

Understanding the Research and Teacher Experience Behind the Refresh of Harmony Third Edition

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Harmony SEL is a social and emotional learning (SEL) program that empowers Pre-K–Grade 6 teachers, counselors, and out-of-school instructors (collectively “educators”) to foster better relationships among their students. Initially developed at Arizona State University, Harmony was presented to elementary schools first in 2008 with the goal of identifying practical methods for reducing relational conflicts in the classroom and other learning environments while also building students’ confidence, relationships, and academic success. In 2014, Harmony formed a partnership with the National University System (NUS), NUS provided greater access to the Harmony program. NUS released several updates to the curriculum in the fall of 2019 to transform it into a digital program (which is accessible via an [Online Learning Portal](#)).

Currently, Harmony is refreshing the program with expanded content and improvements to the educator and student experience while at the same time ensuring that the impact of the program is sustained, amplified, and positioned to reach millions more students. Planned for winter 2022, “Harmony Third Edition” is a refresh that is intended to provide an integrated, relevant, and comprehensive Pre-K–Grade 6 program. With a range of refinements and updates that reflect the latest research on SEL practices in addition to suggestions from educators, district leaders, and national experts, the program refresh will include topics and instructional models that are designed to improve the effectiveness and enhance the relevance of Harmony, particularly for student populations that are typically underserved.

At a Glance

The overall goals, theoretical and empirical grounding, and core content of the program remain the same. Harmony is bringing the program that educators know and love into a Third Edition with a refreshed look and feel, an update to the content, and a more comprehensive and consistent curriculum. Specifically,

Everyday Practices have received enhanced features (Personal Harmony Goals and Mindful Minute in Meet Up) and tools (e.g., Response Prompts). The five-unit structure was adapted to reflect a focus in the first unit on self, then three units on interpersonal relationships, and ending with one unit on relationships in community. Lessons across all grades are structured to be in a consistent and user-friendly format in which each section can be completed within 15-20 minutes using interactive and peer-based activities. Harmony also kept the beloved character Z in the storybooks, while enhancing storybooks to include a more diverse cast of characters. Harmony Third Edition also includes updated features on the Online Learning Portal including a stronger focus on adult SEL, academic integration and literature alignments, and a data dashboard, as well as a global search feature and resource index.

This executive summary provides a high-level summary of what currently exists within the program, what is staying the same in the refresh, and what are enhanced features in the refresh.

The Refresh Process

To refresh Harmony SEL, Harmony staff took a multi-faceted approach, including a discovery phase prior to development, a rigorous development phase, and an intensive quality assurance process. In the discovery phase, Harmony engaged in a comprehensive set of research activities to determine strengths and opportunities for growth through literature reviews, user experience, and qualitative and quantitative research. Once Harmony developed a series of recommendations from the discovery phase, Harmony contracted with a curriculum developer, MPS, to determine which recommendations to implement, and MPS began to execute those recommendations to refresh the program. As MPS and Harmony engaged in the refresh, Harmony executed a rigorous review process comprised of national experts, expert practitioners, and our internal team to refresh the program with coherence and quality.

Harmony Third Edition Refresh

Harmony is taking great care during the Third Edition refresh process to keep a majority of the content, tools, and resources, while incorporating updated content with a refreshed look and feel. In the table below, we provide the core components of the Harmony program, a high-level overview of what is currently included, what is remaining the same (with a refresh), and what is being enhanced.

<i>Components of the Program</i>	<i>Currently within Program</i>	<i>Harmony SEL Refresh - Staying the Same</i>	<i>Harmony SEL Refresh - Enhanced Features¹</i>
Goals of the Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes healthy relationships and social harmony within learning environments Incorporates intergroup contact theory, social-cognitive theory, and principles of SEL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains the goals of the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshes program materials with a trauma-informed lens, an asset-based approach to SEL (bringing out student strengths), and flexibility to meet localized needs
Everyday Practice – Harmony Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-creates classroom goals to achieve respectful and inclusive environments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps Class Harmony Goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements Personal Harmony Goals, which are individual relationship-driven goals that help students meet Class Harmony Goals
Everyday Practice – Meet Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes four steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Greeting Sharing and Responding Community Check-in Quick Connection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retitles four steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Greeting Sharing and Responding Checking-in Connecting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses new tool, Response Option Prompts, to support responding Includes sub-steps for Checking-in: students can check-in on Class or Personal Harmony Goals Includes sub-steps for Connecting: students can connect with others (through Quick Connection Cards) or with self (through Mindful Minute).
Everyday Practice – Buddy Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pairs students with a new buddy each week Uses three types of Quick Connection Cards: Conversation Starters, Community Builders, and Collaborators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands Quick Connection Card deck 	No changes to Buddy Up

