



# TOOLBOX

BY DOVETAIL LEARNING

A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum for Kindergarten to Sixth Grade

**Our mission is to build children's capacity for resilience in life and in learning through self-mastery and empathy for others.**

## What is Toolbox?

### 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

Filling a gap in today's educational assumptions, Toolbox, from Dovetail Learning, honors children's capacity for managing their own emotional, social and academic success by giving them tools that empower them.

The Toolbox curriculum teaches 12 simple yet powerful "tools." With practice, and in a classroom community that shares them, these tools become important personal and social skills: self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. The common language and Toolbox methods help children quickly adopt the tools and use them with autonomy and effectiveness.

Toolbox starts with the individual child, building self-knowledge and self-mastery; it quickly creates improvements in communication, civility and conflict resolution in the classroom, on the playground and across the whole school community. Children experience their own authority and responsibility to manage themselves and solve problems.

## Why is it Important?

Toolbox provides a critical foundation for academic success. Thirty-years of research on children's ability to transcend challenges (in the field of childhood resilience) has clearly proven that 1) social and emotional skills are critical for academic learning, 2) these skills can be taught and learned, and 3) this kind of training has a powerful benefit for life success.

*"Of all the programs on the Federal lists, Toolbox is the only one that teaches children about their own resilience."*

- Bonnie Benard  
Author, *Resiliency: What We Have Learned*

## Tools for Learning – Tools for Life

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# Toolbox Learning Theory

**Emotion drives attention**

**Attention drives memory**

**Memory drives learning**

~ Robert Sylwester

Neuroscience shows that stress, anxiety and fear markedly shut down the frontal lobes of the brain (learning, memory and higher order thinking). Toolbox gives children skills to regulate their own emotions to achieve positive emotional balance, allowing a focus on learning. The Tools help a child regulate through body awareness, emotional intelligence, mental attitude, and understanding, empathy and kindness toward others.

**... students' sense of belonging in the school community is critical to success in school.**

~ McNealy, et al (2002)

Learning theory shows conclusively that classroom connectedness (social comfort and belonging) is crucial to learning. Toolbox skills build empathy between children, creating a caring school environment where children not only learn well together, they understand that they are key to helping each other learn.

**Students don't care how much the teacher knows, until they know how much the teacher cares.**

~ Brendtro, Brokenleg, Van Bockern

Toolbox skills help teachers regulate their reactions and open their hearts to children authentically and non-judgmentally, giving children the "experience" of knowing how much the teacher cares: the number one supportive factor in childhood resilience.

**Higher-order thinking, learner readiness, decision-making, and test taking have all been shown to improve with emotional balance.**

~ Heartmath Institute

The science of neurocardiology demonstrates the critical link between positive emotion, heart "coherence" and the brain's ability to access creativity, intuition, and academic success. Toolbox skills open up the heart—brain connection.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs empower academic success. In July 2010, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) released a major new report that highlights the impact of SEL on academics. A rigorous meta-analysis of 213 studies of SEL programs shows, in addition to enhanced skills, attitudes, positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress,

**... students scored 11 percentile points higher on standardized achievement tests, a significant improvement, relative to peers not receiving (SEL).**

Social and Emotional Learning Research Group  
(U Illinois, Chicago) and CASEL (2010)

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## Tools for Learning – Tools for Life

Capacity →	Skill →	Emotional Competence →	Self-Mastery →	Caring →	Optimal Learning
<u>Understanding</u>  Children's innate <b>CAPACITY</b> for <b>Self-Reflection</b> and <b>Self-Governance</b>	<u>Training</u>  <b>Tools &amp; Practices</b> that establish proficiency (skill)  A self-organizing principle of discovery that "I" can direct myself with skillfulness	<u>Building</u>  <b>Emotional Competence</b> <sup>1</sup> <i>for success</i> in life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self awareness</li> <li>• Self management</li> <li>• Self Motivation</li> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Social Skills</li> </ul>	<u>Achieving</u>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy</li> <li>• Internal locus of control</li> <li>• Agency</li> <li>• Self-efficacy</li> </ul> <b>Engaging the brain for Optimal Learning</b>	<u>Developing</u>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empathy</li> <li>• Meaning</li> <li>• Purpose</li> <li>• Intention for Goodness</li> </ul> <b>Connecting to the natural Impulse to Serve the greater good.</b>	<b>TOOLBOX</b>  <b>Opens the heart and Engages the brain</b>  <b>Creating Optimal learning &amp; Wisdom</b>

**Becoming skilled practitioners of the TOOLS gives children resilience in learning and in life:**

*Confidence, Inner Authority and Kindness become the norm.*

*The inherent desire to belong, connect and contribute is honored.*

*Emotionally calm children – are more able to see multiple perspectives.*

*Personal competence and self-mastery lead to greater **meaning, purpose and service to the greater good.***

