



SAY SOMETHING



Belonging Unit

GRADES 9-10



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges: How can we create a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Unit Overview

In this Belonging unit, students will discuss and apply inclusive practices. Students will engage in key learnings and messages from the *Say Something* program. They will think about the most salient qualities and characteristics of Trusted Adults, develop a Trusted Adult taxonomy, participate in cogenerative dialogues (cogens), and practice giving and receiving feedback and gratitude.



Race, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) Alignment

What is REDI and how is it implemented throughout the curriculum?

Sandy Hook Promise strives to develop materials and resources that reflect the values of race, equity, diversity, and inclusion (REDI). Throughout this curriculum, you will find that the goal is to create a safer community and a just future for students by teaching students to value inclusivity, speak up against injustice and victimization, and get help for those who need it. Additionally, in line with our central belief that children have a right to be safe wherever they are, we commit to ensuring our footprint neither creates nor advances inequitable outcomes as demonstrated by the work we do with and for students and the adult networks around them.

Here are some steps you can take throughout this unit to implement REDI values and bring awareness to intersectionality in your classroom:

1. Reference the *Know the Signs* community agreement and circle norms and make it an evolving, living, collective community agreement.
2. Empower students to bring their authentic selves to the classroom by allowing space for personal identity exploration.
3. Promote an inclusive and safer space that is anti-racist and anti-bias, by encouraging students to uplift and support all individuals, regardless of their backgrounds.
4. Encourage students to be Upstanders and speak up against injustice and victimization.
5. Model celebrating the various aspects of your identity by promoting self-empathy and self-love.
6. Nurture connections between Trusted Adults and students from diverse cultures and backgrounds.



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Curriculum Overview Guide and Student Workbook

To learn more about the full curriculum components and the various resources associated with the *Say Something* curriculum, visit this guide. Here, you will gain access to the curriculum's essential questions, thematic unit rationale, and additional engagement activities. The Unit is also accompanied by a [Student Workbook](#).



Collective Community Know the Signs Agreement

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Collaboratively produce a classroom agreement that aligns with the *Say Something* program and Sandy Hook Promise values.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Social Awareness:** recognize others' perspectives and identify social norms.
- **Self-Awareness:** connect feelings, values, and thoughts about the kind of classroom community you would like to contribute to and be a part of.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** reflect on one's role to promote community well-being.

Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 6:** Students will express comfort with people who are both alike and different from them, and engage respectfully with all people.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [*Say Something Belonging Student Workbook*](#)
- Markers or crayons
- Chart paper

Mindful Minute

Brain Breaks and Mental Mellows

Inform students about the health benefits of taking “brain breaks.” Brain breaks are bouts of physical activity that help the



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9–10

Time for Lesson

45–60 minutes

Notes

brain's wiring reset. Research shows that brain breaks can improve cognitive function, help reduce anxiety, and improve the ability to concentrate and focus. If physical activity does not feel beneficial for your well-being at this moment, students can also choose to do a "mental mellow." A mental mellow is a quieter, mindful activity that can help center someone and make them feel pleasant feelings and emotions. To support students in identifying feelings and emotions, the Center for Nonviolent Communication offers this list of [feelings and emotions](#). Whether it's a brain break or mental mellow, taking time away from multi-tasking and academic work can help the circuits in your brain rewire and reset. The breaks can actually help make you feel sharper and more alert. Sample brain breaks or mental mellows for high school students are mentioned on this [Edutopia video](#) and can include quick activities like:

- Do a puzzle. Bring a Rubik's Cube or a pen-and-paper maze.
- Play a quick game. Yo-Yo's, Connect Four, and Checkers are good options.
- If space permits, do jumping jacks, sit-ups, or a few yoga poses.
- Listen to music.

For this mindful minute, ask students to do the following:

- Develop one three-minute brain break or mental mellow strategy that you can do from your desk. Write the strategy down in your workbook.
- Practice the strategy.
- Revise the strategy if it is difficult to do without distracting others or does not help center and focus you for the class and upcoming learning activities.

Student Connector

Co-Design a Brain Break

Ask students to form groups of four or five. Instruct groups to do the following tasks. Project the instructions on a board or ask students to refer to the instructions in the [Belonging Student Workbook](#).

1. Reflect on the brain break or mental mellow that you just created and tested out. How did it feel? Discuss your feelings and reactions as a group.
2. Design a group brain break or mental mellow. Perhaps you will give the strategy a new name and come up with a new naming protocol for brain breaks and mental mellows.
3. Practice the brain break or mental mellow.
4. Sign up for your group to lead and facilitate the brain break or mental mellow during one of the upcoming classes over the next couple of weeks.





Main Activity

Our Community Agreement

This activity requires everyone in the classroom to come together to create a socially and emotionally safer space. The class will construct an agreement, which is a tool used to hold everyone accountable for creating a safe and inclusive environment. This agreement should highlight qualities that align with the *Say Something* training.

Introduce the activity by having students think back to the *Say Something* training. Revisit the three steps:

1. Recognize warning signs and threats.
2. Act immediately, take it seriously.
3. Tell a Trusted Adult.

Community agreements help move towards a safer community in which all students can go to Trusted Adults for support when warning signs are encountered.

Provide students with 3–5 minutes to complete part one of the [Know the Signs Community Agreement worksheet](#) independently, which reflects how they would like to feel and what they would like to experience when in the class.

Once students complete their individual reflections, place them into groups of four and assign them the task of working on Part 2 of the [Know the Signs Community Agreement worksheet](#).

Collectively, groups will spend 10 minutes brainstorming what an ideal class would be like by writing a list of at least five expectations, feelings, actions, and qualities. Remind students that this classroom is a safe space for all. Allow students to be creative but also realistic. Each member of the group will have different roles.

- **Facilitator** – Gets the necessary supplies and relays instructions to the group.
- **Speaker** – Shares out and communicates the group’s ideas to the whole class.
- **Scribe** – Writes the class agreement.
- **Timekeeper** – Keeps the group on task and ensures project completion on time.

Lastly, once the five expectations, feelings, actions, and qualities are identified, instruct groups to circle their “top two” ideas to share in the upcoming Circle Up.

Circle Up

From the small group activity, all groups will move to a large circle and participate in a whole class Circle Up discussion.

Opening

Tell your students that they’ll be participating in a [Circle Up](#) activity. Use the [Circle Up Norms](#) and *Know the Signs Community Agreement* when available as reminders to apply agreed upon speaking and listening norms. Overall, Circle Ups adhere to a “one mic” policy and only one voice should hold the talking piece and be able to speak at one time.

Arrange chairs or desks in a circle formation or invite students to sit in a comfortable position in an open space. It can surround a centerpiece of significance to the group/class. Reinforce that it is important that all students feel seen and heard during circle rounds, can participate or pass, and are all important members of the circle community. Allow enough time for students to participate, however they feel comfortable, and encourage them to use the **Circle Up worksheet** located in their workbooks. Additionally, model the Circle Up procedures:

- Set up a centerpiece.
- Use “I statements.”
- Use a talking piece.
- Actively listen and be present.
- Listen and speak without judgment.
- Set a time and topic for the discussion.

Circle Round

Start the Circle Up with the following question:

What were the two most important expectations, actions, feelings, or qualities agreed upon by your groups?

