’s competence in another context. You can probably think of ways in which your students (or you) exhibit responsible decision-making differently in the classroom versus when relaxing with their friends, when participating in extracurricular activities, or at home with their families. For example, an early elementary school student may show a high degree of competence when discussing the cause and effect of individual actions during calm classroom discussion time. This same student may be unable to explain to an adult what they thought might happen after they pushed a classmate in frustration while standing in line. A high school student may be able to walk through a decision-making model and complete planning steps when working on a group project in class but have difficulty applying the same type of thoughtful process to their own homework completion timeline once they are out of the structure of the classroom environment. It is important for schools to consider how the development of any social and emotional competency depends, in part, on the extent to which one’s environment is safe and supportive. When working with students to develop social and emotional competence, educators should also keep in mind the degree to which individual students are able to demonstrate their responsible decision-making in different locations and in different content areas. | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 13** | **Culture Matters**Culture, including the intersection of various cultures to which individuals belong, influences how students develop and apply responsible decision-making. For instance, cultural expectations may differ regarding how people think about responsibility and “positive choices.” Think about your own experience growing up — what were the expectations in your family for displaying responsibility and setting priorities in your daily life? Some cultures may view family as a top priority, which means that students may make decisions that prioritize the good of the family over themselves and their individual activities. These students may choose to work late at a family business on a school night. While this decision may mean they are tired during school the next day, it also means their family business is financially more secure. Other cultures may prioritize civic connection, individual achievement, or their faith. All of these differing priorities affect how students define their responsibilities to themselves and to others, and what types of choices they make at school and in their communities. To ensure greater equity in our classrooms and communities, it is critical that educators recognize the impact of culture on students’ responsible decision-making, as well as educators’ own sense of responsible decision-making. It is also critical that teaching draw upon students’ unique strengths while orienting learning in relation to their cultural contexts and to the school’s role in the community. The culture within a school is shaped by and reflective of society — it is not a separate space untouched by the challenges that exist in communities outside the classroom. It is not uncommon for schools and other institutions to recognize where inequities in their communities and their own schools exist, and to then justify the existence of these inequities by blaming the individual or group affected, instead of thinking about the broader structural reasons for different outcomes. This can mean that schools end up creating policies or expectations that replicate and magnify existing societal challenges instead of addressing them. Jagers and colleagues (2018) suggest that to address this concern relating to the development of students’ responsible decision-making competence, educators can engage students as partners to do the following:* Create structures and processes at school that include students as decision-makers and better reflect an equitable and inclusive approach (e.g., active youth councils, rules/norms designed by students)
* Engage in an active and ongoing dialogue about students’ diverse cultural influences and decision-making thinking by making positive community-building in class and with the broader community a central theme of the school day
* Build a shared understanding of ethical and external impacts of decisions by having open and thoughtful discussions with students about existing inequities and the structures that support them

