

SPECIAL OLYMPICS UNIFIED CHAMPION SCHOOLS®

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL INCLUSIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP LEARNING JOURNEY IMPACT EVALUATION

ISSUE DATE: February 13, 2026
RESPONSE DUE DATE: March 13, 2026

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Statement of Purpose

Special Olympics is requesting proposals from qualified individuals or organizations to evaluate the effectiveness of a newly developed set of activities, called the Inclusive Youth Leadership Learning Journey (IYL Learning Journey), meant to develop the leadership skills of openness, bravery, empathy, accountability, innovation, and collaboration in youth with and without intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Activities are being developed for youth in elementary school, middle school, high school, and college. They will typically be used in school settings, but some may also be used independently by youth. This is a multi-year project that will be contracted and funded annually.

Background Information

Special Olympics

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy, and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes, and the community.

Special Olympics' work goes beyond sports events, aiming to drive social change, improve the health of our athletes and build inclusive communities that enable full social participation and life-long fitness for people with ID throughout the world. Through our 57 years of experience, we know that adults and children with IDD are every society's most neglected population.

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools®

Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools® (SOUCS) is a program for schools Pre-K through college that intentionally promotes social inclusion by bringing students with and without ID together through sport and education-related activities. The 3-component model offers a unique combination of effective activities that equip young people with the knowledge, skills, tools, and training to create classrooms and school climates of acceptance, respect, and meaningful inclusion. These are school climates where students with disabilities feel welcome and are routinely included in—and feel a part of—all activities, opportunities, and functions.

This is accomplished by implementing Special Olympics Unified Sports®, inclusive youth leadership opportunities (such as clubs, inclusive student organizations, and youth summits), and whole school engagement. The program is woven into the fabric of the school community, enhancing existing efforts and providing rich opportunities that empower all students to be the agents of change in their schools, creating socially inclusive environments that support and engage all learners. SOUCS implementation can vary greatly from school to school, based on the needs, goals, schedules, and other factors unique to each school, but the building blocks and framework are the same. This programming promotes social inclusion in schools to ensure

special education and general education students are equitably engaged. Teachers and students are encouraged to collaborate and create supportive classrooms, activities, and opportunities. [Learn more about SOUCS.](#)

Annual evaluation of SOUCS has consistently demonstrated that the inclusive youth leadership component is the least implemented component across schools, especially among elementary schools, and adults facilitating the program in their school (liaisons) struggle with knowing how to implement IYL meaningfully and train youth to become leaders. [Read the annual evaluation reports](#) from UMass Boston's Center for Social Development and Education. The IYL Learning Journey is a strategic response aimed at providing U.S. Programs and schools with a turnkey, high quality leadership development pathway that provides consistent, measurable skill development, helps schools implement inclusive youth leadership more easily and meaningfully, and supports Special Olympics North America's (SONA) strategic growth and quality goals for SOUCS. These goals include reaching 20,000 schools with SOUCS and having at least 65% of schools implementing IYL as part of the 3-component implementation model by 2030.

Specific Scope of Work

Summary

The IYL Learning Journey is a new, cohesive suite of materials being developed by SONA in partnership with the leadership development firm [Blanchard](#). The IYL Learning Journey will help youth with and without IDD across the United States take on meaningful roles in their schools, communities, and workplaces by building 6 core leadership skills: openness, empathy, bravery, accountability, collaboration, and innovation (see [Project Detail](#) section below for more information on these skills).

Learning Journey materials are being developed this spring, so there is nothing to share at the time of this RFP, but the contracted group will get to see all materials as they are developed. Development will take place on a rolling basis (Blanchard will beta-test the materials during development). Early elementary, upper elementary, and middle school materials will be ready for evaluation beginning in August 2026 (and on a rolling basis throughout the 2026-2027 school year). High school and college materials will be ready beginning in August 2027 (and on a rolling basis thereafter). Therefore, this evaluation will take place in two phases. Phase 1 will take place during the 2026-2027 school year for early elementary, upper elementary, and middle school. Phase 2 will take place during the 2027-2028 school year for high school and college. This two-phase approach to the evaluation allows SONA to stay on track with the 2030 strategic plan and goals (as noted above) and ensure an evaluated IYL Learning Journey is released nationally before then. Our anticipated date of release for early elementary, upper elementary, and middle school is August 2027. Our anticipated date of release for high school and college is August 2028.

