



**Future Ready Pathways for  
School, Work and Life**

# **Teamwork & Collaboration**

*Lessons for middle school  
students, aged 11-14*

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*Lessons for middle school students, aged  
11-14*

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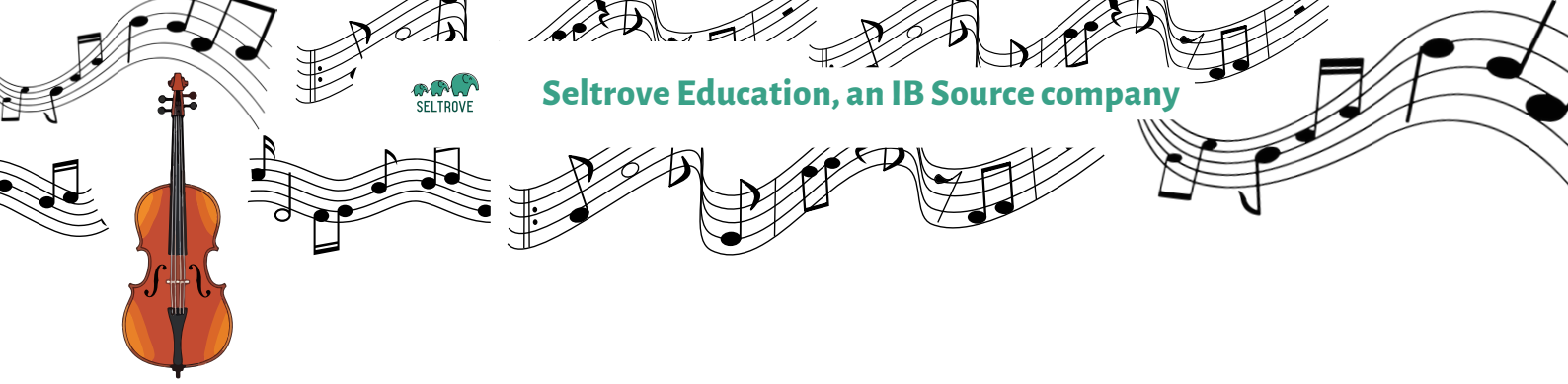
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# Teacher/Parent Guide

## Welcome

Middle school is a time when relationships become more complex, group work becomes more common, and the way students interact with others begins to shape their reputation. Students are no longer just learning how to get along—they are learning how to collaborate, contribute, navigate differences, and take responsibility within a group.

This workbook is designed to help students strengthen the skills needed to work effectively with others. Collaboration is more than just dividing up tasks—it requires empathy, awareness, flexibility, and the ability to handle challenges when they arise.

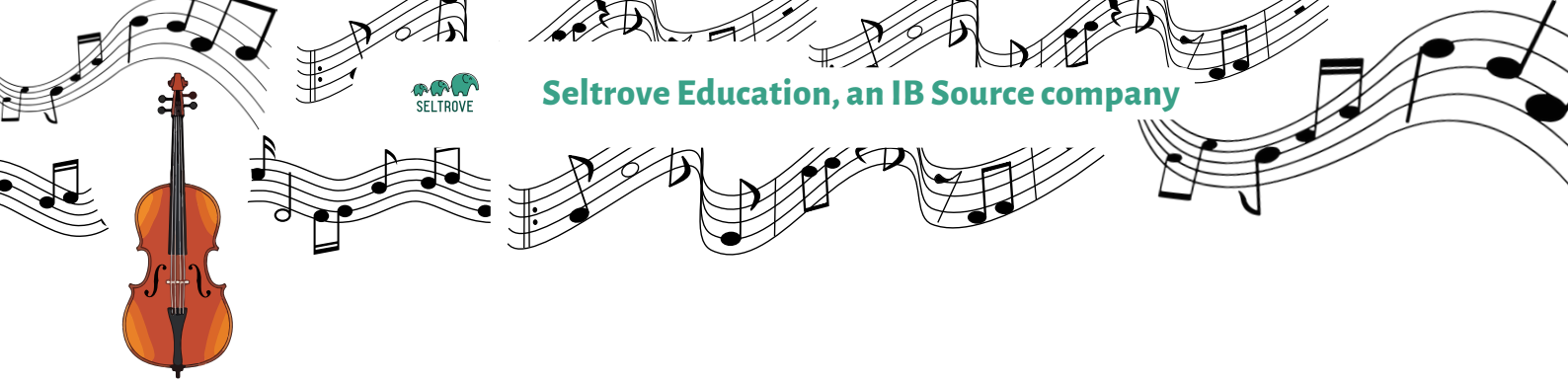
Throughout these lessons, students will explore how they show up when working with others. They will consider how their actions affect group dynamics, practice making decisions together, reflect on how to include different perspectives, and learn how to respond when collaboration becomes difficult.