Allow each group **speaker** to take the talking piece and explain their group’s **top two ideas**. If one idea was already named, have them choose another one from the list.

Now, it is time for the class to **vote** on which ideas they would like to implement in the *Know the Signs Agreement*.

The **scribe** of each group, will write their group’s approved expectation, action, feeling, or quality on the chart paper, labeled “Our Agreement.” This will continue until every group adds an expectation or quality to the class agreement.

Closing

Encourage students to uphold this agreement by reading the agreement aloud as a class. Display the classroom agreement and keep it visible throughout the school year.

Journal Time

Provide students time to **Think-Reflect-React** to the following prompts:

- How do you intend to uphold the principles in this agreement?
- What will we do collectively to hold each other accountable to the agreement?
- What will we do when we are not practicing agreed upon expectations, actions, and qualities?

*Remind students about the protocols for a **Think-Reflect-React**:*

Read: Quietly read the Know the Signs Agreement that we just created.

Think: Think about the expectation or quality that means the most to you.

Reflect: Consider how you intend to uphold this expectation or quality with your classmates.

React: Share or show your reflections.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Give gratitude to the class for working thoughtfully and intentionally to work collectively to build a classroom culture where all students feel safe and included.

As a Promise Challenge, encourage students to speak to and learn from family and community members about cultural norms for speaking and listening and sitting in community together in a circle or discussion. Does the classroom agreement include any cultural norms, expectations, and practices aligned to your family's heritage?

Explore More

Read and discuss the Promise with your class, created just after the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy as the formation of the Sandy Hook Promise organization.

Family Engagement

Using these [Say Something discussion cards](#), encourage students to engage in a dialogue with family members about the Sandy Hook Promise program.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

Invite your school's [SAVE \(Students Against Violence Everywhere\) Promise Club](#) to your class to co-create a group, "School Safety Promise." If your school does not have a SAVE Promise Club, share the [webpage](#) and [video](#) with students and encourage them to explore the mission of SAVE and research how to start one.



Assemble a Trusted Adult Taxonomy

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Investigate personal feelings and biases about the types of Trusted Adults who are trustworthy.
- Generate a list of preferred Trusted Adult qualities and characteristics.
- Produce a taxonomy that captures the qualities and characteristics of a Trusted Adult.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** Students will express complex thoughts and emotions with trusted peers or adults.
- **Social Awareness:** “Students will recognize family, school, and community resources and supports for personal and collective well-being” (Jagers et al., 2019, p. 167).
- **Relationship Skills:** Increase connectedness between students, and all Trusted Adults on a school campus.

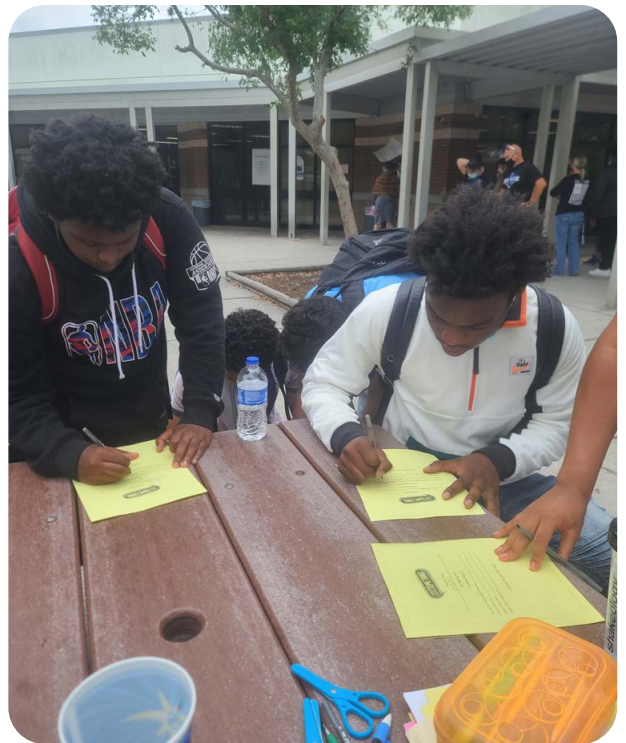
Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 7:** Students will develop language and knowledge to accurately and respectfully describe how people (including themselves) are both similar to and different from each other and others in their identity groups.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)
- Large chart paper for posters
- Markers and crayons



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9–10

Time for Lesson

45 minutes

Notes

Mindful Minute

For today's Mindful Minute, ask students to think about the word "trust" and visualize someone in their own life that they trust.

Honor this person that they trust with a Loving-Kindness Meditation (LKM). Write or display the LKM phrases on the board so students can refer to them as they silently repeat this Loving-Kindness Meditation with the trusted person in mind. Inform students that they may want to copy the statements on a small piece of paper that can be folded and placed in their backpack, wallet, or purse for a time when they feel like sending Loving-Kindness messages to someone.

Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.

Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.

Just as I wish to, may you be safe, may you be healthy, may you live with ease and happiness.

**This Loving-Kindness Meditation is taken from [Mindful Magazine](#).

Student Connector

Today's student connector is to be completed in silence. Ask students to line up a row of chairs, enough for each member of the class. Without talking, the group's task is to **arrange themselves in order** in a single line using the provided prompts (see below). Students will need to use body language and other non-verbal communication techniques to get the task completed.

1. By birthdate day/month/year.
2. Reverse alphabetical order by last name Z-A.
3. Order in which students entered the classroom today.
4. Favorite musician/artist in alphabetical order (Adele at the front of the line and the Weekend at the back of the line as an example).
5. Student Choice: _____

After completing this connector, reinforce that building cultural competencies around the many ways human beings communicate is important.

Racial, ethnic, and religious groups may express themselves and communicate in ways that are rooted in historical events or traditions. Building sensitivity around the diverse ways humans communicate is an important 21st-century skill. Eye contact, visual cues, hand gestures, facial expressions, and emotional expressions can be forms of communication that are accepted or unaccepted by various groups. Observing different communication styles can help you better understand how you can effectively communicate with other students who come from different cultural heritages than you.

Main Activity

Develop your own Trusted Adult Taxonomy

In the *Say Something* training, students were asked to identify a Trusted Adult they can count on when warning signs or threats are noticed.

A Trusted Adult is an educator or community member who is visible to students as a source of support when warning signs or threats are recognized. A Trusted Adult listens and responds appropriately to student concerns and provides ongoing support. A Trusted Adult is chosen by students.

Inform the class that they will dig deeper into who they consider as Trusted Adults in the school community. They will identify Trusted Adults, who can offer support and become part of a social capital network.

Social capital is the web of formal and informal relationships people build throughout their lifetimes. Trusted Adults are very important for young people to have in their social capital networks.