As of right now, SONA anticipates the project will span approximately May 15, 2026 to May 15, 2028, but note that these dates are entirely dependent on contracting timelines with the selected vendor of this RFP, and development timelines with Blanchard.

Also note that this RFP seeks proposals to evaluate the IYL Learning Journey, not develop it. Because Blanchard is developing the Learning Journey materials on a rolling basis starting in early 2026, development and evaluation will happen in tandem over the next few years. This presents an exciting opportunity for evaluators to get in on the ground floor.

Project Detail

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to understand whether and to what degree the IYL Learning Journey develops the 6 target leadership skills of openness, empathy, bravery, accountability, collaboration, and innovation in youth with and without IDD from early elementary through college. The secondary purpose of this evaluation is to also understand the benefits of the Learning Journey above and beyond the typical IYL activities implemented in SOUCS schools.

What is the IYL Learning Journey?

Special Olympics IYL programming is anchored in 6 skills—openness, empathy, innovation, accountability, bravery, and collaboration. These are skills that all IYL programming develops in youth with and without IDD and are essential in creating quality leaders that know how to include people with different strengths, preferences, and roles within a team. The 6 skills are briefly described here:

1. **Openness:** I am open to new people and new ideas. I believe that all people belong and have value. I am curious and like to learn more when people share new ideas. I am honest and respectful when I share my ideas with others.
2. **Innovation:** I am creative/innovative. I like coming up with new or better ways to do things and evolve things to do all together.
3. **Bravery:** I am brave. I choose to do the right things, even when it is hard. I keep going and believe that I can do it, even if it is hard!
4. **Collaboration:** I collaborate with others. I work with other people to accomplish my goals. I believe everyone has unique strengths that are all needed to complete projects.
5. **Empathy:** I show others empathy. I try to understand how another person is feeling. I try to understand things from other people's perspective and "walk in their shoes."
6. **Accountability:** I am accountable to myself and to others. I am responsible. I do what I say I will do, even when it is hard. I keep the promises and commitments that I make to other people.

These skills are rooted in three underlying frameworks whose substantial research base creates a solid foundation for IYL programming. Those frameworks are [Student Self Leadership \(SSL\)](#) by Blanchard, the [Inclusive Mindsets and Behaviors \(IMB\) framework](#) by Special Olympics and the Harvard University Graduate School of Education's EASEL Lab, and [The CASEL 5 framework](#) for social and emotional learning by The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

(CASEL). Each of these frameworks contributes unique elements that, when combined, create a comprehensive approach to developing inclusive youth leadership. For more information about these skills and their developmental trajectory (broken down by grade band), please see the [Appendices](#) (Appendix A).

Given the developmental nature of these skills, the Learning Journey is being built for multiple “personas” across five grade bands: early elementary, upper elementary, middle school, high school, and college. This comprehensive suite of materials brings together new and existing resources developed by SONA and Blanchard. Each package also incorporates components of Blanchard’s SSL, which focuses on empowering students to take charge of their own learning and development.

For each grade band, the journey will include a package of materials for each of the 6 core skills. Materials include introductory skill videos, activities, and lessons with applied learning opportunities. Materials will be designed to support multiple learning styles and environments (e.g., various types of media and activities, digital vs. printed, classroom vs. independent engagement, etc.). Each youth-facing activity will be accompanied by materials for both adults and families. The facilitator guide provides adults with step-by-step instructions on how to lead the activity effectively, while the take-home one-pager gives families and caregivers insight into the leadership skills their youth are developing and guidance on how to support those skills at home.

SONA will share the Learning Journey materials with U.S. Programs, who will then distribute them to schools in their state that implement SOUCS. The Learning Journey will include materials that are available in print/physical versions as well as digital versions. While some materials may be used across skills, most of the materials will be grouped by the skill and grade band. Please see the [Appendices](#) (Appendix B) for an example list of materials in the empathy package designed for early elementary students.