Students will learn that successful collaboration is not about being in control or always being right. It is about contributing with purpose, respecting others, adapting when needed, and working toward shared goals.

## Learning Objectives

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to:

- Describe how empathy and perspective-taking support effective collaboration.
- Recognize how their behavior, participation, and effort impact group outcomes.
- Demonstrate awareness of how they show up when working with others, including voice, effort, and accountability.
- Identify different ways groups make decisions and explain the role of compromise and shared responsibility.
- Evaluate how flexibility and openness contribute to stronger collaboration.
- Recognize signs of frustration or tension in group settings and explain how these can affect outcomes.
- Apply strategies to manage reactions and respond constructively during disagreements.
- Use problem-solving skills to navigate challenges and conflicts in collaborative settings.
- Reflect on how inclusion, respect, and awareness of others influence group dynamics.
- Apply collaboration skills in academic, social, and real-world situations.
- Evaluate their own strengths and areas for growth when working with others.
- Set goals for how they want to contribute in future collaborative experiences.



# Teacher/Parent Guide

## Learning Rationale

Group work requires more than just completing tasks—it involves navigating different perspectives, balancing participation, managing frustration, and making shared decisions. At the same time, social dynamics become more nuanced. Tone, effort, and behavior within a group can influence not only outcomes, but also relationships and reputation.

This workbook is designed to support students during this developmental stage by making collaboration skills explicit, reflective, and actionable. The focus is on how students show up when working with others—how they contribute, how they respond, and how their actions affect the group as a whole.

Students are encouraged to understand that collaboration is not just about completing a shared task. It is about working with intention, respecting different perspectives, adapting when needed, and contributing to a positive and productive group experience.

The workbook is grounded in the understanding that:



Collaboration begins with self-awareness



Perspective influences how situations are understood



Respect and boundaries support healthy collaboration



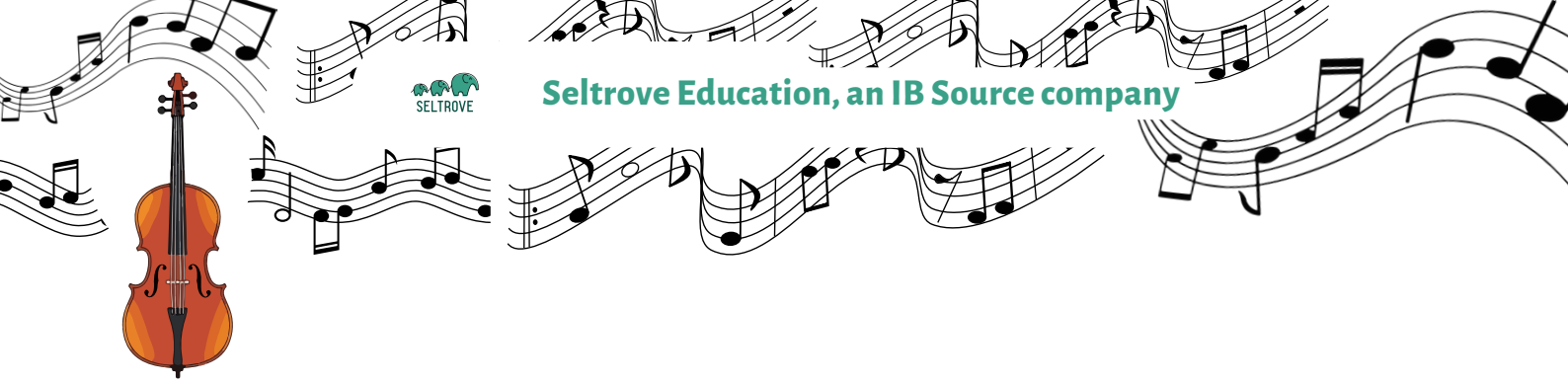
Actions and participation reflect values and character



