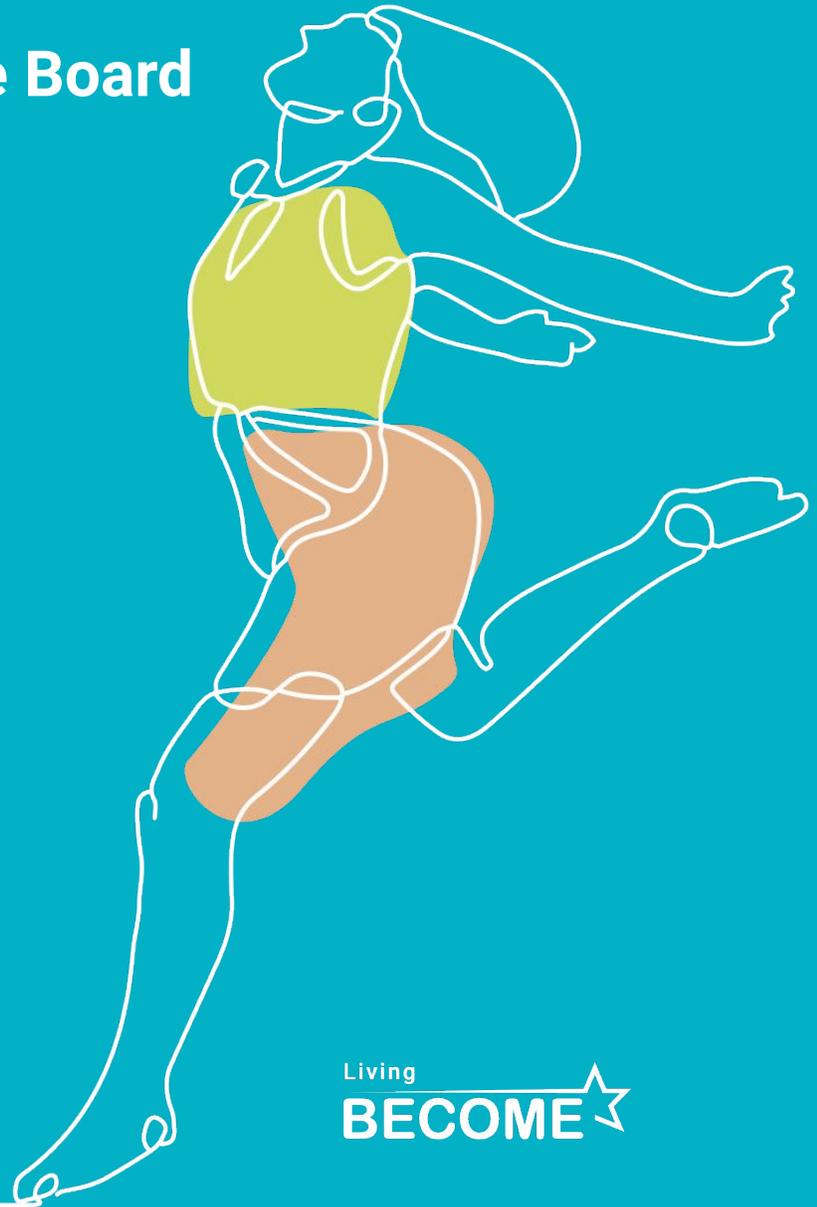


# SEL Toolkit

Greater Lowell Workforce Board

Fall 2022



Living  
**BECOME** 

Dear Educator:

Thank you for your interest in supporting the social and emotional learning of your students. You are an extremely important part of your students' development as a member of the school community and their community at large. You have witnessed firsthand the behavioral, academic and emotional challenges they are experiencing brought on by living through a pandemic. As we dig deeper into the effects of missing classroom time, alternative schedules, changes in school culture and learning, missing adult touch points, fluctuating rules and guidelines within school communities, lack of social interactions, missed extra curricular activities and multiple transitions in learning from in school to online and hybrid, we will learn more about the impact and how important social and emotional learning is in supporting the mental health of students.