Proposed evaluation activities

The evaluation partner will be responsible for managing the design, methodology, recruitment, data collection, cleaning, analysis, and compilation of findings (including dissemination to SONA in various written and oral products) across both phases of the work. Specifically, the successful applicant will:

- Collaborate with SONA to identify appropriate agreed upon methods, recruitment strategy, design, and measures for understanding impact of the IYL Learning Journey on the 6 core skills
- Collaborate with SONA and U.S. Programs to recruit a sample of schools and students in each grade band for both Learning Journey and comparison schools.
 - Note: SONA does not have a preferred student sample size and looks forward to respondents’ recommendations based on there being multiple skills across multiple grade bands (and the rolling nature of materials development). Strong

proposals will include a power analysis or other appropriate sampling calculation(s).

- Secure human subjects ethics (IRB) approval
- Collect data from Learning Journey participants and comparison groups
 - Note: SONA does not have a preferred methodology for data collection and looks forward to hearing respondents’ recommendations. Strong proposals will clearly articulate plans for data collection across multiple grade levels and among youth with and without IDD.
- During each phase: analyze data and provide interim findings, write a technical report, provide recommendations on further development and implementation of materials, develop easy-read briefs or summaries, presentations to SONA, and other activities as agreed upon by SONA and the contracted group
- Support dissemination of findings internally and externally, as relevant (e.g., academic conference or publication)

Timeline

The IYL Learning Journey materials are being developed on a rolling basis throughout 2026 and 2027. Therefore, evaluation activities will occur on a rolling basis as materials are completed. This timeline shows key project milestones and when each package of materials for each grade band is anticipated to be ready for evaluation (note that this timeline could change). This is not an exhaustive timeline, and SONA looks forward to receiving a more detailed timeline of all proposed evaluation activities from respondents.

Note that there is some anticipated overlap in the timelines for Phase 1 and Phase 2.

	Phase 1 Early Elementary (EE) Upper Elementary (UE) Middle School (MS)	Phase 2 High School (HS) College (C)
2026		
May-August	Kickoff & planning Recruitment	
August	Openness (EE, UE, MS)	
December	Innovation (EE, UE, MS) Accountability (EE, UE, MS) Bravery (EE)	
2027		
January	Bravery (UE)	
February	Bravery (MS)	
March	Empathy (EE, UE)	Planning & recruitment begins
April	Empathy (MS) Collaboration (EE)	
August	Collaboration (UE, MS)	Openness (HS, C)

		Innovation (HS, C)
December		Accountability (HS, C) Bravery (HS, C) Empathy (HS, C) Collaboration (HS, C)
2028		
January-March		Complete data collection
March-May		Final analysis & reporting

Proposal Information

SONA is expecting a submitted written proposal in PDF format and may request a presentation from top candidates, which you will be notified of shortly after submission of the written proposal. From there, SONA will utilize a rubric scoring system to award the vendor.

Your response must contain enough detail for us to fully understand it, or we may eliminate you from consideration. We may ask you to clarify your response. If we do ask for clarification, we must get a written response from you within the requested time for you to remain in consideration. Modifications to the RFP by the vendor may result in disqualification and rejection of any or all the vendors' response.

Please do not send us confidential information unless we have signed an agreement agreeing to receive that information on a confidential basis. SONA reserves the right to retain all materials submitted in connection with this RFP. Please note that we have not agreed to enter a contract with you simply by receiving your response.

In responding to this RFP, the vendor fully accepts the responsibility to understand the RFP in its entirety, and in detail, including making any inquiries to SONA as necessary to gain such understanding. All information provided by SONA in this RFP is offered in good faith. Individual items are subject to change at any time.

