

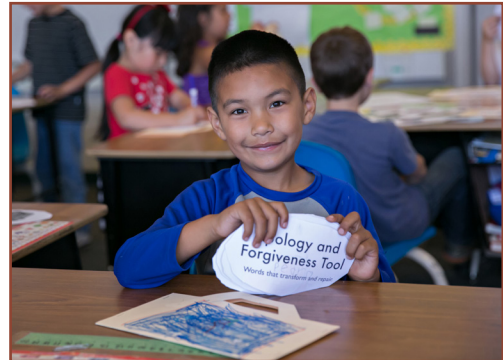


THE TOOLBOX PROJECT

Building Resilience, Self-Mastery, & Empathy for Others

What Is *The Toolbox Project*?

The Toolbox Project or *Toolbox* is a research-based, community-tested, social and emotional learning (SEL) program targeted to elementary age youth that fosters the development of resilience, self-mastery, and empathy for others. *Toolbox* transforms teaching to focus on the heart of what matters: the child's conscious self-development is the key to success in both school and life. *The Toolbox Project* honors and strengthens children's innate capacity for managing their own emotional, social, and academic success by giving them tools and practices that empower them. Schools use *Toolbox* to help students increase agency and self-mastery, improve their relationships with peers and family members, and to effectively manage the complexity of interpersonal as well as intrapersonal conflicts. Institutional adoption leads to less disruptive behavior in class, better school climates, and ultimately, better academic performance.



The foundation of *The Toolbox Project* is 12 human capacities that reside within all of us. Through its simple and profound metaphor of Tools inside us, *The Toolbox Project* brings forward a set of skills and practices that help students access their own inner resilience at any time, in any context.

The 12 Tools

- Breathing Tool
- Quiet/Safe Place Tool
- Listening Tool
- Empathy Tool
- Personal Space Tool
- Using Our Words Tool
- Garbage Can Tool
- Taking Time Tool
- Please & Thank You Tool
- Apology & Forgiveness Tool
- Patience Tool
- Courage Tool

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as "the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." CASEL has identified five interrelated social and emotional competencies: self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. The skills and practices of *The Toolbox Project* directly build the five competencies defined by CASEL.

The Toolbox Project starts with a teacher providing instruction on how to use the Tools. Through modeling and daily classroom practices, the teacher subsequently supports his/her students to use the Tools to build self-knowledge and self-trust. Schools note rapid improvements in communication, civility, and conflict resolution in the classroom, on the playground, and across the entire school community. Providing parents and caregivers with the Tools and information on how to incorporate the practices into the home setting allows for continuity and reinforcement of skills for students.

How *The Toolbox Project* Works

While *The Toolbox Project* is taught formally through a comprehensive curriculum, the essence of *Toolbox* are the common language and practices used multiple times each day in every school context. Daily use of *Toolbox* is both an inquiry and an invitation. Teachers are instructed to engage students in the 12 Tools using an inquiry-based approach. Inquiry opens a child's mind to their own inherent possibilities. Inquiry also allows a child to think for him/herself and discover personal competence as a problem-solver which, in turn, builds confidence. Invitation from the teacher, similarly, helps children make their own choices. We instruct teachers to inquire with children, "What three Tools might you try?" A frequent conversation in the classroom or during playground conflicts at *Toolbox* schools involves a teacher asking, "What Tools did you try?" and students responding, citing the various Tools they have employed to resolve their conflict. This moves the conversation into higher-order thinking.



Every Tool has a corollary icon and hand-gesture, so teachers and students can call on Tools visually and non-verbally throughout the day. *The Toolbox Project* curriculum is enhanced by supplementary children's literature through which each Tool (skill) can be introduced and reinforced. Additional supporting materials provided to schools include *Toolbox* manila cutouts that students decorate and personalize; fan-deck cards on lanyards which summarize the 12 Tools and are worn by teachers and staff, and age-appropriate posters which reinforce the Tools. All of these visual representations work together to concretize the Tools in the minds of young learners. After students initially gain familiarity with the Tools through introductory lessons, teachers employ further lessons that include puppets, role-plays, journaling, pair-share, group discussion, and instructional prompts. *The Toolbox Project* is integrated into academic learning in a classroom and embedded in all school contexts (classroom, playground, discipline, and parent communication). *The Toolbox Project* is implemented in schools through training provided to administrators, teachers, and support staff.

