<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotion Management</th>
<th>Abilities to be aware of and constructively handle both positive and challenging emotions.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key youth experiences</td>
<td>Youth experience a range of positive and negative emotions in a safe context. Youth have opportunities to practice and develop healthy and functional emotion skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff practices</td>
<td>Staff create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth's processing of emotion. Staff model healthy emotion strategies within the context of caring, mutually-respectful relationships with youth. Staff provide coaching to youth about handling and learning from their ongoing emotional experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Empathy</th>
<th>Relating to others with acceptance, understanding, and sensitivity to their diverse perspectives and experiences.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key youth experiences</td>
<td>Youth explore social structure and power in relation to themselves and others. Youth share their stories and listen to the stories of others. Youth practice relating to others with acceptance and understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff practices</td>
<td>Staff provide programs with appropriate structure for sharing experience and promoting equity. Staff model empathy skills with youth.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Dispositions and abilities to reliably meet commitments and fulfill obligations of challenging roles.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key youth experiences</td>
<td>Youth take on roles and obligations within program activities. Youth encounter difficult demands. Youth draw on resources to fulfill challenging roles and internalize accomplishment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff practices</td>
<td>Staff provide structured but open-ended roles for youth. Staff model and fulfill their own roles. Staff promote high expectations, respect youth's ownership of their roles, and provide help only as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Capacities to take action, sustain motivation, and persevere through challenge toward an identified goal.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key youth experiences</td>
<td>Youth set ambitious and realistic goals. Youth develop and sustain motivation by doing work that matters to them. Youth have experiences persevering through the ups and downs of difficult work.</td>
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<td>Staff provide ongoing assistance to help youth develop motivation within the work. Staff encourage youth to persist through challenging work, making sure that the effort behind youth's achievement is recognized.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Abilities to plan, strategize, and implement complex tasks.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Key youth experiences</td>
<td>Youth engage in projects that involve organizing actions over time. Youth learn through cycles of strategic planning, execution, responding to emergent problems, trial and error, and reflection on outcomes. Youth reflect on how outcomes of their work provide information that helps build and verify youth skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff practices</td>
<td>Staff provide sufficient structure to youth-driven projects. Staff create opportunities for youth to observe models of successful work. Staff provide assistance, as needed, to help youth learn and solve problems on their own. Staff offer youth opportunities for reflection on project outcomes.</td>
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Download the SEL Field Guide PREPARING YOUTH TO THRIVE: PROMISING PRACTICES FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING at SELpractices.org
2.1 SEL Curriculum Features

The SEL curriculum features are those practices not specific to a single domain but are foundational to the SEL work. These features are common across the Challenge offerings and organize the implementation of the SEL practices.

The SEL curriculum features include the Content Sequence (Project and SEL), Safe Space, Responsive Practices, and Supports for Staff. We define the term “curriculum” to include both (1) the sequence of content and experiences fit to the developmental and learning needs of youth, and (2) as the supports necessary for the instructional staff to implement the sequence. Each feature is described below with supporting vignettes from the SEL offerings.

### Table 3. SEL Curriculum Features

| PROJECT CONTENT SEQUENCE | PC | • Staff shape the offering work with youth input, often requiring youth ownership.  
| | | • Staff shape the offering work with complex goals and/or a complex sequence of operations.  
| | | • Staff shape the offering work with repetitive skill practice in diverse contexts.  
| SEL CONTENT SEQUENCE | SC | • The offerings follow a progression through the SEL domains.  
| | | • Offerings are structured for youth to engage their community.  
| | | • Youth master social and emotional skills and experience increasing agency.  
| SAFE SPACE | O | • Staff cultivate ground rules for group processes (e.g. listening, turn-taking, decision-making) and sharing of emotions.  
| | | • Staff cultivate a culture around the principles that all are different, equal, and important in which people actively care for, appreciate, and include each other.  
| | | • Staff cultivate a culture where learning from mistakes and failures is highly valued.  
| | | • Staff organize consistent routines, activities, roles, or procedures to provide a structured and predictable experience.  
| RESPONSIVE PRACTICES | ⬅️ | • Staff observe and interact in order to know youth deeply.  
| | | • Staff provide structure for check-ins to actively listen to and receive feedback from individual youth.  
| | | • Staff coach, model, scaffold, and facilitate in real time as challenges occur.  
| SUPPORTS FOR STAFF | 🛥️ | • The organization recruits youth who will benefit from the offering.  
| | | • There is more than one staff member in every program session with the ability to implement responsive practices.  
| | | • Staff work together before each program session to plan and collaborate on the session activities and regularly debrief following each session to discuss youth progress, staff response, and adjustments for future sessions.  
| | | • Staff are supported to grow professionally and rejuvenate energy for the work.  
| | | • Staff are supported by their organization to reflect on and improve their practices through a continuous improvement process.  