<sup>1</sup> EQ Competence criteria from Daniel Goleman



## Tools for Learning – Tools for Life



**Breathing Tool:** Calming ourselves; checking in.

*I can take a breath. It takes only 3–5 seconds to calm myself.*

**Quiet/Safe Place:** Remember your quiet place.

*There is always my quiet/safe place. It is there for me.*



**Listening Tool:** We listen with our ears, eyes and heart.

*When I listen as well as hear, I can really understand.*

**Empathy Tool:** Caring for others, caring for ourselves.

*When I walk in someone else's shoes, it opens my heart.*



**Personal Space:** Where my space ends and yours begins

*I have a right to my space, and others have a right to theirs.*

**Using Our Words:** The right words, in the right way, for the right reasons.

*I ask for what I want and need. I am a problem-solver.*



**Garbage Can:** Put it in the garbage can and walk on by.

*I choose to let the little things go.*

**Taking Time Tool:** Time-in and time-away.

*I use my time wisely.*



**Please and Thank You:** Words that open.

*I treat others with respect, appreciation, and gratitude.*

**Apology and Forgiveness:** Words that transform and repair.

*I admit my mis-takes. I accept that others make mistakes, too.*



**Patience Tool:** Quiet waiting.

*I am strong enough to wait.*

**Courage Tool:** Using your Tools when others are not using theirs.

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





# The 12 Tools

## Tools for learning – Tools for life

### 1. **Breathing Tool:** *Calming ourselves—checking in.*

When we breathe deliberately with our Breathing Tool, it calms and slows us down, and brings our attention inward. We become more self-aware and reflective about our bodies, minds, emotions, and reactions. We are more likely to have the insight and time to act in our own best interests and in the best interests of others.

*I can take a breath. It takes only 3–5 seconds to calm myself.*

### 2. **Quiet/Safe Place Tool:** *Remember your quiet place.*

The Quiet/Safe Place is a place of rest and peace where we can gather ourselves together and feel safe and comforted. It can be an actual place, or a place that exists in our imaginations. In quietness, we can hear the soft, small voice in our hearts and minds, and allow creativity, imagination, and self-expression to emerge naturally.

*There is always my quiet/safe place. It is there for me.*

### 3. **Listening Tool:** *We listen with our ears, eyes and heart.*

When we listen with our ears, our eyes, and our hearts, we become deep listeners who can “hear between the lines.” Our ears bring us the words and intonation; our eyes bring us body language, gestures, and facial expressions; and our hearts bring us empathy—allowing us to walk in someone else’s shoes.

*When I listen as well as hear, I can really understand.*

### 4. **Empathy Tool:** *Caring for others, caring for ourselves.*

Empathy is the root of understanding, kindness, and forgiveness—both for others and for ourselves. When we empathize, we let go of our own perspective *long enough* to acknowledge the feelings, situation, and motives of others. Through this, we develop compassion, and learn to care.

*When I walk in someone else’s shoes, it opens my heart.*

### 5. **Personal Space Tool:** *Where my space ends and yours begins.*

Whether we feel safe or threatened, secure or on our guard depends on how we experience others in relation to our personal boundaries. Every day, we experience the joy of sharing our personal space, as well as hurt or anger when that space is violated by unkind words or hurtful actions. By using our personal space tool, we come to appreciate the importance of respecting each other’s physical, emotional, and social boundaries.

*I have a right to my space, and others have a right to their space.*

### 6. **Using Our Words Tool:** *The right words, at the right time, for the right reasons.*

Careful words encourage understanding, connection, and closeness. Careless words divide and offend. Once we understand and can name our and others’ feelings, our words can resolve conflicts and mend relationships. Using the best words, in the best way, at the best time, for the best reasons, requires practice, practice, and more practice.

*I ask for what I want and need. I am a problem-solver.*

**7. Garbage Can Tool:** *Put it in the garbage can and walk on by.*

By discarding unkind words and actions instead of taking them into our personal spaces, we free ourselves to be actors—not re-actors—in our own lives. We take responsibility for our own well-being and what we do with other people’s words and actions.

*I choose to let the little things go.*

**8. Taking Time Tool:** *Time-in and time-away.*

Understanding that we can make choices about how we use time is empowering. Pushing the pause button and taking time-away to breath renews our strength and resolve. Taking time-in to reflect leads to better self-understanding and more empathy for others.

*I use my time wisely.*

**9. Please and Thank You Tool:** *Words that Open.*

These “magic words” work to appreciate, invite, and include others. Saying “Please” shows respect, and encourages others to want to be helpful and kind. “Thank you” lets people know we value them and their actions, and reminds us that we need each other.