To activate thinking about Trusted Adults, pose the following questions and allow space for students to **think-reflect-respond**:

- *Who are the Trusted Adults in our school community who may be overlooked?*
- *How do race, ethnicity, gender, and language play a role in your selection of a Trusted Adult?*
- *Do you feel you bring any bias into the selection criteria for adults that you deem as trustworthy?*
- *Have there been any situations where a Trusted Adult has surprised you and showed up in a way that was unanticipated or unexpected?*

Next, explain that there is research about the importance of children and youth having at least one caring adult in their lives they can trust. For today's activity, students will think more deeply about the qualities and characteristics that Trusted Adults embody. Pringle et al. (2019) devised a taxonomy with the acronym TAP that outlines the most valuable Trusted Adult inputs and qualities from youth perspectives. These qualities include trustworthiness, authenticity, and positive examples, see the entire taxonomy below (write or display the taxonomy on the board):

T: Trustworthy, Time-generous

A: Accessible, Approachable, Attentive, Authentic, Available Adult

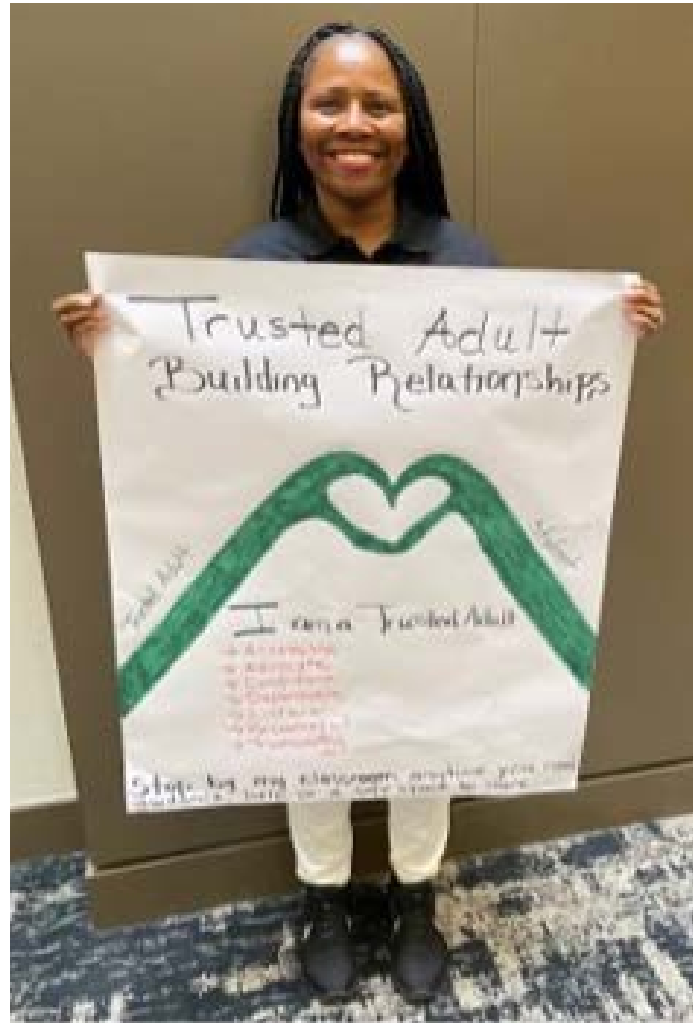
P: Provides Persuasive, Protective, Positive Example, Promotes Positive Development

Instruct students to form groups of three and bring large chart paper and markers/crayons to a table or space to work. As a group, discuss the qualities and characteristics that they seek in community, school, or family Trusted Adults. Building on the earlier discussion, encourage students to think about only Trusted Adults in the school community:

- *Who are the Trusted Adults you can turn to in our school community?*
- *What qualities and characteristics do they have that make them viewed as Trusted Adults?*
- *Which qualities and characteristics do you expect and want Trusted Adults to have?*
- *How can Trusted Adults in our school community actively support and help advocate for racial equity and diversity?*
- *Do you think there are any challenges or barriers that can affect certain groups' perceptions of Trusted Adults in terms of Race, Equity, Diversity, and inclusion?*

For the next part of the activity, ask groups to create a poster with a symbol and taxonomy that represents a collective agreement of the most important qualities and characteristics of school-based Trusted Adults. Sample symbols, like nets, ties, and webs, are included in the [Belonging Student Workbook](#).

While students are working in groups, the educator should think about their strengths and assets as a Trusted Adult and develop a taxonomy to share with the class. An example from [Sandy Hook Promise National Youth Advisory Board member](#) Dr. LaShanda West, can be seen below. You can use the acronym T-R-U-S-T-E-D A-D-U-L-T or select something that you feel reflects more of you and your role. Select a symbol to use for your taxonomy. Use one of our ideas or create your own. You may want to select something representing your school or community, such as a mascot, social justice historical connection, or a slice of your community symbolizing “trust.” Or you may select a symbol of cultural significance.



Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Share your own educator-created Trusted Adult Taxonomy with the class and ask for their feedback and impressions. *What is missing? What do you like about the taxonomy and symbol I selected and created?*

Ask a couple of groups to share their Trusted Adult Taxonomies. Invite the class to weigh-in on the similarities and differences between the various taxonomies. Is there a dealbreaker quality or characteristic that appears on all posters? How do the Taxonomies help us get closer to answering the essential question:

Building Bridges: How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Lastly, encourage students to recite Loving Kindness Meditations (LKMs) for themselves or the identified trusted person in their life. Inform the class that they will continue to discuss the meaning of trust and the importance of Trusted Adults throughout the Belonging Unit. As a Promise Challenge, ask students to connect with their Trusted Adults to say “hello” over the next two weeks.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Display the Trusted Adult taxonomy posters on a hallway bulletin board or in a high-traffic area of the school where many students and Trusted Adults will be able to view and receive the important Trusted Adult messages.

Family Engagement

Post the [Say Something Family Presentation video](#) and the [Say Something Monthly Activity Guide](#) on your classroom web page and encourage students to share with their families. Highlight the February Trusted Adult activities and give a Promise Challenge to students to facilitate the Trusted Adult activity with family members.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

For a collaborative Project-Based Learning Activity, team up with the school’s SAVE Promise Club and develop a school-wide **Trusted Adult Campaign** to uplift the importance of connecting to Trusted Adults when warning signs or threats are noticed.

References

- Jagers, R. J., Rivas-Drake, D., & Williams, B. (2019). Transformative social and emotional learning (Sel): Toward sel in service of educational equity and excellence. *Educational Psychologist*, 54(3), 162–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2019.1623032>
- Pringle, J., McAteer, J., Whitehead, R., Scott, E., Milne, D., & Jepson, R. (2019). Developing a taxonomy to characterise trusted adult support in the lives of adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 76(1), 30–36. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2019.08.004>

Symbols for Trusted Adults

Net

Trusted Adults catch you when: _____

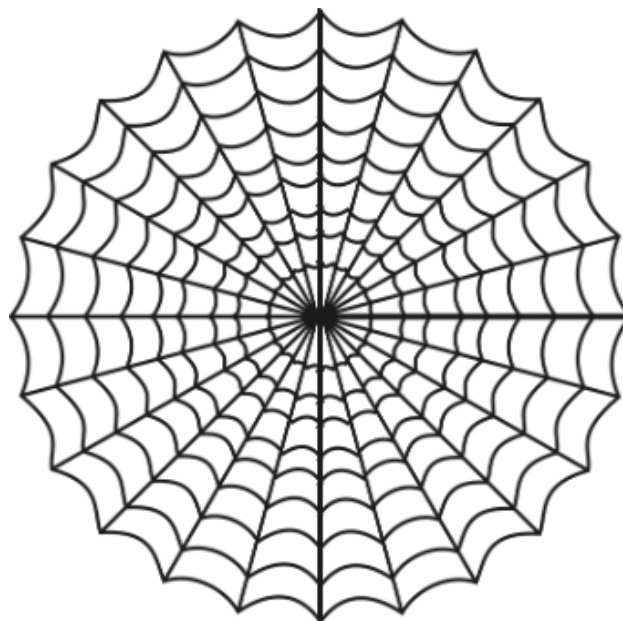
Trusted Adults are a safety net for: _____

