

# Family Engagement

## Strategies to Share

## Workbook

# Strategy #1:

# Positive Home Contact



# Positive Home Contact

This strategy encourages educators to communicate with a student's parent or guardian about something that they are grateful for about the student.

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## **GOAL:**

The goal of this strategy is to nurture the educator-student and educator-caregiver relationship while reinforcing prosocial behaviors that are recognized through a short note expressing gratitude. This practice also encourages educators to identify specific student behaviors or actions that they are grateful for.

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## **INSTRUCTIONS:**

(3-5 minutes) Reflection: Select a student from your class. Think of something that they did or a behavior that contributed positively to the class.

(3-5 minutes) Communication: Call, text, or email the student's parent or guardian. Share the positive moment, behavior, or achievement in the form of gratitude, focusing on what it contributed to the classroom environment.

## **IMPLEMENTATION TIPS:**

- Consider providing parents or guardians with something concrete (such as a handwritten note) that they can re-share with the child.
  - Strive to make this a daily routine; practice Positive Home Contact for at least one student per day.
  - Be mindful of balancing outcome-focused with process-focused praise.
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## **WHY THIS WORKS:**

Research suggests that expressing thanks for a student's behavior to family members conveys to parents and/or caregivers that the educator values the student and the prosocial behavior. This reinforces both the behavior itself as well as the relationships between educator, student, and parent.

# Strategy #2: Community Walk

# Community Walk

Co-create a tour through the neighborhood(s) in the surrounding community. This learning experience can both build a sense of belonging as well as inform future collaboration between teachers, caregivers, students, and community partners.

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## **GOAL:**

The goal of a community walk is to foster an assets-based understanding of the students in your school and their unique identities and interests—all while exploring the history and current context of the surrounding community.

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## **OVERVIEW:**

A Community Walk is a collaborative learning experience that can help build connection and trust with students and their peers, teachers, and other school staff members (along with community partners).

## **PLANNING THE WALK:**

- (1) Engage community members (e.g., caregivers, community partners, students) to plan a tour of the neighborhood(s) around your school.
- (2) Co-create a walking path to create a tour of the community. Consider including places where students and their families play, eat, spend time with friends, etc. Prioritize what is important to your school community members.
- (3) Before taking students on the walk, conduct some research about the history and currency context of the surrounding community that you can share during the tour.
- (4) Set a date and time for the community walk. Invite caregivers, community partners, administrators, and other school staff members to join (along with your students).

# Community Walk

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## **DE-BRIEF:**

After the community walk, come together as a full group (with everyone who participated) and take time to reflect.

(1) Explain that the purpose of this debrief is to learn from the community walk experience and plan for how we (as a school community) can take action.

(2) Invite staff members, students, community partners, and caregivers to independently reflect (via writing or share-outs) about the following questions:

- What is important to our school community?
- What are community members proud of?
- How do community members care for each other?
- What assets did you find on the tour?
- How did you connect with your school community on this walk?
- How has your understanding of other members of the community (classmates, staff members, community members, etc.) deepened through this experience?

(3) Ask for volunteers to share (in whole groups or small groups) some of their key takeaways from the experience.

(4) Based on what everyone observed during the community walk, prompt the group to brainstorm actions that they might take (both individually and as a school). These could include how to better partner with families, how to leverage community partners to support students, or how to bring more assets from the community into classroom learning experiences.

(5) Wrap-up by inviting participants to share an expression of gratitude about the community.

# Community Walk

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## **IMPLEMENTATION TIPS:**

- This activity is ideal to start planning in the summer or near the beginning of the school year. You can use the creation of the community walk as a chance to build relationships with caregivers and other members of the school community.
  - Engaging the entire school (including leaders/administrators, teachers, and staff) can help improve school climate and sense of belonging across the entire campus.
  - Ensure that all participants understand the “why” of this exercise and that you set a clear, asset-based purpose.
  - Invite students to help co-lead the tour alongside teachers, caregivers, and other staff members.
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## **WHY THIS WORKS:**

Belonging positively affects engagement, behavior, and academic performance. When learners feel that they belong in an educational setting, their engagement increases, negative behavior incidences decrease, and academic outcomes improve. This activity can help students (and educators) more deeply understand the identities and culture of students from a place of empathy and respect.

Moreover, by connecting social-emotional learning with a community-based learning opportunity, educators are tapping into the same [research](#) that underscores the importance of situating learning in authentic, meaningful real-life contexts.

# Strategy #3:

# SEL Choice Board



# SEL Choice Board

This strategy allows students to co-create a tic-tac-toe-style game that will then serve as a choice board and be used to help them engage in self-directed learning.

