



FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH GAMING





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Thank you for respecting our work and supporting our mission to create impactful educational experiences through gaming and creativity.

A LETTER



Dear Educator,

Welcome to 1UpEDU, where we empower teachers like you to support students who struggle with social skills through the power of gaming and creative learning! We believe every student has the potential to thrive socially and emotionally when given the right tools and opportunities to connect, collaborate, and grow.

We focus on integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) strategies into engaging activities that help students develop key skills such as self-awareness, relationship-building, and responsible decision-making. By utilizing games in an educational setting, we can create an environment where students feel safe, supported, and excited to learn real-life skills in a nonthreatening manner.

Thank You,

Josh Bound

1UpEDU Purpose

The purpose of 1UpEDU is to provide educational resources, programs, and tools that use gaming, creativity, and interactive learning to foster personal growth, collaboration, and essential life skills. It focuses on integrating Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and STEAM philosophies into engaging activities, helping students and educators alike develop competencies such as teamwork, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence.

Our Thanks

We extend our deepest gratitude to the countless teachers and professional contributors for their invaluable contributions to the development of our 1UpEDU curricula. Your creativity, dedication, and passion have been the driving force behind creating innovative programs that empower students and educators alike. Thank you for your hard work and commitment to making 1UpEDU a success!



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Chapter 1

The Framework

Purpose

This curriculum uses games as structured practice spaces where students build social, emotional, and life skills through safe, engaging play. It is designed to support socially isolated and neurodiverse learners while developing transferable skills for school, relationships, digital spaces, and future careers.

Core Belief

Games are not rewards or downtime. They are intentional learning environments where social emotional skills develop naturally through play, observation, reflection, and real world transfer.

Four Core Framework Pillars

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

CASEL's five core competencies are embedded into gameplay. SEL is experienced, observed, and reflected on rather than taught through lecture.

Game Based Learning

Students learn through board games, video games, RPGs, and digital platforms with a focus on interaction, decision making, and emotional response.

STEAM and Systems Thinking

Students engage in creativity, design, iteration, and problem solving while learning how systems, mechanics, and cause and effect shape outcomes.

Life and Career Readiness

Students practice communication, collaboration, adaptability, leadership, and digital citizenship.

1UpEDU SEL Game Based Learning

| Grade Band | Instructional Focus | CASEL Core Competencies | PA Career Ready Skills CRSs | Evidence in Practice |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|
| K-2 | Belonging, emotional awareness, basic social skills | Self Awareness • Self Management • Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1: Self Awareness & Self Management • CRS 2: Establishing & Maintaining Relationships • CRS 3: Social Problem Solving | Cooperative play, turn taking, emotion identification, rule following, greetings, handshakes, guided reflection |
| 3-5 | Emotional regulation, communication, cooperation | Self Awareness • Self Management • Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1: Self Awareness & Self Management • CRS 2: Establishing & Maintaining Relationships • CRS 3: Social Problem Solving | Managing frustration, verbal conflict resolution, gratitude and apology actions, collaborative decision making, reflection after play |
| 6-8 | Identity development, perspective taking, ethical decision making | Self Awareness • Self Management • Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1: Self Awareness & Self Management • CRS 2: Establishing & Maintaining Relationships • CRS 3: Social Problem Solving | Trigger-action SEL hacks, role based teamwork, ethical discussions, consequence analysis, peer leadership |
| 9-12 | Leadership, systems thinking, real world transfer | Self Awareness • Self Management • Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1: Self Awareness & Self Management • CRS 2: Establishing & Maintaining Relationships • CRS 3: Social Problem Solving | Mentorship, facilitation of games, strategic decision making, digital citizenship, community engagement, reflection and transfer |

Curriculum Structure Overview

| Strand | Focus | Key Elements | Student Outcomes |
|--|---|--|---|
| Foundations of SEL Through Play | Understanding SEL through lived gaming experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to CASEL competencies Identifying emotions, behaviors, and social dynamics in games Recognizing how games mirror real life situations | Students can name SEL skills used during play, recognize emotions and reactions in themselves and others, and reflect on choices and outcomes. |
| The Mentor and Safe Play Environment | The educator or facilitator as mentor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating inclusive, emotionally safe spaces Establishing norms, routines, and expectations Supporting belonging and identity through play | Students experience psychological safety, positive adult relationships, and clear structure without pressure. |
| Gameplay Traits and Teachable Moments | The skills that naturally occur during games. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gameplay traits such as patience, empathy, resilience, and decision making Teachable moments embedded into sessions Sportsmanship, communication, and emotional regulation | Students practice real social skills in real time, learn to win and lose appropriately, and build confidence through repetition and success. |
| Hacking Games for SEL | Modifying games to highlight SEL skills without losing fun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Triggers and Actions framework Mapping game events to SEL behaviors Adapting commercial games to create growth moments | Students pause and reflect during emotional moments, practice skills like empathy and apology, and learn that systems can be adapted for improvement. |

Curriculum Structure Overview (CONTINUED)

| Strand | Focus | Key Elements | Student Outcomes |
|--|---|---|---|
| Game Modalities and Delivery Models | Using different types of games to reach different learners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social gaming • Competitive gaming • Casual gaming • Cooperative games • Role playing games such as Haven's Quest • Digital platforms and virtual spaces | Students find entry points that match their comfort level, explore leadership and teamwork, and engage consistently regardless of skill level. |
| STEAM and Creation Through Gaming | Moving from playing games to understanding and creating them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Game design and prototyping • Systems thinking and mechanics analysis • Artistic expression, storytelling, and digital media creation | Students combine creativity and logic, communicate ideas clearly, and understand how systems influence outcomes. |
| Digital Citizenship and Real-World Transfer | Applying SEL skills beyond the game table. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online safety and cyber behavior • Communication in digital communities • Responsible decision making and balance • Social philanthropy and community connection | Students navigate online spaces responsibly, balance gaming with other responsibilities, and see themselves as contributors to their community. |

Student Impact Evidence Statements

| Long-Term Outcomes | Long-Term Outcomes |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased student engagement • Improved peer interaction • Reduced social isolation • Increased emotional vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved social emotional competence • Stronger relationships with peers and adults • Improved decision making and self-regulation • Increased sense of belonging and school connection |

Measurable Outcome Indicators

| | Indicator | Measure | Target | Data Source |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| Student Engagement | Student participation rate during game-based sessions | Percentage of students actively participating for the full session | 85% or higher participation | Attendance and facilitator observation logs |
| Sense of Belonging | Students report feeling accepted and included | Student reflection responses indicating comfort and belonging | 80% of students report positive belonging indicators | Reflection prompts and student surveys |

Curriculum Fidelity

Program implementation follows a consistent play cycle including expectation setting, active gameplay, observation of behaviors, structured reflection, and real-world transfer.