Toolbox Teaches Children

- How to realize their innate goodness and intrinsic wholeness
- How to belong and contribute their uniqueness
- How to achieve emotional balance and emotional intelligence in 3-5 seconds
- How to be proactive rather than reactive
- How to organize and understand their internal experiences (self-knowing)
- How to care for themselves and experience empathy for others
- How to understand and make sense of what is going on around them
- How to find their voice and speak up
- How to listen to their inner voice non-judgmentally and make fair self-assessments
- How to let the little things go
- How to use time wisely (time-in and time-away)
- How to be grateful and give thanks from a place of authenticity
- How to be forgiving when it is time
- How to apologize when aware of harming others
- How to understand the value and intelligence of patience
- How to be courageous when others are not using their Tools

Toolbox Implementation

Training

Schools or districts begin with a one-day training in which all teachers, administrators, office staff, yard-duty aides, and custodians learn the language and practices of the 12 Tools.

Introductory training includes the following:

Theory & Research: The 12 Tools are connected to the science of emotional regulation, which is critical to higher order thinking, learning, and good teaching. Our theory of change describes the developmental process through which children and adults learn the Tools. Formative research on *Toolbox* describes significant transformative behavioral change in children, as well as key school climate factors.



Daily Practices: The 12 Tools are embedded within the **common language** of the classroom and across all school contexts. *Toolbox* skills are described and modeled, giving teachers daily classroom practices that empower children, as well as self-regulation (i.e., well-being practices) that uplift teachers into their own resilient nature.

Pedagogy: *Toolbox* is an inquiry-based model. Asking, “What three Tools have you tried?” gives children the competence and confidence to solve their own problems. Teachers are introduced to the pedagogy of resilience: the power of caring relationships, high expectation messages (e.g., “I believe in you.”), and opportunities for meaningful contribution. Adult modeling of going first is shown as an authentic/effective way to teach the 12 Tools.

Multi-year Development: *Toolbox* is a multi-year developmental program through which the Tools are used within daily academic instruction, assemblies, and class meetings for bully and violence prevention, and within positive disciplinary procedures to empower self-discipline in children. The Tools go home through parent connection letters and activities, assisting adults with tools for parenting.

Curriculum Instruction:

Two developmentally distinct curricula (K-3 and 4-6) are currently in their 5th Edition. Each curriculum is laid-out for multi-year use. Teachers work with the curriculum flow, sequence, and function with each of the 12 Tools units and lessons, including lesson modeling shown through videos of teachers teaching *Toolbox* in the classroom. Lesson sequence includes:

- *Introducing the Tools* (K-3 focus on learning the Tools; 4-6 focus on using the Tools for their Journey) through literature, puppets, role-play, journaling, and generative conversations.
- *Putting the Tools to Work* by exploring together the impact of how and when each Tool can be used (or not used) within oneself and in relationship to others.

As soon as a Tool is introduced, it becomes part of the common language in the classroom, within academics, discipline, and the whole school culture.

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The 12 Tools

Tools for Learning • Tools for Life



Breathing Tool

I calm myself and check-in.



Quiet/Safe Place Tool

I remember my quiet/safe place.

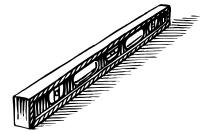


Listening Tool

I listen with my ears, eyes, and heart.

Empathy Tool

I care for others. I care for myself.



Personal Space Tool

I have a right to my space and so do you.

Using Our Words Tool

I ask for what I want and need.

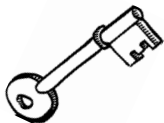


Garbage Can Tool

I let the little things go.

Taking Time Tool

I take time-in and time-away.



Please & Thank You Tool

I treat others with kindness and appreciation.

Apology & Forgiveness Tool

I admit my mistakes and work to forgive yours.



Patience Tool

I am strong enough to wait.

Courage Tool

I have the courage to do the "right" thing.