In these ways, students will have the information, community connections, and individual skills they need to make their own or group decisions that advance a more equitable society and promote well-being. Consider how the suggested activities build students’ (and educators’) responsible decision-making competency. Reciprocally, how do responsible decision-making knowledge, skills, and attitudes equip students to participate in these equity-building efforts? Consider and, if possible, discuss: how might students be asked to apply problem-solving skills, consider consequences of possible actions, and evaluate the impact of decisions on themselves and others, toward advancing the goal of equity at school? | **6 minutes** |
| **Slide 14Activity**Handout 2 | **Activity: Student Vignettes**Let’s consider some examples illustrating the ways in which students use their responsible decision-making knowledge, skills, and attitudes in different contexts. It is important to remember that many social and emotional competencies relate to each other, and that we use multiple competencies in any single interaction. As you read the student vignettes on Handout 2, please pay specific attention to responsible decision-making and its sub-competencies in these examples and note that you will also probably see other social and emotional competencies at work. Answer the questions to reflect on your insights. | **10 minutes****Facilitation note:**Ask participants to read each vignette individually and record their thoughts, then discuss as a group. Repeat for each vignette**.** |
| **Slide 15** | **Educators’ Responsible Decision-Making**Responsible decision-making by educators is essential to ensure that schools are effective and safe learning environments for all students.Educators exercise their responsible decision-making skills to model the kinds of steps, strategies, and approaches they expect to see students use during their own systematic decision-making processes. Educators can also demonstrate how their own decisions within the classroom, like the structures for grading, discipline, or classroom group management, can reflect a thoughtful consideration of consequences and the well-being of the class and school as a whole. As for all social and emotional competencies, how educators structure the classroom environment plays a key role in how students are able to develop responsible decision-making skills. In addition to using direct skills instruction, educators can create a classroom environment in which students exercise responsible decision-making skills as part of everyday routines. In this type of classroom, educators ensure that there are democratic norms in place, students have authentic input into the way the classroom is structured and managed, students have clear and meaningful choices within academic lessons and content, and student decisions are respected and applied (Yoder, 2014). | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 16****Activity**Handout 3 | **Activity: Educator Reflection**Let’s pause to reflect on your own sub-competencies related to responsible decision-making. Complete Handout 3. Revisit this tool periodically, updating your reflections and noting progress.There is a significant amount of reflection represented in this activity. Do not feel compelled to fill in every box now. You can record your initial reflections now, and then revisit the worksheet repeatedly when you have more time or new insights.After you complete Handout 3, consider the following questions: Which sub-competency was the easiest to reflect upon? The most difficult? What surprised you? Did you discover new elements of responsible decision-making or its impact on your teaching?This self-reflection may uproot deep-held feelings about your work. Remember the importance of self-care as you balance the goal to continuously improve professionally, while also staying attuned to your needs, personal well-being, and realistic expectations.  | **20 minutes****Facilitation note:**If working in a group, give participants time to complete the reflection on their own before discussing as a group. They can use the handout to record their initial reactions now, and then revisit the handout later. When all participants have finished, ask them to discuss their reflective process in small groups.  |

## Strategies to Support Student Responsible Decision-Making

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 17** | **Strategies to Support Student Responsible Decision-Making**Educators can intentionally and effectively support student responsible decision-making by implementing classroom practices that help students to identify and apply specific steps and strategies for decision-making, use questions and decision-making models to determine and provide an explanation for decisions, and reflect in a thoughtful way on decisions and their consequences.By incorporating instructional strategies that explicitly teach and afford students the opportunity to apply responsible decision-making sub-competencies, educators support students as they build a toolbox of decision-making strategies. While students may be faced with a different set of decisions, they can still develop steps and decision-making models that will support them to make choices that are productive and thoughtful, regardless of the context. Educators can also support responsible decision-making through practices and strategies that closely relate to SEL — for example, through character education, restorative practices, trauma-informed or healing-informed care, positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS), and a multi-tiered system of support. | **2–3 minutes** |
| **Slide 18** | **Three Integrated Classroom Approaches**As noted previously, SEL is a process, and there are multiple ways to implement this learning process. As noted in the introductory module, there are three classroom-based approaches to SEL which can be implemented either through SEL programs or through teaching practices. First, you can provide instruction that explicitly targets specific social and emotional competencies, focusing on the underlying knowledge, attitudes, and skills that constitute each competency. Next, SEL instruction can and should also be integrated with core academic content. And finally, you can help students develop social and emotional competencies through teacher pedagogy — in particular, regular teaching practices that encourage social and emotional learning within a safe and supportive learning environment. These approaches are not mutually exclusive; they can be integrated to reinforce each other, as each supports the development of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. For our learning purposes in this module, let’s engage in learning about each approach one at a time. | **2–3 minutes** |
| **Slide 19** | **Teaching Strategies to Support Responsible Decision-Making**First, let’s consider teaching strategies that explicitly target the development of student responsible decision-making and the corresponding sub-competencies. Multiple strategies exist that educators can use to teach and support student responsible decision-making. This module will not include all strategies but rather provide examples, and we encourage you to find the evidence-based practices that will meet the needs of your students.Research indicates that educators have to be purposeful and planful for effectively carrying out SEL instruction. The introductory module discussed the “SAFE” approach to being systematic in SEL implementation. The SAFE approach to instruction is: * *Sequenced*: following a specific scope and sequence of when social and emotional competencies will be taught and reinforced;
* *Active*: with students engaging in activities that allow them to practice and apply the targeted social and emotional competencies;
* *Focused*: with instruction concentrating on only one or two social and emotional competencies, sub-competencies, or skills at a time; and
* *Explicit*: with students made aware of, and able to identify, the specific social and emotional competencies, sub-competencies, or skills they are learning and using.

