

An ASCD Study Guide for *Students Taking Action Together: 5 Teaching Techniques to Cultivate SEL, Civic Engagement, and a Healthy Democracy*



This ASCD Study Guide is designed to enhance your understanding and application of the information contained in *Students Taking Action Together: 5 Teaching Techniques to Cultivate SEL, Civic Engagement, and a Healthy Democracy*, an ASCD book written by Lauren M. Fullmer, Laura F. Bond, Crystal N. Molyneaux, Samuel J. Nayman, and Maurice J. Elias and published in April 2022.

You can use the study guide after you have read the book or as you finish each chapter. The questions provided are not meant to cover all aspects of the book, but rather to address specific ideas that might warrant further reflection.

Most of the questions contained in this study guide are ones you can think about on your own, but you might consider pairing with a colleague or forming a study group with others who have read (or are reading) *Students Taking Action Together*. Please note that this question set features multiple opportunities to employ the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. We recommend you do so in collaboration with colleagues.

Introduction

1. Would your elevator pitch about the importance of public education (and formal education in general) include something about its role in fostering a democratic society? What parts of the Introduction would you include in your pitch?
2. Why do you think that civics education efforts continue to be sporadic, despite general agreement that civics knowledge is important?
3. Review the statements on page 4 about the capabilities children need as future citizens. Which ones, if any, do you disagree with? Is there anything you would add?

Chapter 1. The Five STAT Strategies

1. How is social-emotional learning related to the capacity for civil discourse?
2. *I believe that social justice education is an essential part of basic education.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
3. Review the five STAT instructional strategies. Are any of them familiar to you? Which of these strategies will require you to acquire new learning? Which take you most out of your comfort zone? Why do you think that is the case?
4. Reflect on the book's main title: *Students Taking Action Together*. Within your school or district, are their persistent policies or practices that would need to be rethought or retired to achieve this outcome?
5. Refer to the anecdote at the beginning of the chapter (pp. 11–12). What are the barriers to addressing politically charged social issues (e.g., gun violence, racism, gender fluidity, climate change) in your classroom and school?

Chapter 2. Norms: Creating the Climate for Civil Conversation

1. Why is it so important to involve students in cocreating norms for classroom discussions? What have been your best experiences doing this? What have you found to be most challenging?

2. Review Figure 2.4. In each of the four sections, identify a strategy for fostering a positive classroom climate that you are *not* currently using and commit to employing it in the coming weeks. Get a colleague on board to serve as a "buddy" for accountability and support.
3. Review the "SEL Competency Connections" on page 30 and page 40. How can norms elevate student's relationship skills and self-management capacity?
4. *Good classroom norms involve minimizing conflict during a discussion.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
5. Using the norms check-in assessment on pages 40–41, where do you see opportunities (in your curriculum, over the course of the school year) to revisit norms? How would you explain to students why it's necessary to do so?

Chapter 3. Yes-No-Maybe: Building Skills for Social Awareness and Peer Listening

1. Operating under the ethic of "do no harm," what are the consequences when educators avoid teaching topics that are on students' minds and weighing on their hearts?
2. In the five steps of Yes-No-Maybe, teachers do not summarize or correct students' choice of Yes, No, or Maybe. What is the instructional purpose of this hands-off approach?
3. What is the benefit of asking students to reflect on how their opinions may have changed?
4. Think of a recent lesson or class discussion during that revealed students held strong misconceptions. How might integrating a Yes-No-Maybe have changed the nature of that lesson or discussion to better support student learning?
5. Which SEL competency referred to in the chapter do you expect to be the most and the least challenging to address as you implement the Yes-No-Maybe strategy in your classroom?
6. *Informed opinions nurture our democracy.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.

Chapter 4. Respectful Debate: Developing Empathy and Perspective-Taking

1. What is unique about the Respectful Debate strategy? What benefits do you feel it brings to the students?
2. Think about influential debates you have seen, heard, or read about. What made them great, in your opinion? What aspects of these debates made them influential? What similarities can you identify between those debates and the Respectful Debate strategy?
3. What do you find most challenging about the Respect Debate strategy? Whom might you consult for help in working through potential challenges?
4. Yes-No Maybe: *The goal of Respectful Debate is not to solve the social or political matter in question; it's to incite a willingness among students to consider others' viewpoints.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
5. Review the assessment tools in Figures 4.6, 4.7, and 4.8 (pp. 71–72). Discuss with a colleague, or even with your students, how you might use or modify these assessments in your practice.
6. Once you have had some practice implementing the Respectful Debate strategy, reflect on how it has affected students' empathy and appreciation for different points of view. How has it helped clarify the issues underlying the debate? How can the SEL outcomes of Respectful Debate help cultivate healthier civic engagement for a democracy?