*I treat others with respect, appreciation, and gratitude.*

**10. Apology and Forgiveness Tool:** *Words that transform and repair.*

Apology can restore trust. The act of sincere apology can resolve problems in relationships. This takes self-reflection and emotional strength. Forgiveness takes a willingness to let go of blame or resentment and move forward.

*I admit my mis-takes. I accept that others make mistakes, too.*

**11. Patience Tool:** *Quiet waiting.*

With patience, we allow existing conditions to unfold as they will—physically, mentally and emotionally. Patience is the ability to let go of our need to control how and when things happen. This brings us peace, and reminds us that things usually work themselves out in their own time.

*I am strong enough to wait.*

**12. Courage Tool:** *to use your Tools when others are not using theirs.*

Courage from the Latin “cor” means heart, inner strength, bravery, and confidence. When we use courage, it empowers us to stand up for what we believe in. Courage is being willing to do the right thing even when it is difficult.

*I have the courage to do the “right” thing.*

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## Stages of Teaching Toolbox

*“A challenge to practitioners and caregivers is to believe in their own innate resilience, to understand it so they can model it and see it within their young people.”*

~ Bonnie Benard

1. **Familiarity with the Tools.** Establish personal confidence and understanding by exploring how effective these Tools are for you (in class, at home, driving, etc.).

*Begin by using the tools yourself.*

2. **Teaching Weekly Lessons:** Instructing children in the “Tool of the Week,” as taught in class with weekly lessons.
3. **Using the Tools every day in Teaching.** The power of these tools is through interacting with them in all of the learning domains: Academic, social and personal. Using your creativity to discover the ways you can bring the tools alive in class (helping kids apply them) is part of the joy & usefulness of toolbox.
4. **Toolbox benefits the whole School Community.** As it becomes shared language Toolbox is extended into the whole landscape and culture of the school. Each day the Tools can be used to fit the learning a child needs, whether in class, on the playground, in the lunchroom, or waiting in line, etc.

Teaching Toolbox is an ongoing “practice” of helping children learn to “manage” their own challenges. It is the responsibility of every adult in the school community to help them do so. In this way, every mis-take a child makes in behavior or attitude becomes an opportunity to help him/her learn to use these tools for self-efficacy (his/her own belief in the power to solve the problem).

## Being a Teacher of Toolbox

1. Remembering that each child has an overriding need to belong, to contribute and to be accepted.
2. Emotional safety is a prerequisite to a child’s readiness for learning. Toolbox is a set of skills for heightening emotional safety.
3. Self-management—Helping children to access their own innate ability to manage themselves is the key to helping them grow, thrive and learn.

4. Whole Child—separating the “child” from the “mis-behavior” allows us to see the whole person within, which fosters empathy and connection, even when their behavior is horrible.

*Every child has impeccable reasons for being exactly who they are.*

5. Leading by example—we adults must “Go First” in order to model to children what it means to use the Toolbox tools. It is our behavior they learn from the most and therefore, as Parker Palmer shows us, we must “look in our own mirror” to find our inner knowledge of Toolbox.

*“Teaching, like any human activity, emerges from one’s inwardness, for better or worse.  
As I teach, I project the condition of my soul onto my students, my subject,  
and our way of being together.*

*If I am willing to look in that mirror, and not run from what I see,  
— I have a chance to gain self-knowledge —  
knowing myself is as crucial to good teaching as knowing my students and my subject.”*

*~ Parker Palmer, Courage to teach*

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The greatest revolution in our generation is the discovery that human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives.

~ William James

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## **TOOLS FOR LEARNING – TOOLS FOR LIFE**

Developing children's resilience, self-mastery and empathy for others.

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### **Overview**

Toolbox is a research-based, social and emotional learning curriculum that fosters the development of resilience, emotional intelligence, and other positive behaviors and skills in K-6 students. Toolbox uses a strengths-based approach and the simple metaphor of tools to address the needs of the whole child and promote school and life success.

Developmental supports found in the Toolbox approach include: 1) building authentic, caring relationships; 2) promoting high expectation messages; 3) building positive regard for and between students and teachers; and, 4) providing students with opportunities to participate in meaningful ways in the school community. These supports (also known as resiliency protective factors) have been shown to be key in increasing student engagement, learning, and achievement of academic success.

Toolbox also recognizes the need to support teachers and administrators as they grow in their own understanding and instructional practices related to teaching social and emotional skills and fostering resiliency. For this reason, Toolbox integrates principles of social-emotional learning in its instructional support materials and implementation guidelines for school staff. In this way, Toolbox provides both high-quality student curricula and helps create positive, productive school climates for students and staff.

In January 2010, Toolbox conducted formative research during a 15-week implementation as part of the Toolbox/Sonoma County Collaboration for Resilient Children project. This research was funded by the Stuart Foundation of San Francisco and completed by the educational research, development, and service organization, WestEd. The research investigated 'Toolbox' potential to positively impact schools, students, and family/community systems. Complete results of the research are available in a 34-page report<sup>1</sup> from WestEd. This paper provides a review of the impact of Toolbox on children and families from two schools located in largely underserved neighborhoods in Northern California.

