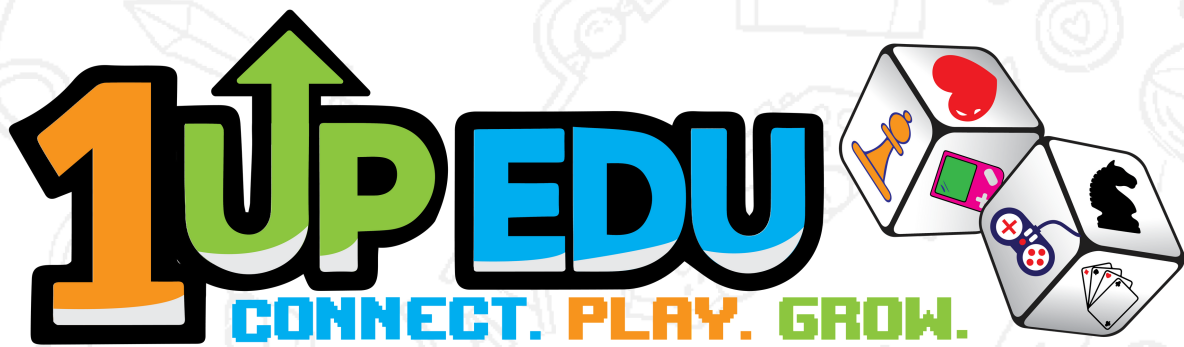




An Educator's Guide to Promoting Social Emotional Learning Through Gaming



THE STORY ENGINE[®]





CASEL Intro to The Story Engine Deck

The Story Engine Deck is a fun, easy-to-use story-prompting tool that has helped educators introduce creative writing and storytelling to young writers through a structured game.

The deck can be used as a solo activity, or in collaboration with other players, to engage in creative play, create ideas for stories, explore strategies and skills for collaboration, and learn about core writing concepts like character, motivation and conflict. It can even be used to create characters, locations, items, and adventure hooks for tabletop roleplaying games like *Dungeons & Dragons*.

CASEL Principles

When used in a group setting, The Story Engine Deck provides numerous opportunities to develop the five core competencies of CASEL: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making.



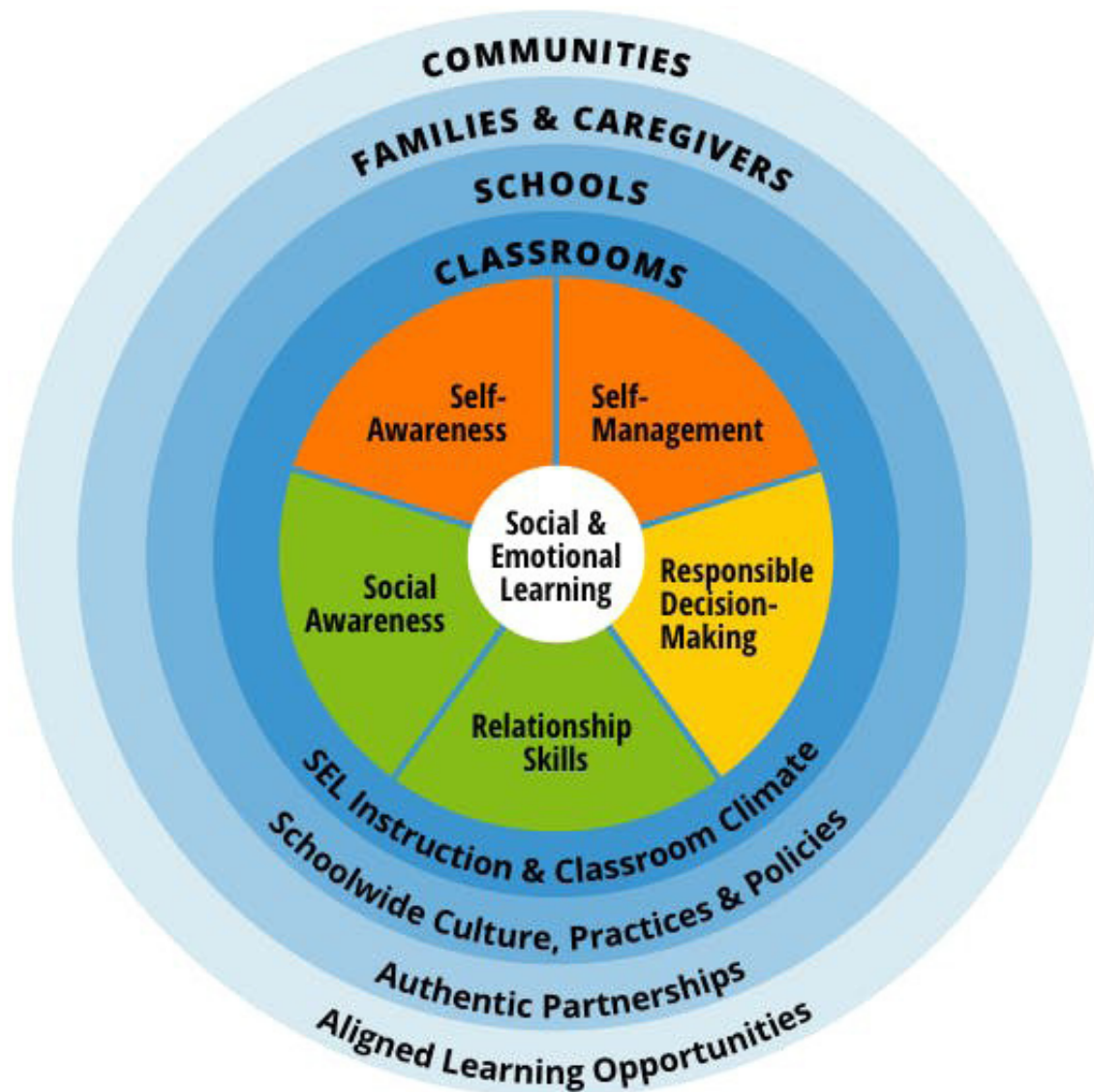
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This lesson was designed for The Story Engine Deck. For more resources, visit storyenginedeck.com. p. 1