Chapter 5. *Audience-Focused Communication: Creating Effective Presentations*

1. In which areas of instruction do you expect the Audience-Focused Communication strategy to be useful?
2. Review the Seven Steps of AFC (see Figure 5.1, pp. 76-77). What challenges do you foresee when carrying this out in your classroom? How might you modify the process to make AFC more feasible with your students?
3. Refer to Step 5 (SEL Skill Practice and Presentation Rehearsal) of the seven-step AFC process (see Figure 5.1, p. 77). Which SEL competencies does it address? How would skipping this step affect the overall strategy?
4. *Students should focus on the content of their work and be less concerned with the nuances of its presentation.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
5. How might you adjust your teaching to provide students with more opportunities to practice crafting communication with audience perspective in mind?

Chapter 6. *PLAN: A Problem-Solving Strategy for Historical Understanding and Social Action*

1. Does your school use a common problem-solving framework? If so, what elements of PLAN, (if any) might be integrated into that framework? If you don't follow a common framework, what benefits might come from using a problem-solving strategy like PLAN in your classroom?
2. Think about a recent school- or classroom-based problem that drew a lot of attention in your community. How could PLAN have made a difference in how that problem was addressed?
3. How can PLAN help to democratize the classroom and fuel democratic action?
4. Does your current lesson-planning process present any barriers to implementing PLAN? If so, what are they, and how might you go about removing them?
5. Refer to Figure 6.3 (p. 100), which presents guiding questions for helping students identify and describe the problem (P). How does this part of PLAN foster the SEL competency of social awareness?
6. How do the PLAN strategy steps of listing options (L) and action planning (A) help students empathize with the stakeholders who grappled or are currently grappling with the problem? How do these steps open students' eyes to the agency of these stakeholders?
7. How would eliminating the notice successes (N) step of the PLAN strategy affect student learning?
8. Refer to Figure 6.10 (p. 112), which presents the gold standard of project-based learning. How could PLAN Integrative help you to implement project-based learning in your classroom? If you are already implementing project-based learning, what elements of PLAN integrative could enrich your current practice?

Chapter 7. *STAT Integration Across the Curriculum*

1. Review Figure 7.1 (pp. 118–119). Choose one of the STAT strategies and explain how you might make it transdisciplinary in your professional setting.
2. *I don't think most students in STEM/ELA/VPA classes would be interested in STAT strategies.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
3. In what ways do you think STAT strategies could elevate student engagement in STEM, ELA, and VPA classes?
4. Keeping in mind that *knowledge* is not *understanding*, how do STAT strategies promote students' depth and breadth of understanding across the content areas?

5. How might you use the STAT strategies in your classroom or school to cultivate student and teacher autonomy?

Chapter 8. STAT in the Inclusion Classroom

1. *I don't believe STAT has a place in the inclusion classroom; this is a distraction from the most important focus of students with challenged abilities.* Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion.
2. Are there instructional differences between STAT in an inclusion and a non-inclusion classroom? If so, what are they? If not, why not?
3. How can giving students with challenged abilities choice and voice with the STAT strategies build their competence and confidence in the classroom?
4. What challenges might you anticipate when implementing STAT in an inclusion classroom? How would you handle these challenges? What support might you seek out?

Chapter 9. Scaling Up STAT

1. Review your school or district mission statement. Where might STAT connect to the language in this statement? If a connection cannot be made, what revisions to the mission statement would be necessary in order to accommodate STAT?
2. How can sharing your own lived-and-learned experiences using STAT strategies help both you and others grow in ways that benefit students?
3. If you wanted to make more teachers or administrators in your school aware of STAT strategies, how would you start this process? Review the list of avenues to scale up STAT on pages 144–146. Which seems the most and least feasible for your current context?
4. A theme that emerges in this chapter is that *we need each other to make change*. Reflect on this statement, using the Yes-No-Maybe STAT strategy. Do you agree with it, disagree with it, or are you not sure? Elaborate on the reasoning behind your opinion. Practically speaking, how might a collaborative implementation of STAT with colleagues help you (and them) this week or this school year?
5. How is teacher leadership interconnected with student leadership?
6. How might you reach out to mental health professionals in your school for additional support in implementing STAT strategies? Where and when might you most need that support?
7. What work would need to be accomplished within your school community to empower students to lead change on school-based or community issues?
8. What current issues in your educational community could STAT potentially help mitigate?

Appendices

1. Review the Appendices for additional resources and sample STAT lessons. Discuss them with colleagues. (You can find additional STAT lessons to review and discuss on this book's [companion website](#).)
2. Review the teaching tips in Appendix C and make a commitment to try a few as you implement the STAT strategies. Consider pairing up with a colleague for accountability and support.
3. Review the STAT elevator pitches to key stakeholders in Appendix E. How would you personalize them for your own use? In particular, note the guidance on pitches to parents (p. 216). With colleagues, practice explaining to parents how and why you are committed to integrating STAT strategies into your instruction.

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