Contribution requires effort and responsibility



Group interactions shape experience and outcomes



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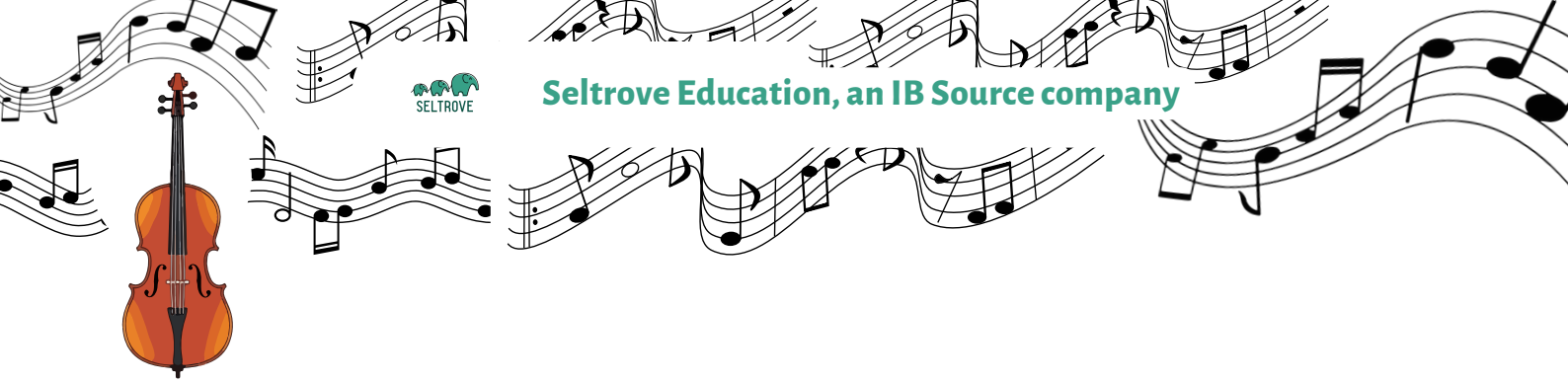
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# Universal Design for Learning

## Overview

This workbook is designed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles to ensure that all students can access, engage with, and benefit from the lessons. The goal is not to lower expectations, but to remove unnecessary barriers so every student can participate fully in collaborative learning experiences.

## Multiple Means of Engagement - How students stay interested and motivated

- Lessons incorporate a variety of formats, including reflection prompts, scenario analysis, partner dialogue, group-based activities, and real-world examples of collaboration.
- Students are encouraged to make choices in how they participate—whether responding verbally or in writing, selecting scenarios that feel relevant to them, or choosing how deeply to reflect on their own experiences working with others.
- Content is grounded in realistic middle school situations involving group work, shared decision-making, participation, inclusion, and navigating challenges when working with others. This relevance increases motivation and personal investment.
- Opportunities for private reflection are balanced with structured interaction to support both introverted and extroverted learners.