Description of (1) a sequence of content and planned experiences fit to the developmental and learning needs of the learner and (2) the supports necessary for the instructional staff to plan and implement that sequence. Curriculum features highlighted in the guide include content sequence, offering session structure, responsive practices, and staff supports.

Preparation Youth to Thrive: Promising Practices for Social & Emotional Learning
Table 4. Emotion Management Standards and Practice Indicators

### KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES

#### RANGE OF EMOTIONS. Youth experience a range of positive and challenging emotions in a safe context.

- (EM1) Youth engage in program work and activities in which emotions occur, are expressed, and are recognized as an important and often valuable component of human experience.

- (EM2) Emotions are experienced within a shared program culture (e.g., rules, norms) structured to make emotional expression and reflection safe and supported.

#### EMOTION AWARENESS AND SKILL. Youth practice and develop healthy and functional emotion skills.

Youth practice (EM3) being aware of, identifying, and naming emotions, (EM4) reasoning about causes and effects of emotion, (EM5) using strategies for healthy coping with strong emotions and for harnessing emotions to advance the program work.

### STAFF PRACTICES

#### STRUCTURE. Staff create and adjust the structure of daily activities to accommodate youth’s processing of emotion.

- (EM6) Staff create time, space, or rituals within program activities for youth to process and learn from emotion.

- (EM7) Staff adapt program activities to respond to youth’s emotional readiness and needs.

#### MODELING. Staff model healthy strategies for dealing with emotion within the context of caring, mutually-respectful relationships with youth.

- (EM8) Staff model healthy strategies for dealing with emotions such as:
  a) active listening, remaining calm during intense episodes, and using problem-solving methods;
  b) communicating effectively and honestly about emotions (including their own);
  c) respectfully acknowledging and validating emotions in others.

#### COACHING. Staff provide coaching to youth about handling and learning from their ongoing emotional experiences.

- (EM9) Staff provide coaching that is respectful of youth’s emotional autonomy, including:
  a) using deep understanding of youth and their emotional styles to monitor, appraise, and respond in the moment to youth’s ongoing emotions;
  b) fostering emotional awareness and reflection; helping youth frame the situation and emotion;
  c) encouraging problem solving in response to challenging emotions and the situations creating them; suggesting strategies for dealing with them.
EMOTION MANAGEMENT

At the Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory (PWBF), youth had many experiences with the ups and downs in the work of collective construction requiring complex problem solving. A young participant, Randy, recounted:

A lot of times it's really frustrating, like when you have to figure out how to do something because you aren't given a direct answer on how to do it. It's frustrating because I personally am used to just being told, “This is the way it is,” and I don't really have to think about it that much. But here it's not like that. You have to learn how to deal with the frustration of not knowing the answer and having to figure out the answer.

Jennifer Freed, Co-Executive Director at AHA!, described how her organization focuses on developing emotional awareness and understanding:

We're talking about—and this is huge—how do you know what you're feeling? So really helping girls start to identify cues that they have in their bodies around anger and fear. We do the work around the healthy expression of anger versus the destructive expression of anger. We work on fear and how to self soothe when you get in an anxious state. We work on laughing and humor.

Sometimes the causes of emotions may be obvious, but other times youth may need to first examine the effects emotions are having on their progress before they are able to clearly identify the cause. Elizabeth “Poppy” Potter, Director of Operations at VOBS, described the realization youth may come to:

They realize their limits on the rock climb. They realize “Wow, I’m way more scared than I thought I was, and I feel like I'm in a dangerous situation and I need to come back down from this climb.” That's an okay thing to learn, that it's not just about getting to the top. It's that self-management that connects to the social and emotional skills, experiencing that and feeling that so they know where those lines are for themselves. Everybody has different fears and even if someone maybe not able to get through that correct move, there's still a ton of learning that can come from it. It might be disappointing because they hit a limit, or they wish they had tried harder. That is a great teachable moment.

