

# The Interdependence of Life

## PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students discuss interdependence and ethics. First, we revisit the definition of interdependence and compassion. Then, students will have a class discussion on the purpose of ethics. Finally, students will create an interdependence web of their favorite dish. This activity will help strengthen students' understanding of interdependence. By the end of this lesson, students should be able to identify how awareness of interdependence leads to a sense of gratitude and appreciation.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Analyze interdependence by examining how all individuals depend on and can be affected by a system context
- Explore a definition of ethical practice
- Recognize the number of people contributing to our well-being by providing the necessary ingredients for a favorite dish

## LENGTH

45 minutes

## PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



### Appreciating Interdependence

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Writing utensils and paper
- Colored pencils
- Computer (research)
- Timer
- School Interdependence Web
- Sweater Interdependence Web
- Favorite Food Examples handout

## CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

[PAUSE]s can be up to 10 seconds each

### Overview

Lead students in a resource practice. Use a timer for 4 minutes for the practice and 1 minute for the debrief questions.

### Guiding Language

*"Let's take a moment to get comfortable. For you, this may be in your chair or, if you feel like it, leaning against a wall or sitting on the floor. You can open your eyes or keep them closed. However you feel comfortable. [PAUSE]*

- *Now I invite you to think of something that makes you feel better, stronger, or more resilient. It could be a person, place, thing, something about yourself, or a memory of kindness you experienced. It can be real or imaginary.*
- *Take a few moments to focus on your resource. Notice the details of your resource. What do you see, smell, feel, hear, or taste? [PAUSE]*
- *What do you notice inside your body when you think about your resource? Notice the sensations. [PAUSE]*
- *You might feel warmer or cooler, lighter or heavier, perhaps tingling, maybe you notice your breathing — just be curious. [PAUSE]*
- *As you notice your sensations, can you find a place in your body that feels pleasant or*

*neutral? If so, let your attention rest there for a few moments. [PAUSE]*

- *If you don't notice any sensations, that's okay. Just notice that you're not feeling any sensations at the moment and continue to sit with your resources. [PAUSE]*
- *When you get distracted, notice that and bring your attention back to your resource*
- *Let's take a moment to get comfortable. For you, this may be in your chair or, if you feel like it, leaning against a wall or sitting on the floor. You can open your eyes or keep them closed. However you feel comfortable. [PAUSE]*
- *Now I invite you to think of something that makes you feel better, stronger, or more resilient. It could be a person, place, thing, something about yourself, or a memory of kindness you experienced. It can be real or imaginary.*
- *Take a few moments to focus on your resource. Notice the details of your resource. What do you see, smell, feel, hear, or taste? [PAUSE]*
- *What do you notice inside your body when you think about your resource? Notice the sensations. [PAUSE]*
- *You might feel warmer or cooler, lighter or heavier, perhaps tingling, maybe you notice your breathing — just be curious. [PAUSE]*
- *As you notice your sensations, can you find a place in your body that feels pleasant or*

*neutral? If so, let your attention rest there for a few moments. [PAUSE]*

- *If you don't notice any sensations, that's okay. Just notice that you're not feeling any sensations at the moment and continue to sit with your resources. [PAUSE]*
- *When you get distracted, notice that and bring your attention back to your resource or a sensation in your body. [PAUSE]*
- *If you become aware of unpleasant sensations, you can shift your focus to another part of your resource, choose a new resource, or do a grounding practice if you like. Then, track your body for sensations again, focusing on a place that feels neutral or pleasant. Let your attention rest there for a few moments again. [PAUSE]*
- *As we do this practice, we're learning more about our bodies and how to use a resource to get in touch with sensations of well-being that can help our body feel safe and relaxed.*
- *Now we'll conclude the practice. Thank you."*

### Debrief

Write the debriefing questions on the board. If no students volunteer, please share an example of a resource that you use personally.