Equity and Access Evidence Statements

The curriculum is designed to be inclusive and accessible, providing multiple entry points for students with varying social, emotional, and cognitive needs. Non elimination gameplay, cooperative structures, and flexible participation models ensure equitable access to learning.

Data Collection and Reporting Summary

Data is collected through:

- Facilitator observation logs
- Student reflection responses
- Participation tracking
- Qualitative behavior notes

Facilitator Training Evidence

Educators and mentors receive guidance on SEL alignment, trigger and action game modifications, and reflection facilitation to ensure consistent program delivery.

CASEL Core Competency Evidence Statements

| | Description | Evidence Collected Includes |
|------------------------------------|--|---|
| Self-Awareness | Students demonstrate self-awareness by identifying emotions experienced during gameplay, reflecting on personal reactions to success and failure, and recognizing individual strengths and challenges within group activities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student verbal reflections during post-game discussions • Written or oral self-assessments • Facilitator observation notes documenting emotional identification |
| Self-Management | Students practice self-management by regulating emotions, managing impulses, persisting through challenges, and setting personal goals related to gameplay and group participation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of emotional regulation during competitive play • Documentation of goal setting and progress monitoring • Reflection prompts addressing coping strategies |
| Social Awareness | Students demonstrate social awareness by recognizing the emotions and perspectives of peers, showing empathy during collaborative and competitive gameplay, and responding appropriately to social cues. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer interactions during cooperative and competitive games • Use of gratitude, apology, and compliment actions tied to in game triggers • Facilitator notes on perspective taking behaviors |
| Relationship Skills | Students develop relationship skills through effective communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, and leadership roles within gaming sessions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group collaboration during gameplay • Verbal conflict resolution and negotiation • Leadership and mentorship behaviors observed during sessions |
| Responsible Decision Making | Students demonstrate responsible decision making by evaluating the consequences of in game choices, making ethical decisions, and reflecting on how decisions impact others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student explanations of strategic choices • Reflection on short- and long-term consequences • Facilitator documentation of ethical reasoning during play |

Pennsylvania Career Ready Skills Evidence Statements

| | Description | Evidence Collected Includes |
|--|--|--|
| CRS 1: Self Awareness and Self-Management | Students consistently demonstrate the ability to recognize emotions, regulate behavior, set goals, adapt to challenges, and demonstrate accountability during structured gameplay experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting reflections • Observations of impulse control and adaptability • Student self-evaluations |
| CRS 2: Establishing and Maintaining Relationships | Students engage in effective communication, collaboration, empathy, and respect for diversity through structured social and competitive gaming experiences. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer collaboration records • Observation of respectful communication • Participation in inclusive group activities |
| CRS 3: Social Problem Solving | Students identify problems, generate solutions, resolve conflicts, and evaluate outcomes within game-based scenarios that mirror real world social challenges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem solving discussions following gameplay • Documentation of conflict resolution strategies • Reflection on decision outcomes |



1UpEDU Core Structure

Pillar 1: Foundations of SEL Through Play

Focus: Understanding SEL through lived gaming experiences.

Key Elements:

- Introduction to CASEL competencies
- Identifying emotions, behaviors, and social dynamics in games
- Recognizing how games mirror real life situations

Outcomes:

- Students can name SEL skills used during play, recognize emotions and reactions in themselves and others, and reflect on choices and outcomes.

Pillar 2: Game Modalities and Delivery Models

Focus: Using different types of games to reach different learners.

Modalities:

- Social gaming
- Competitive gaming
- Casual gaming
- Cooperative games
- Role playing games such as Haven's Quest
- Digital platforms and virtual spaces

Outcomes

- Students find entry points that match their comfort level, explore leadership and teamwork, and engage consistently regardless of skill level.

Pillar 3: Digital Citizenship and Real World Transfer

Focus: Applying SEL skills beyond the game table.

Key Elements:

- Online safety and cyber behavior
- Communication in digital communities
- Responsible decision making and balance
- Social philanthropy and community connection

Outcomes

- Students navigate online spaces responsibly, balance gaming with other responsibilities, and see themselves as contributors to their community.

Pillar 4: The Mentor and Safe Play Environment

Focus: The educator or facilitator as mentor.

Key Elements:

- Creating inclusive, emotionally safe spaces
- Establishing norms, routines, and expectations
- Supporting belonging and identity through play

Outcomes

- Students experience psychological safety, positive adult relationships, and clear structure without pressure.

Pillar 5: Gameplay Traits and Teachable Moments

Focus: The skills that naturally occur during games.

Key Elements:

- Gameplay traits such as patience, empathy, resilience, and decision making
- Teachable moments embedded into sessions
- Sportsmanship, communication, and emotional regulation

Outcomes

- Students practice real social skills in real time, learn to win and lose appropriately, and build confidence through repetition and success.

Pillar 6: Hacking Games for SEL

Focus: Modifying games to highlight SEL skills without losing fun.

Key Elements:

- Triggers and Actions framework
- Mapping game events to SEL behaviors
- Adapting commercial games to create growth moments

Outcomes

- Students pause and reflect during emotional moments, practice skills like empathy and apology, and learn that systems can be adapted for improvement.

Pillar 7: STEAM and Creation Through Gaming

Focus: Moving from playing games to understanding and creating them.

Key Elements

- Systems thinking and mechanics analysis
- Artistic expression, storytelling, and digital media creation

Outcomes

- Students combine creativity and logic, communicate ideas clearly, and understand how systems influence outcomes.

Chapter 2

Research Driven

The Case for Social Emotional Learning and Purposeful Gaming in Schools

Across K-12 education, Social Emotional Learning is no longer viewed as an add on. It is a research supported driver of academic achievement, student behavior, and school climate. Large scale studies consistently demonstrate that when SEL is implemented with fidelity, students perform better academically, engage more consistently in school, and demonstrate stronger interpersonal skills.