All students should engage in social and emotional learning and application; however, some students may need more individualized support. | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 20** | **An Example Teaching Strategy**Let’s consider an example of an explicit teaching strategy to support students’ development of responsible decision-making.As you listen to the example of Ms. Limona’s class, consider the following questions:* What does Ms. Limona do to support students’ development of responsible decision-making?
* What do the students do to apply responsible decision-making?

Ms. Limona teaches 5th grade, and she is working with students on skills they will need to successfully transition from elementary to middle school. In 6th grade, students will rotate between three different team teachers who share teaching responsibilities for five different academic subjects each day. One focus of Ms. Limona’s instruction is helping students develop strategies for staying organized and making good decisions about schoolwork priorities they will have to navigate in next year’s multi-class environment. She has students read a series of short stories together about different characters who are faced with challenges and distractions. Ms. Limona has pairs of students select a story and take on the role of one of the characters. Students use a graphic organizer to work through a scenario in which they come to a constructive decision about the character’s challenge. Once they have completed the task, students present the decision-making steps they took, including weighing the pros and cons of various options, writing down the possible consequences of different actions, and then making a choice for the best possible outcome. After the presentations, the class has a group discussion about different strategies or steps they heard about from peers and that they could use in their own lives.Now consider and, if possible, discuss the following questions:* What did Ms. Limona do to support students’ development of responsible decision-making?
* What did the students do to apply responsible decision-making?
 | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 21****Activity**Handouts 4a and 4b | **Activity: Educator Vignettes**You can find additional examples of teaching strategies at the elementary and high school levels in Handout 4a. Use the handout to consider the vignettes and answer the reflection questions individually, then discuss as a group. | **10 minutes****Facilitation note:**Ask participants to read each vignette individually and record their thoughts on Handout 4a. After they finish, discuss as a group. You may choose to use Handout 4b as a resource document to help participants consider potential responses to the reflection questions. Note that there is certainly more than one correct response for each question. |
| **Slide 22Activity**Handouts 5a and 5b | **Activity: Design a Lesson to Support Student Responsible Decision-Making**Now that you have considered examples of direct instruction supporting responsible decision-making, brainstorm one way in which you might target support for student development of responsible decision-making in your classroom. Use Handout 5a to plan a targeted SEL lesson and Handout 5b to refer to sample, grade-banded learning objectives and teaching strategies for each responsible decision-making sub-competency. For this activity, choose one sub-competency on Handout 5b and read through the column for your students’ age group. Choose a learning objective for a lesson. Then choose one of the strategies listed or another strategy you are aware of that will support that learning objective. As you decide which objective and strategy to choose, keep in mind your students and the content you teach, and think about how you would adapt the activity to meet the needs of your students and your class context. Using the chosen strategy as a starting point, design a lesson to explicitly teach the learning objective using the lesson planning template in Handout 5a. You can modify this template as you see fit to meet your context; its purpose is to prompt thinking on how to support student responsible decision-making.  | **10 minutes****Facilitation note:**If working in a group,have participants discuss their answers and share the lesson they designed.  |

## Embedding Responsible Decision-Making in Instruction

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| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
| **Slide 23** | **Embedding Responsible Decision-Making in Instruction**In the previous section, we learned that educators can support students’ development of responsible decision-making through explicit teaching of responsible decision-making skills, attitudes, and knowledge. It is beneficial to use an SEL evidence-based program that is sequenced, active, focused, and explicit. In this section, we will discuss two additional approaches to SEL instruction: integrating responsible decision-making into academic content and implementing general teaching practices that support responsible decision-making.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 24** | **Integrating Responsible Decision-Making in Academic Learning**Responsible decision-making, especially the ability to problem-solve and think critically, is intrinsically tied to how we engage with, process, and retain academic content. In any academic subject, learning content without the ability to reason, analyze one’s own learning, and make decisions or choices about learning processes will be ineffective. Remember that New Jersey further defines responsible decision-making in terms of the following three sub-competencies:* Developing, implementing, and modeling effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills
* Identifying the consequences associated with one’s actions in order to make constructive choices
* Evaluating personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions

