

PBL in practice

Building and using your PBL teaching matrix

A teaching matrix is a tool to help establish common expectations and teach students the social, emotional and behavioural skills they need to thrive and achieve at school.

This PBL in practice paper explains how to develop or review your teaching matrix and provides examples of how to identify and teach the skills included in the matrix.

References

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). *Personal and social capability*. <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/general-capabilities/personal-and-social-capability/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). www.case1.org

Robbie, K., Santiago-Rosario, M., Yanek, K., Kern, L., Meyer, B., Morris, K., & Simonsen, B. (August, 2022). *Creating a Classroom Teaching Matrix*. Centre on PBIS, University of Oregon. www.pbis.org

What is a teaching matrix?

A teaching matrix is a rubric which outlines:

Expectations	All settings	Transitions	Classroom	In the community
We are safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report problem situations Keep bodies calm Manage emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk briskly between locations Keep left on walkways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep my area tidy Use equipment correctly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow road rules Stay with the group
We are respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Speak kindly Use manners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use inside voices Follow staff directions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wait my turn Allow others to learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledge others Respect privacy
We are learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn from mistakes Be aware of surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay in bounds Learn the school layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get started straight away Stay on task 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get along with others Participate in activities

Having a collaboratively developed teaching matrix promotes a positive, safe and predictable environment by providing a common language and acting as a tool to teach expected social, emotional and behavioural skills.

Matrix checklist for schools

Was your matrix developed collaboratively?

If not, seek input from students and families as well as teaching and non-teaching staff.

Are your settings relevant?

You should have an “all settings” column and other settings which fit your school context and where specific skills are needed.

Have you used positive language?

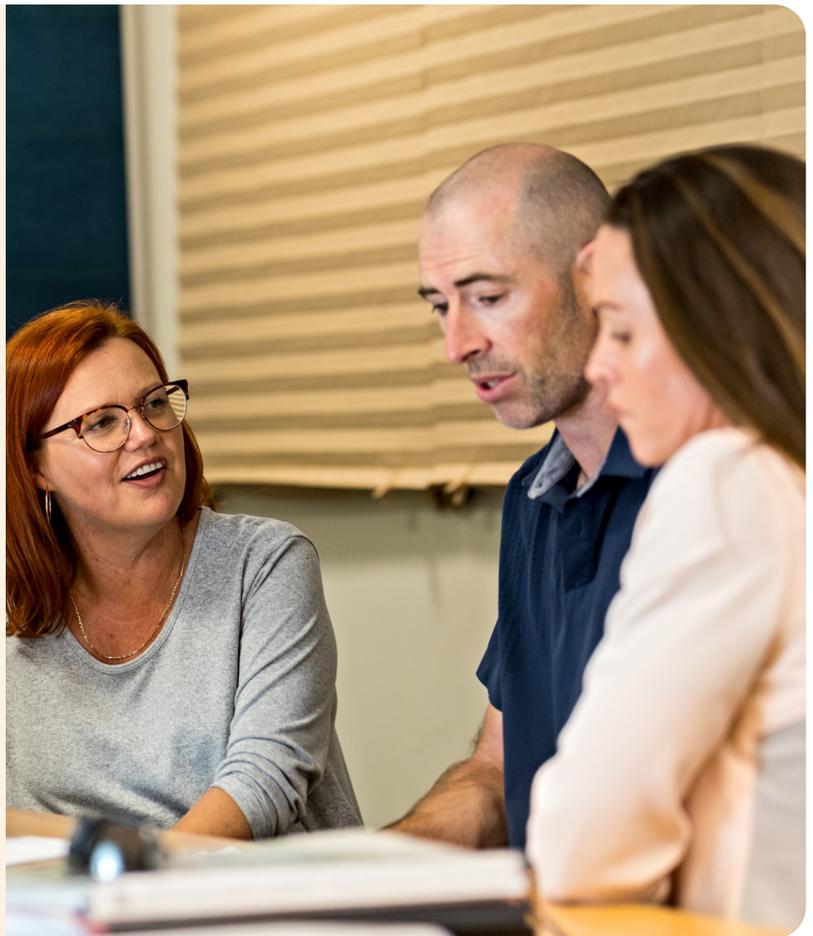
State what you want to see and avoid words like ‘don’t’ or ‘stop’.

