

Choosing student materials to support social emotional learning

There is no simple solution for building safe and caring learning environments that support healthy relationships, prevent bullying behaviour and promote positive mental health. No single resource can do this. It takes an intentional, well-planned, long-term comprehensive approach to support transformative changes necessary for creating and sustaining responsive learning environments.

As part of a comprehensive approach to support social and emotional development, schools may sometimes need student resources that:

- reinforce specific skills, concepts or strategies
- provide a reference and visual reminder for students, school staff and families
- provide a framework for reflecting on and discussing new skills, concepts or strategies.

When making decisions about developing or acquiring student materials to promote social emotional learning, use the following checklist to assess the material's potential appropriateness and value.

- Has a clear purpose that align with the overall goals of the school's comprehensive approach
- Content is relevant to the purpose and promotes understanding and skill development
- Content is easy to read and contains enough detail to be meaningful
- Is sensitive to cultural and ethnic differences
- Contributes to a shared understanding of an important concept, skill or strategy
- Teaches and reinforces specific skills and strategies
- Is inclusive of and accessible to all students (all students can use it and benefit)
- Honours students' different ways of learning and knowing
- Uses positive and respectful language
- Does not promote negative stereotypes
- Focuses on solutions (rather than blame, shame or fear)
- Is relevant across a number of different learning contexts
- Provides an effective tool for school staff to follow up to reinforce and build on new learning
- Can be used as a communication tool with families, to introduce and reinforce strategies and skills students are using at school

These criteria can be used to assess the potential appropriateness and value of student materials such as posters, cue cards; school tools such as bookmarks, rulers or pencils that display targeted messages or other child-friendly products that could display targeted messages such as decals, tattoos or magnets. This criteria is not intended to evaluate the value of novelty "swag" items that are often used as promotional material and focus more on name recognitions than social messaging.