Staff are attuned to youth’s emotional states so that they can adjust the day’s activities according to the needs of the youth. La’Ketta Caldwell at BGCGM said:

Maybe what we're doing today we need to shift because they're already not having a good day. We need to maybe play and try to figure out how we can get them to process through that. We know we have to hit outcomes and stay on schedule, but our kids are the number one priority in outcome. We can push our agenda, but our agenda is not as important as their agenda and what's going on with them, the whole child.

At YW Boston, much of the content is focused on raising awareness of disparities among social groups, and Beth Chandler shared that an important part of the work is “to help the youth think about steps they can take to not just feel frustrated or helpless, but there are some systemic issues that exist that you too can help address now that you are aware of them.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INEQUALITY AND IDENTITY.</strong> Youth explore social structure and power in relation to themselves and others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(E1) Youth explore effects of stereotypes, discrimination, and social structures (e.g., based on race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>(E2) Youth own and articulate their identities, including in relation to these social structures.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES.</strong> Youth share their stories and listen to the stories of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(E3) Youth develop and share personal stories, and (E4) provide attentive, empathic listening to the experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives of others.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACCEPTANCE.</strong> Youth practice relating to others with acceptance and understanding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(E5) Youth practice identifying, understanding, and managing judgments and (E6) experience empathy and demonstrate caring when others reveal or share emotional experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STAFF PRACTICES</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRUCTURE.</strong> Staff provide programs with appropriate structure for sharing experience and promoting equity.</td>
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| Staff cultivate a safe and caring space, including:  
(E7) Employing appropriate structure for sharing different cultural backgrounds, personal beliefs, and stories (particularly those that are emotionally charged) without judgment.  
(E8) Actively promoting inclusion and equity and demonstrating support for the principles that all are different, equal, and important.  
(E9) Cultivating a program culture in which people actively care for each other.  
(E10) Providing programs with ritual structures for multiple sessions that allow youth to first check in, then open up, and end with reflection. |   |
| **MODELING.** Staff model empathy skills with youth. |   |
| (E11) Staff model empathy skills, including:  
a) intentionally recognizing the influence of their own identities and how these may affect interpersonal interactions;  
b) active listening;  
c) serving as an ally for youth who are isolated by differences in culture, family background, privilege, or power;  
d) modeling boundary-setting, including sharing or withholding personal experiences as appropriate and as needed. |   |
EMPATHY

Teaching empathy is also supported by a framework that does not blame others for the situations or problems they encounter. Julie Thayer, InIt Program Manager at YW Boston, said:

We want people to understand that social injustice isn't primarily about individuals treating other individuals unfairly, but it's about systemic and institutionalized factors that perpetuate privilege in some groups and injustice in others.

In TPP's production, the youth set out to communicate to the audience that they're not alone in their experience either. One youth explained how moving it is to affect someone else's feeling of connection:

Sometimes you think there's no other people going through the things you're going through. When we make a show we just try to send the message that we're going through everything, and that a lot of people need your help to solve the problem. We didn't know the audience was watching us going through the same thing they're going through and every day they would learn something. Like at the last show my teachers were crying. I never saw them cry [before] and I think that's amazing.

As youth are able to articulate who they are, they gain a stronger sense of self from which to empathize with others. Natalie Cooper, Senior Director of Social Emotional Learning at BGCGM, sees this as helping youth. She said:

They find security in who they are as individuals, and also their power as individuals. It allows us to delve deeper into how that power impacts them and others around them. It allows them to be secure in who they are and what their feelings are, to be able to relate empathically to something that somebody else is dealing with.

Paul Griffin at TPP said:

So when we go into that room on the first day, and we're observing them and listening to them, we're just trying to understand where they're at, as individual youths as well as the group as a whole. We're literally simply just trying to understand who they are. We try not to make assumptions about them or who they are. We try to listen and really understand.

Andrea Gomez, Init Program Coordinator from YW Boston, said:

We frame it in a way that the choices they have are going to impact positively, so that they're not just like, “Oh, my god, racism sucks, this is horrible, let me shutdown.” So how do I still frame this in a way where you're facing the realities, but you have some kind of optimism that you can be an agent of change?

In the end, a safe place and a highly effective program is about more than the right structure or the right content. Nothing can replace the importance of genuine caring.