-



Web

I have a web of relationships. A Trusted Adult who I can count on in my web is: _____



Symbols for Trusted Adults

Portfolio

My portfolio is a collection of my top skills, qualities, academic and work accomplishments, and social networks. Trusted Adults are part of my social capital network. They are important people in my portfolio. A Trusted Adult who is important to my portfolio is: _____



Ties

There are many different types of ties. Ties are formed when pieces of fabric connect or fasten together. Ties can be strong or weak. Trusted Adult ties can help me in many areas of life. One way that I can strengthen my Trusted Adult ties is: _____



Symbols for Trusted Adults

Carabiner

Carabiners are safety tools. They fasten securely and link strong rope together. Ultimately, they help keep rock climbers safe. Which Trusted Adult in your life is like the carabiner that always catches you and keeps you safe? _____



Circle Up on Trust

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Examine personal feelings about trust.
- Engage in a dialogue about trust as an anchor for a community of care.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Social Awareness:** Recognize others' perspectives and show empathy and concern for others with varying views on trust.
- **Relationship Skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships with Trusted Adults and to effectively navigate settings with diverse peers and Trusted Adults.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Identify safe and healthy Trusted Adults who will provide consistency and support.

Social Justice Standards

- **Diversity 7:** Respectfully express curiosity about the history and lived experiences of others and exchange ideas and beliefs in an open-minded way.
- **Diversity 8:** Respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding, and connection.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)
- Circle Up materials (talking piece, centerpiece, and Circle Norms). Further description can be found in the [Circle Up Playbook](#).



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9–10

Time for Lesson

45 minutes

Notes

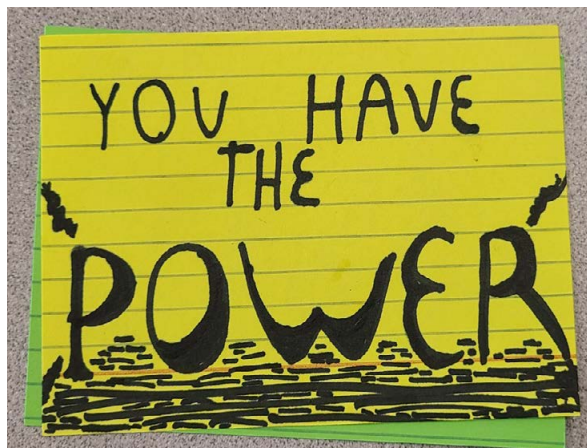
Mindful Minute

Personal Affirmation

Ask students to think and/or write down a positive self-affirmation. Encourage students to hold the affirmation close to their hearts that day and continue to refer to it when they need an emotional boost. A personal affirmation can be thought of as a thanks-giving for oneself.

Example self-affirmations include:

- I am kind and generous.
- I can conquer mountains.
- I am a loyal friend.
- My heart is beautiful.
- In life or on the court, I am a champion.
- I celebrate my uniqueness.
- My voice matters and I used it to advocate for justice and equality.



Student Connector

Collective Affirmation Station

Reserve wall or bulletin board space (a clothesline with clothespins can also be strung around the classroom) for a class Affirmation Station. Display these [sample affirmations](#) for inspiration.

After students have given themselves a confidence boost with a personal affirmation, inform the class that they will create an Affirmation Station. For this activity, give students index cards, sticky notes, and/or cutout construction paper. Set the timer for five minutes and guide students to create as many positive affirmation statements as possible in the provided time frame. When the timer goes off, inform the class that they will give and receive as many affirmations as possible to classmates.

For the final step, ask students to add at least one of the affirmations that was created or received to the class Affirmation Station. Students are welcome to give or take affirmations as they like in the coming days and weeks.

Main Activity

What is Trust?

Write or display the following quotes about trust on the board or class website:

“Trust is the glue of life. It’s the most essential ingredient in effective communication. It’s the foundational principle that holds all relationships.” – Stephen R. Covey

“Few things can help an individual more than to place responsibility on him, and to let him know that you trust him.” – Booker T. Washington

“If you have three people in your life that you can trust, you can consider yourself the luckiest person in the whole world.” – Selena Gomez

Encourage students to select one of the quotes that resonates most loudly with them. Next, remind the class that they were asked to select a Trusted Adult in school to go to when warning signs or threats are noticed. Ask each student to think of a school-based Trusted Adult and write them a quick note of appreciation using the template in the [Belonging Student Workbook](#) or on a piece of available paper. The prompt can be as simple as:

_____, I chose you to be my Trusted Adult because _____.

I appreciate your support.

Next, inform the class that they will be facilitating Micro-Circle Ups on the topic of trust. Divide the large group into smaller groups of six to 10, depending on how many students are in your class. Ask small groups to create circles, using chairs or floor space. Provide each group with a talking piece. Re-capture highlights from the *Know the Signs* Community Agreement created at the beginning of this unit and any existing circle discussion norms. Recommended Circle Up guidelines are included in this [guide](#).

Build awareness that the topic can be highly sensitive, and participation is always voluntary. As an adult educator, you will rotate groups and provide support as requested or needed by the student participants. Additionally, instruct each group to elect a timekeeper. **Fifteen to 20** minutes can be reserved for the Micro-Circle Up segment of this lesson, depending on the teacher’s time constraints.

Micro-Circle Ups

First, ground the group in the unit essential question and explain what a community of care is.

A community of care is a group of people who come together to provide support, safety, warmth, and well-being. A community of care in a school setting may be a Social Studies Class, the art club, or a group that sits together at lunchtime.

Essential Question: How can you create a community of care for one another and with Trusted Adults?

Next, review the class *Know the Signs* Community Agreement or Circle Norms. Root the Circle Up discussion in giving a thanksgiving to the Indigenous lands where the Circle Up is taking place

Circle Opening

First, ask participants to do a quick feelings check-in and body scan.

- ***Where are your emotions?***
- ***How are you feeling?***
- ***How are your mind, heart, and body feeling?***
- ***Is there anything you can do from this seat to get centered for today’s circle discussion?***

Second, the facilitator starts by reading a selection from your note of appreciation to your Trusted Adult or tell the group about a few special qualities and characteristics about them. Give the talking piece to any other student who would like to share their note or a little about their Trusted Adult.

Circle Round Questions

Move into the Circle discussion using the questions below.

Circle Round #1

- How do you build trust with people?
- What do you do when trust is broken?

Circle Round #2

- How can you create a community of care for one another and Trusted Adults in our school or organization?
- What structures, systems, spaces, and policies are in place for you to be able to create a trusting community of care with Trusted Adults in our school?

Circle Round #3

- What would you like Trusted Adults to know about your cultural heritage and background?
- How will building cultural competencies help strengthen relationships between students and Trusted Adults in our school?