## Multiple Means of Representation - How information is presented and understood

- Key concepts such as empathy, perspective, participation, accountability, decision-making, and managing tension are introduced using clear language and structured explanations.
- Abstract ideas about collaboration are consistently connected to concrete situations students experience in school and social settings.
- Lessons intentionally revisit core ideas across different contexts to strengthen understanding and transfer of learning.
- Sentence starters, guiding questions, and reflection frames support students who benefit from structured thinking prompts.

## Multiple Means of Action & Expression - How students demonstrate understanding

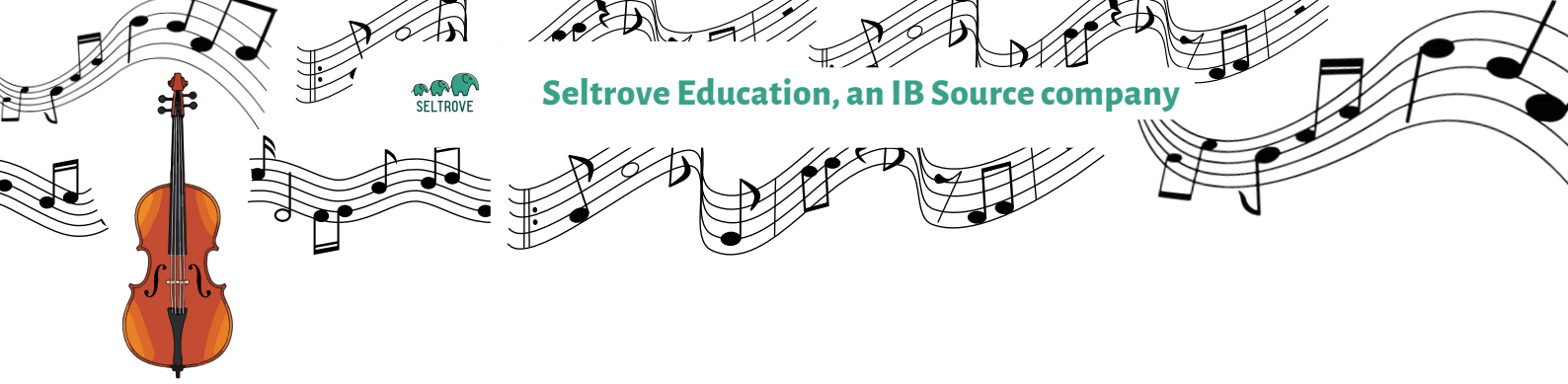
- Students are offered varied ways to demonstrate learning, including written reflections, structured discussions, scenario responses, group problem-solving tasks, role-play practice, personal goal-setting, and visual organizers or mapping activities.
- This flexibility supports students who may struggle with traditional written responses but can demonstrate strong understanding through discussion or applied examples.
- Opportunities for self-assessment and goal-setting allow students to monitor their growth in collaboration skills and reflect on how they contribute when working with others.
- The focus remains on demonstrating understanding of concepts and applying them in real-world collaborative situations.



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# Pre-Assessment



# Pre-Assessment Lesson Plan

## Learning Objectives

By the end of the pre-assessment activity, students will:

1. Reflect on how they currently contribute when working with others in group settings.
2. Identify strengths in their collaboration style, such as empathy, participation, flexibility, or responsibility.
3. Recognize areas that feel challenging, including speaking up, listening to others, sharing responsibility, managing frustration, or handling disagreements.
4. Increase self-awareness about how their actions and behavior affect group dynamics and outcomes.
5. Reflect on how they collaborate in both in-person and digital environments.
6. Establish a personal baseline that will guide reflection, discussion, and skill development throughout the lessons.