La'Ketta Caldwell at BGCGM: A lot of these young kids, they've never been told that somebody loves them. From the beginning, we say that all time. It's like we love you and they're, in the beginning, it's like oh my goodness. That's just stupid. Their faces frown up. What in the world, love, whatever. But we say it every session. So many of these kids have never said I love you without wanting something, and that's amazing to me.
### Table 6. Teamwork Standards and Practice Indicators

#### KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES

**TRUST AND COHESION.** Youth develop group cohesion and trust.

Youth participate in work teams that (T1) develop cohesion and trusting relationships and (T2) a sense of group identity and purpose.

**COLLABORATION.** Youth participate in successful collaboration.

(T3) Youth work together toward shared goals.
(T4) Youth practice effective communications skills (e.g., turn-taking, active listening, respectful disagreement).
(T5) Each group member’s contribution is valued and affirmed.

**TEAM CHALLENGE.** Youth manage challenges to creating and maintaining effective working relationships.

(T6) Youth practice managing the challenges of group work, such as miscommunication, obstructive behavior, and conflict over goals and methods.

#### STAFF PRACTICES

**STRUCTURE.** Staff provide programs with norms and structure.

(T7) Staff help youth cultivate norms and rituals for effective group work.

**MODELING.** Staff model teamwork skills with youth.

(T8) Staff model sensitive and high-level interpersonal functioning in staff-youth and staff-staff interactions.

**FACILITATING.** Staff facilitate or intervene as needed to foster or sustain youth-led group dynamics and successful collaboration.

(T9) Staff facilitate or intervene as needed to foster or sustain youth-led group dynamics. This includes:

a) cultivating mutual accountability (e.g., by communicating the importance of all youth’s successful contributions to the group’s work) (See also Responsibility);

b) intervening only as needed, allowing youth to lead group processes;

c) helping to manage individuals’ personalities when warranted (e.g., through one-on-one conversations before, during, or after a group activity);

d) diffusing unconstructive conflict, regrouping, reorganizing, getting group back on track and functioning well.
TEAMWORK

Paul Griffin, Founder and President of The Possibility Project (TPP), described how team-building activities provide opportunities for youth to practice teamwork skills and debrief and discuss their experiences in a safe atmosphere:

When it comes to teamwork it's about doing exercises that allow youth to work together as a team and then process out their experience as a team, so that they're understanding the techniques like the craft of being a good team member and how teams work, but also beginning to believe in that as an idea.

Elizabeth “Poppy” Potter, Director of Operations at VOBS, explained:

To me [purpose] is greater than goals. Purpose is more mission-driven. It helps create the group culture and gives them an identity. I think of it as the values aspect of what brings the group together for their collaboration. In our work, the group develops a purpose together as they progress through expedition. It may take the shape of a mission statement or a group contract.

Beth Chandler, Vice President of Programs, explained:

They aren't necessarily friends before they get here, so there are challenges in learning to work with people who may have different work styles. You have to learn to listen actively because you need to hear where everybody is coming from so you can try to all move in a direction that you all agree on. You have to figure out how to manage time.

Teena-Marie Johnson, Education Organizer at YOB, said:

We do a lot of appreciation in our work. As the year progresses we'll notice differences in what people appreciate. In the beginning of the year they were like, "I appreciate Faja for always hanging out with me and being there for me." And then at the end of the year, the kids are like, "I appreciate Faja for always pushing me to do the work and always believing in me." It gets deeper and a lot more personal.

Natalie Cooper at BGCGM, said:

The process for getting kids to agree on anything is very tedious. There's a lot of arguing. When the kids are forced to bring together 22 ideas and formulate one, there's a battle. You definitely can see the strong personalities taking surface, but what's even more powerful is when one of those strong voices can see that there's a sister or brother in the room who has a thought like them, they want to say something, but they're scared to say something, and instead of using their voice to share their ideas, they share the idea of the person who isn't yet comfortable to speak. That's powerful.

Jennifer Freed at AHA!:

The first few weeks of Girls’ Group is about setting the culture and the norms. We talk to the girls right from the onset about what kind of culture they want to create, and we make a list of the qualities the group needs to be the best it can be. We write down what things are going to be helpful in order to have a safe and thriving group culture. They decide, but we also get to weigh in.
### Table 7. Responsibility Standards and Practice Indicators

