



SME Guide Concept

Spotlight on: Ashley Tucker

Spotlight On...

No two classrooms are alike, and Soar with Wings can be integrated into all classroom environments. When educators use the Soar with Wings resources, children are introduced to social and emotional learning in a way that creates a community in which each child is valued *and* given the tools to become the best version of themselves. This can be accomplished no matter where or how your class is held.

In this professional learning video, you will be introduced to Ashley Tucker, who is a special educator and school leader in Brooklyn, New York. Ashley believes that diversity, equity, inclusion, and social and emotional learning are directly linked and she explains how to make these connections in your classroom on a daily basis.

A Closer Look...

Ashley introduces four suggestions that Wings Leaders—and educators across the country—can use to approach diversity, equity, and inclusion as they integrate social and emotional learning into their classrooms. Below are overviews of each technique as well as quick tips to help you begin incorporating her suggestions into your own learning communities.

1. Provide culturally affirming content in all spaces

What is it? Culturally affirming content is content that celebrates and showcases all backgrounds. All the resources of content that students are exposed to (such as books, posters, images, and guest speakers) should strive to be representative of the diversity of your classroom.

Why does it matter? When there is an emphasis on everyone being different—and that these differences are okay—students learn that differences are special and worthy of celebration. Students can feel both unique and included as a result of their differences, and the positive development of students' sense of self is supported.

Tips for classroom incorporation:

- Build relationships with your students' families and community members. Ask questions to learn more about their background, and encourage them to help you build your classroom content.
- Encourage storytelling—both among your students and from guest speakers you invite into your classroom.
- Use [restorative circles](#) to help students of all backgrounds build relationships with each other and support one another as they face challenges.



2. Make space for open dialogue and expression

What is it? When you make space for open dialogue and expression, you make an effort to address current events and other topics that are relevant to students' lives. Even if a subject or question is uncomfortable, you take the time to explore it together and you encourage students to share their thoughts and questions.

Why does it matter? Children constantly observe and internalize what they are exposed to. When we bring up sensitive topics thoughtfully and intentionally, we help students make sense of the world around them.

Tips for Classroom Incorporation:

- Establish rules and protocols together to guide your classroom community in respectful discussion.
- Consistently set aside time for students to reflect on and discuss topics that are relevant to their own lives.
- Incorporate different forms of discussion and expression—such as partner shares, one-on-one chats, whole group discussions, dialogue circles, journal writing, and more—so all students have an opportunity to express themselves in a way that is comfortable to them.

3. Build strong developmental relationships with students.

What is it? A developmental relationship with students is one where you take the time to get to know each student as a person and not just a student in your classroom, you strive to understand what makes them tick and what their needs are, and you try to make them feel valued and you respect them.

Why does it matter? When students feel affirmed, seen, and heard, your relationship with them can help them discover who they are and how to contribute to the world around them.

Tips for Classroom Incorporation:

- Use Morning Meeting or another sharing time to show students who *you* are. Share what you care about and learn the same about them.
- Throughout the day, take advantage of mini-opportunities to spend one-on-one time with your students, no matter how brief.
- Once you know more about your students' interests, preferences, and experiences, try to build connections to what they are learning and how it can contribute to their success outside of school.

4. Connect passion and purpose to learning.

What is it? When we connect passion and purpose to learning, we create nurturing environments where students are able to explore their own identities as well as the world's problems and needs.

Why does it matter? When students are able to understand themselves and their talents, they can begin to connect their strengths to problems or needs that affect others. This motivates them to not only continue learning, but to also consider their role in addressing the issue.



Tips for Using

- Start simple. Ask students to consider: Who am I? What am I good at? What do I enjoy doing? What do I care about?
- Introduce the idea of a growth mindset and guide students in activities in which they imagine the life and world they hope to create, followed by the actions and learnings that could get them there.
- Provide space for students to dream about how they can be agents of change and what changes they would make in the world.

In My Own Classroom

Reflect on the questions below as you consider the role that diversity, equity, and inclusion play in your classroom and how you can continue to foster them in the future:

- Perform an audit of your classroom materials. Are there different resources that could be used to teach the same standard or illustrate the same idea that are more representative of your students?
- How can you work with your team or school administration to better understand the communities where your student population comes from?
- How can you learn more about your students' passions and interests?
- When and how can you make space for more dialogue, expression, and relationship building in your classroom?

Additional Resources

Looking for even more ways to help you incorporate, support, and reinforce these concepts in your classroom? Check out the following resources for ideas that can be used in school and at home!

- Soar with Wings [Digital Lesson Bundles](#), especially *Who am I? Who are You?*, *Celebrating Community*, and *Our Rights, Wants, and Needs*.
- [Virtual Field Trip](#): Bringing SEL to Life: Skills for the Classroom and Beyond
- [Meet the SEL Experts Video](#): What is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?
- [Professional Learning Video](#): Social and Emotional Skills for School and Life, especially Segment 2: Self Awareness and Segment 6: Relationship Skills
- Soar with Wings [Family Activities](#), especially *Who Are We?* and *Family Contributions*