A meta analysis of more than 270,000 students found that participation in evidence based SEL programs resulted in an average gain of 11 percentile points in academic achievement, along with improvements in behavior, emotional regulation, and attitudes toward school (Durlak et al., 2011). Follow up studies have shown that these benefits persist over time and extend into adulthood, including improved graduation rates and workforce readiness (Taylor et al., 2017).

More recent analyses reinforce these findings. A large scale review of universal SEL programs found that students receiving SEL instruction scored 4 to 8 percentile points higher on standardized assessments in reading and math, with stronger effects observed in programs that were implemented consistently and over longer periods (Learning Policy Institute, 2023). Importantly, SEL instruction does not detract from academic time. Instead, it strengthens the conditions that make learning possible.

Behavioral outcomes are equally compelling. Research indicates that SEL programs lead to improved classroom behavior, reduced conduct problems, increased engagement, and more positive peer relationships across grade levels (CASEL, n.d.). These outcomes directly support district goals related to attendance, discipline, and school climate.

As a result of this evidence, SEL adoption has become widespread. National surveys report that over 80 percent of school principals indicate their schools now implement some form of SEL programming, reflecting a significant shift in district priorities over the past decade (Education Week, 2025).

Why the Way SEL Is Taught Matters

While the evidence supporting SEL is strong, research also emphasizes that implementation quality matters. SEL is most effective when students are given opportunities to practice skills in authentic contexts, receive feedback in the moment, and reflect on their choices.

Traditional approaches that rely primarily on lessons, worksheets, or isolated instruction often struggle to produce lasting behavior change. In contrast, experiential learning environments show stronger and more sustained outcomes.

This is where purposeful gaming aligns directly with the research.

Purposeful Gaming as a Research Aligned SEL Strategy

Research from psychology, education, and developmental science demonstrates that games naturally create the conditions required for SEL development. During gameplay, students must communicate, regulate emotions, manage frustration, collaborate, negotiate rules, and respond to success and failure. These behaviors align directly with CASEL competencies and career readiness skills.

A comprehensive review published in American Psychologist found that well designed video and tabletop games are associated with improvements in emotional regulation, prosocial behavior, resilience, and social connection, particularly in multiplayer and cooperative contexts (Granic et al., 2014). Additional studies show that role based and strategy games support perspective taking, ethical reasoning, leadership, and systems thinking when paired with guided facilitation and reflection.

Crucially, research emphasizes that games are most effective when used intentionally, not as free play. Structured gameplay combined with adult facilitation and reflection transforms games into instructional tools rather than recreational activities.

How the 1UpEDU Framework Operationalizes the Research

The 1UpEDU Framework translates SEL and purposeful gaming research into a repeatable, scalable instructional model that functions in classrooms, advisory periods, pull out groups, and extracurricular programs.

Each session is built around evidence based practices shown to support SEL outcomes:

- Clear framing of behavioral expectations and focus skills
- Structured gameplay that surfaces authentic social interactions
- Facilitator guided pauses to coach skills such as communication, emotional regulation, and problem solving in the moment
- A consistent reflection cycle that reinforces learning and transfer
- Explicit connections to classroom behavior, peer relationships, and real world context.

This approach aligns directly with research showing that active practice, immediate feedback, and reflection are key drivers of SEL effectiveness.

System Level Benefits for Districts

Districts implementing structured SEL programs aligned with research demonstrate:

- Academic achievement gains without sacrificing instructional time
- Improved student engagement and attendance
- Reduced behavioral disruptions and improved classroom climate
- Stronger support for socially isolated and neurodiverse learners
- Greater consistency in expectations across classrooms and settings

Because the 1UpEDU Framework uses non graded, growth focused assessment tools, districts can document progress through observations, student reflections, and participation data without increasing testing demands.

More Research Data

Decades of research show that evidence based Social Emotional Learning increases academic achievement by an average of 11 percentile points, improves student behavior and engagement without reducing instructional time, and produces lasting benefits into adulthood, including higher graduation rates, stronger employment outcomes, and improved mental health (Durlak et al., 2011; Learning Policy Institute, 2023; Taylor et al., 2017).

Chapter 3

Purposeful Gaming

Purposeful Gaming in the 1UpEDU Framework

The 1UpEDU Framework uses purposeful gaming to transform play into a structured learning experience. Games are not rewards or downtime. They are intentionally selected environments where students practice real social behaviors such as communication, self regulation, problem solving, and collaboration.

Rather than teaching social skills in isolation, the framework embeds them into gameplay so students can practice skills as they are needed, receive immediate coaching, and apply them again moments later. This approach mirrors how social skills are used in real life.

How Learning Happens Through Play

Games naturally create situations that require students to:

- Enter a group appropriately
- Communicate needs
- Manage emotions
- Navigate conflict
- Accept outcomes
- Support others

The 1UpEDU Framework provides educators with a structure to intentionally teach these behaviors as they occur, instead of reacting after the fact. Play creates the situation. Coaching creates the learning. Reflection creates understanding.

Why This Model Works

Captures authentic learning in real time

- Aligns directly to CASEL and PA Career Ready Skills
- Reduces anxiety associated with grades
- Supports socially isolated and neurodiverse learners
- Produces meaningful qualitative and quantitative data

Embedded Reflection as Instruction

Reflection is embedded into every session using a consistent, age adaptable four step cycle. This ensures gameplay functions as instruction rather than recreation.

- 1.What happened – Students describe observable actions and events
- 2.How did it feel – Students identify emotions experienced during play
- 3.What choices were made – Students examine decisions and strategies
- 4.How does this apply outside the game – Students connect skills to real life

This cycle reinforces learning and ensures transfer beyond the game.

In the Moment Teaching and Teachable Skills

A defining feature of the 1UpEDU Framework is the facilitator's ability to pause gameplay intentionally to teach specific social skills in the moment. These pauses are short, focused, and directly tied to what students are experiencing. Rather than general reminders, facilitators explicitly teach and model concrete behaviors, including but not limited to:

Handshakes and Introductions

Students practice greeting others as a routine part of play. In early grades this may be a simple hello and name. In later grades it becomes confident introductions, welcoming new members, and initiating respectful conversations. This builds comfort in social entry points, reduces isolation, and strengthens group belonging

Eye Contact and Volume Control

Students learn how to communicate in ways that make others feel respected and safe. Younger students practice looking toward the speaker and using an appropriate speaking volume. Older students learn to monitor tone, pacing, and body language, especially during disagreement, competition, or leadership moments. This supports communication in classrooms, teams, and workplace settings.