The trauma young people are experiencing has impacted how they show up to school and this needs to be addressed and not minimized. Acknowledging the societal trauma absorbed on an individual and community level will help us to provide the support students need. It will also help to support your role as an educator and the challenges you face teaching our young people. The 2021/ 2022 school year taught us that returning to the classroom did not bring back normalcy. Rather, it demonstrated that much has changed and with these changes new ideas, new approaches and new methods need to be introduced and adapted for our students to be successful.

This toolkit is for you and your students. It is written to support your work, offer creative ideas for implementing SEL into your classroom. It is designed to incorporate questions, talking points and exercises into your existing curriculum. The intention is not to add to your teaching, rather compliment the work you are already doing in your classroom.

The toolkit is designed to help build the self- awareness or the self-efficacy necessary to create an impactful learning environment. Your awareness and confidence directly influence your students and the overall learning environment, so it is extremely important for you to feel supported and to have effective and relevant tools and strategies to support your work. This toolkit will provide you with those tools and strategies. These are suggestions for implementing social and emotional learning into your classroom and are to be used according to your discretion. They will provide you with creative and fun ways to support your incredible work.

Have an amazing school year teaching and modeling what it means to be bold, energized, compassionate, open-hearted, mindful and empowered.

With gratitude,  
The Living Become Team



## A Sample Letter to Students

Welcome to the new school year! The school community is here to support you and champion you throughout your learning this year. If you feel challenged as you grow, learn and experience the world around you, we will be by your side to lift you up. The past 3 years have been exceptionally challenging at times and we as a community want to acknowledge your resilience and help you to create fun and meaningful memories. There is much to learn and experience and as your teacher I am excited to be a part of this journey with you.

Based on how many students are showing up to school, chances are you are feeling some stress and/ or anxiety. Like adults, you are trying to make sense of living through a pandemic. You are feeling what adults are feeling and do not have the same capacity to process it because your brains are still developing. So, it makes sense if you are feeling overwhelmed and confused.

The American Academy of Pediatrics put out a statement in October of 2021 correlating the impact of the pandemic on young people.

“The pandemic has struck at the safety and stability of families. More than 140,000 children in the United States lost a primary and/or secondary caregiver, with youth of color disproportionately impacted. We are caring for young people with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities. We must identify strategies to meet these challenges through innovation and action.”

As a school community we will embrace bold actions to support you, be energized in our approach, model compassion and kindness, maintain an open-heart to foster inclusiveness, slow down and take mindful breaks when necessary and promote self-advocating and advocating for others so our community feels empowered

Thank you for showing up every day! Your school community looks forward to watching you BECOME.

Open-heartedly,  
Teacher



# Introduction to the Toolkit

The theory behind the toolkit is based on creating an environment conducive to learning. The past 3 years have placed students and teachers in learning environments that are stressed, unstable, unpredictable and reactionary. As much as school administrators have attempted to maintain optimal learning environments for teachers and students this has been a challenge with the multitude of transitions and interruptions in learning.

The foundational theory of the toolkit is self-efficacy and building the awareness to understand how each of us show up within our communities. Whether a teacher or a student, it is important to know and connect with your thoughts and feelings to successfully be a participant in your community. Simply acknowledging tiredness or a lack of energy, a headache or being frustrated will help you to manage your behaviors and in turn provide you with the ability to see your students and acknowledge how they are showing up. This will allow you the capacity to support them and manage your classroom environment.

Teachers and school staff have historically been directed to focus on academics even when students have not been in the emotional or physiological states to process information and learn. PreCOVID we were seeing a climb in anxiety, depression and suicide rates with teenagers. Post COVID these numbers continue to climb at alarming rates and we know that if a mind is stressed or anxious it will not effectively retain information. The past three years have made social and emotional learning even more relevant and providing teachers and school staff with useful tools to incorporate into their classrooms is important. This toolkit is designed to encourage you to place an emphasis on connecting and communicating with your students in an intuitive and compassionate way.

We want you to approach this new school year believing in your ability and your students' ability to have a fun and successful year guided by awareness and compassion. Creating a school culture focused on kindness and compassion will foster an optimal learning environment.

**"You can't cling to the side your whole life, that one lesson every parent needs to teach a child is "If you don't want to sink, you better figure out how to swim"**

— Jeannette Walls, *The Glass Castle*