***"Who would like to respond to one of the following questions about your resource practice today?"***

1. *What was that like for you?*
2. *Who noticed a new sensation to share about?*
3. *Who has a thought or insight to share?"*

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## PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 20 minutes

### Overview

In this presentation, students will explore more deeply the concept of interdependence. They will also be introduced to SEE Learning's perspective of ethics. Finally, as a class discussion, students will create a definition of Ethical Practice.

### Instructions and Guiding Language

In Part I, students will learn about the definition and connection between compassion and interdependence. In Part II, students will have a class discussion on ethics. Write the following vocabulary words, along with their definitions, on the board: Compassion, Interdependence, and Ethics.

### Part I: Interdependence (Presentation)

***"Let's take a moment and review Compassion and Interdependence. Compassion is an emotion involving the wish to relieve or prevent the suffering of another out of a genuine concern for their well-being and a sense of tenderness and care for them."***

***It is important to remember that compassion rarely involves only you. Usually, kind acts that occur in our lives involve other people. We are kind to others, others are kind to us, or we are kind to each other. Our well-being depends on others and others' well-being on us. We call this "interdependence."***

***Interdependence is the principle that objects and events arise from various causes and conditions. Therefore, things can be interconnected even across long distances or periods of time. We understand that our lives do not exist in a vacuum and that there is an inherent relationship between ourselves and broader systems of people.***

***Interdependence can be applied not only to kind acts but to everyday things we use or experiences we've had. So remember, reflecting on the kind things others do for us or we do for them can be a personal resource for us and help us feel better, safer, or happier.***

***Understanding interdependence can help us recognize how we depend on others and others rely on us. This can help us feel gratitude, compassion, and connectedness even to people we may never meet. It also supports systems thinking since interdependence is a feature of all systems. We will discuss systems thinking in the next learning experience."***

Allow 1-2 minutes for students' questions and insights about interdependence.

***"Let's look at this picture."***

Give students at least 1 minute to look at the School Interdependence Web on page 409.

***"What do you notice in this picture?"***

***What does this picture mean to you?***

***What connections do you see between this picture and our discussion today?"***

Allow students to share, as you record their answers on the board.

The goal of this picture is to help students visualize an interdependence web in a city. Sample student responses might include:

- We exist within and are affected by Interdependent Systems.
- We are all interconnected in this world.
- The people we are connected to are also connected to many others.
- We are individuals within a system context, and we are all connected.

## **Part II: Ethics (Class Discussion)**

***"Let's talk a bit about ethics. Ethics is a set of principles or values that guide our thoughts and actions toward our own***

*well-being and the well-being of others. For example, seeing the value of friendship and caring for your friends are ethical practices. Caring for your friends benefits the friends as well as yourself. How about eating healthy? Every day, we engage in ethical practices. This section aims to make ethics a little more visible to us. Let's discuss the following questions as a class.*

*How would you describe ethics to someone not in our class? What does ethics mean to you?*

*What are some essential characteristics of an ethical practice?*

*What responsibilities do we have to consider the well-being of others when making decisions?"*

Co-create a working definition of ethical practice or some important characteristics of it as a class. A sample definition might be:

***"When we engage in ethical practices, we free ourselves from actions and behaviors that can harm ourselves and others."***

Conclude the discussion by saying:

***"Interdependence contributes to a sense of gratitude and connection with other people worldwide. Applying ethics to our decision-making will help us consider the impact those decisions have on ourselves, others, and the larger system we live in."***

### Teaching Tips

In SEE Learning, ethics is defined as a moral principle or values that can help guide one's thoughts and actions for one's and others' benefit. This learning experience aims to support students as they start thinking about ethics and ethical practice. It may be beneficial to have a class discussion or put students in small groups when discussing Part II. The time allocated for this section is 15 minutes. Please modify the time so it meets the needs of your students. Finally, writing the vocabulary on the board or having a word wall in your classroom dedicated to SEE Learning can be helpful.