The research looked at three, overarching goals, all involving use of the 'Toolbox classroom, family, and parenting/mental health curricula:

1. To improve links between school, home, and community efforts to support children's positive social, emotional, and behavioral growth;
2. To improve resiliency skills and assets for children in grades K – 3; and
3. To improve school climate and connectedness for teachers and staff.

### **Results**

Analysis of data from this formative study shows highly positive results. Significant positive change over time was found in children's social, emotional and behavioral growth, and in improved resiliency skills and assets. Measures of school climate also revealed significant positive changes in both schools. Additionally, teachers reported being quite satisfied or extremely satisfied with a majority of the curriculum materials, and there were significant, positive changes in several of their teaching practices around resiliency-related skills.

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<sup>1</sup> Contents taken from a 34-page Final Report of the Toolbox/Sonoma County Collaboration for Resilient Children, written by Bo De Long-Cotty, PhD, WestEd Project Director – November 30, 2010. This "brief" compiled by Chuck Fisher, PhD.

## Toolbox and Improved Student Resiliency

To assess possible change over time in teacher, yard duty aide, and parent perceptions of students' social and emotional behavior, two forms of the *Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale (BERS)* were used – the Teacher Reporting Form for teachers (classroom environment) and yard duty aides (playground environment) and the Parent Reporting Form for parents (home environment) – given both pre- and post-intervention. The BERS measures children's behavioral and social-emotional skills across four scales:

**1) Interpersonal Skills; 2) Intrapersonal Skills; 3) School Functioning Skills; and 4) Affective Skills.**

The customized, *Toolbox version of the California School Climate Survey for teachers (T-CSCS)*, also given both pre- and post-intervention, included expanded questions on teacher beliefs and practices around resilience, as well as a post-only section on teachers' perceptions of the impact of Toolbox on their students, and feedback on the Toolbox curriculum and materials.

**. . . there were significant, positive changes in student behavior and social-emotional skills (in 15 weeks).**

Analyses of the BERS revealed that there were many significant, positive changes in student behavior and social-emotional skills (Interpersonal Strength; Intrapersonal Strength; School Functioning; and Affective Strength) across all three environments – in the classroom, in the playground, and at home – as reported by teachers, yard duty aides, and parents.

Significant changes between pre- and post-implementation behaviors and skills included: In *Interpersonal Strength* items: *apologizing when wrong; using anger management skills; accepting criticism; admitting mistakes; showing remorse; sharing; and reacting to disappointments calmly.* For *Intrapersonal Strength* items: *identifying feelings, and personal strengths; enthusiastic and positive about life; positive peer relationships; and self-confidence.* In the *Affective Strength* scale, significant changes were measured in: *accepts closeness and intimacy; acknowledges painful feelings; asks for help; discusses problems; and expresses affection for others.*

## Toolbox and Improved School Climate and Connectedness

The project also examined improvements over time in teacher perceptions of school climate and connectedness. Results from the T-CSCS show that perceptions of school climate and connectedness for teachers and students improved over the course of the Toolbox implementation in all seven areas that were measured, even in light of very strong, positive school climate ratings at both schools at baseline. Combined, mean rating changes from pre- to post-implementation for 86% of the seven areas of school climate proved to be statistically significant, as did 30% of the total 70 individual items. Eighty-seven percent of the non-significant individual items showed a definite positive trend.

As discussed in the beginning of this report, the presence of the kinds of school and staff supports (also called resiliency protective factors) assessed in the T-CSCS have been shown by research to be key components to a healthy school climate where resilience and well-being can be nurtured in both students and staff. These results are a strong indication that, by the end of the project, teachers perceived significant improvements in school climate at their schools, and believed themselves to be more aware of and able to foster the positive development of critical behavioral and social emotional skills in their students.

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# TOOLBOX

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## Toolbox Teaches Children

- How to realize their innate goodness and intrinsic wholeness
- How to belong and contribute their uniqueness
- How to achieve emotional intelligence in 3-5 seconds
- How to be proactive and not reactive
- How to organize and understand their internal experiences and make sense of it
- How to care for themselves and experience empathy for others
- How to understand and make sense of what going on around them
- How to find their voice and internal locus of control or self- knowing
- 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 intelligently
- How to be grateful and give thanks when it is “right”
- How to be forgiving when it is time
- How to apologize when no harm was intended and speak honestly if it was
- How to understand the value and intelligence of patience
- How to be courageous in a world without Toolbox

Toolbox works for adults equally well . . . when they are willing to use their Tools.  
We are all our children’s teachers . . .

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TOOLS FOR LEARNING, TOOLS FOR LIFE.