Vendors should organize their proposals as defined below to ensure consistency and to facilitate the evaluation of all responses. All the sections listed below must be included in the proposal, in the order presented, with the Section Number listed. The responses shall be submitted in the following format:

- Section 1 – Executive Summary (provide a concise summary of proposed solution)
- Section 2 – Company Profile (provide answers using the template and instructions below)
- Section 3 – Specifications (provide a narrative and description of how your concept and approach will meet the needs and functionalities of this specific project, as outlined above)

- Section 4 – Implementation Plan and Proposed Timeline (provide a high-level implementation plan with estimated timeline and CVs for the project team members)
- Section 5 – Work Samples and References (provide links or demos to products/materials created by company, ideally those that are aligned with this project, and a list of past clients)
- Section 6 – Cost Estimate (include all line items as described below)

Additional Response Considerations

Please ensure you include the following in your proposal:

Background

- Provide your legal business name, website, address, number of employees, parent entity or university (if applicable), and office locations.
- Do you have any overseas or contract/freelance employees?
- Provide a detailed description of your organization’s experience working with the target populations for this evaluation (i.e., early childhood through college) and youth and young adults with IDD (especially in research and evaluation settings).

Summary/History

- How did your organization/group start?
- Who is the lead PI or principal evaluator, and what is their background/area of study? What is their experience working with youth from early elementary through college and with IDD?
- What is the mission of your organization/group?
- Does your organization have an internal IRB and criteria for its engagement in a project like this? If not, how will you ensure human subjects ethics are upheld?

Differentiators

- How does your organization differentiate itself vs. similar entities?

HR & Hiring Processes

- Please provide highlights of your work culture and any ratings/awards in this area. Please summarize your hiring process, including support of ADA and efforts to ensure you reach a broad applicant pool.

Partnerships

- What partnerships do you maintain that are relevant to this request?

Project Management

- Describe your project management team. Please include sample resumes or bios, including at least one of whom would be assigned to our project if it were to start today

(we understand that individuals may or may not be available when the contract is executed).

- Please describe your project management philosophy/approach.
- How does your management team deal with large complex organizations and differences of opinion within those organizations?

Project Concept & Recommendations

- Ensure that all key features, participants, audiences, and deadlines are acknowledged in your proposal.

Project Approach

- Summarize your approach to the project, and what you believe will be major variables/risks that will drive success/failure based on our goals. How can those risks best be managed on our side and your side?

Communication

- How will we interface with your team on a day-to-day basis? What tools will be used?

Project Team Summary

- Describe the team that will conduct this work.

Budget

- Submit a yearly budget based on your proposed timeline/staffing. Budgets should be constructed around project tasks/objectives. Please include costs for: personnel and FTE (incl. fringe benefits), travel (if applicable), project operations and supplies (e.g., technology, software, printing), participant stipends, and any other direct or indirect project costs not specified here that you think are required to complete the project.
- Please note that our cap on indirect rate is 11.8%.

References

- Provide several references for similar projects.

Terms of Contract

Contract terms and conditions will be negotiated upon selection of the winning bidder for this RFP. All contractual terms and conditions will be subject to review by Special Olympics legal and finance departments and will include scope, budget, schedule, and other necessary items pertaining to the project.

Instructions

General Conditions and Terms

Special Olympics is not obligated to any course of action as the result of this RFP. Issuance of

this RFP does not constitute a commitment by Special Olympics to award any contract. Special Olympics is not responsible for any costs incurred by any vendor or their partners in the RFP response preparation or presentation. Information submitted in response to this RFP will become the property of Special Olympics. All responses will be kept private from other vendors. Special Olympics reserves the right to modify this RFP at any time and reserves the right to reject any responses to this RFP, in whole or in part, at any time.

Questions, Delivery, and Due Dates

Specific questions concerning this RFP may be emailed to: jdonahue@specialolympics.org. All responses to this RFP are due to Special Olympics by March 13, 2026. Final notification of selected proposal will be shared with the successful respondent by March 30, 2026.

We will hold a virtual public Q&A session for all potential respondents to join SONA and ask questions about this RFP and the IYL Learning Journey. This Q&A session will be held on Microsoft Teams and will take place on March 2, 2026, at 1:30pm ET. Please email jdonahue@specialolympics.org to request the details and meeting link for this session.