## Learning Rationale

The pre-assessment gives students an opportunity to pause and reflect on how they currently work with others during the middle school years. This brief reflection serves several important purposes:

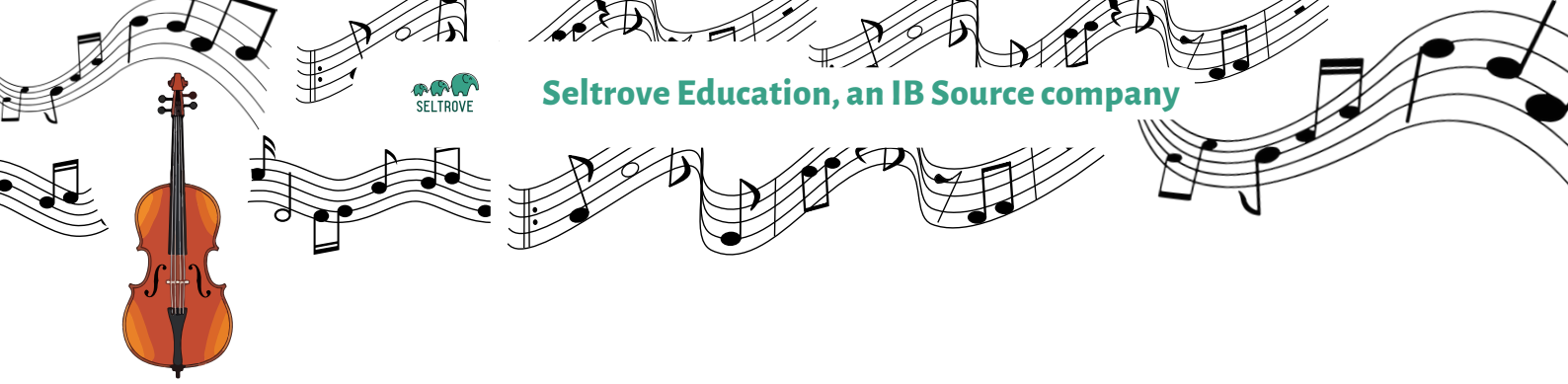
**Builds self-awareness** – Students begin to recognize patterns in how they participate, respond in group situations, manage challenges, and contribute to shared outcomes.

**Normalizes growth in collaboration** – Students understand that skills like working with different perspectives, sharing responsibility, and handling tension are developed over time—not fixed traits.

**Provides insight for adults** – Teachers and caregivers gain a clearer understanding of students' collaboration habits, confidence in group settings, and areas that may need support.

**Encourages ownership** – Reflecting on current strengths and challenges increases student investment and readiness to grow when working with others.

**Establishes a meaningful baseline** – When paired with a post-assessment, students can clearly see how their collaboration skills, awareness, and confidence evolve across the pack.



# Pre-Assessment Lesson Plan

## Step 1: Introduce the Activity

- You can say: “This activity helps us understand how you currently work with others. It looks at things like how you participate in group work, share ideas, listen to others, handle disagreements, and contribute to shared tasks. There are no right or wrong answers. Everyone is at a different starting point. Your responses simply show where you are right now.”
- Encourage honesty and self-reflection.

## Step 2: Clarify the Format

- Students read each statement and mark their response in the rating column.
- If working one-on-one or in a small group, you may also read the statements aloud.
- Remind students to respond quickly and honestly, without overthinking.