Self Awareness

- **Integrating personal and social identities:** Players will practise expressing their identities through the ideas they contribute to the story, which means sharing themselves with the group in collaborative play.
 - *Modification: After a prompt is complete, have players reflect on what elements of their identity they contributed to the story.*
- **Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets:** Players will be able to see how their unique experiences, values, and vocabulary contribute to the story that unfolds.
 - *Modification: After a prompt is complete, have players reflect on how their experiences, culture, and vocabulary contributed to the story.*
- **Identifying one's emotions:** Players will identify and empathize with the emotions that unfold through storytelling, from the emotions driving their own creative choices to those driving the character's motivation.
 - *Modification: Ask players if they had any strong reactions to any of the cards (like, dislike, anxiety, interest, anger, etc.). Have them discuss how they feel when they think about the characters' motivations (2 **Engine** cards) or their reaction to setbacks within the story (4 **Conflict** cards).*
- **Demonstrating honesty and integrity:** Players are encouraged to share their true selves through their creative choices in story, while respecting the creative choices of others in group play.
 - *Modification: Ask players to discuss if there are parts of fictional stories that can be "true," even if the story isn't real.*
- **Linking feelings, values, and thoughts:** Storycrafting and roleplay give players the opportunity to explore the connections between the feelings, values and thoughts of the characters in their story, building their capacity to explore these connections in their own life.
 - *Modification: Ask players to brainstorm a word cloud of feelings, values, and thoughts for the character. Draw lines connecting related words.*
- **Examining prejudices and biases:** Group storytelling provides an opportunity for players to break down barriers and learn about each other through creative collaboration.
 - *Modification: Have players reflect on the choices they contributed to the story. What motivated that choice? Have players reflect on the choices contributed by the other players. Did any of them surprise you?*
- **Experiencing self-efficacy:** The Story Engine Deck helps bypass writer's block and creative anxiety, helping players experience their own creativity and build confidence.
 - *Modification: At the end of the prompt creation process, ensure players record the prompt in a notebook and highlight their contributions to it.*

- **Having a growth mindset:** The Story Engine Deck gamifies the creative process, helping players discover motivation for developing their skills for writing, communicating, creativity, and collaboration.
 - *Modification: After the activity, have the player write down their favorite idea or sentence they contributed and which skill they developed by contributing it: brainstorming, writing, characterization, vocabulary, conflict, communication, description, creativity, etc.*
- **Developing interests and a sense of purpose:** Players have the opportunity to discover and nurture their interest in storytelling, writing, and idea generation.
 - *Modification: After the story-prompting activity, encourage players to pursue writing the story down or prompting more stories in their hobby time.*