Volume Control and Tone

Students learn to monitor how loudly and how intensely they speak, especially during excitement, frustration, or disagreement. Facilitators pause play to model calm tone and appropriate volume.

In the Moment Teaching and Teachable Skills (Continued)

Winning and Losing Gracefully

Facilitators coach language and behavior around outcomes, helping students practice congratulating others, managing disappointment, and continuing participation respectfully.

Problem Solving and Repair

When conflict arises, facilitators guide students through naming the problem, listening to others, proposing solutions, and repairing harm before returning to play.

Managing Frustration and Setbacks

Students practice calming strategies when things do not go their way. Over time they learn resilience, persistence, and flexible thinking rather than quitting or blaming others.

Building Confidence Through Participation

Students practice joining a group, staying engaged, and contributing. This is especially important for socially isolated learners. Over time students move from participating to leading, mentoring, and facilitating.

Demonstrating Respect for Rules and Norms

Students learn that rules create structure and fairness. Over time they learn how norms are created, how to adjust systems responsibly, and how to make ethical decisions within shared environments.

Using Kind and Clear Language

Students practice speaking respectfully, giving compliments, and using apologies. Older students learn how to disagree without disrespect, negotiate rules, and resolve conflicts verbally.

Practicing Leadership and Followership

Students learn to take direction, support others, and contribute without needing to be in charge. Older students practice leadership behaviors such as including others, setting tone, managing conflict, and helping groups stay focused.

Taking Turns and Sharing Space

Students learn how to wait, share materials, and respect personal space. Over time this becomes managing group roles, collaborating in teams, and sharing leadership.

In the Moment Teaching and Teachable Skills (Continued)

Asking for Help

Students build the habit of requesting support appropriately. In early grades this may be asking how to take a turn or understand a rule. In later grades it expands to self advocacy, clarifying expectations, requesting feedback, and seeking peer support during challenges. This strengthens confidence, reduces frustration, and promotes healthy collaboration.

Reflecting on Choices

Students practice thinking back on what they did and why they did it. Younger students answer simple questions like what happened or how they felt. Older students analyze triggers, strategies, consequences, and ethical choices. This turns gameplay into a structured reflection routine and strengthens decision making in real life.

Connecting Games to Real Life

Students learn that the behaviors practiced in games apply outside the game. Early learners connect turn taking to classroom routines. Older students connect leadership, teamwork, conflict resolution, and digital citizenship to school, home, jobs, and online spaces. This transfer step ensures the curriculum builds skills that students can use beyond the program.

The Role of the Facilitator

The facilitator serves as a mentor, coach, and observer, not a referee or lecturer.

Core Facilitator Responsibilities:

Create Psychological Safety

Establish norms that support inclusion, respectful communication, and emotional safety.

Frame the Skill

Briefly introduce one or two focus behaviors at the start of each session, such as eye contact, patience, or asking for help.

Observe Authentic Behavior

Allow students to play without constant interruption so real behaviors surface naturally.

The Role of the Facilitator (Continued)

Reinforce Through Reflection

Guide students to name the skills they practiced and recognize growth.

Support Transfer

Explicitly connect game behaviors to classroom expectations, peer interactions, digital spaces, and future responsibilities.

Document Growth

Use observation checklists, reflection notes, and participation logs to track progress over time.

Overarching Instructional Cycle

Every session follows the same predictable cycle:

- Frame expectations and focus skills
- Play the game
- Observe triggers and behaviors
- Pause to teach and practice skills
- Reflect using the four step cycle
- Transfer learning to real life

This consistency supports neurodiverse learners, reduces anxiety, and ensures instructional fidelity across facilitators and settings.

Cross Band Continuum of Skill Development

Across all grade bands, students practice the same core social behaviors, including:

- Handshakes and introductions
- Eye contact and volume control
- Asking for help
- Turn taking and patience
- Emotional regulation
- Respectful communication
- Problem solving and repair

Skills are introduced simply in early grades and strengthened over time through more complex games, group dynamics, leadership roles, and real world application. This spiral ensures that students build confidence, competence, and independence.

Developmental Progression of Reflection

- Early Grades: Reflections are brief, guided, and often verbal or visual
- Upper Elementary: Students begin explaining choices and outcomes
- Middle School: Students analyze triggers, strategies, and consequences
- High School: Students evaluate ethical implications, leadership behaviors, and long term impact

Administrative and Audit Value

This model provides:

- Consistent documentation of student growth
- Clear alignment to recognized standards
- Observable evidence without standardized testing
- Longitudinal data across sessions and grade levels

Flexible Implementation Models

This curriculum can function as a standalone SEL course, a gaming club curriculum, advisory or enrichment programming, an intervention or support group, a camp or community based program, or a hybrid in person and virtual model.

What Makes This Curriculum One of a Kind

SEL is embedded rather than added on. Games are treated as instructional tools. The design prioritizes socially isolated learners, works across physical and digital spaces, and balances joy, structure, and intentionality. It scales from single sessions to year long programming.



Assessment and Data Collection

The 1UpEDU SEL Gaming Curriculum uses a non graded, growth focused assessment model designed to capture authentic social emotional learning as it occurs during play. Rather than relying on tests or point systems, assessment emphasizes observable behaviors, student reflection, and developmental progress over time.

This model recognizes that SEL skills develop through practice, feedback, and reflection. Data is collected across multiple sessions to identify patterns of growth, support individual learners, and inform instruction while avoiding punitive or high stakes grading.

Observation Checklists

Facilitators use structured checklists aligned to CASEL competencies and PA Career Ready Skills to record observable behaviors during gameplay. These may include communication, emotional regulation, cooperation, decision making, and leadership behaviors. Observations are brief, consistent, and focused on growth rather than compliance.

Student Self Reflection

Students engage in regular reflection through verbal discussion, written responses, or visual methods depending on age and context. Reflection allows students to identify emotions, recognize choices, and develop self awareness. Over time, student reflections demonstrate increased depth, vocabulary, and insight.