After the closing deadline for proposals, during the review period, Special Olympics may elect to schedule individual meetings with or presentations from respondents.

Proposal Review Schedule

The schedule for RFP submission is as follows:

RFP released	Feb 13, 2026
Q&A session (SONA to answer questions from respondents)	Mar 2, 2026 1:30pm ET <i>Please email to be added to this event.</i>
Full RFP response submission due	Mar 13, 2026 11:59pm ET
SONA review submissions, follow up as needed, reference checks	Mar 16-27, 2026
Notification of selected proposal	Mar 30, 2026
Contract negotiation begins	Apr 6, 2026
Implementation start	May 15, 2026 <i>Dependent on contract negotiation timeline.</i>

Response Format

Responses shall be submitted in PDF format and sent using electronic mail. Send your response to: jdonahue@specialolympics.org by the date and time specified above. Receipt will be acknowledged via email. Please include the words "RFP Submission: SOUCS IYL Learning Journey" in the subject line. Please note, financials should be sent separately, directly as a PDF document via email to: sduckworth@specialolympics.org (subject: "RFP Budget: SOUCS IYL Learning Journey").

Value in-Kind (VIK) Solutions

Special Olympics, being a non-profit organization, relies heavily upon sponsored or value-in-kind contributions. We ask vendors to state if and how much of their solution would be offered in a sponsored or VIK relationship.

Special Olympics EEO Statement

Special Olympics is an Equal Employment Opportunity employer committed to maintaining a non-discriminatory, diverse work environment. Special Olympics does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, or on any other basis prohibited by applicable law in any of its programs or activities.

Points of Contact

Primary

- Jennifer Donahue, Director of Applied Research and Knowledge Translation, Unified Champion Schools – jdonahue@specialolympics.org

Secondary

- Holly Jacobs, Director of Research and Evaluation, Unified Champion Schools – [hjacob@specialolympics.org](mailto:hjacobs@specialolympics.org)
- Sarah Duckworth, Senior Director, Grant Admin & Operations, Unified Champion Schools – sduckworth@specialolympics.org

Terms and Conditions

Special Olympics has the right to do any of the following at any time:

- Accept or reject any or all the responses we get to this RFP for any reason
- Cancel this RFP or the project for any reason
- Change any of the terms of this RFP or the requirements of the project
- Discuss the project or negotiate a contract with more than one supplier at a time
- Investigate any supplier to ensure it is qualified for this project
- Ask any supplier to explain its RFP response
- Re-open or ask more suppliers to participate in the RFP process

Appendices

Appendix A: The Six Skills of Special Olympics Inclusive Youth Leadership

Special Olympics Inclusive Youth Leadership (IYL) programming is anchored in six skills—openness, empathy, innovation, accountability, bravery, and collaboration. These are skills that all IYL programming develops in youth with and without intellectual disabilities (ID) and are essential in creating quality leaders that know how to include people with different strengths,

preferences, and roles within a team.

The six skills are briefly described below.

- **Openness:** I am open to new people and new ideas. I believe that all people belong and have value. I am curious and like to learn more when people share new ideas. I am honest and respectful when I share my ideas with others.
- **Innovation:** I am creative/innovative. I like coming up with new or better ways to do things and evolve things to do altogether.
- **Bravery:** I am brave. I choose to do the right things, even when it is hard. I keep going and believe that I can do it, even if it is hard!
- **Collaboration:** I collaborate with others. I work with other people to accomplish my goals. I believe everyone has unique strengths that are all needed to complete projects.
- **Empathy:** I show others empathy. I try to understand how another person is feeling. I try to understand things from other people's perspective and "walk in their shoes."
- **Accountability:** I am accountable to myself and to others. I am responsible. I do what I say I will do, even when it is hard. I keep the promises and commitments that I make to other people.

These skills are rooted in three underlying frameworks whose substantial research base creates a solid foundation for IYL programming. Those frameworks are Student Self Leadership (SSL) by Blanchard, the Inclusive Mindsets and Behaviors (IMB) framework by Special Olympics and the Harvard University Graduate School of Education's EASEL Lab, and Social and Emotional Learning competencies. Each of these frameworks contributes unique elements that, when combined, create a comprehensive approach to developing inclusive youth leadership.