¹ Note that not all features are released at the time that this document is released

<p>Units</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on core skills needed to build supportive and inclusive relationships • Includes five sequential units <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Diversity and Inclusion 2. Empathy and Critical Thinking 3. Communication 4. Problem Solving 5. Peer Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes approximately 80% of original content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds additional SEL competencies students need to be successful in school, work, and life (based on gap analysis with CASEL² sub-competencies) • Includes five refreshed units <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being My Best Self 2. Valuing Each Other 3. Communicating with Each Other 4. Learning from Each Other 5. Supporting Our Community
<p>Lessons & Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes play and peer-based activities, role plays, hands-on activities, discussions, mixed groups, movement, and games • Aligns to CASEL competencies • Are grade-banded • Includes 20-25 lessons per grade band • Divided into three sections • Provides 45-60-minute lessons, with one- and two-day lessons • Includes lesson synopsis, learning goals, learning objectives, and key concepts/vocabulary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporates similar instructional strategies • Includes similar three sections: set the stage, facilitate the activity, and review and reflect • Keeps learning goals • Ensures consistency with using lesson synopsis and learning goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances alignment to CASEL sub-competencies • Develops grade-level-specific lessons • Includes 5 lessons + a unit introduction for each unit (30 lessons per grade) • Provides lessons that can be divided into 15-20-minute segments • Adapts learning objectives to student-friendly success criteria • Adapts key concepts/vocabulary section to become vocabulary instruction within the lesson • Includes differentiation section for additional support and challenges • Includes adaptations for remote learning
<p>Storybooks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in Pre-K to Grade 2 to introduce lesson concepts • Includes a space being, Z, as primary character, with Treehouse Friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continues use of storybooks to introduce concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops stories for unit introduction in Grades 3–5 • Incorporates a more diverse set of Clubhouse Friends who have more prominent roles within stories • Decreases wordiness and enhances layout and images of storybooks
<p>Digital Games</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes a Game Room App with select Harmony games and Quick Connection Cards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refreshes Game Room App with updated games and content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds additional games to the Game Room App (at least one per unit) • Develops web-based platform so students can play games on the web

² The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) identifies five social and emotional competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Each competency is comprised of additional sub-competencies.

<p>Home-School Connections</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes Family Letter and Home Activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refreshes Family Letters and Home Activities with updated content 	<p><i>No changes to Family Letters and Home Activities</i></p>
<p>Academic Integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes Everyday Moments section to extend the skills and concepts learned Incorporates academic skill-building within lessons (e.g., writing, reading comprehension, active listening, presenting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures Everyday Moments section is consistent across grades and refreshed Incorporates similar skill-building activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes an academic integration section within each unit, providing an overview and concrete suggestions on how SEL competencies can be incorporated into academic instruction Develops literature guides with specific texts to help students discuss and engage with SEL competencies
<p>Educator SEL</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes a Research and Relevance section Includes a <i>Think On It/Act On It</i> section to reflect on use of lesson skills and concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updates research sections to build educatory SEL capacity, e.g., <i>Relevancy: Building Our Knowledge</i> section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Builds educator SEL competencies to better align with CASEL's Program Guide, specifically a <i>Think on It: Reflecting on Our Assumptions</i> section and an <i>Act on It: Understanding Our Students in Context</i> section Incorporates on-demand professional learning through sister program, <i>Inspire Teaching & Learning</i>
<p>Professional Learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes product training to get started with Harmony Includes on-demand training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keeps product training with updates to the current program Updates on-demand training with refresh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhances professional learning offerings to go deeper with the program materials, academic integration, and coaching and support
<p>Data and Measures</p>	<p><i>Not currently included</i></p>	<p>N/A</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates SEL in Action section so students can reflect on how they use SEL competencies across contexts and monitor progress towards SEL goals Develops student SEL competency and school climate compendium to identify aligned and validated measures Includes a Data Dashboard on the Online Learning Portal to monitor progress and obtain feedback Includes implementation measures (observation and self-assessment)

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