Peer Recognition

Students are encouraged to recognize positive behaviors in peers, such as teamwork, kindness, perseverance, or leadership. Peer recognition builds social awareness, reinforces desired behaviors, and strengthens group belonging. Recognition is descriptive rather than competitive and focuses on actions rather than outcomes.

Facilitator Notes Over Time

Facilitators maintain brief narrative notes that capture patterns, growth, and significant moments across sessions. These notes provide qualitative evidence of student progress, inform targeted support, and support reporting requirements for audits and grants.

Chapter 4

SEL Gaming Bands

Cross Band SEL Continuum Through Game Based Learning

1UpEDU ALIGNMENT KEY

| CASEL Core Competencies | PA Career Ready Skills Domains |
|---|---|
| SA – Self Awareness SM – Self Management SoA – Social Awareness RS – Relationship Skills RDM – Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1 – Self Awareness & Self Management CRS 2 – Establishing & Maintaining Relationships CRS 3 – Social Problem Solving |

K-12 Developmental Progression with Standards Alignment

This framework outlines a clear K-12 progression that supports student growth through age appropriate, scaffolded learning experiences. Skills build systematically across grade levels, increasing in complexity and preparing students for future academic and real world success. All instruction is aligned to relevant state and national standards to ensure consistency, rigor, and accountability.

K-2 Band

Kindergarten-Grade 2 Curriculum Overview

Focus: Belonging, Emotional Awareness, and Foundational Social Skills

The Kindergarten through Grade 2 implementation of this curriculum uses play based, structured gaming experiences to help young learners build comfort in group settings while developing early social and emotional skills. At this stage, the primary goal is to help students feel safe, included, and confident participating with others.

Games are selected for their simple rules, cooperative play, and non elimination structures, allowing students to focus on interaction rather than competition. Sessions are short, predictable, and routine driven, which is especially supportive for young learners and neurodiverse students.

Each session follows the same instructional rhythm:

- Framing expectations for behavior and safety
- Playing a game together with adult guidance
- Brief guided reflection using student friendly questions
- Connecting game behaviors to classroom and playground routines

In Kindergarten through Grade 2, students practice core skills like:

- Taking turns and waiting patiently
- Naming basic emotions during play
- Using kind words when winning or losing
- Following rules and routines
- Asking for help appropriately

Reflection is short and highly guided. Students may respond verbally, through gestures, or with visual supports. The focus is on helping students recognize feelings and choices, not on explaining or justifying behavior.

Games Used in the K-2 Band

Hoot Owl Hoot

Hoot Owl Hoot is a fully cooperative game where players work together toward a shared goal. There is no single winner, which reduces pressure and supports inclusion. The game reinforces turn taking, shared problem solving, and helping behaviors while allowing students to practice identifying emotions during success and setbacks.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: cooperation, empathy, patience, following rules

Catan Junior

Catan Junior introduces basic strategy and resource sharing in a simplified format designed for younger players. Students practice making choices, waiting turns, and responding appropriately to winning and losing. The structure allows facilitators to model kind language and fair play.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: decision making, self control, sportsmanship, cooperation

Happy Salmon

Happy Salmon is a fast paced, social interaction game that emphasizes face to face engagement, movement, and quick positive exchanges. It is especially effective for building comfort in social entry points, greetings, and playful connection among peers.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: social confidence, communication, inclusion, emotional expression

Jenga

Jenga encourages focus, patience, and calm under pressure. As the tower becomes unstable, students experience natural moments of excitement and anxiety, making it an ideal game for practicing emotional regulation and reflection.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: self regulation, focus, coping with stress, persistence

Go Nuts for Donuts

Go Nuts for Donuts focuses on simple decision making and impulse control. Students must think about choices, wait patiently, and manage disappointment when outcomes do not go their way. The game naturally creates teachable moments around patience and fairness.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: patience, emotional regulation, turn taking, managing disappointment

Uno

Uno is a familiar, easy to learn card game that allows for intentional SEL modifications. Simplified rules and facilitator pauses help students name emotions, practice winning and losing gracefully, and use kind language during play.

Key SEL Skills Practiced: emotional awareness, rule following, self management, respectful communication

Sample Post-Game Reflection Questions by Grade

| Grade | What Happened? | How Did It Feel? | What Choice Did You Make? | How Does This Apply Outside the Game? |
|-------|--|---|---|--|
| K | What game did we play today? | How did you feel while playing? | What did you do when it was your turn? | Where else can you use that behavior at school? |
| 1 | What happened in the game today? | How did you feel when you were playing? | What choice did you make during the game? | How can you use that choice in the classroom or at recess? |
| 2 | What was one important moment in the game? | How did that moment make you feel? | What did you choose to do and why? | When could you use that same choice outside of games? |

K-2 SEL and PA CRS Alignment

| Continuum Element | Grades K-2 | CASEL Alignment | PA Career Ready Skills |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|------------------------|
| Greetings and Introductions | Simple greetings and name sharing | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| Eye Contact and Volume Control | Practice looking toward speaker and appropriate volume | Self Management, Relationship Skills | CRS 1 and CRS 2 |
| Winning and Losing Gracefully | Use kind words with support | Self Management, Social Awareness | CRS 1 |
| Asking for Help and Support | Ask for help with rules or turns | Self Awareness, Relationship Skills | CRS 1 and CRS 2 |
| Reflecting on Choices | Identify what happened and feelings | Self Awareness, Responsible Decision Making | CRS 1 and CRS 3 |
| Connecting Games to Real Life | Connect play to classroom routines | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| Turn Taking and Shared Space | Wait turns and share materials | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| Kind and Clear Communication | Use polite language and apologies | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| Managing Frustration and Setbacks | Use simple calming strategies | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| Confidence and Participation | Join games and stay engaged | Self Awareness, Relationship Skills | CRS 1 and CRS 2 |
| Respecting Rules and Norms | Follow rules with reminders | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| Leadership and Followership | Follow directions and support peers | Relationship Skills, Responsible Decision Making | CRS 2 and CRS 3 |