Let’s consider specific examples of ways in which these responsible decision-making sub-competencies support deeper engagement with academic content.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 25** | **Sample Strategies: English/Language Arts**The [New Jersey Student Learning Standards in English and Language Arts](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/ela/) (ELA) [https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/ela/] across grade bands call for students to be able to read for comprehension, write and speak with clear and organized language, listen for understanding, and demonstrate media literacy. To effectively engage with these elements of the ELA standards, students use responsible decision-making sub-competencies in multiple ways. For example, in order to engage with an unfamiliar text, students need to systematically use their problem-solving and critical thinking skills to identify unfamiliar words or concepts, build comprehension, and come to a new understanding or decision about the text and what it is communicating.Given the importance of responsible decision-making in academic learning, educators can use multiple strategies to integrate responsible decision-making into ELA instruction. For example, ELA teachers can:* Use age-appropriate literature to identify specific characters who have faced challenges or come to decision-making crossroads. Use these characters as an entry point to engage in discussions about the types of problems that can come up, problem-solving strategies, choices we can make, and the possible consequences of different choices.
* Adapt and use writing strategies and tools — like thought webs, graphic organizers, and brainstorm charts — to help students adopt a planful approach to individual or group decision-making.
* Pull examples from literature to model different kinds of decision-making strategies, consequences, and the ethical or societal impacts of decisions.
* Use nonfiction texts like newspaper articles and editorial posts to engage students in reflective discussions about active, real-world decisions. Students can evaluate the ongoing consequences, both intended and unintended, and broad implications of decisions made by policymakers and other people in positions of power.
 | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 26** | **Sample Strategies: Mathematics**Similar to the ELA standards, the [New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Mathematics](https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/math/standards.pdf) [https://www.nj.gov/education/cccs/2016/math/standards.pdf] across grade bands call for students to be able to engage in multiple mathematics practices that require responsible decision-making, including making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, reasoning abstractly and quantitatively, using appropriate tools strategically, looking for and making use of structure, and looking for and expressing regularity in repeated reasoning. Given the importance of responsible decision-making in mathematics classrooms, educators can use multiple strategies to support responsible decision-making in math instruction. For example, mathematics teachers can use the following strategies:* Ask students to show each step they took to solve a problem. After they complete the problem, have students verbally explain their thought process and the decisions they made to come to a solution.
* Present students with problems that can be solved using multiple different strategies. Engage students in a discussion about the types of mathematical strategies that are possible, the pros and cons of each strategy, and the best or most strategic mathematical approach for the problem.
* Provide opportunities for students to use repeated mathematical strategies to solve similar problems. Encourage students to pay attention to when the reasoning they are using can be applied to multiple problems or used to develop a shortcut to a solution.
* Make time in mathematics class for students to reflect on their work and evaluate what they could have done differently or improved. Connect these reflective conversations or assignments to reviews of content and to new learning.
 | **2 minutes** |
| **Slide 27** | **Responsible Decision-Making in Real-World Contexts**Responsible decision-making provides the foundation for how we engage with problems, analyze relevant information, and take thoughtful action in the classroom and in life. Consider this example.At Two Rivers Public Charter School, 4th-grade students engage in problem-based learning. Their project this year focuses on a hands-on wetlands restoration project in the Anacostia River watershed and an online communications strategy to educate other young people in their community about the health of the ecosystem. Let’s pause to watch about two minutes of this [video](https://www.edutopia.org/video/solving-real-world-issues-through-problem-based-learning) from Edutopia focused on the Two Rivers approach to community-connected classroom learning (start at minute 2:48 and watch through 4:12) [Solving Real-World Issues Through Problem Based Learning](https://www.edutopia.org/video/solving-real-world-issues-through-problem-based-learning.) [https://www.edutopia.org/video/solving-real-world-issues-through-problem-based-learning].After viewing the video, reflect on the following questions:* How did the teacher and the community educator integrate responsible decision-making skill-building into academic lessons?
* What did the teacher and community educator do during the lesson to develop responsible decision-making in their students? What did the students do to apply responsible decision-making?
 | **5 minutes** |
| **Slide 28Activity**Handout 6 | **Activity: Design a Lesson Integrating Responsible Decision-Making**Use Handout 6 to think strategically about how you can integrate responsible decision-making within an academic lesson. You will use a lesson-planning tool that is nearly the same as the last activity but with a different purpose. In the last activity, you designed a lesson that directly targeted a sub-competency of responsible decision-making as a learning objective. In this activity, you will design a lesson that integrates responsible decision-making skill building within an academic lesson.Note: The goal is not necessarily to use the exact lesson planning template provided, as you may have a lesson planning template that you already use. Focus on the aspects of SEL integration encouraged by the template, rather than the exact template itself.You may want to refer again to Handout 5b to refamiliarize yourself with sample learning objectives related to responsible decision-making competencies.To ensure alignment of learning objectives, refer to the New Jersey SEL competencies and sub-competencies and the New Jersey academic standards as you complete the handout. Discuss your ideas with your grade-level or department team to identify ways in which you can create consistent structures to integrate responsible decision-making into your lessons.  | **20 minutes****Facilitation note:** If in a group, participants can complete the lesson planning template individually and then discuss or complete the activity together to collectively model the process. |
