



SEAL, or Social-Emotional Artistic Learning is the practice of utilizing arts integration strategies to teach social-emotional learning competencies.

What is Responsible Decision Making?

This social-emotional competency addresses many skills that are necessary and intertwined throughout all the others. At the heart of this competency is how we make decisions about our behavior and interactions. In other words, what we do can affect not just ourselves, but others as well.

According to CASEL.org, responsible decision making refers to: *The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the well-being of oneself and others.*

These abilities include identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, evaluating, reflecting, and ethical responsibility.

~ SEL Competencies cited from CASEL.org

SEAL and Responsible Decision Making

When creating, presenting, responding to and connecting with art you are constantly making decisions. Responsible decision making is part of the creative process and certainly something you can (and should!) emphasize through SEAL.

As with all the other competencies, let's look at how the *creative process* plays a part in responsible decision making. The creative process includes every part of art making from idea conception to drafting to refining and performing. Throughout this process an artist may ask:

- What tools, people and/or resources do I have to help me with this work?
- How can I solve this problem?
- How can I work with what I have?
- How can I use this work to help others?
- How does this work help me to understand more about myself, other people and world around me?
- How can I critique this work?
- How can I modify this work?
- How can I utilize other's critiques about this work?



The Creative Process is a Learning Process

When you work through the creative process regardless of what art form you are working in, you are able to take the time to work through projects, persevere through mistakes and rough patches and come out with something in the end.

When given the opportunity to experience the creative process, you learn so much, especially if you are cognizant of the journey. This is where SEAL comes in! With SEAL activities, you encourage your students to consider the creative process through the lens of social-emotional learning.

What's more, the creative process isn't something that happens once in a while and only with art, it happens all the time and with everything. That's another reason why learning about the creative process through SEAL is so beneficial! Writing is a creative process, working is a creative process, constructing is a creative process, learning is a creative process.



When I cook (also an art form), I go through the creative process. Whether following a recipe or trying to create a meal from what is left in the kitchen, I am working through stages of planning, exploring, refining, and sharing. And all the while, I am learning: discovering what flavors work with what, what temperatures to use with which foods and how to best present the food on the plate. And consider the SEAL implications here too. As I plan and cook and serve, I am making decisions as I identify and solve problems (regardless of how small they may seem). I'm also considering the well-being of others: my family or guests who will consume what I create. I'm making decisions on what foods will be healthy, tasty and easy to prepare. (That last one is due to my own self-awareness - I'm not the greatest cook!)

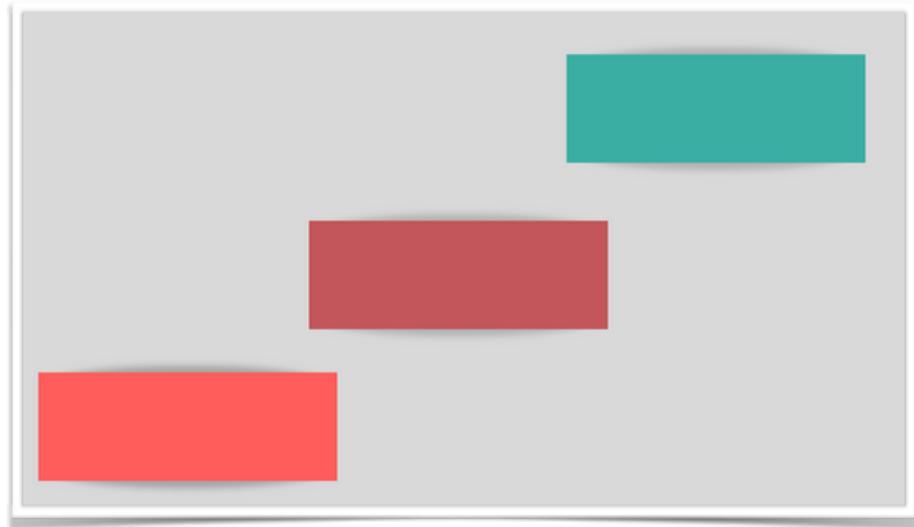
The same is true in the classroom. The creative process is everywhere in schools, the point of SEAL is to allow yourself and your students to recognize it in their writing, their working and their completing of projects. It is important to allow students to purposefully go through the



creative process with certain specific tasks. When they go through this SEAL process, they are learning so much at different levels.

One level is the academic. Students are deepening their knowledge of the art form and, if you are working with an arts integrated lesson, other content as well! When my students work on their science

illustrations to show the meanings and differences among the three states of matter, they are working on artistic skills (media, design, color) and science content (states of matter, molecular structure).



The other level of learning is that which embodies SEAL. Students learn how to plan, how to revise, how to persevere, how to work with others, how to work independently, how to communicate, and how to present our ideas. With the same science assignment, students are making decisions about what medium to use in their presentation, how to plan out their illustrations, how to best communicate the concepts of the states of matter, how to budget their time and space as well as work through problems that may arise throughout the process of completing the product in an attractive manner. And if they are working with a partner or team, the learning goes even deeper as every decision they make affects the others they are working with.

Note that a lot of overlap happens here among the various social-emotional competencies here. Students need to be self-aware as they manage their behavior and work with others who may have different ideas. AH, the beauty and value of working through SEAL!!!



Application of the Creative Process and Responsible Decision Making in Art Practice

When I think of my years of musical training, I can't help but think about all the responsible decisions I had to make through the creative process. From carving out time to practice, to utilizing my time appropriately, knowing when and how to work with others and of course the constant reflection, analyzing and evaluating of my own work and that of others.

One of the biggest decisions I had to make for myself happened in high school when I decided to cut down on other activities so that I could devote my time to piano study. A lot of time, energy, emotion and reflection went into that decision. I had to consider my personal goals, my time management, my priorities, my responsibilities and even my teammates on the field hockey team. Needless to say, it was a big decision!



Again, all the competencies overlap in this example. Responsible decision making certainly is something that ties all the work together.

Conclusion

Working with art form requires discipline, attention to yourself and those around you and so many other habits of mind that parallel the social-emotional competencies in their importance for our students' social and emotional well-being. SEAL helps students to practice these skills in a very natural way so that they can apply these skills to life!