Circle Round #4

- How will this community of care help create a healing-centered community and a positive school culture and climate?

Circle Closing:

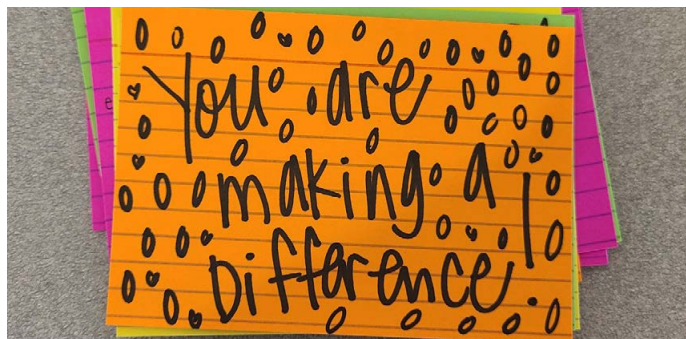
- What's one "ribbon" of wisdom you will take away from this discussion. State your new ribbon of wisdom in one sentence or less.

Ask everyone to join as a whole group for the optimistic closure.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Ask volunteers to provide feedback on how the small groups abided by and practiced the community agreements. Ask the whole group if there is anything that can be improved upon for the next Micro-Circle Up discussions. Finally, ask if the topic warrants further discussion and if the class is interested in continuing the conversation with another Micro-Circle Up discussion.

Affirm students for the courage it takes to participate in a discussion about a very heavy and personal topic, trust.



Lesson Extension and Explore More

Give groups time to develop their own Micro-Circle Up discussion using the provided template in the [workbook](#). Instruct groups, the theme is Building a Community of Care with Trusted Adults, giving them the space and creativity to design the entire activity. If time permits, schedule half a class period (about 25 minutes) for each group to facilitate their Micro-Circle Up plans.

Family Engagement

Inspire students to set up a family Affirmation Station where family members can give or take positive affirmations. At the high school level, written words of affirmation can be very powerful and meaningful.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

If your class Affirmation Station takes off, invite the school SAVE Promise Club to view the station and discuss with one or more of your classes how to make the concept come to life as a school-wide activity. Your class(es) and the SAVE Promise Club can work collectively to build a “living” Affirmation Station for the entire school to enjoy.

References

Borman, G. D., Choi, Y., & Hall, G. J. (2021). The impacts of a brief middle-school self-affirmation intervention help propel African American and Latino students through high school. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 113(3), 605–620. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000570>



Cogens for Community Building

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Describe and practice a protocol for discussing issues that are affecting and impacting student safety and school climate.
- Engage in a dialogue with peers and a Trusted Adult.
- Collectively identify a classroom culture goal.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Social Awareness:** To take the perspective of others and try to understand their point-of-view about issues or challenges in the classroom or broader school community.
- **Relationship Skills:** Practice team building and collaborative problem solving.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** The ability to identify and analyze problems and devise solutions for the problems while taking safety concerns and social norms into consideration.

Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 6:** Engage with Trusted Adults who may have different racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)

Mindful Minute

Guide students to reflect upon a favorite person. This will spur more thinking about the qualities and characteristics of valued Trusted Adults.



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9-10

Time for Lesson

45 minutes

Notes

Take a deep breath. Keeping your eyes open or closed, think about being around one of your favorite people. It could be a friend, parent, grandparent, neighbor, cousin, teacher, or a Trusted Adult in your life.

Try to visualize being with that person now. What feelings come up for you? What activities are you doing? What are the qualities in that person that makes you want to hang out with them?

Most often, we feel comfortable, relaxed, at ease, happy, content, peaceful, joyful, safe, and inspired when we are with some of our favorite people. It is often the reason we keep wanting to be around these people. As you think of one of your favorite people, take a gentle inhale and exhale. If you feel comfortable, silently state a loving-kindness meditation for that person, like:

May you feel well, happy, safe, and peaceful.

Student Connector

Concentric Circles

Ask the class to work together to form two concentric circles. Students can count in one's and two's: the one's form the inside circle and the two's form the outside circle. The inside circle will ask icebreaker questions and the outside circle rotates. When possible, each student faces a partner. If the group has an odd number of students, the teacher can participate, or one space is left and there is a "break" when a student reaches that spot.

The inside and outside circles face each other so that each student on the inside circle is facing a partner on the outside circle.

A round starts by asking inside-circle students to select icebreaker questions. You may use this list as inspiration, write a few on the board, or instruct students to create their own questions.

Sample questions include:

- *What's your favorite ice cream flavor?*
- *Do aliens exist?*
- *How would you rather spend your free time: watching movies and eating popcorn, playing sports, streaming YouTube, or playing video games?*
- *Planes, trains, or automobiles: which mode of transportation would you prefer to take on a trip?*

The circle begins when the facilitator asks the **INSIDE circle** to ask the icebreaker question to their partner. This is a quick, speed-helloing type of activity.

After 20 seconds, the facilitator calls "Rotate" and the **OUTSIDE circle**, or the two's, rotate one person clockwise. After a rotation call, the inside circle will ask their same question again, but to a new individual.

Main Activity

Cogenerative Dialogues



Throughout the *Say Something* program, students learn how instrumental Trusted Adults are to the community and school safety. In the previous lesson, students discussed what trust means to them and developed a Trusted Adult taxonomy. Both activities generate thinking about present and past factors that have either contributed to or damaged trust in nonparental adults. To encourage further reflection and bridge the gap between Trusted Adults and students, educators are encouraged to start a new pedagogical approach in the Belonging Unit: Cogenerative Dialogue.

Introduce students to a new strategy: **cogenerative dialogues** or **cogens**. Most simply stated, **cogens** are:

- Small groups of adult educators and students who collectively work together to improve an aspect of the classroom or school culture.
- A structure and a platform for students to give feedback to the teacher(s) or administrator(s). Cogens started as a tool for students to give feedback on instruction in Science classes.
- A strategy to invite a diverse group of students to shape the way a class is organized, managed, and taught.
- Cogens can help give historically marginalized populations and disproportionately excluded student agency in the academic process. For example, cogens make room for educators to “have conversations with Black male students about how you can better meet their specific academic needs and allow them to present their true selves to you” (Emdin, 2012, p. 23).

A special note on the time and place for cogens:

Intentionally, cogens are recommended to occur outside of subject-area classes and during an advisory, lunch period, or after-school period. However, for this activity, the cogen can be used

within any class or content area in which the Say Something program curriculum is being taught. Cogens are a recommended strategy to encourage and empower high school students to enact their agency and influence class protocols, structure, and culture. As an upstream violence prevention program that teaches social and emotional skills, cogens are an effective tool for igniting dialogue and buy-in. For this purpose, it is recommended that the cogen strategy and experience is built into your class schedule. When possible, set a regular schedule for cogens to take place. For example, announce to students that they will participate in cogens once every two weeks or once per month. The cogen are specially dedicated class periods, reserved for dialogues between students and Trusted Adults (the teacher, co-teacher, paraprofessional, Special Education teacher, Counselor, etc.) and focus on collectively working towards goals.