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### INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 15 minutes

#### Activity Overview

In this insight activity, students will explore the idea of interdependence by working in a small group to create an interdependence drawing of their favorite meal. Interdependence helps us feel gratitude for the complexity of everyday objects we need for our survival. It is also an essential aspect of systems thinking.

#### Instructions and Guiding Language

To help your students understand this concept, do the following example as a whole group.

***"Today you will make an interdependence web. Before we start, let's look at an example of this activity using a sweater."***

- **What do you notice about this interdependence web?**

[Show students the Independence Web 2 of a sweater on page 410]

- **Next, look at where, when, why, and how this sweater came to exist.**
- **Finally, consider all the people needed to make this sweater."**

Allow 3-4 minutes for any questions over interdependence.

Let students self-select into groups of 3-4. Provide each group with a large piece of chart paper and colored pencils. Ask students to come to a consensus of a dish they all like to eat within 2 minutes.

**"In your group, you will make an interdependence web drawing for the dish you chose."**

Review the series of steps with the whole group before signaling the groups to begin their own web constructions. Remind students to be kind to each other and respectful of whatever others offer.

**"Let's take up to two minutes to come up with a dish everyone in the group enjoys eating. When your group comes to agreement, draw a simple picture of it in the center of your paper."**

If possible, write the following steps on your board. Check in with each group to provide help or guidance.

**"Now, let's follow these steps to make your interdependence web.**

- **#1: Brainstorm everything necessary for your favorite dish to exist.**
- **#2: Draw lines that connect your picture to the words or images of things/people needed for your dish to exist.**
- **#3: Look at your first circle of ideas. What do all of these depend on? Add more items around each of those, connecting with lines.**
- **#4: Imagine all the people involved in growing and harvesting the ingredients for your dish. Imagine all the people involved in making it and the tools and resources they use. Add any people, tools or resources that are necessary for this next layer of contributors.**
- **#5: Keep going:**
  - **Where do the ingredients come from? Is it from a farm or factory?**
  - **How far have the ingredients traveled?**
- **#6: Finally, think about all the people you've charted out. Estimate the total number of people needed for you to have this tasty food and write it on the bottom right-hand side of your paper."**

Conclude by asking your class the following questions:

- ***"What surprised you?"***
- ***"What are you wondering about now?"***

Encourage students to share this experience.

### Teaching Tips

It is recommended that students start by picking four main ingredients in their favorite dish. For example, lasagna's four main ingredients would be cheese, pasta, meat, and sauce.

- Then, where do these ingredients come from?
- Is it a factory?
- Is it a store?
- Is it a farm?
- Where are the ingredients from (location)?
- How far have the ingredients traveled?

Next, remind students what you need to buy the ingredients and the supplies they need. For example, you need money to purchase the ingredient of your favorite food. This requires having a job etc.

Suggest students take 2 to 3 minutes for each step. Step #5 is designed to push students to think about the global distribution of food. The goal is to help them realize that some ingredients come from around the world. Finally, encourage students to share what they are thinking and feeling after this exploration.

### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 5 minutes

#### Instructions and Guiding Language

In the same groups, ask students to select 2 of the following questions to discuss. Build in time at the end for several students to share.

***"As a group, select two of the following questions to discuss with your group. Please, everyone remember to help ensure each person in your group is heard. This is a time to share ideas that may be similar or different, and to listen generously to one another."***

1. ***How are these people in your independence web connected to you? How do they impact your well-being?***
2. ***Interdependence is part of our daily life, but often we do not see it. How can we highlight our interdependence more?***
3. ***What personal responsibilities do we have within the larger system?***
4. ***How do your everyday choices in food consumption affect the larger system?***
5. ***What are some ways our school is connected to our larger community?"***

### Teaching Tips

Interdependence can help us recognize how we depend on others, and others rely on us. This can help us feel gratitude, compassion, and connectedness to other people we may never meet. This reflective practice can also be completed in pairs (i.e., Think-Pair-Share). Dedicate 5 minutes to discuss questions within