KINDERGARTEN ~12 WEEK PLAN

| Week | Games Played | Weekly Guided SEL Question | CASEL | PA CRS |
|------|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Happy Salmon, Hoot Owl Hoot | How did it feel to play with others today? | Social Awareness | CRS 2 |
| 2 | Uno, Jenga | What did you do when it was not your turn? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 3 | Catan Jr., Uno | What feelings did you have during the game? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 4 | Hoot Owl Hoot | What helped you follow the rules? | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| 5 | Happy Salmon | How did you help a friend while playing? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 6 | Jenga | What did you do when the game felt hard? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 7 | Happy Salmon | How did you show kindness today? | Social Awareness | CRS 2 |
| 8 | Uno (simplified) | What made you feel proud while playing? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 9 | Jenga | What helped you stay calm? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 10 | Hoot Owl Hoot | How did you listen to others? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 11 | Uno (simplified) | What did you do when you lost or won? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 12 | Student choice review game | What did you learn about playing with others? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |

GRADE 1 ~12 WEEK PLAN

| Week | Games Played | Weekly Guided SEL Question | CASEL | PA CRS |
|------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Happy Salmon | What helped you take turns today? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 2 | Uno (simplified) | What feeling showed up during the game? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 3 | Jenga | How did you know how you were feeling? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 4 | Hoot Owl Hoot | What rule helped the game work better? | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| 5 | Catan Jr. | How did you help your group today? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 6 | Uno (simplified) | What did you do when you felt frustrated? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 7 | Happy Salmon | How did you show respect to others? | Social Awareness | CRS 2 |
| 8 | Jenga | What made you feel confident during play? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 9 | Uno (simplified) | How did you calm your body or voice? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 10 | Hoot Owl Hoot | How did listening help the game? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 11 | Catan Jr. | What words did you use when the game ended? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 12 | Student choice review game | What kind of player are you becoming? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |

GRADE 2 ~12 WEEK PLAN

| Week | Games Played | Weekly Guided SEL Question | CASEL | PA CRS |
|------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Uno | How did you manage to wait your turn? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 2 | Jenga | What feeling changed for you during the game? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 3 | Uno | What caused that feeling to change? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 4 | Catan Jr. | How did following rules help everyone? | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| 5 | Happy Salmon | How did your actions help the group? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 6 | Jenga | What strategy helped when things went wrong? | Responsible Decision Making | CRS 3 |
| 7 | Uno | How did you treat others during play? | Social Awareness | CRS 2 |
| 8 | Catan Jr. | What did you do that made you proud? | Self Awareness | CRS 1 |
| 9 | Uno | How did you control your emotions? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 10 | Happy Salmon | How did communication help today? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |
| 11 | Jenga | How did you react to winning or losing? | Self Management | CRS 1 |
| 12 | Student choice review game | What did games teach you about teamwork? | Relationship Skills | CRS 2 |

3-5 Band

Grades 3-5 Curriculum Overview

Focus: Emotional Regulation, Communication, and Cooperative Decision Making

The Grades 3-5 implementation of this curriculum uses structured, game based learning experiences to help students strengthen emotional regulation, improve communication, and practice making responsible choices within group settings. At this stage, the primary goal is to help students manage emotions during interaction, communicate effectively with peers, and understand how their choices impact others.

Games are selected for their balance of structure, strategy, and light competition, allowing students to experience emotional highs and lows in a safe, supported environment. Unlike the early grades, students are encouraged to take greater ownership of gameplay, decision making, and reflection, while facilitators guide behavior and discussion rather than directing every action.

Each session follows the same instructional rhythm:

- Framing expectations for behavior, communication, and emotional regulation
- Playing strategic or social games with guided facilitation
- Guided reflection focused on emotions, choices, and outcomes
- Connecting game behavior to classroom group work and peer interactions

In Grades 3-5, students practice core skills such as:

- Managing frustration and excitement during competition
- Communicating clearly and respectfully
- Accepting outcomes and handling setbacks
- Working cooperatively toward shared goals
- Understanding consequences of choices

6-8 Band

Grades 6–8 Curriculum Overview

Focus: Identity Development, Perspective Taking, and Ethical Decision Making

The Grades 6–8 implementation of this curriculum uses intentional, game based learning experiences to support students as they navigate identity formation, peer relationships, and increasingly complex social dynamics. At this stage, the primary goal is to help students understand themselves, recognize the perspectives of others, and make thoughtful, ethical decisions within group settings.

Games are selected for their strategic depth, role differentiation, and social complexity, allowing students to experience meaningful emotional responses, disagreement, and collaboration in a controlled environment. Both cooperative and competitive games are used to surface real decision making moments that mirror middle school social experiences.

Each session follows the same instructional rhythm:

- Framing expectations for respect, safety, and group norms
- Engaging in strategic, competitive, or role based games
- Guided reflection focused on emotions, choices, and impact on others
- Connecting game behavior to peer relationships, school settings, and online interactions

In Grades 6–8, students practice core skills such as:

- Identifying emotional triggers and reactions
- Regulating emotions during pressure or disagreement
- Taking perspective and understanding group dynamics
- Making ethical and fair decisions
- Collaborating within defined roles and responsibilities

9-12 Band

Grades 9-12 Curriculum Overview

Focus: Leadership, Systems Thinking, and Real World Application

The Grades 9–12 implementation of this curriculum uses advanced, game based learning experiences to help students refine leadership skills, navigate complex systems, and apply social emotional learning to real world and future focused contexts. At this stage, the primary goal is to support students in making intentional choices, managing responsibility, and transferring skills to academic, social, digital, and career settings.

Games are selected for their strategic complexity, ethical decision making, and leadership opportunities, including cooperative problem solving, competition under pressure, role based collaboration, and digital interaction. These experiences mirror the types of challenges students encounter in school leadership roles, team environments, online spaces, and future workplaces.

Each session follows the same instructional rhythm:

- Framing expectations around leadership, accountability, and respectful interaction
- Engaging in complex strategic, competitive, or creative games
- Guided reflection focused on decision making, impact, and responsibility
- Explicit transfer to real world contexts such as school, work, community, and digital spaces

In Grades 9–12, students practice core skills such as:

- Leading and supporting peers
- Managing pressure, competition, and stress
- Communicating effectively during conflict and collaboration
- Evaluating ethical dilemmas and long term consequences
- Demonstrating digital citizenship and responsible online behavior

Chapter 5

Research and Definitions

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), n.d.

What Does the Research Say?