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## GOAL:

This simple tool can help increase engagement and provide motivation to complete tasks by giving students choice and agency.

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## PREPARATION:

- [Make copies of the SEL Choice Board template slides](#), or create a paper/print version using a large poster or whiteboard.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

(1) Distribute the boards to the students and ask them to fill in the spots by following the below instructions. (You can also pre-fill them.)

- In the first row, fill in the three spots with these prompts:
  - *List 3 things that you like about yourself*
  - *What is something that you're thankful for?*
  - *Stretch up like a tree*
- In the middle row, fill in the three spots with these prompts:
  - *Write a positive note to someone you care about*
  - *Complete a breathing exercise*
  - *What is something you do well?*
- In the bottom row, fill in the three spots with these prompts:
  - *Write a goal that you have for the week?*
  - *What is something you hope for?*
  - *What was the last thing or instance that made you laugh?*

(2) Explain that students will be given opportunities throughout the week to pick activities from their choice board. Share that they can pick three activities across, down, or diagonally on their board.

## SEL Choice Board

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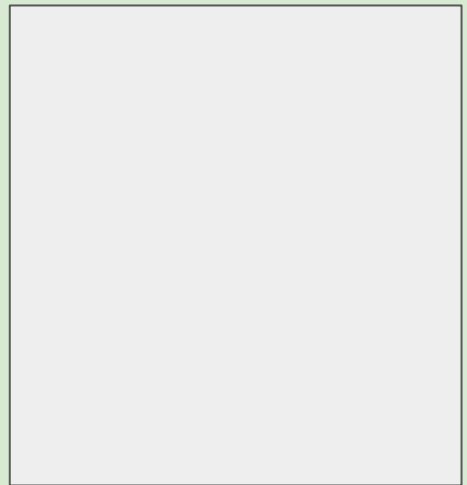
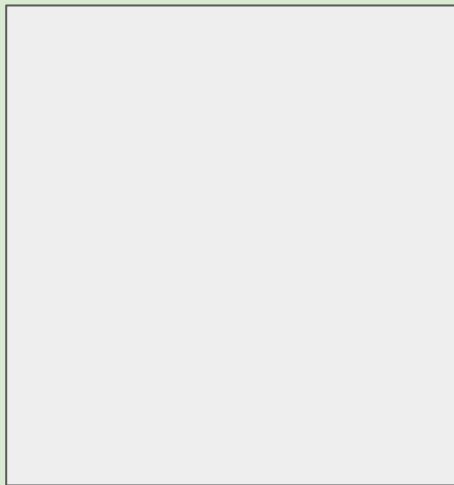
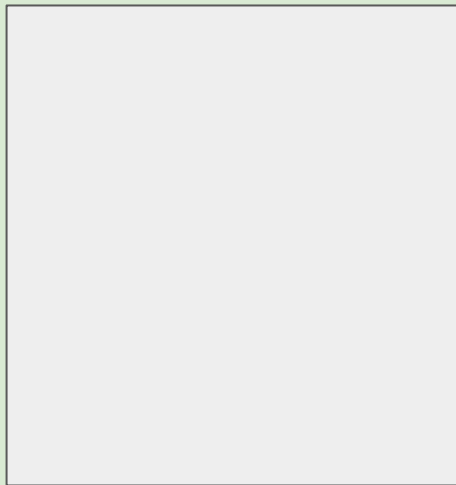
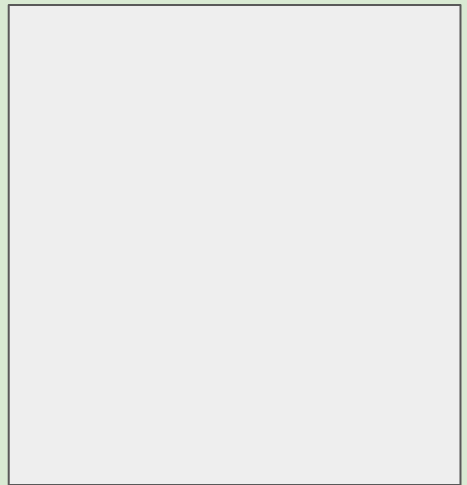
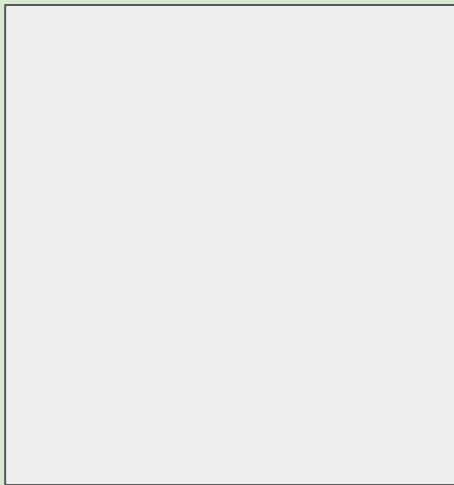
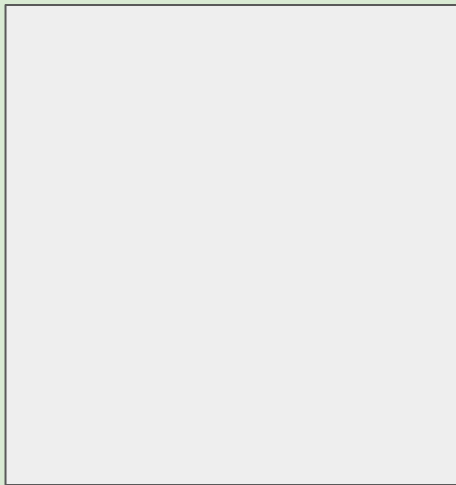
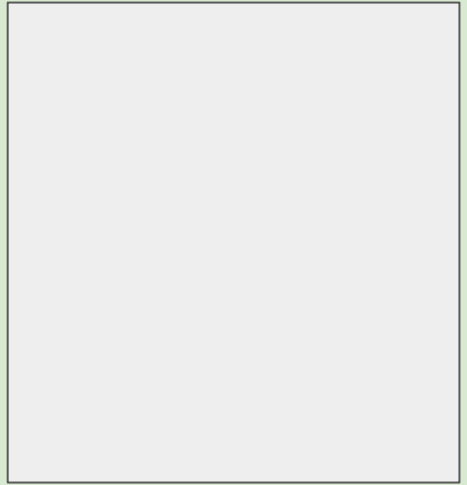
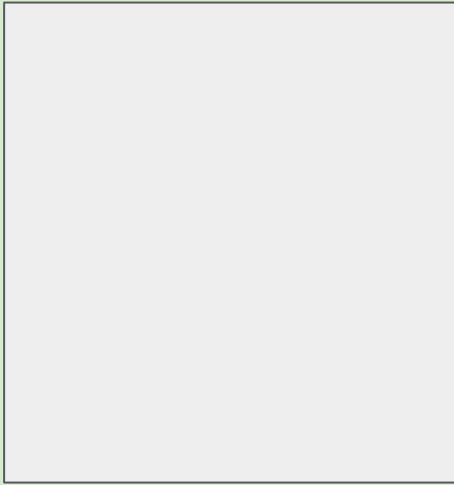
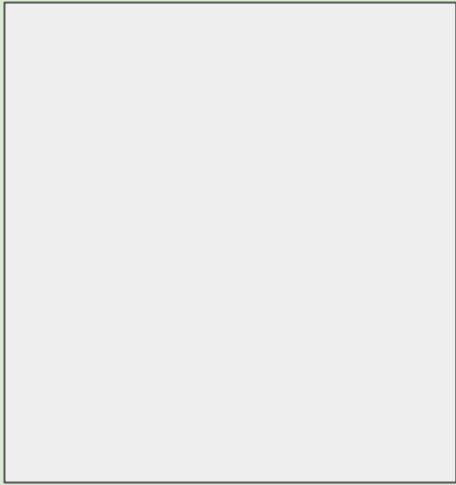
### **IMPLEMENTATION TIPS:**