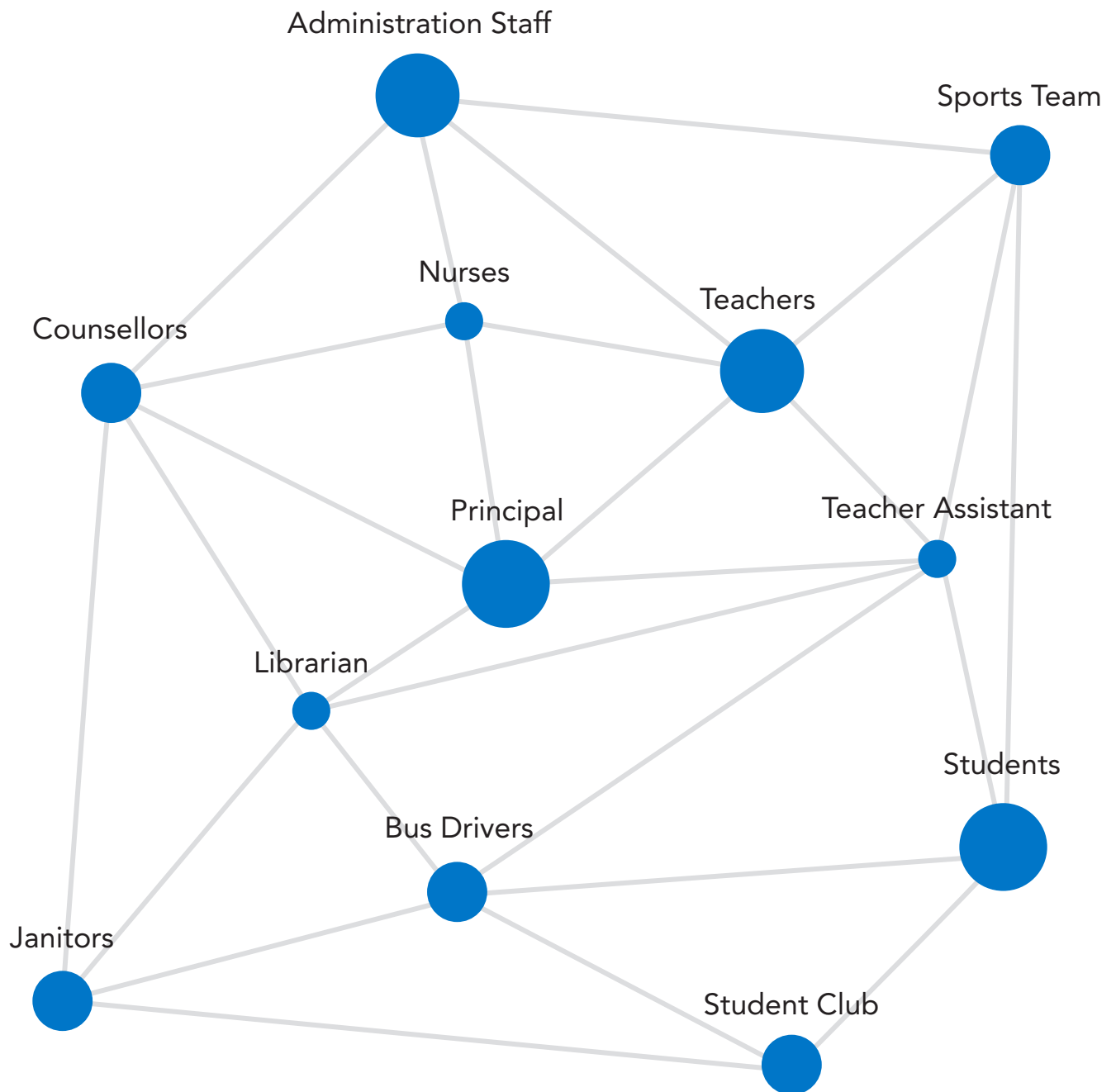
groups and 5 minutes to share. If time is an issue, select one question for the entire class to discuss together instead.