Overview:

This synthesis curated by CASEL summarizes decades of peer reviewed research demonstrating that Social Emotional Learning improves academic achievement, student behavior, emotional regulation, and school climate across K-12 settings. CASEL highlights that SEL instruction leads to stronger engagement, improved relationships, and increased readiness for college, career, and civic life. The resource emphasizes that SEL is most effective when embedded into daily practice and reinforced through active learning experiences.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (n.d.). What does the research say?

Durlak et al., 2011

The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning

Overview:

This landmark meta analysis examined 213 school based SEL programs involving over 270,000 students. Findings show that students participating in SEL programs achieved an average 11 percentile point gain in academic performance, alongside improvements in social skills, classroom behavior, and attitudes toward school. The study established SEL as an evidence based intervention that supports, rather than competes with, academic instruction.

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta analysis of school based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*(1), 405–432.

Taylor et al., 2017

Long Term Effects of School Based SEL Programs

Overview:

This meta analysis examined follow up data collected months to years after SEL program participation. Results demonstrate that SEL benefits are long lasting, extending into adulthood with outcomes including higher graduation rates, improved employment outcomes, reduced mental health challenges, and stronger social functioning. This study confirms SEL as a long term investment in life readiness.

Taylor, R. D., Oberle, E., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2017). Promoting positive youth development through school based social and emotional learning interventions: A meta analysis of follow up effects. *Child Development*, 88(4), 1156–1171.

Learning Policy Institute, 2023

Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools

Overview:

This comprehensive report synthesizes findings from randomized controlled trials and large scale implementation studies. The analysis shows SEL programs produce academic gains of 4 to 8 percentile points, improved student engagement, reduced behavioral challenges, and stronger school climate outcomes. The report emphasizes that SEL is most effective when implemented consistently and integrated into instructional routines rather than isolated lessons.

Learning Policy Institute. (2023). Evidence for social and emotional learning in schools.

Education Week, 2025

Does Social Emotional Learning Really Work?

Overview:

This national reporting synthesizes survey data and practitioner perspectives, revealing that over 80 percent of U.S. schools now implement SEL programming. Educators report improvements in student engagement, behavior, and classroom climate, particularly when SEL is embedded into daily practice rather than delivered as standalone lessons.

Education Week. (2025). Does social emotional learning really work? Educators had a lot to say.

Granic, Lobel, & Engels, 2014

The Benefits of Playing Video Games

Overview:

Published in American Psychologist, this review highlights the cognitive, emotional, motivational, and social benefits of video game play. The authors found that well designed games promote emotional regulation, resilience, cooperation, problem solving, and prosocial behavior, particularly in multiplayer and cooperative contexts. The study emphasizes the importance of intentional design and adult facilitation.

Granic, I., Lobel, A., & Engels, R. C. M. E. (2014). The benefits of playing video games. *American Psychologist*, 69(1), 66–78.

Game Based Social Emotional Learning for Youth

Overview:

This research review examines how game based approaches support social emotional skill development in youth. Findings indicate that structured game environments help students practice emotion regulation, communication, cooperation, and self awareness, especially when paired with reflection and adult guidance.

Liverman, C. (2025). Game based social emotional learning for youth. PMC.

Stubbs & Sorensen, 2025

Tabletop Role Playing Games and SEL

Overview:

This study explores the use of tabletop role playing games in school settings, finding that RPGs provide powerful opportunities for perspective taking, empathy, collaboration, ethical decision making, and leadership development. The research highlights the value of role based play for experiential SEL instruction.

Stubbs, R., & Sorensen, N. (2025). Tabletop role playing games and social and emotional learning in school settings. *Social and Emotional Learning Journal*.

REL Northwest, 2025

Overview:

This brief examines the relationship between SEL and behavioral skill development, finding that SEL supports self regulation, cooperation, and problem solving, particularly for students requiring additional supports.

REL Northwest. (2025). Social emotional learning and behavioral skills development.

Hromek & Roffey, 2017

Games as a Pedagogy to Promote SEL

Overview:

This article synthesizes theory and practice demonstrating how games function as effective pedagogical tools for SEL. The authors conclude that games support emotional expression, cooperation, resilience, and relationship building, especially when educators facilitate reflection and discussion.

Hromek, R., & Roffey, S. (2017). Games as a pedagogy to promote social and emotional learning. *Simulation & Gaming*, 48(3).

American Psychological Association, 2014

Video Game Playing and Social Benefits

Overview:

This APA summary highlights research linking video game play to improved social cognition, cooperation, and prosocial behavior, particularly in multiplayer environments. The article reinforces that social benefits emerge when gameplay is structured and supported rather than isolated or excessive.

American Psychological Association. (2014). Video game playing frequency, social cognition, and social benefits. *APA Monitor on Psychology*.

Federal and Large Scale SEL Studies (Summaries)

Rossier School of Education, 2025

Overview:

This study reports that students participating in SEL programs demonstrate significant academic improvements, reinforcing prior meta analyses and highlighting SEL as a lever for academic success.

Rossier School of Education. (2025). New study provides evidence that social emotional learning programs improve academic performance.

ScienceDirect Meta Analysis Summary, 2025

Overview:

This summary of a large scale meta analysis confirms that universal SEL programs produce positive academic and behavioral outcomes across diverse student populations.

Author(s) unknown. (2025). Meta analysis of universal school based SEL effects.

Key Vocabulary for Understanding the 1UpEDU Curriculum

Action

A guided response to a trigger that supports skill practice, such as calming strategies, communication, or repair.

Asking for Help

Requesting assistance appropriately and effectively when support or clarification is needed.

Belonging

The feeling of being accepted, included, and valued within a group.

CASEL Five Core Competencies

A widely used framework for Social Emotional Learning that includes Self Awareness, Self Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making.

Cooperative Game

A game where players work together toward a shared goal.

Conflict Resolution

Addressing disagreements through communication and problem solving rather than escalation.

Cross Band Continuum

The alignment of skills practiced across grade bands, with repetition and increasing depth over time.

Developmental Progression

The intentional increase in complexity of skills and expectations as students move through grade levels.

Emotional Regulation

The ability to manage emotions, especially during challenge, excitement, or frustration.

Experiential Learning

Learning that occurs through direct experience, followed by reflection and application.

Eye Contact

Using visual attention to show engagement and respect during interaction.

