Teaching Guide

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RULER

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHING GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

RULER for Middle School aims to contextualize students' understanding of emotions and emotional intelligence within their understanding of the real world: personally, at school, in their communities, and in the world at large. It is comprised of five units per grade, with four lessons in each unit, for a total of 20 lessons per grade, per year. Each unit culminates in a content-specific, standards-aligned project; there are suggestions for projects across six disciplines: ELA, social studies/history, math, science, digital/fine arts, and physical education.

The curriculum leverages core components of project-based learning to position students as co-creators of knowledge; each of the fifteen total units is framed by a driving question such as, "How do we know when a relationship is good for us?" or "How does technology influence our emotions and decision-making?" Within each lesson, students will use the five RULER skills and four RULER tools to build the requisite knowledge and skills necessary to answer these questions.

The design of the curriculum is such that, in theory, students could complete all six projects across all six content areas without redundancy and in a way that aligns with the content that is already being taught in the class. Grade-level teams or schoolwide teams can plan for students to complete all projects, or they may pick and choose which content area or teacher will "own" specific units.

OVERVIEW

Grade Level				
Unit 1 Community, Safety, and Climate	**Unit 2** Emotions Matter	**Unit 3** Self- and Social Awareness	**Unit 4** Personal Values and Emotion Regulation	**Unit 5** Empathy, Perspective Taking, and Community Restoration
RULER Tool Focus: The Charter	**RULER Tool Focus: RULER skills**	**RULER Tool Focus: The Mood Meter**	**RULER Tool Focus: The Meta-Moment**	**RULER Tool Focus: The Blueprint**
Introduction lesson: The Charter	Introduction lesson: Emotions Matter	Introduction lesson: The Mood Meter	Introduction lesson: The Meta-Moment	Introduction lesson: The Blueprint
Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3 Lesson 4	Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3 Lesson 4	Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3 Lesson 4	Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3 Lesson 4	Lesson 1 Lesson 2 Lesson 3 Lesson 4
Final project based on content area	Final project based on content area	Final project based on content area	Final project based on content area	Final project based on content area

INTRODUCTORY LESSONS

The Introductory Lessons are designed to introduce students to the "basics" of specific RULER Tools that they either have not used before or RULER Tools that the teacher feels should be reviewed. These lessons cover the purpose of the tool, how the tool works, which RULER skills the tool is used to develop, and include opportunities to practice using the tool. The Introductory Lessons each take approximately 45 minutes and are the same for grades 6-8, with the idea that once students have been introduced to and have practiced using a tool, they will not need to experience the Introductory Lesson again. The Introduction to the Charter lesson is the exception; this Introductory Lesson can be completed each year when designing the Charter.

Some RULER Tools have more than one Introductory Lesson. This is for tools that either have multiple components to teach (For example, the Meta-Moment has both the "*Best Self*" component and the "Strategies" component) or for tools that explicitly develop multiple RULER skills (such as recognition and regulation for the Mood Meter) and should logically be separated for ample instruction and practice.

There are 8 Introductory Lessons in total:

1. Introduction to an "Emotions Matter" Mindset
2. Introduction to the Charter
3. Introduction to the Mood Meter (Lesson 1)
4. Introduction to the Mood Meter (Lesson 2)
5. Introduction to the Meta-Moment (Lesson 1)
6. Introduction to the Meta-Moment (Lesson 2)
7. Introduction to the Meta-Moment (Lesson 3)
8. Introduction to Blueprint

PREPARING TO TEACH THE LESSONS

RULER for Middle School has been designed to foster maximum flexibility within a given school's context. The structure was designed so that one teacher (or group of teachers) that individually or collectively sees all students in a given grade level can teach the lessons while the projects can be completed in one or all content areas. Recommended timing estimates and activity types (individual, group, pairs, or whole class), materials, videos, and extension ideas, are also included.

UNITS

Each unit (1-5) has a theme that aligns with a specific RULER Tool (formerly called Anchor Tools), and these themes are consistent across grade levels. Traditionally, RULER has been presented through a "tool-forward" approach, where the emphasis of each lesson was on the RULER tool rather than the underlying principles and purpose of the tool. For this reason, the units are presented through a bigger picture lens where the tools are used as a means to build skills, develop mindsets, and shift climate--and not as the centerpiece of the unit.

UNIT LESSONS

There are four lessons within each unit that build students' knowledge and skills so that they are able to complete the suggested projects at the end of the unit. The lessons are guided by the unit's driving question and has their own unique set of student learning objectives. Please see here for the scope and sequence of lessons and objectives across grade levels.

LESSON FORMAT

Each lesson is designed to take 45 minutes, and the lessons can either be shortened or extended if necessary.

OPENER

All lessons begin with an opening reflection or activity intended to engage students' prior knowledge of the subject matter and introduce them to the topic of the lesson. Many of the openers ask students to reflect on lessons or units past so that they may build a cohesive understanding of the curriculum on a larger scale and understand how the RULER Tools, topics, and skills are connected.

BODY

The body of each lesson is intended to teach students the skills or concepts necessary to meet the learning objectives. The body looks different in each lesson; some lessons may involve bringing in an outside text or media source, some may ask students to complete creative group or individual activities, and others may ask students to engage in their school and local communities. All help students build the skills necessary to address the unit's driving question

CLOSING

The closing of each lesson typically requires written reflection, and is then either shared with others or kept individually. The reflections center on the skills and concepts that were taught, and ask students how these skills can or should be applied in their own lives or their communities. Closing reflections typically take between 5-10 minutes.