Cogens can help improve equity and ownership of the classroom culture and environment by:

- Ensuring all voices are heard and that students are active participants in the teaching and learning process.
- Giving students agency in the culture-development of the classroom, including the way that a class is organized and run.
- Developing a bi-directional feedback process between educators and students.

According to Emdin (2012) and Tobin & Shady (2014), the standard protocol involves selecting a small **group or cohort of 4–6 diverse students from the whole class** to represent the classroom community. As mentioned, typically, the educator and perhaps a co-teacher or administrator, sets aside time for a regularly scheduled cogen. However, to involve the entire class and ensure teacher participation happens with every group, for this activity the following steps are recommended:

1. Divide the class into groups of four or six. Make the groupings as diverse as possible in terms of academic participation in class, race/culture/linguistic background, and social participation.
2. Every other week, when possible, the teacher(s) rotates groups and participates in the cogen with the students. Or, in a block scheduling period, the educator(s) rotates cogen groups every 15–20 minutes to hop in and join in each group's dialogue. Whichever model, the educator(s) must hear feedback and reflect back on what they learn from each cogen.

Similar to a focus group, cogens require teaching, modeling, and reinforcing strong, active listening skills. Prior to the cogens, review the Know the Signs Community Agreement, classroom discussion guidelines, and/or the following active listening and "[I Statement](#)" tips:

- **Tune in, don't zone out.** Be present, just as you are during a Mindful Minute.
- **Be respectful with your feedback.** Do not place blame on others. Refrain from pointing people out or using names, instead, use general observations.
- **Hold a one mic policy.** One person holds the mic at a time.
- **Listen actively.** Use body language to express that you are hearing one another. Put away all distractions, such as phones, computers, and tablets.
- **Be open-hearted and open-minded.** Refrain from making judgements, simply listen.

- **Be flexible and open to changing your mind**, don't get so locked-in to your mindset.
- **Student Choice** (Add an active listening tip or "I Statement" that is not included in this list): _____

The cogen will operate similar to a micro-Circle Up or a focus group. For the first cogen, the group will **democratically select a goal related to the unit topic: belonging and the unit essential question: how do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?** Specifically, the topics will relate to the core *Say Something* program messages: being Upstanders, connecting to Trusted Adults, noticing and acting on warning signs and threats, and doing prosocial behaviors to create a kinder, safer environment.

Once groups are established and the cogen dialogue norms are reviewed, ask each group to spend 5 minutes discussing and selecting one of the following goals or collectively develop a goal. The goals can be found in the [Belonging Unit Student Workbook](#). Instruct groups to elect a facilitator to get the conversation going and a scribe to write the goal down on the worksheet.

Sample cogen goals:

1. *We have time to process safety concerns that are happening outside of the classroom.*
2. *Each student has a strategy to regulate their emotions and can use the strategy during class.*
3. *During class all students feel seen and heard.*
4. *All students are included in class discussions and group work.*
5. *Our community is free from bullying and unkindness.*
6. *We can connect to our Trusted Adults when we need to.*

For the next 15 minutes, inform students that, using the **one mic policy and taking turns** talking, they will begin to discuss questions and create action steps related to the selected cogen goal using the [Cogen Dialogue Notes worksheet](#) in their workbooks.

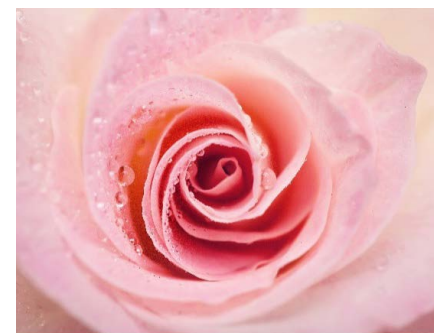
At the end of the 15-minute dialogue, ask students to return to the large group to conclude with an optimistic closure.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Ask for a couple of volunteers from different cogen groups to share out one thing they found to be a "shining star" or a "rose" in the cogen process. What did they enjoy about the process of working together to identify a goal and action steps?

As the adult cogen participant, also give a "shining star" or "rose" reflection, shout out, or positive feedback about the process of dialoguing and working together to identify a goal that will improve classroom and/or school culture.

Inform students that they will continue to practice and use the cogen model to work on selected goals. Give a Promise Challenge to hold each other accountable on the specific action steps that group members said they would work towards in achieving the select goal.



Lesson Extensions and Explore More

The cogen strategy can be built into your class more frequently if time permits. Additionally, middle and high school teachers with multiple classes may opt to create one cogen with members comprised of four to six students representing different ethnicities and academic abilities from all of their classes. This one cogen can meet during lunch or afterschool to provide feedback on your classes and the way that community and belonging is being built.



Family Engagement

Encourage students to test out the cogen dialogue strategy with family members. Similar to facilitating a Circle Up at home, inform students that the cogenerative dialogue involves an equal discussion and feedback loop between the adults and children. Cogens are opportunities for families to dialogue about goals and work collectively towards a goal that will build acceptance, love, compassion, and belonging for all members of the home environment.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

The main activity mentions that outside participants can contribute to contributors to cogen dialogues. If your school has a [SAVE Promise Club](#), invite a Club member to participate in one or more of the cogens so that they can hear the issues most pressing to your students.

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Tobin, K. G., & Shady, A. (2014). *Transforming urban education: Urban teachers and students working collaboratively*. SensePublishers.

Sample Cogen Goals

We have space to voice school safety concerns.

All students are included in class discussions and group work.

We lean on each other for academic, social, and emotional support and this is a part of our classroom vibe and culture.

Mutual respect exists between students and Trusted Adults.

We don't play favorites. Everyone has an equal voice in our classroom community.

Cogen Dialogue Notes

Student Facilitator Name: _____ Date: _____

Next Cogen Meet Up: _____

Focus Question	Notes
COGEN GOAL SETTING AND PLANNING	
1. What is the main goal our group is addressing for our cogen?	
2. How is each member of our Club feeling about this issue?	
3. On a scale of 1 (not too serious) to 10 (needs immediate intervention and attention), our group would rate this issue a _____.	
4. Why is our group zoning-in or tuning-in to this issue/challenge today?	
5. Collectively, what action steps can we take to reach our goal?	
6. If we reach our goal, how will our classroom community benefit?	

Cogen Dialogue Notes

Goal Reflection

Focus Question	Notes
COGEN GOAL REFLECTION	
7. Have we noticed our group members take action towards our goal over the past days/weeks? If yes, take talking turns giving feedback.	
8. What additional steps should we take to ensure we work towards our cogen goal?	
9. How can we involve Trusted Adults so that we can reach our goal collectively?	
10. What feedback can we offer our cogen's Trusted Adult member?	
11. Other important points from our dialogue:	
12. If we reach our goal, how will our classroom community benefit?	

SWAG Feedback

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Apply the SWAG feedback model to give and receive authentic feedback.
- Demonstrate giving and receiving feedback for the cogenenerative dialogue model.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** The ability to embrace and accept positive peer feedback.
- **Self-Management:** The ability to manage one's emotions when receiving peer feedback.
- **Relationship Skills:** Communicate feedback effectively and demonstrate cultural competency when delivering feedback.