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Self Management

- **Identifying and using stress management strategies:** Players will have to wait for their turn to contribute to the story and respect other players' contributions, even if they disagree with the creative choice. Collaboration provides opportunities to build tolerance for stress and skills for communicating when in disagreement.
 - *Modification: Establish rules as to whether or not players can give each other suggestions on their turns. If a player talks over another, encourage them to wait their turn. If they are feeling stressed about not being able to speak up, have them write their thoughts down so they can be discussed later.*
- **Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation:** The Story Engine Deck does not have traditional "win condition." Players are motivated by the desire to create, collaborate, improvise, and develop their skills. The activity can help players understand the intrinsic value of the time and skill they dedicate to creative work and social activities.
 - *Modification: Have players reflect on the parts of the process that were challenging. What helped them overcome those challenges?*
- **Setting personal and collective goals:** Players have the opportunity to set both collective goals (like completing a story prompt together) and personal goals (like writing a story based on the prompt).
 - *Modification: Whenever you start a new story prompt, review the end goal with players. If players decide to write stories based on a prompt, set a goal word count or deadline.*
- **Using planning and organizational skills:** The deck helps students exteriorize the creative process, developing the skills to build a story idea step by step and organize the elements of their story in a thoughtful and compelling way.
 - *Modification: Between developing a story prompt and writing their story, have students jot down a quick plot outline. After they finish writing, have them compare the story to the outline, reviewing any differences to make sure they are satisfied with how the story came out.*
- **Showing the courage to take initiative:** Players build their confidence in making creative decisions, starting with choosing between multiple creative cues printed on the card, and culminating with them providing their own personal interpretation of the story prompt.
 - *Modification: If a player feels stuck on their choice between cues, remind them that collaboration is a safe space and there are no wrong choices when being creative.*

- **Demonstrating personal and collective agency:** Players can build story ideas on their own or as a group, learning how to make choices independently or in concert with one another.
 - *Modification: After completing a prompt, discuss with players how only minutes ago, nothing existed, and now they have a story idea that they developed together. Remind them that every great creation—from their favorite movie to the invention of the cell phone—was nothing until someone decided to try creating something.*

Social Awareness

- **Taking others' perspectives:** Building a character-based story encourages players to engage in roleplay and think about the feelings and experiences of another person.
 - *Modification: After creating the story prompt, have players reflect on what might happen in this story and what a character might be thinking or feeling at the beginning, middle, and end. Players can also discuss how the story made themselves and others feel.*
- **Recognizing strengths in others:** Players are encouraged to celebrate each other's contributions to the story, as well as to think about the personal strengths of the characters they create for their story.
 - *Modification: After creating the prompt, have each player highlight their favorite idea that someone else suggested.*
- **Demonstrating empathy and compassion:** Storytelling requires thinking about the emotions and conflicts that a character is navigating.
 - *Modification: After completing a story prompt, have players reflect on how the 4 **Conflict** might affect the 1 **Agent** of the story.*
- **Showing concern for the feelings of others:** The deck gives opportunities for players to recognize, explore and connect with their emotions, the emotions of the characters they create, and the emotions of other players.
 - *Modification: When a card, cue, or prompt evokes an emotional response, have players discuss. What emotion was evoked? What evoked it? Discuss how players can check in with each other if someone is experiencing strong or difficult emotions.*
- **Understanding and expressing gratitude:** Using the deck in a collaborative manner gives opportunities for players to recognize and appreciate each others' contributions. The most interesting prompts created with The Story Engine Deck involve contributions from every player.
 - *Modification: After a creative session with the deck, have players thank each other for their contributions, sharing specific reasons they appreciated each others' ideas, support, or behavior.*

- **Identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones:** Many of the deck's **4 Conflict** cards encourage players to explore social themes like inclusion/exclusion, acceptance/prejudice, belonging/disconnection, and justice/injustice.
 - *Modification: When a social theme comes up in a prompt, have players try to discuss and define the terms on the card. Is it an example of a social norm? Are social norms helpful or harmful?*
- **Recognizing situational demands and opportunities:** The Story Engine Deck can create over 30 billion different combinations of its most basic prompt: the story seed. Each combination is unique and invites players to recognize the situational storytelling opportunities provided by that particular set of cues.
 - *Modification: After completing a prompt, have players review the cards they drew and explore which elements appeared in the final story idea. How would the story be different if different cards were drawn or different cues were chosen on each card? Replace one of the cards with a random draw and explore how the story situation changes.*
- **Understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior:** Storytelling can be an excellent venue to explore how social systems affect individual people. In The Story Engine Deck, **2 Engine** cards provide individual motivations for characters. These motivations often put characters at odds with social norms, systems, and organizations through **4 Conflict** cards, giving players the opportunity to explore how individual desires and behaviors are influenced by the systems they live in.
 - *Modification: When a social system or organization comes up in a prompt, have players discuss how it affects the character's behavior. What would happen if there was no social system or organization as part of the story? What would the character do and what would the consequences be?*



"SEL is not one more thing
on the plate. It is the plate."