| **Slide 29** | **Implementing General Teaching Practices That Support Responsible Decision-Making**A third way for educators to promote the development of social and emotional competencies in the classroom is to implement general teaching practices that create a safe and supportive learning environment.As discussed in the introductory module, content experts from the American Institutes for Research and a panel of expert reviewers compiled 10 research-based teaching practices that promote SEL. Implementing these evidence-based teaching practices in your classroom can help all students master academic standards while simultaneously helping them develop social and emotional competencies. An overview of the 10 practices is offered on this slide. The next two slides offer examples of how specific social teaching practices and instructional teaching practices support, and are enhanced by, students’ development and application of responsible decision-making skills, attitudes, and knowledge.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 30** | **Social Teaching Practices That Promote Responsible Decision-Making**Educators can provide a model for students by engaging in social teaching practices such as student-centered discipline and providing opportunities for responsibility and choice. In both of these examples, students take shared ownership for the management and functioning of the classroom. Students are able to develop and practice their responsible decision-making skills as an inherent element of the classroom design.With student-centered discipline, educators and students take part in shared decision-making processes to establish norms and values in the classroom. With greater student buy-in and understanding of how the classroom is managed, students are more motivated to follow behavioral guidelines and make individual decisions that are productive and supportive of the classroom as a whole. When rules or norms are broken, the consequences should be clear, described in advance as part of the rules and norms, and logically tied to the students’ actions with a focus on repairing the harm done versus consequences that are disconnected and punitive. Giving students a say in the decision-making around discipline in the classroom and providing clear models for logical and reflective problem solving provides helpful, real-world models as students develop their own decision-making skills. When a classroom is focused on student-centered discipline, students are able to have a role in decision-making and take some responsibility for setting up shared structures and expectations. With a broader focus on responsibility and choice in the classroom, students are also given a role and input in the academic content or how it is learned. To build more responsibility and choice into the classroom, educators can provide specific and structured ways for students to have a voice in the classroom and provide meaningful choices for students during academic learning. For example, educators can allow students to choose between project presentation options as the final demonstration of learning in a unit. Educators can use classroom group discussion or meeting times to plan for future projects, make decisions about the sequence or approach to new work, and reflect on what elements of recent projects or lessons students felt worked well or needed improvement. By building regular decision-making into the classroom, educators can help students to build skills and to co-design the kinds of conditions for learning that support all students in the class.  | **3 minutes** |
| **Slide 31** | **Instructional Teaching Practices That Promote Responsible Decision-Making**In addition to the social teaching practices just discussed, instructional teaching practices that promote SEL provide students with opportunities to engage deeply in academic content with their peers and their teacher. To effectively engage in these practices, students apply their social and emotional competencies, including their responsible decision-making skills, attitudes, and knowledge. For example, educators can use academic press and expectations to engage students in individual problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making strategies. In a classroom where educators implement challenging and meaningful work with the expectation that all students will succeed, students are encouraged to set specific and challenging goals for their own achievement. Educators should support students to engage with specific strategies to identify their academic goals, engage with any challenges or problems standing in the way of them meeting those goals, set specific plans or decisions around their next steps, and then take action toward their goals. Students who feel appropriately challenged and supported in class are more likely to build intrinsic motivation to succeed and feel a sense of personal agency around their own academic decisions and options (Zins et al., 2004).An educator’s appropriate use of academic press and expectations helps students set goals for themselves and then work toward making the kinds of decisions that will help them achieve those goals. With self-reflection and self-assessment, educators support students to actively think about and evaluate their work and what they have already accomplished. Students who are able to engage in reflective practices about the decisions they make in the classroom can assess their work against a standard, identify areas for improvement, and then adapt their goals and action steps (Elias, 2006). These types of skills are transferable to other decision-making processes, supporting students as they work to identify consequences and implications for their decisions in and outside of the classroom. | **3-4 minutes** |
| **Slide 32Activity**Handout 7 | **Activity: Reflect on Teaching Practices**As you can see, the responsible decision-making competency is reflected not only in academic instruction but also in the interactions that educators have with their students within schools and classrooms. We encourage you to review one or two classroom videos on the [Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjoWr_wxMaSdShazWcer9Endr4MXDcews) (https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjoWr\_wxMaSdShazWcer9Endr4MXDcews) that focus on the 10 teaching practices that promote SEL. For this activity, individually or in a group:1. Watch one or two videos focusing on educator practices that promote SEL.
2. Identify the responsible decision-making skills, attitudes, or knowledge that students use.
3. Identify how educators are helping students develop or apply those skills.