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## School Interdependence Web

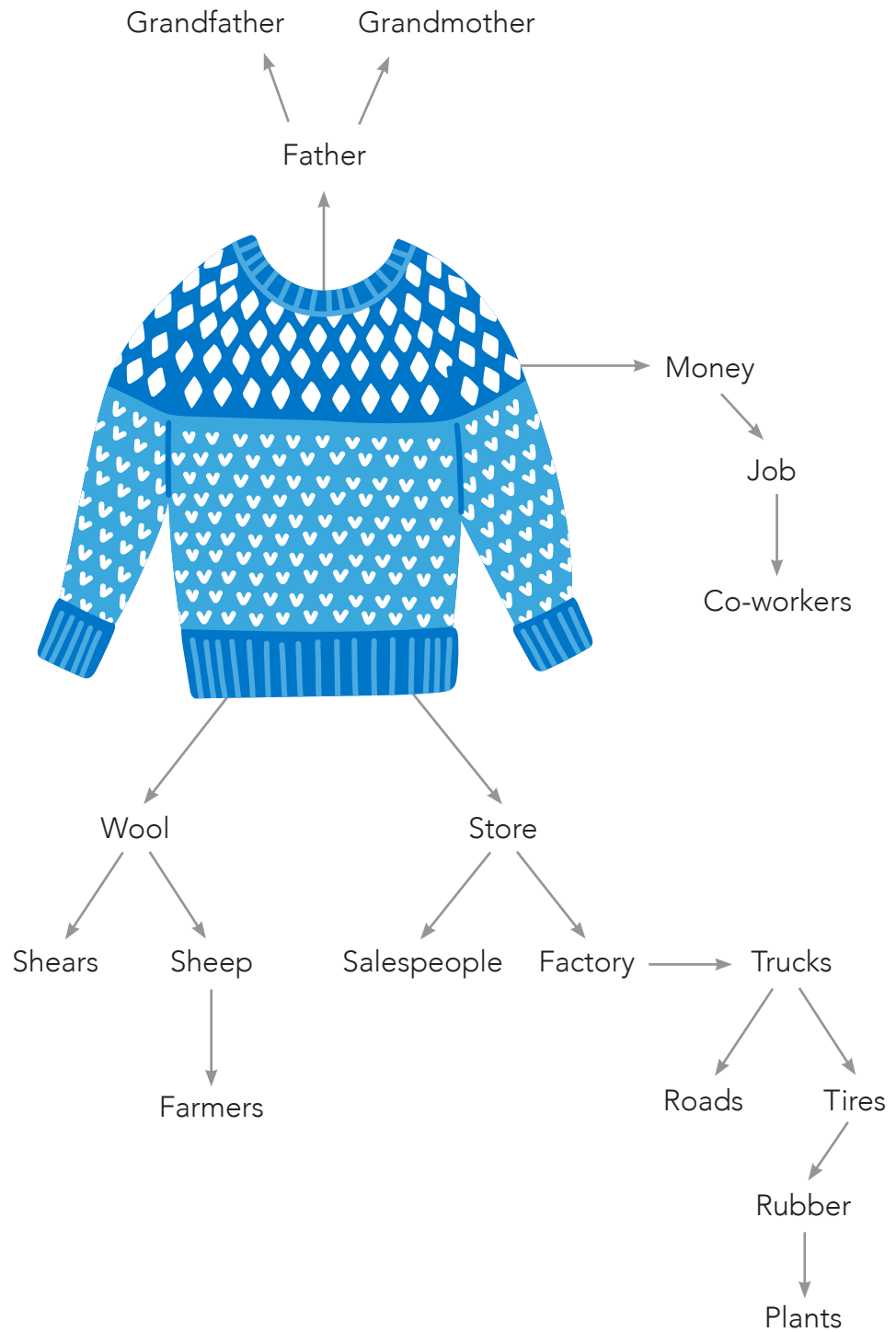
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## Sweater Interdependence Web

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## Favorite Food Examples

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