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ROLES.</strong> Youth take on roles and obligations within program activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R1) Youth choose or accept roles and their obligations; in some cases they initiate the roles.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEMANDS.</strong> Youth encounter difficult demands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R2) As youth get into the roles, they encounter demands, requirements, and obligations; they understand that their actions in response to these demands will impact self, peers, or others.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ACCOMPLISHMENT.</strong> Youth draw on resources to fulfill challenging roles and internalize accomplishment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R3) Youth draw on resources to successfully fulfill roles and obligations. Resources include drawing on inner strength, commitment, or newfound resolve; a sense of obligation to their peers and the program goals; and/or leaders’ support and encouragement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R4) Youth succeed in their roles and internalize the experience of having fulfilled valued roles.</td>
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<th>STAFF PRACTICES</th>
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<td><strong>STRUCTURE.</strong> Staff provide structured but open-ended roles for youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R5) The program design and the staff help create a variety of roles for youth that: a) have clear expectations and requirements; and b) have sufficient flexibility to allow youth initiative and ownership and accommodate youth’s growing skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R6) Staff help fit individual youth to roles appropriate to their interests and capacities.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MODELING.</strong> Staff model and fulfill their own roles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R7) Staff model and fulfill their own roles in the program, defining and discussing them with youth.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>COACHING.</strong> Staff promote high expectations, respect youth’s ownership of their roles, and provide help only as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R8) Staff articulate, encourage, and enforce high accountability for youth living up to roles and obligations.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(R9) Staff vigorously support youth’s ownership, empowerment, and latitude for decision-making within their roles, providing assistance only as necessary.</td>
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INITIATIVE

Goal setting takes different forms. Sometimes goals are personal goals. As Victoria Guidi, Program Director, Boat Build and Sail at Philadelphia Wooden Boat Factory (PWBF), explained:

No one knows you better than yourself, and we help them to be reflective about who they are and where their value system lies and seeing that their daily practices are aligning with that. We sit down with them and set up goals with them.

At AHA!, staff work with youth to identify personal goals for self-change. Jennifer Freed, Co-Executive Director, described the process:

Some of the questions we ask in different ways throughout the semester are, “What do you need help with? What are the biggest things you’re having to overcome from your past? Where in your life right now do you feel like you’re off course and need support to get back on track?” We’ll ask a question like, “If there was one thing in your life you could really transform, what would it be?”

Elizabeth “Poppy” Potter described:

We hope to build the community, the culture of that group, so they have the support they need and want from each other. It’s a positive support group in helping each other achieve those goals and reminding themselves and each other when they’re falling away from their goals.

For staff at PWBF, learning through failure is an important credo of the program. Building a boat presents a lot of opportunities for youth to take initiative and learn from the mistakes they make. PWBF’s Brett Hart said:

Students have tons of experience with failure, but what we want them to do is to fail well. We want them to have the chance to use failure as an opportunity. Not like, “Geez, that sucks. I failed. I can't wait till I never have to do that again.” That's not what we're getting at here because they're here to do it in the first place and, frankly, it goes on the boat. The boat looks wonderful even though there are scratches in the varnish. The boat looks amazing. If she's ever going to build another boat again, she knows that she can sand a little longer. So she gets to succeed and fail at the same time. It's a really beautiful thing.

At AHA!, where the participants are focused on learning more about themselves and their relationships, it is important for staff to reflect back to youth the progress they’ve witnessed. Jennifer Freed shared:

Part of the mirroring we do throughout is letting them know the positive behaviors that we see. We often check in with the girls about what they are noticing about how each of them is becoming more powerful and more who they want to be. They reflect to each other. We reflect to them. That's a big part of our culture every week.

Staff make salient the achievements that come from youth’s sustained effort through official celebrations. Elizabeth “Poppy” Potter described an annual event at VOBS:

The students build a collaborative meal as a celebration dinner with their families. It's important in acknowledging their growth and having them acknowledge their growth and what it means to them. They start to see, “If I’m feeling like I’m struggling or challenged in school, a relationship, a job, or whatever it may be, I know I have the skills I've used in this setting and I can use them here, too.” The rite of passage promotes transference.
### Table 8. Initiative Standards and Practice Indicators

#### KEY YOUTH EXPERIENCES

**SET GOALS.** Youth set ambitious but realistic goals.

(11) Youth have experiences setting challenging but achievable short- and long-term goals.

**MOTIVATION.** Youth develop and sustain motivation by doing work that matters to them.

(12) Youth develop motivation as they:
   a) form connections with collaborators;
   b) build skills and confidence; and
   c) see the value in the work for their futures (adult roles and career), their communities, and the world.