1. [Student Self Leadership \(SSL\) by the Blanchard Institute](#)
SSL focuses on empowering students to take charge of their own learning and development. It focuses on building confidence and personal leadership skills by teaching students how to set meaningful goals, take responsibility for their actions, overcome limiting beliefs, evaluate their progress, and seek support when needed. This helps students reframe their current situations and realize that they're in control of their own lives and decisions. Students gain the resources and confidence to have better conversations at work and at home. SSL's focus on challenging beliefs and overcoming limiting mindsets directly supports the inclusive youth leadership skill of bravery, as it encourages students to take courageous actions and overcome obstacles.
2. [Inclusive Mindsets and Behaviors \(IMB\) by Special Olympics and Harvard EASEL Lab](#)
The IMB framework promotes the development of inclusive mindsets and behaviors. It includes concepts of universal dignity, empathy and perspective taking, and courageous action. These elements foster an environment where all individuals are valued and respected and where taking bold steps to include others is encouraged. The IMB framework's focus on universal dignity aligns with the inclusive youth leadership skill of openness, as it emphasizes understanding and valuing diverse perspectives.

3. [Social and Emotional Learning Competencies by CASEL](#)

Social and emotional competencies encompass self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making, and self-management. These competencies are essential for understanding oneself and others, building positive relationships, and making ethical decisions. The focus on self-awareness and social awareness supports the inclusive youth leadership skill of openness, as it encourages students to be curious about new ideas and respectful of different perspectives.

The integration of SSL, IMB, and social and emotional frameworks creates a holistic approach to developing inclusive youth leadership skills. Each framework contributes specific skills and competencies that, when combined, provide a robust foundation for the six main skills. The chart below outlines what attainment of each skill looks like across several developmental stages of an individual's life. This is a first attempt to map skills by developmental level, drawing on the influencing frameworks. The crosswalk of skills, frameworks, and development could change before or during the evaluation, especially considering any findings from the evaluation.

	Elementary	Middle	High	College
Openness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive to a new activities, ideas, and people even if it's unfamiliar • Welcomes others into play or a group (e.g., shares materials or makes space) • Asks questions about something or someone new • Accepts people regardless of differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds her identity through a lens of inclusion, mutual respect, different perspectives, and universal dignity • Listens when others share different opinions or interests • Tries new roles or activities, especially when she doesn't feel confident • Uses respectful language to agree/disagree with peers • Reflects curiosity by trying and learning about new things 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively seeks out groups with different people, including those outside his usual circle • Engages in new experiences, like field trips, new activities, or leadership roles • Learns from others' ideas and uses them to improve his own thinking • Knows the value of his perspective and shares it clearly and respectfully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages with new people or ideas using her preferred communication methods • Reflects curiosity rather than judgment when encountering unfamiliar ideas • Mindful of others' stories, perspectives, or needs • Affirms belonging for others • Thoughtful when learning and applying new concepts and perspectives • Advocates for her need for space, time, and respect
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practices wonder and curiosity: asks questions • Tries different approaches • Shows curiosity • Uses familiar tools or materials in new ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges limiting beliefs • Expresses original ideas • Combines information or ideas in a new way • Creates or suggests alternative ways of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers suggestions to improve how things work • Uses personal interests to contribute in creative ways • Adjusts tools, routines, or language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies problems or inefficiencies and suggests improvements • Contributes to the design of or leads new methods for organizing people, tasks, or events