DISCUSSIONS

Many of the lessons center around discussions. We encourage teachers to involve students in setting expectations, or "norms," for respectful conversations in the classroom. These norms may specify whether to raise hands, to use a talking piece, or collaborate on ways to promote equal participation. This will look different in every classroom and will reflect each class's unique culture.

CORE ROUTINES

A crucial component to successful implementation of any social and emotional learning approach is seamless integration into everyday practices. Students will benefit most fully from RULER when emotional intelligence is woven into the fabric of how schools and classrooms function. Every interaction with and between students is a chance to demonstrate, model, practice, and nurture the skills of emotional intelligence.

To assist you in embedding RULER into the infrastructure of your school's climate, the Middle School curriculum includes the Core Routines. These are simple and adaptable practices that require minimal preparation or planning. These are not lessons or units, but repeatable, customizable activities that can be incorporated into classroom culture. When implemented regularly, these practices can enhance a culture of emotional safety at the classroom-level, and ideally, at the school-wide level.

These routines were designed to reinforce the principles of emotional intelligence and provide opportunities to practice, develop, and sustain the RULER skills. The routines address different emotional intelligence concepts and tenets, and each one, in addition to contributing to a healthy and positive overall emotional climate, aims to achieve different goals.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is an instructional method that equips students to learn and apply their knowledge and skills through engaging experiences that relate to their own lived experience. PBL units are student-centered, interdisciplinary, and address a "driving question" that both focuses and guides inquiry. PBL has been shown to increase student engagement and higher-order critical thinking while de-emphasizing approaches that rely on rote memorization and a "skill and drill" approach.

The skills of emotional intelligence are used in our personal, educational, and professional lives, both in relationships with others and always embedded in context. For this reason, the middle school curriculum is designed to teach students how to leverage the RULER tools and skills in ways that can be applied to their lived experience, rather than as an abstract set of concepts and skills.

FLEXIBILITY AND ACCOMODATIONS

We encourage schools to review the curriculum provided through the lens of suggestion. While some schools implement the lessons as they are written, many schools use the provided materials as a starting point and modify, add, subtract, lengthen, or shorten the activities as written.

We hope that all students will have safe, relatable environments in which to develop, practice, and discuss the RULER skills and mindsets. To that end, please feel free to adapt the lessons as needed and makes sense for your context.

FORMAT AND MODALITY

- The lessons include discussions and activities as a whole class, small groups, and pairs. Teachers may wish to shift a given activity to a different group size, or even consider forming standing learning communities in which students can participate for the majority of discussions and activities.
- The teacher may wish to shift the modality for demonstrating, engaging, and reflecting on learning. The lessons include opportunities for students to write, draw, role-play, journal, and share, and teachers can shift these as works for their own teaching style and students' preferences.
- Formative assessment can include gallery walks, sticky notes, online polling, or exit tickets. Teachers may wish to shift these to a different method for monitoring students' learning.

DIFFERENTIATION AND ACCOMMODATION

- In order to meet students' needs across the learning spectrum, teachers may wish or need to differentiate instruction. Teachers are encouraged to use scaffolding, examples, modeling, chunking, visuals, and checks for understanding.
- Teachers may also provide supplemental materials (like transcripts of audio), recordings, teacher notes, or sentence starters to support students as they.
- Teachers may also adjust the time to complete tasks or the length of the task. For example, in many discussions or reflections, it is possible to shorten the number of prompts.

MOBILITY AND SPACE

- Many of the lessons include movement. This may be difficult or impossible in certain settings, whether due to student exceptionality, limitations of the classroom, or other reasons. Teachers are encouraged to meet the goals of the activity through another method.
- Lessons that include movement for discussions or sharing can be shifted to online polling or small group discussions with nearby students.

DIFFERENTIATING ACROSS GRADE LEVELS

While each unit is defined by the same theme, each grade level explores these themes in developmentally appropriate ways through different lenses. Sixth grade focuses on relationships; seventh on identity and agency; and eighth on decision making.

Each unit's theme is consistent across grade level to promote consistency in timing, roll-out, and focus of the RULER Tools at the school-wide level.

PREVIOUS EXPOSURE TO RULER

If your school has already begun implementing RULER, whether over years or months, the RULER for Middle School curriculum is a logical development from the resources that have been provided in the past. Each lesson addresses a specific, developmentally appropriate area such as healthy and unhealthy relationships, conflict resolution versus coping, identifying personal values, and community engagement. Whereas past "lessons" taught students about the RULER tools, the current lessons use the tools as a means for greater/broader understanding of developmentally appropriate topics. Further, the new curriculum provides suggestions for integrating the lessons and units across six different content areas.

NEW TO RULER

If this is the first time your students have been exposed to RULER, the curriculum includes everything you need to begin. Before teaching the units and lessons, the students must be taught the "Introductory Lessons" that introduce them to the RULER Tools and how/why to use them. Further, teachers should consider implementing the Core Routines consistently and over the span of months so that students become familiar with the context and tools. Schools may consider using the first year of implementation as a year to familiarize students with the concepts before beginning the more in-depth units.