**PERSEVERANCE.** Youth have experiences persevering through the ups and downs of difficult work.

(13) Youth have repeated experiences of persevering through strenuous tasks and challenging work.
(14) Youth experience the satisfaction of accomplishment and social acknowledgment of their efforts and achievements.

#### STAFF PRACTICES

**SCAFFOLDING.** Staff provide ongoing assistance to help youth develop motivation within the work.

(15) Staff help youth develop motivation by having youth select or shape the program goals and project(s) according to what matters to them.
(16) Staff support youth’s discovery of personal motivation in the program work by kindling youth’s experience of belonging, competence, and connection of the program work to personal goals or societal purpose.

**COACHING.** Staff encourage youth to persist through challenging work, making sure that the effort behind youth’s achievements is recognized.

(17) Staff give youth opportunities to persevere through challenges, setbacks, tiredness/tedium/boredom and also provide encouragement as needed to keep youth’s attention focused and their effort engaged in keeping the program work moving forward.
(18) Staff help youth see the progress and successes that come from their effort and perseverance.
RESPONSIBILITY

DeVonne Bernard, director, Teen Outreach Program at Wyman, described how having defined roles that youth choose themselves resulted in youth accepting the responsibilities of their roles without complaint:

We didn't start out with roles or even identify them, but they felt it would go more smoothly if everybody had a place and identified roles. That came directly from the group.

Youth from PWBF described how commitment to the rest of the team provided the impetus to keep going when the burden of responsibility was heavy:

PWBF: I have a responsibility not only to myself but to everyone else because I agreed to do this as my part of the team and finish it. The responsibility of it is what really got to me. The independence they gave me was like, “This is what you have to do. If you need help, we're going to help you, but this is your thing. Do it.” The freedom of it and the responsibility that came with it was really life changing.

SEL Challenge programs intentionally create a variety of roles for youth. This variety gives them multiple opportunities to grow in responsibility and learn different skills. Paul Griffin at TPP expressed it this way:

Sometimes they're being an audience. Sometimes they're being witnesses. Sometimes they are being leaders where they stand up and lead something. Sometimes they are being organizers. Their roles shift a lot depending on what we're doing. But I do think that the multiplicity of those roles makes it interesting for them, more exciting. I think it's a big part of the learning, too, because every time they're doing it, they're looking in from a different lens.

At YOB, staff pay close attention to the ambitions youth have towards particular roles and where their motivation may be coming from to take on a role. Teena-Mari Johnson explained:

I usually listen for “why” when they give their speech. I think it's just something that they may be interested in. Bill might have a gift at facilitating, so he wants to be president. Pedro might have a gift for taking really great notes, so he would like to be secretary. And I think a lot of that is why they're interested because of their own personal gifts and what they like to do.

Laura Greenlee Karp at VOBS explained how modeling works on their expeditions:

The roles are established by the instructors, and then the instructors will walk through the roles with the students, but the instructors are always actively modeling what those roles look like.

At TPP, this is a form of deprogramming staff do with the youth, many of whom are used to being told what to do by others. Paul Griffin said:

A lot of them, if there’s a problem, they say, “What are we going to do?” And of course we say, “Well, what do you think we should do?” That's a constant refrain for us. We're trying to empower them to do those things for themselves. It takes a little while for that relationship to shift. TPP staff are trained to listen first, ask questions second, and offer options third. They understand that youth must lead the way, and our role is to facilitate that leadership.

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## Table 9. Problem-Solving Standards and Practice Indicators

### Key Youth Experiences

**Set Goals.** Youth engage in projects that involve organizing actions over time.

- **(PS1)** Youth build project-specific knowledge and skills (e.g., carpentry, leadership, public speaking).
- **(PS2)** Youth conduct projects that require organizing multiple, cumulative steps of work (e.g., creating a work of art, planning an event or a service project).

**Planning-Action Cycles.** Youth learn through cycles of strategic planning, execution, responding to emergent problems, trial and error, and reflection on outcomes.

- **(PS3)** Youth engage in planning, including:
  - a) brainstorming and generative planning;
  - b) thinking strategically about the purposes, methods, content, and outcomes of the project;
  - c) anticipatory thinking, if-then thinking (e.g., about how the work and various constraints interact), and contingency planning.
- **(PS4)** Youth have multiple opportunities to practice implementing the same skills to achieve greater success (e.g., by trying and trying again).
- **(PS5)** Youth grapple with adjusting short- and long-term goals and strategies to emerging challenges and changing circumstances in their work.