		<p>doing things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries out different ways to connect with others or solve social challenges 	<p>to increase access or participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses visual, verbal, or physical methods to express themselves clearly and accessibly to others • Communicates new ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Takes initiative to solve problems creatively • Creates systems or tools that help others participate more fully
Bravery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries something new even when unsure • Intervenes when someone is doing something unkind • Keeps going when a task is difficult or frustrating • Asks for help instead of giving up or shutting down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocates for self or others • Expresses ideas even when unsure • Takes initiative to connect with someone new or unfamiliar • Tries again after being unsuccessful • Joins a group activity or discussion even when unsure of belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares ideas and ask questions in groups • Advocates for self or others, even when it's not easy • Tries a new activity or leadership role, even when there are barriers • Keeps showing up—even if he feels underestimated or left out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Productively challenges assumptions • Finds opportunities to meaningfully share her perspective • Seeks out new experiences outside her routine (new job task, new social role, travel) • Communicates discomfort, disagreement, or boundaries • Steps into influential roles (greeter, presenter, decision-maker) even when people speak for her
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beginning to recognize when he feels left out or doesn't belong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes when she feels like she doesn't belong and why she feels that way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes when and why he feels like he doesn't belong and what that means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses agreement, ideas, or needs in group work using varied

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joins in group tasks or play • Takes turns or shares materials during an activity • Asks for and accepts help from peers or adults • Shows interest in what others are doing and tries to join in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in paired or group activities with clear expectations • Respects different ideas or perspectives during planning or problem-solving • Asks for or offers help on shared tasks or challenges • Completes part of a project while recognizing others' contributions 	<p>to him</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes reliably to team efforts, especially in structured or sport-based contexts • Recognizes peers' roles and comments on their strengths or wins • Experiments with different communication styles to share his ideas and contribute to problem solving 	<p>communication styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engages in shared decisions about group tasks or social plans • Advocates for the inclusion of other team members with different needs • Helps shape environments where different strengths are named and valued
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands his own basic emotions • Notices when someone is happy, sad, upset, or hurt • Expresses care through simple gestures (sharing, hugging, offering a toy) • Beginning to change own behavior when prompted to consider how someone else might feel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands complex emotions and what causes them • Notices social or emotional shifts in others and adjusts her behavior • Listens and ask questions when others share their thoughts or feelings, even if different from her own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responds when someone is struggling by offering help or encouragement • Remembers what peers like or need and brings that into conversation or activity • Adjusts communication style based on a peer's comfort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes others' feelings, simple and complex, and helps them feel seen • Expresses care and shows compassion when others are excluded, upset, or not heard • Builds inclusive habits—e.g., waits, prompts, or supports others in communicating • Reminds others to "think about what they need or feel"
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tries to complete a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to make 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates

	<p>task even if it's not fun or easy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receptive to instructions or routines and makes informed decisions, with or without support • Takes responsibility for simple choices (e.g., cleaning up, staying with the group) 	<p>decisions according to her values, beliefs, and point of view</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows through on personal or group responsibilities, especially in a structured environment • Uses tools to stay on task and finish what was started • Acknowledges when something isn't done or she needs support • Tries again or asks for support when overwhelmed instead of withdrawing 	<p>mistakes without shifting blame</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living according to her values, beliefs, and point of view • Fulfills assigned or chosen roles on a team, even when it's challenging or not preferred • Asks for help when unsure how to complete something • Checks in with adults or peers to confirm progress or next steps • Notices when others depend on him and adjusts to meet shared goals 	<p>preferences, availability, or changes in plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follows through on agreed-upon tasks when given accessible timelines and tools • Checks in with partners or facilitators about her progress • Shares what she needs to succeed—before quitting or disengaging • Owns her mistakes without shifting blame
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Appendix B: Example Materials Package for Empathy Skill in Early Elementary

1. Empathy Skill Intro Video
 - a. Video
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager

2. Classroom Role Mapping
 - a. Poster
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager

3. Matching: Ask & Offer – Help Switch Bracelets
 - a. In-person activity
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager

4. [Unified Young Readers Club](#) Book of the Month
 - a. Written Resource – discussion questions, classroom activities, project suggestion that goes along with a particular book
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager

5. [Inclusion Tiles F.E.E.L.S](#) & [feeling tracker](#)
 - a. Physical and digital tiles with tracker worksheet
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager

6. Coloring/Activity Pages
 - a. Empathy-specific coloring/activity pages
 - b. Guide for use by facilitator
 - c. Take-home one pager