Is language understandable and acceptable to your school community?

Consult with students and the community to check use of terms.

Have you included social, emotional and behavioural skills?

Include skills that will help students get along with others, manage their emotions and comply with school rules.



Identifying skills to include in the matrix

- Collect data on problem areas, routines and times (observation and referrals) to identify settings and skills to be taught.
- Collect feedback from staff, students and families about the skills they see as important to teach.
- Consider community values and cultures to ensure a good contextual fit.
- Check that skills have a functional purpose (e.g. walk quietly between buildings to keep everyone safe and prevent disruptions to others) and are not just for adult convenience (e.g. eat in silence).
- Consider the developmental level of students – for example, a matrix for senior high school should focus more on skills for independence, academics and post-school success.
- Select social skills that students need to be taught in order to get along with others and participate in activities.
- Select emotional skills that students need to develop to help them manage their emotions and achieve their goals.
- Use the school-wide expectations to identify behavioural skills needed to meet these expectations.

Matrix skills

Type of skill	Elements (examples)	Matrix examples
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Friendship & collaboration • Problem-solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use manners • Take turns • Solve conflicts peacefully
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self and social awareness • Self-regulation • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use calming strategies • Ask for a break • Consider others' feelings
Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School-wide rules • School procedures • Classroom rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be in the right place at the right time • Walk on the left • Let others learn

Teaching skills

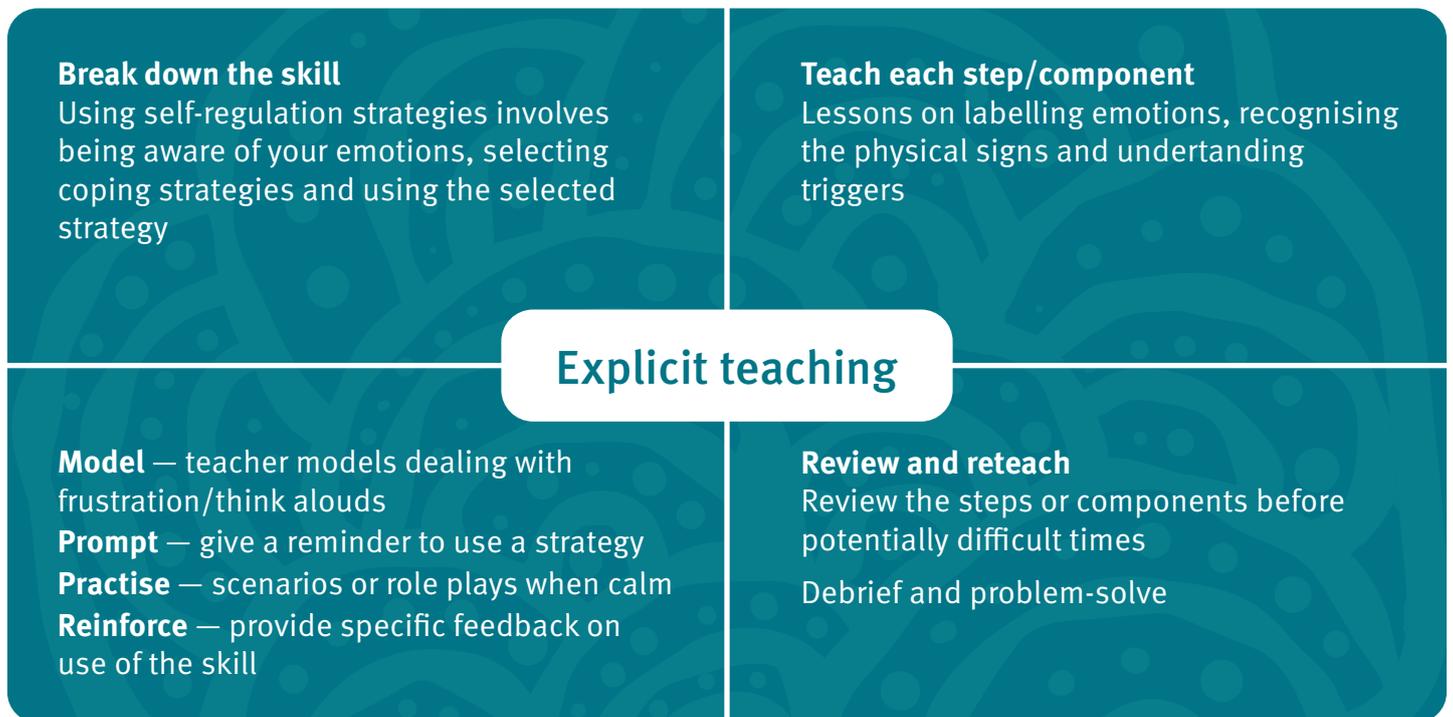
Having a teaching matrix is only the first step. Once skills have been selected, schools need a teaching plan to explicitly teach and reinforce use of the skills. Schools can develop a flexible schedule for teaching matrix skills by prioritising skills to be taught at particular junctures. For example, early in the year is a good time to teach skills related to whole school expectations and procedures. As the year progresses, skills to teach should be selected based on identified needs (data and observations). Skills should be taught in the setting where they are required and integrated with curriculum activities. For example, lessons on turn-taking and respecting others' opinion should be taught before embarking on a co-operative learning unit in science. If the majority of students display a lack of social-emotional competencies, such as resilience or self-regulation, then procedures for teaching these to all students will be needed. Don't forget to put systems in place to support teachers, such as providing brief lesson plans, collaborative unit planning or building teacher confidence. It's a good idea for year levels or department teams to review the curriculum to identify opportunities to embed explicit skills teaching. Remember that not all year levels will need to focus on the same skills, or to the same degree, and there may also be some variation class to class.