Social Justice Standard

- **Identity 4:** Express pride, confidence, and healthy self-esteem without denying the value and dignity of other people. Give feedback that honors and celebrates the value and dignity of other people.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)

Mindful Minute

Take a deep breath. Count 1-2-3 for the inhale and 3-2-1 for the exhale.

Think about a time you felt heard.

What was that moment in your life like?

After about 45 seconds, close with another ascending and descending 3-count breath.



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9-10

Time for Lesson

30-45 minutes

Notes

Student Connector

Quote Connector

Invite a student to read aloud a couple of empowerment quotes and display the quotes on the board. Use the provided quotes or select your own. Ask students to think-reflect upon the quote that resonates with them most.

“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.” – Malala Yousafzai

“It’s really about giving tools and empowering kids to create the community that they want, which is one in which outreach is welcoming and inclusive, and bullying and isolation are reduced.”

– Nicole Hockley, Sandy Hook Promise Founder

Instruct students to **turn-and-learn** with a partner. Each partner takes one minute explaining what the quote means to them and why it is significant to the *Say Something* program and the topic of belonging.



Main Activity Role Play

Giving and receiving feedback constructively is a skill that is needed in all aspects of life inside and outside of school. Part of the cogenerative dialogue (cogen) process is learning how to give feedback to adult educators and other Trusted Adults. Therefore, for this main activity, students will use prompts to practice giving and receiving feedback.

Feedback is personal and sensitive, especially when related to social and emotional skills. Therefore, encourage students to keep the SWAG feedback approach top-of-mind when generating and sharing feedback on highly personal and sensitive areas of one’s personality, characteristics, cultural norms, skills, and qualities.

S: Specific

W: Warm and Kind

A: Based on actions or action-oriented

G: Expresses Generosity and Gratitude

Display the topic and prompts on the board. The prompts are also located in the [Belonging Unit Student Workbook](#). Explain to the class:

Today, you will practice giving positive feedback to each other about one of the following topics:

- *Participation in group projects or Circle Ups.*
- *Treating classmates with respect and kindness. Being inclusive.*
- *Doing prosocial actions like helping others in the community.*
- *Showing respect towards Trusted Adults.*
- *Supporting one another through difficult or traumatic situations.*

Instruct students to pair up with a student who they have not worked with recently. Select one of the prompts to start, and for five minutes, practice giving and receiving feedback. Some guidelines for the feedback are:

- Give only positive or constructive feedback.
- Be culturally competent. Recognize and honor the diverse ways that individuals express emotions, connect socially, and participate in community.
- Do not criticize, be sarcastic, or call out someone's deficiencies.
- Do not judge, only offer supportive feedback.
- Feedback can be used on writing assignments or during group projects. This feedback is personal and should only affirm your partner's strengths.
- Sometimes, when we receive feedback in the form of constructive criticism, we may feel the urge to be defensive. Try to take a moment to think about and "soak in" the feedback before responding.
- Acknowledge and validate emotions expressed in feedback to help express a supportive and understanding environment.



Feedback Prompts:

Giving Feedback

Your greatest strength in _____ is when you _____.

Explain how you _____ to _____. Your action/strategy was very impactful/supportive/helpful for the community.

I appreciate the time you helped _____ with _____. It impacted our classroom community in a positive way.

You bring _____ to group work and make the group members feel _____.

I value the way you actively listen to diverse perspectives by _____.

Your use of inclusive language in _____ is important. It creates an environment where everyone feels _____.

Receiving Feedback

I appreciate your supportive words.

Thanks for your feedback, I can do more by _____.

Your feedback is helpful/insightful. Thanks.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Model the feedback loop by expressing feedback to the whole class. For example,

- *The way you practice giving and receiving feedback will create stronger relationships and community. Wonderful work giving each other space to practice giving and receiving feedback today.*
- *I appreciate that many students generated their own feedback responses, and they were well received.*
- *Providing feedback will be an important part of the **cogen** process. Let's keep helping each other improve on our feedback skills the way we did so beautifully today.*

Encourage students to continue to practice giving feedback in other content classes and give students the Promise Challenge to apply feedback to several areas of their lives, including at home, on sports teams, and when doing service-learning projects.

Lesson Extension and Explore More

Go further with feedback by building in prompts that offer an area for growth or improvement to the recipient.

Family Engagement

Set aside some family time to practice giving and receiving feedback.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

If your school has a [SAVE Promise Club](#), invite some of the Club members into class and ask your students to give both gratitude and feedback to the Club members for the activities they have scheduled at school.



Cogen Cascade

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Analyze cogen goals and give feedback on action steps.
- Explain cogen goals with the Trusted Adult member.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Social Awareness:** To take the perspective of others and try to understand their point-of-view about issues or challenges in the classroom or broader school community.
- **Relationship Skills:** Practice team building and collaborative problem solving.
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** The ability to identify and analyze problems and devise solutions for the problems while taking safety concerns and social norms into consideration. Ability to demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness.

Social Justice Standard

- **Diversity 6:** Engage with Trusted Adults who may have different racial, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9-10

Time for Lesson

45 minutes

Notes



Mindful Minute

Mindfulness involves listening to oneself. Listening to one's own feelings, sensations, and thoughts. It also involves being completely present. Today's topic is listening. To be a strong listener, we should be present. Being present often requires distractions like phones and headphones to be put away. Also, body language can help clue someone in that you are present and ready to listen.

Take a gentle inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

Think about a time that you felt truly listened to.

What were you sharing?

Who was the listener?

How did you know that person was really listening to you?

To be a good listener, sometimes we need to refrain from jumping in and sharing our own opinions, ideas, and thoughts. This is referred to as listening without judgement. This can be challenging for some of us. When you know someone wants to be heard or has something important to share with you, you can use a breathing strategy to prepare you for listening fully to someone.

Take three inhales/exhales to prepare you for times when you know you need to be fully present and listen. Sometimes repeating a simple positive affirmation to yourself, such as "I am a good listener" will help get you centered and prepared to be fully present.

Student Connector

Quote Connector

Invite a student to read aloud a couple of empowerment quotes and display the quotes on the board. Use the provided quotes or select your own. Ask students to think-reflect upon the quote that resonates with them most.

"Why don't we practice what we preach and listen first." – Barack Obama

"Knowledge speaks, but wisdom listens." – Jimi Hendrix

Instruct students to **turn-and-learn** with a partner. Each takes one minute explaining what the quote means to them and why it is significant to the *Say Something* program and the topic of belonging.

Main Activity

For this activity, students will need to get into their **cogen groups** of four to six students and open the [Cogen Dialogue Notes](#) in their workbooks.

Inform students that they will have a dialogue about the group's progress towards the goal. Cogens will use **questions 7–11** to guide their discussion.

7. Have we noticed our group members take action towards our goal over the past days/weeks? If yes, take talking turns giving feedback.
8. What additional steps should we take to ensure we work towards our **cogen** goal?
9. How can we involve Trusted Adults so that we can reach our goal collectively?
10. What feedback can we offer to our **cogen's** Trusted Adult member?
11. Other important points from our dialogue:

For the Cogen “Cascade,” the Trusted Adult(s) will rotate to each group and spend five minutes hearing and receiving feedback from the students. Therefore, set a timer to ensure that you, the Trusted Adult, is able to spend at least five minutes joining and participating in the cogen dialogue with students. It is important that the adult cogen member(s) hear each group’s goal and actionable steps towards the goal. It is also important for the Trusted Adult(s) to be an equal participant in achieving the goal.