**Outcomes Verify Skills.** Youth reflect on how outcomes of their work provide information that helps build and verify youth skills.

- **(PS6)** Youth reflect on the outcomes of their efforts at all stages of the work to identify mistakes and successes, note progress, and identify current challenges.
- **(PS7)** Youth’s sense of self-efficacy, accomplishment, or confidence grows as outcomes demonstrate their developing skills, and they critically evaluate how their actions influenced outcomes. *See also Initiative.*

### Staff Practices

**Structure.** Staff provide sufficient structure to youth-driven projects.

- **(PS8)** Staff provide training experiences for youth to help them learn project-related skills.
- **(PS9)** Staff place a high priority on youth having latitude to make choices and learn from experimenting within their projects.
- **(PS10)** Staff set high expectations and structure projects that are achievable (e.g., by setting goals, setting timelines and deadlines, setting boundaries).

**Modeling.** Staff create opportunities for youth to observe models of successful work.

- **(PS11)** Staff model skills youth need to learn for their projects (e.g., carpentry or speaking skills, skills for planning and problem solving) and expose youth to models of successful work that set high expectations (e.g., youth learn about projects from prior years, novices work with veteran youth or expert staff).

**Scaffolding.** Staff provide assistance, as needed, to help youth learn and solve problems on their own.

Staff scaffold youth progress on projects by balancing:

- **(PS12)** stepping in to provide assistance and input as needed to help youth solve problems and learn (e.g., helping youth develop strategies when stuck or unsuccessful), and
- **(PS13)** stepping back to support youth’s increasing independence in their work as their skill grows and to allow youth space to struggle with challenges.

**Reflection.** Staff offer youth opportunities for reflection on project outcomes.

- **(PS14)** Staff ensure that youth have opportunities to reflect on the processes that led to the outcomes of their work and to evaluate the impact and meaning of completed projects for both the youth and other stakeholders.
**PROBLEM-SOLVING**

At The Possibility Project (TPP), planning involves complex and strategic thinking. One alumna from TPP explained:

So formal planning and seeing the plot and how we're going to set up the play are important, like which scene should go first, and why should this scene go first? Why is it most important? Who is the narrator, and why should they be the narrator? How are we going to process this to the audience, and how are they going to understand it, and what's the finished product going to look like?

Repetition is critical to learning action skills. Applying the same skills over again to the same or to slightly varying situations deepens learning. Brett Hart, Executive Director at PWBF, said:

The construction techniques inherent to this model—10 planks to hang on each side of the boat, and 40 frames to hold the shape together—provide the student builder the opportunity to participate in a process, make mistakes, and improve in the next round.

Paul Griffin, Founder and President of TPP, explained how failure is an integral component of his program:

One of the theories in improvisational theatre is “fail big.” The goal is to not say the right thing or to get the scene right. It is literally to just do whatever comes to your mind and to fail big because when you do, it leads to the next action and you can create from it. We want our young people to take risks and “fail big” because that’s where creativity comes from.

Understanding what types of training are needed is key to successful implementation. YOB does this assessment intentionally, as Rachel Gunther described:

Depending on the year and the needs we do an assessment of what kind of training is needed. It could be public speaking. It could be communication skills with policy makers. How do you ensure you get enough airtime at meetings with adults? How do you speak to them in a way that they're going to be listening? It may be as simple as knowing what's appropriate to wear. How do we make sure youth show up to meetings on time?

Natalie Cooper, Senior Director of Social Emotional Learning at BGCGM, highlighted the evolving nature of scaffolding as it changes over time:

The way that it progresses is that it's more like a teacher in the beginning and as it evolves it becomes more like a coach or a counselor. In the beginning, it's really just establishing things. It's very structured, but it changes as the kids become more comfortable. Towards the end we're saying that they are our bosses. They're telling us what they need from us and holding us accountable to get the job done.

Teena-Marie Johnson at Youth on Board (YOB):

We do a lot in the form of debriefs, pluses and deltas, and key learnings. After a meeting takes place we'll debrief it and talk about what could have been done better. What went great? What could I have done? What could you have done? A lot of things come up like, “Hey, I could have spoken up more,” or “I could have looked at this piece more.” That's where staff comes in and says, “What do you think about having done this more? Do you think that would have helped?” We definitely designate a time for framing pieces that way. That is where we get to have the opportunity to learn from and build on what we could have done better and what was great.

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