Schools may choose to have a whole school lesson schedule as well as more flexible scheduling for year levels or individual classes.

Explicit teaching

Social, emotional and behavioural skills are taught in exactly the same way as academics. First, break down the skill into smaller steps or components and then provide explicit instruction which includes defining the skill, when it should be used and providing examples and non-examples. Follow up the explicit teaching with opportunities to practise the skill and receive feedback. Teachers should continue to model the skill and provide prompts and re-teaching as required.

It is a good idea for schools to develop a bank of lesson plans, preferably through a shared undertaking involving all staff. Many existing social skilling and social-emotional learning (SEL) curricula contain lesson plans which can be adapted and used as required. However, it is not recommended simply to teach a sequential series of lessons from a packaged resource, as lessons may not match with student needs.



Ideas for getting input from the school community

Staff	Students	Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide staff into groups (e.g. year levels, departments) and brainstorm skills that need to be taught • Put up a large blank matrix in a staff area and ask staff to write in their suggestions • In a staff meeting, ask staff to write skills for each setting on post-it notes • PBL team determines settings from data then seeks feedback from whole staff on the skills needed in each setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class teachers (or home room teachers in high school) ask students to write their feedback on a draft matrix (or current matrix being reviewed) • Student council drafts a matrix using feedback collected from year level representatives • Student PBL committee formed to provide feedback on draft matrix • Student feedback collected on areas around school where they feel unsafe or witness problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students take a copy of the school matrix home for parent feedback – prize draw for any returned with comments • P&C lists the qualities they want to see in the ideal student • Blank or draft matrix displayed at school events, with requests for feedback • Family focus group formed to provide feedback • Family survey developed

Reviewing your matrix

It is important to provide at least an annual opportunity for staff, students and families to provide feedback on school expectations and rules by reviewing the matrix. Existing settings or skills included in the matrix may need to be altered or replaced based on current concerns and priorities. Feedback can then be incorporated for the following year.