After each group has been visited by the Trusted Adult(s), ask the groups to convene as a whole class and review and debrief on each of the cogen’s goals and reflect on the actionable steps that the Trusted Adult(s) can feasibly and realistically take to work collectively on each of the goals. The cascading effect of the goals creates a strong positive effect on building an inclusive classroom culture steeped in belonging, cooperation, and respect.



Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

Invite students to open the Cascade worksheet in the [workbook](#). In closure, ask students to jot down the cogen goals that they heard and to answer the question: how does each cogen goal help reach our essential question:

Building Bridges: How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

For a Promise Challenge, empower students to continue to work on the actionable steps towards the cogen goals.

Lesson Extensions and Explore More

Ask groups to write their cogen goals on a large piece of construction paper. Post the cogen goals on a bulletin board space where students can respond and provide feedback to other group's goals. Place markers and sticky notes by the bulletin board so that it can serve as a space for ongoing feedback and dialogue.

Invite school and district administration to join cogens to listen and learn about the most important class and school culture issues from the student perspective.

Family Engagement

During a family night or report card conference evening, invite cogen groups to conduct mini presentations to families about the cogen goals they are striving to achieve. Leave time and space for students to engage in dialogues with family and community members about the goals and hear possible action steps and solutions that had not been considered.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

Invite members of the SAVE Promise Club to listen and learn about the most pressing classroom and school culture issues your students are talking about and action-planning to remedy.



Belonging Gratitude Circle Up

A BELONGING LESSON PLAN

Lesson Objectives

Students will:

- Explain the meaning of gratitude and express gratitude to oneself and Upstanders and Trusted Adults.
- Facilitate a student-led gratitude Circle Up.

Standard Alignment

CASEL Competencies

- **Self-Awareness:** Identify personal assets and express gratitude to oneself.
- **Social Awareness:** Understand and express gratitude to others including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts.

Social Justice Standards

- **Identity 1:** I have a positive view of myself, including an awareness of and comfort with my membership in multiple groups in society.
- **Diversity 9:** I relate to and build connections with other people by showing them empathy, respect and understanding, regardless of our similarities or differences.

Materials and Resources

Students:

- [Say Something Belonging Student Workbook](#)

Mindful Minute

Silent Gift of Gratitude

Sit comfortably in your seat. Take a gentle inhale and exhale. Think of someone who reached out and helped you recently. As you touch your heart, take a gentle inhale and exhale and express your appreciation to the person silently.



Unit Essential Question:

Building Bridges:
How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Grades:

9–10

Time for Lesson

30–45 minutes

Notes

Student Connector

Gratitude Gift Box Scramble

Refer the class back to the core *Say Something* student training and the vital step of connecting to a Trusted Adult. Each student should have at least one Trusted Adult to turn to in the school community. Ask students to open the Gift of Gratitude worksheet in the [Belonging Unit Student Workbook](#). Encourage students to do the tasks listed below. Ensure that students are given adequate space and time to reflect, write, and share. Once students have written gratitude statements. Set a timer for the gratitude scramble.

In the Gratitude Gift Box, write a quick note of appreciation to a Trusted Adult who has helped you recently. Gratitude words like grateful, thankful, appreciative, blessing, glad, and happy may be helpful as you write.

Next, get ready for a gratitude scramble. Pair up with a classmate. Within one-minute, each person in the pair shares:

Something I appreciate about my Trusted Adult...

Something I appreciate about you ...

An important note is that students *do not need to divulge the name or identity of their Trusted Adult*. The student connector goal is to get students more comfortable sharing and expressing gratitude and appreciation for Trusted Adults and one another.



Main Activity

Circle Up

Prior to the start of the class, set up chairs or desks in a circle and have a centerpiece and talking piece ready for the activity. Refer to the [Circle Up Playbook](#) for further details on the Circle Up process.

The practice of gratitude can have positive effects on mental and physical health. Research shows that gratitude can serve as a protective factor against life stressors and adverse experiences, like trauma (Liau et al., 2018). Before starting the Circle Up, provide a definition for gratitude:

- **Gratitude is noticing and appreciating positive things and people in your life.**
- **Gratitude is an emotion. It is giving thanks for things, people, experiences, and places.**

Pause for students to **think-reflect** on the definitions. As a quick check for understanding, instruct students to turn-and-talk with a classmate near them. Take turns **paraphrasing** the definitions to one another in one's own words that helps give deeper meaning to the term "gratitude."

Next, begin the circle discussion. Ask a student or two to be the main facilitators for this **student-led Circle Up**. When possible, the educator becomes a passive participant and simply observes the discussion. Intervene only when the facilitator(s) requests support.

Review the [Know the Signs Agreement](#) and/or [Circle Up Norms](#).

Using a talking piece and a one voice, one mic policy, begin the discussion.

Opening

Ask the group to check in with their emotions and body. How are they feeling today? Using a tool like the Mood Meter, Feelings Wheel, or [Feelings and Needs Inventory](#) as a reference. Take a moment to stretch, breathe, get comfortable so that everyone feels they can comfortably enjoy the discussion and participate in any way that they can.

Circle Round #1

Think of a bridge that is familiar to. What purpose does it serve?

What does a bridge symbolize to you?

Who are some Upstanders and Trusted Adults in our school and community who 'build bridges?'

Circle Round #2

Do you believe we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

What else can we do to strengthen these bridges?

Circle Round #3

Who is someone that builds bridges, helps keep our community safe, and promotes kindness and connection, that you would like to express gratitude to today?

Moving counterclockwise around the circle, if comfortable, take a moment to acknowledge that Upstander or Trusted Adult aloud.

Closing

Gratitude can be a powerful force. Give yourself gratitude to close today's circle. Moving counterclockwise around the circle, state one thing that you are thankful for about yourself.

I am thankful that I can _____.

I appreciate myself because I _____.

I am grateful that I have _____.

Optimistic Closure and Promise Challenge

If time permits, ask students to respond to the "what sticks with you" prompt and unit essential question on the last two pages of the [Belonging Unit Student Workbook](#). Now that the unit is completed, encourage a few volunteers to share their responses to the essential question aloud:

Building Bridges: How do we know when we have created a community of connection between students and Trusted Adults?

Lastly, express your own gratitude for participation in the Circle Up. Give students a Promise Challenge to tell a friend or teacher that you appreciate them within the next twenty-four hours.



Lesson Extensions and Explore More

Research has shown that gratitude can have positive effects on well-being. Take the gratitude Circle Up one step further by dividing the class into groups and asking them to design their own Gratitude Circle Up using the template on page 13 of the [Circle Up Playbook](#).

Family Engagement

Encourage students to write notes of gratitude and appreciation to family members (siblings and cousins), neighbors, and community members who have been helpful or brought a smile and laughter to their day.

SAVE Promise Club Connection

As an authentic project-based learning experience, propose that your class(es) organize a school-wide **Gratitude Day**. Ask for the help of your school's SAVE Promise Club to launch a day of Gratitude Circle Ups and sentiments of kindness and appreciation.



References

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Sandy Hook **PROMISE**