Facilitator

The educator or mentor guiding gameplay, reflection, and social emotional skill development.

Framing

A brief introduction at the start of a session that sets expectations, norms, and the focus skill.

Game Based Learning (GBL)

An instructional approach that uses games to support learning outcomes through interaction, decision making, and reflection.

Growth Focused Assessment

An assessment approach that emphasizes progress over time rather than grades or scores.

Guided Reflection

Facilitator led questioning that helps students process emotions, decisions, and outcomes.

Implementation Fidelity

Delivering the curriculum as designed to ensure consistent outcomes.

In the Moment Teaching

Short, intentional pauses during gameplay to teach or reinforce social skills when they naturally arise.

Instructional Cycle / Play Cycle

The consistent session structure used in 1UpEDU that includes framing expectations, gameplay, observation, reflection, and real world transfer.

Non Elimination Play

Game structures where all players remain engaged until the end, supporting inclusion and persistence.

Observation Checklist

A tool used by facilitators to document observed social and emotional behaviors during sessions.

PA Career Ready Skills (CR1–CR3)

Pennsylvania's framework for career readiness, focusing on Self Awareness and Management (CR1), Establishing and Maintaining Relationships (CR2), and Social Problem Solving (CR3).

Peer Recognition

Positive acknowledgment of social behaviors demonstrated by peers during sessions.

Perspective Taking

Understanding how others may feel or think in a given situation.

Psychological Safety

An environment where students feel safe to participate, make mistakes, and express emotions.

Purposeful Gaming

The intentional use of games as instructional environments to practice social, emotional, and life skills rather than as rewards or free time.

Reflection Cycle

The four step process used after gameplay: what happened, how it felt, what choices were made, and how the learning applies outside the game.

Repair

Actions taken to restore relationships after a mistake or conflict.

Responsible Decision Making

The ability to make choices based on ethics, consequences, and impact on others.

Role Based Play

Gameplay in which players take on specific roles with responsibilities, often used to teach leadership and collaboration.

RPG (Role Playing Game)

A game format where players collaboratively create narratives and make decisions as characters within a structured system.

Scalability

The ability of the curriculum to function effectively across classrooms, schools, and programs.

SEL (Social Emotional Learning)

The process through which students develop skills to understand and manage emotions, build relationships, and make responsible decisions.

SEL Hacks

Intentional modifications to games that highlight or reinforce specific social emotional skills without reducing engagement or fun.

Sportsmanship

Demonstrating respect and appropriate behavior when winning or losing.

Student Self Reflection

A student's verbal or written response analyzing their own behavior, emotions, or choices.

Systems Thinking

Understanding how different parts of a system interact and influence outcomes.

Teachable Moment

An authentic situation during gameplay that provides an opportunity to practice or reinforce a social or emotional skill.

Transfer

The process of applying skills learned during gameplay to real world situations such as classrooms, relationships, or digital spaces.

Trigger

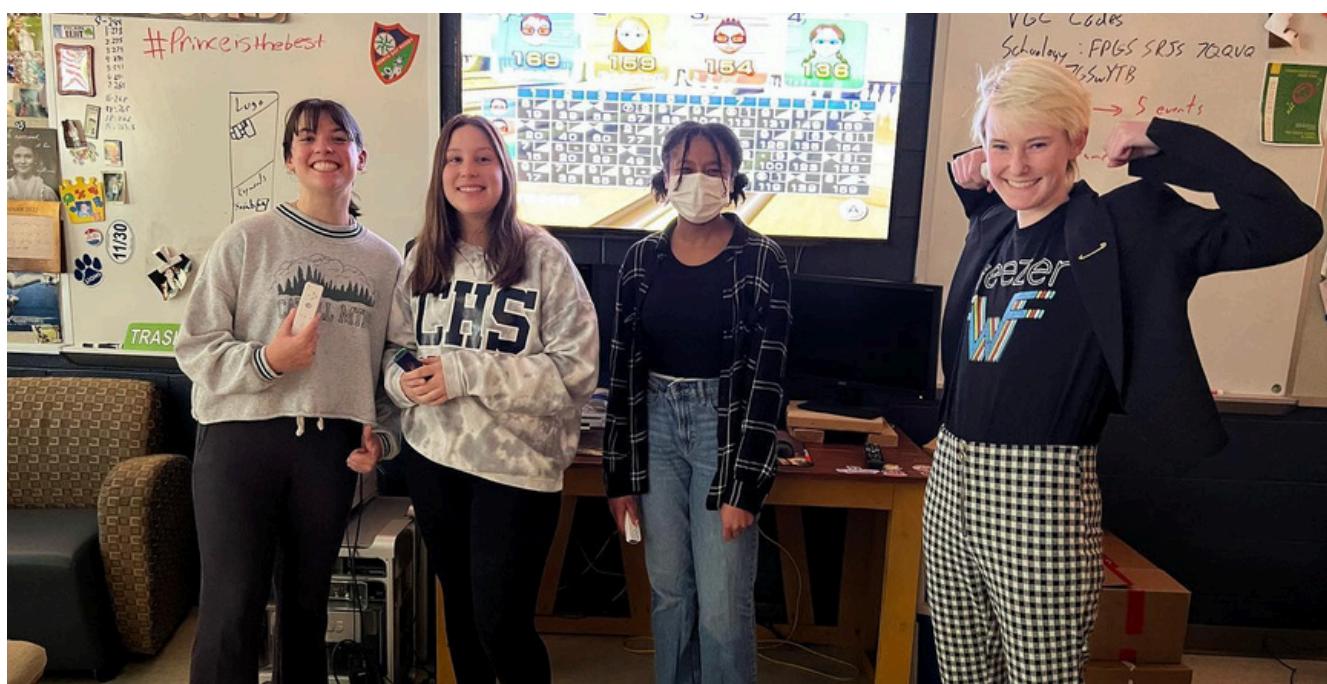
An in game event or interaction that causes an emotional or behavioral response.

Turn Taking

Waiting appropriately and allowing others equal participation.

Volume Control

Adjusting voice level to match the setting and situation.



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For information about purchasing 1UpEDU Student Development Systems or have questions, don't hesitate to reach out and say hello! We're excited to support you in transforming your students' lives, ensuring no one eats lunch alone.

Contact information can be found below and we look forward to the conversation. Talk to you soon.

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