- Choose specific days of the week and times that students will be allowed to engage with their choice board.
  - Many educators use choice board with small groups of students or in 1:1 settings to help focus on building self-efficacy and self-directed learning. SEL Choice Boards can also be used as a classroom-wide support.
  - Consider continually refreshing and updating the options on choice boards based on their interests. These are great tools to use for tasks that include reflection, physical movement, and journaling.
  - Create themed SEL Choice Boards with specialized activities by grade level. For instance, you might create an SEL Choice Board focused on emotion labeling and coping skills for 5th-grade students; one on health, wellness, and physical activity for middle school students; and one on project-based learning for high school learners.
  - Curate activities that are conducive to different learning models and learning styles. Some lessons should be easy for students to complete in the classroom, with or without the guidance of an educator. Other lessons should be self-guided for the days that students are learning from home. To cater to different learning preferences, compile online/digital activities as well as printable handouts or worksheets.
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### **WHY THIS WORKS:**

Choice and relevance are two of the many factors that can increase student engagement and motivation. Research by Thibodeaux, Harapnuik, and Cummings ([2019](#)) found that perceived ownership from choice is an indicator of students' engagement within their learning environment.

# my CHOICE BOARD



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that you like  
about  
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*Stretch up like  
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*Write a  
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*Complete a  
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*What is  
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*What is a goal  
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*What is  
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*What was the  
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