Use Handout 7 to record your thoughts. | **20 minutes****Facilitation note:**If in a group, participants may complete the handout individually and then discuss as a group or complete the handout with a partner or small group*.* |

## Action Planning

| **Slide Number/Materials** | **Suggested Language for Facilitator** | **Time/Facilitation Notes** |
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| **Slide 33** | **Action Planning**In this module we have:* Defined responsible decision-making and how it develops over time
* Highlighted research on the importance of responsible decision-making
* Learned educator strategies to explicitly support student development of responsible decision-making
* Identified ways to embed support for responsible decision-making into general teaching practices
* Developed action steps to begin to implement practices that support student responsible decision-making

You can now plan for the incorporation of new insights that you gained in this module into your teaching practice.  | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 34** | **Considerations for Action Planning**As you begin to take action to more strategically incorporate responsible decision-making into your teaching, consider the following:* Define learning objectives. Determine which social awareness sub-competency(s) you want to target in your instruction, and why?
* Determine which educator competencies — social and emotional skills, knowledge, and attitudes — are necessary to teach those competencies well.
* Integrate the three approaches to supporting responsible decision-making: explicit teaching strategies, integration with academic content, and embedding through general teaching practices.
* Monitor progress of your SEL efforts by collecting data that indicate progress.
* Determine ways to sustain this work so that it is effective over time.
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| **Slide 35Activity**Handout 8Handout 9 | **Activity: Action Planning**For today’s purposes, we’ve allowed time to plan for individual shifts in teaching practice. If you are completing this module as a group, you will use this time to plan together for a collective instructional approach to supporting students’ development of responsible decision-making. You will want to think broadly about how this focus complements and enhances existing initiatives within your district and school, such as trauma-informed care, restorative practices, and positive behavioral intervention supports (PBIS). In addition, it is critical to think about how responsible decision-making and SEL broadly fit within your school improvement plans — how you are identifying the strategies and supports to purposefully support SEL schoolwide.To finish off the module, we provide an additional handout for action planning. Please refer to Handout 8 for a template to assist in the action planning process and Handout 9 for additional resources to review as you develop your action plan. You can engage in action planning on your own or in a team. As this planning exercise focuses on the classroom level, consider student and educator needs, as well as consistency and sustainability, when planning for moving forward. | **15 minutes****Facilitation note:**This activity can be done individually or in a group. If in a group, allow adequate time for discussion. |
| **Slide 36** | **Evaluation**Thank you for participating in this social and emotional learning module focused on responsible decision-making. We hope you find the learning modules useful and the suggestions they provide help you to enhance your practice and support the development of students’ social, emotional, and academic competencies.  The NJDOE developed this online module in collaboration with the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Comprehensive Center, which are funded through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Education.  To learn more about SEL and the online modules, visit the [NJDOE SEL page](https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) (https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/) or contact the NJDOE Office of Student Support Services at SchoolClimate@doe.nj.gov . We ask that you now complete the online evaluation of this learning module. We also encourage you to review the other online modules that provide knowledge, tools, resources, and strategies to embed social and emotional learning in your classroom. | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 37** | **General Resources to Support SEL** | **1 minute** |
| **Slides** **38–40** | **References** | **1 minute** |
| **Slide 41** | **Thank You** | **1 minute** |

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