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Lisa Xagas

Naperville Community Unit School District 203



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Relationship Skills

- **Communicate clearly and listen intently:** Each player's contribution to a group prompt requires them to listen to the contributions of players who came before them, and to communicate their contribution clearly so other players can build on it.
 - *Modification: Encourage players to listen carefully during each other's turns and ask questions to better understand each other's ideas and how to communicate their own ideas.*
- **Cultivate relationships:** Group storytelling is an excellent activity for ice-breaking and group bonding.
 - *Modification: After completing a prompt, have players break away into smaller groups to write stories together based on the prompt.*
- **Resist negative influence:** Many prompt formats allow players to explore interpersonal conflict between characters, including stories where characters may try to influence or manipulate each other. They can also explore how characters can overcome social influence and stay true to themselves.
 - *Modification: Create a multiplayer prompt together using the format of "Circle of Fate" (The Story Engine Guidebook, p. 4). Discuss what the two characters want from each other, and how they might influence each other to get what they want. Is this influence positive or negative? How could the other character recognize when negative influence is being applied? How might they resist it?*
- **Negotiate conflict:** Players will often have competing ideas for how a cue, card, or prompt should be interpreted. Using the deck and guidebook for structured collaboration helps players recognize and respect each others' boundaries, and their own.
 - *Modification: Before starting a creative session, have players discuss ground rules for collaboration. Are they allowed to talk or make suggestions during each other's turns? Are they allowed to interpret other players' chosen cues in their own way? When a conflict or disagreement comes up, refer back to your ground rules. Remind them that sometimes, collaborating means letting other people make choices you disagree with.*
- **Seek and offer help when needed:** Players can sometimes get "stumped" by a cue, and may have trouble knowing how to interpret it or connect to previous cards. The guidebook has a long list of strategies for working through roadblocks in prompts, all of which can be conducted as a group.
 - *Modification: Discuss ground rules for what to do when a player gets "stuck" interpreting a cue or prompt. They may choose to ask for help and/or other players may choose to offer it. Use the strategies on p. 4 of the guidebook as a group to work through roadblocks together, always deferring the player whose turn it is to make the final decision.*

Responsible Decision Making

- **Consider ethical standards, social norms, and safety while making responsible decisions:** Not only does collaboration give players an opportunity to see how their behavior and creative decisions affect each other, but storytelling can be used as a form of roleplay to explore how a character's choices interact with ethical standards, social norms, and safety.
 - *Modification: Create a multiplayer prompt together using the format of "A Soul Divided" (The Story Engine Guidebook, p. 5). Evaluate the character's choices by considering ethical standards, social norms, and impact on safety.*
- **Use a systematic approach to decision making:** Collaborative storytelling offers players a structured and systematic framework for making creative decisions to build a story idea card by card and cue by cue, and to evaluate decisions that characters may make in the story from multiple perspectives.
 - *Modification: After creating a prompt, discuss the decisions available to the character. What does each player do in this situation? Using a systematic approach to decision making, which option(s) would be best?*
- **Consider the implications of decisions:** Players have the opportunity to create a scenario using a story prompt and then explore the decisions a character might make in that situation, and how each decision could impact them and other characters.
 - *Modification: After creating a prompt, discuss the character's motivation **2 Engine** card (motivation) and what decisions it might drive them to make. Who or what else might be affected by this decision, and/or by the **4 Conflict** card? How might the character consider this?*
- **Reflect on decisions made:** Whenever an individual player or group creates a prompt, the cards on the table serve as a record of the sequence of creative decisions that was made to assemble the prompt, card by card and cue by cue. Players can always review and reevaluate their creative choices.
 - *Modification: After a player completes a solo prompt, have them review the decisions they made with each card and how that impacted the final story prompt. Are there any decisions they would make differently? Invite them to adjust their cards and explore the alternative prompt they could have created.*