

# Everyday Speech

## Navigating Scheduling Difficulties for SEL

Scheduling difficulties can often pose a challenge to the implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in both primary and secondary schools. However, with careful planning and creative solutions, educators can successfully navigate these challenges and create a flexible yet effective SEL schedule. Here, we discuss several approaches to scheduling SEL at different grade levels and how Everyday Speech's digital SEL curricula can offer additional support to educators.

### Strategies for Incorporating SEL at the Primary Level

#### Empowering Grade-Level Teams

At the elementary level, it may be more effective to let each individual grade level or Professional Learning Community (PLC) decide when to implement SEL. With diverse schedules for different classes, it can be challenging to synchronize SEL implementation across the entire school. To maintain alignment, administrators can set bi-weekly or monthly goals regarding which units to cover. This approach allows for flexibility while ensuring that all grades address similar topics. This way, school-wide assemblies can still address common themes, and the building can grow together, unified in their social-emotional content progression.

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## Scheduling Options for Elementary

**Start of Day Routine/Morning Meeting:** Starting the day with an SEL activity can set a positive tone for the day. Morning meetings are an excellent opportunity for educators to incorporate SEL skills like active listening, empathy, and collaboration. It's also a great time to set goals and have students visualize what they want their day to *"Look like, feel like."*

**End-of-Day Routine/Closing Meeting:** In contrast to Morning Meetings, closing meetings can help students transition onto the bus or back home by reflecting on the day's experiences and addressing any concerns. It's usually a great time for reflection and to transfer skills between environments, strengthening the home-school partnership.

**Snack or Lunch & Learn:** Stretched for time? Biweekly or monthly SEL sessions during snack or lunchtime can provide a relaxed and informal setting for students to learn about social and emotional skills without encroaching on other scheduled academic instruction and activities.

**SEL Moments:** This option perhaps allows the most flexibility and creativity. Natural pauses throughout the day, such as before lunch, after recess, or during quiet time, can be opportunities to address SEL topics. Even 5-10 minutes can make for a meaningful opportunity to engage students in segments of Everyday Speech's engaging SEL curriculum.

**Dedicated Weekly SEL Times:** Designating a specific time each week or bi-weekly for SEL, intertwined with academic instruction, can help reinforce SEL skills. For example, students could write about an SEL topic during an ELA lesson.

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## Strategies for Incorporating SEL at the Secondary Level

Implementing SEL at the secondary level presents unique challenges due to the complexity of adolescents, scheduling, academic demands, and the shift towards increased student independence. However, with creative solutions, it is entirely feasible. By integrating SEL into core subjects, educators can naturally weave in discussions about empathy, ethical decision-making, and emotional awareness into academic content. Utilizing digital resources can provide flexible and engaging ways to address SEL topics, even within tight schedules.

**Advisory/Homeroom Periods:** Incorporating SEL into advisory or homeroom periods is an effective way to create a dedicated time for SEL in the high school schedule. This period could focus on relationship-building, goal-setting, and self-awareness, allowing students to start their day with a strong focus on their social and emotional well-being.

**Integration into Core Subjects:** SEL can be integrated into the core curriculum of subjects like English, social studies, and science. For example, literature discussions can be a platform for exploring emotions, perspectives, and relationships. In history or social studies, teachers can emphasize empathy and ethical decision-making by discussing historical figures' choices and their impacts.

**Extracurricular Activities and Clubs:** Schools can integrate SEL principles into extracurricular activities and clubs. For instance, sports teams can focus on teamwork, resilience, and leadership, while debate clubs can emphasize active listening and respectful disagreement. Incorporating SEL into these contexts allows students to practice their skills in real-life situations.

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**SEL Courses:** Offering dedicated SEL courses as electives gives students the opportunity to delve deeper into topics such as conflict resolution, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal communication. These courses can provide students with a safe and structured environment to explore and develop their social and emotional skills.

**Flexible SEL Blocks:** Schools can schedule flexible SEL blocks, where students participate in activities, workshops, or discussions based on their interests and needs. These blocks can be offered bi-weekly or monthly and provide opportunities for guest speakers, community service projects, or student-led initiatives that focus on SEL topics, such as those highlighted in the Everyday Speech PK-12 SEL curricula.

By incorporating these scheduling solutions, high schools can create a supportive environment that prioritizes their students' social and emotional well-being.

## Everyday Speech: The Perfect Solution

By offering a flexible and comprehensive approach, Everyday Speech's digital SEL curricula stand out as an excellent choice for schools aiming to integrate social and emotional learning seamlessly into their schedules.

A digital SEL curriculum can offer creative solutions to address scheduling difficulties in several ways:

**Flexibility:** A digital curriculum allows educators to access SEL materials at any time and to implement them whenever it is most convenient for their schedule.

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**Customization:** Teachers can select specific lessons or activities from a digital curriculum to align with the current needs of their students or to complement other academic topics.

**Interactivity:** Interactive digital SEL materials can engage students in unique ways, such as through relevant and engaging video material, discussion prompts, and interactive games and activities.

**Collaboration:** Digital platforms may enable specialists like counselors, social workers, and principals to easily access SEL materials, participate in lessons, or help facilitate Tier 1 SEL instruction.

**Encouraging Buy-In:** By allowing for flexibility in scheduling and incorporating digital resources, administrators can increase buy-in from educators. This flexibility allows educators to fit SEL into their schedules without feeling overwhelmed or inconvenienced. ***The goal should be to create an environment where SEL is a natural part of the school day rather than an added burden.***

Navigating scheduling difficulties for SEL requires thoughtful planning and creative approaches. Empowering individual grade levels, incorporating SEL at specific times, and leveraging digital curricula from Everyday Speech are key strategies for effectively implementing SEL. By providing flexibility and support, administrators can encourage buy-in from educators and promote the successful integration of SEL into both primary and secondary MTSS programming.