## Step 3: Optional Discussion

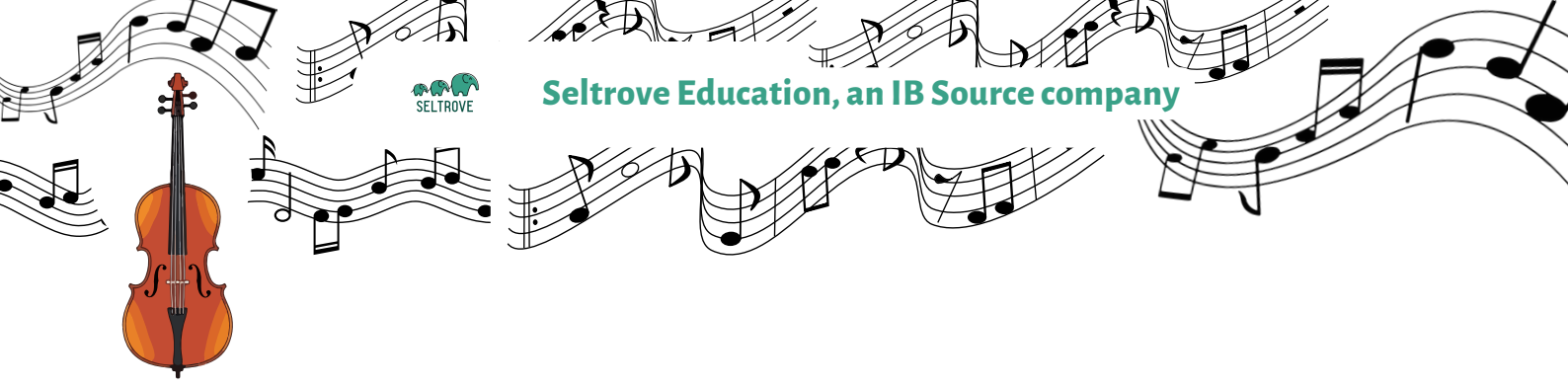
- After a few selected statements, invite short, low-pressure sharing, such as:
  - “When is it hardest for you to speak up in a group?”
  - “How do you usually decide whether to share your idea or stay quiet?”
  - “What makes group work go well—or not go well—for you?”
  - “What does it mean to really contribute to a group?”
  - “How do you usually react when you disagree with someone?”
  - “What makes working with others frustrating sometimes?”
- Keep the tone reflective and non-judgmental.

## Step 4: Record Insights

- Teachers/parents jot down notes on patterns you notice:
  - Areas where the student feels confident when working with others
  - Areas where the student expressed uncertainty or challenge
  - Student examples or comments that reveal their thinking
  - Strategies students already use to participate, collaborate, or handle challenges
- These notes create a baseline snapshot that can be revisited during the post-assessment.

## Step 5: Set the Tone

- You could say: “This is just a starting point. Over the next lessons, you’ll explore how to understand different perspectives, how you show up when working with others, how to make decisions together, and how to handle challenges when collaboration becomes difficult. If your answers change later, that’s growth.”
- Keep the atmosphere positive and reflective. Frame this as exploration, not a test.

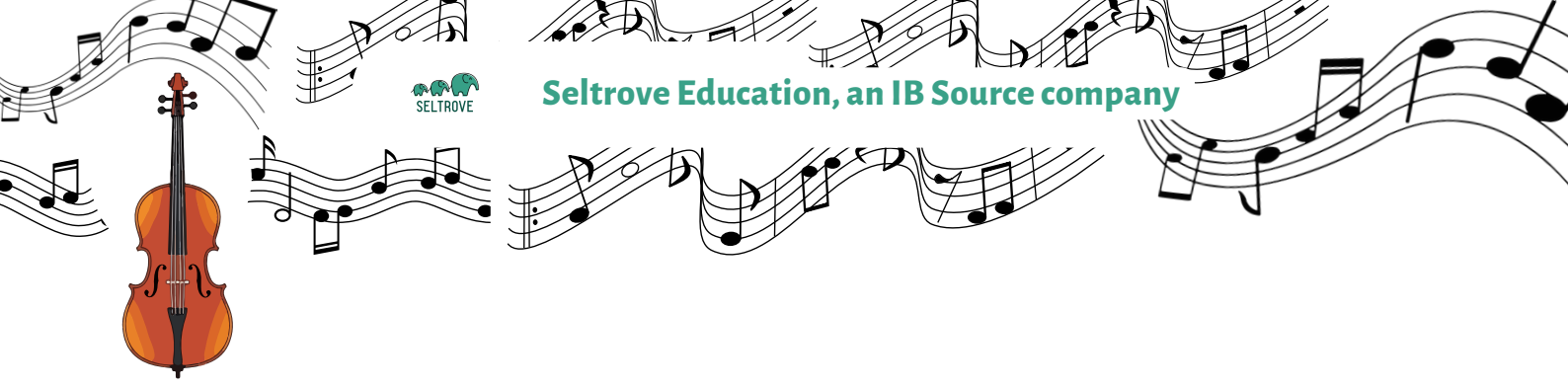


# Pre-Assessment

For each statement below, rate how well you understand the idea by choosing one of the following:

- I understand this well
- I somewhat understand this
- I'm unsure or confused by this

Statement	I understand this well!	I somewhat understand this.	I'm unsure or confused by this.
I understand that people can experience the same situation in very different ways.			
I understand how my words or actions might affect others in a group.			
I understand what it means to actively contribute when working with others.			
I understand the difference between participating and letting others do the work.			
I understand how speaking up (or staying silent) can affect a group.			
I understand how groups can make decisions together effectively.			
I understand that not everyone will always agree in a group—and that's okay.			
I understand how listening to different ideas can improve group decisions.			



# Pre-Assessment

Statement	I understand this well!	I somewhat understand this.	I'm unsure or confused by this.
I understand that feeling frustrated in a group is normal sometimes.			
I understand how my reactions can make a situation better or worse.			
I understand how collaboration skills are important in school and everyday life.			
I understand what I do well when working with others.			
I understand what I could improve when working with others.			

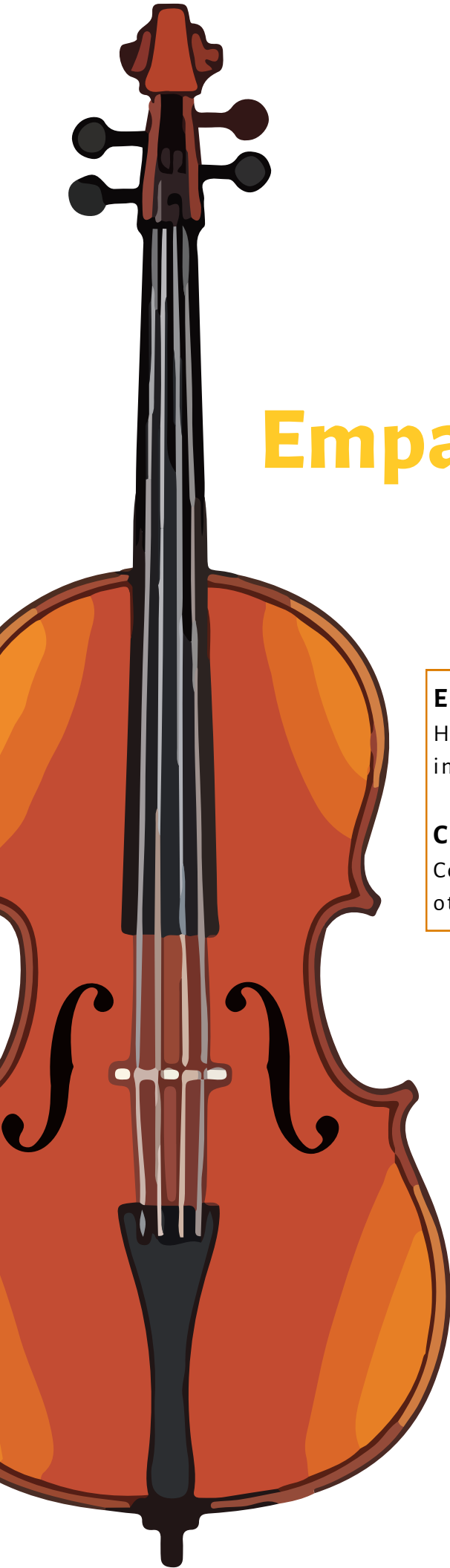
When you think about working with others, what is one strength you already have and one area you would like to improve?

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## Lesson 1

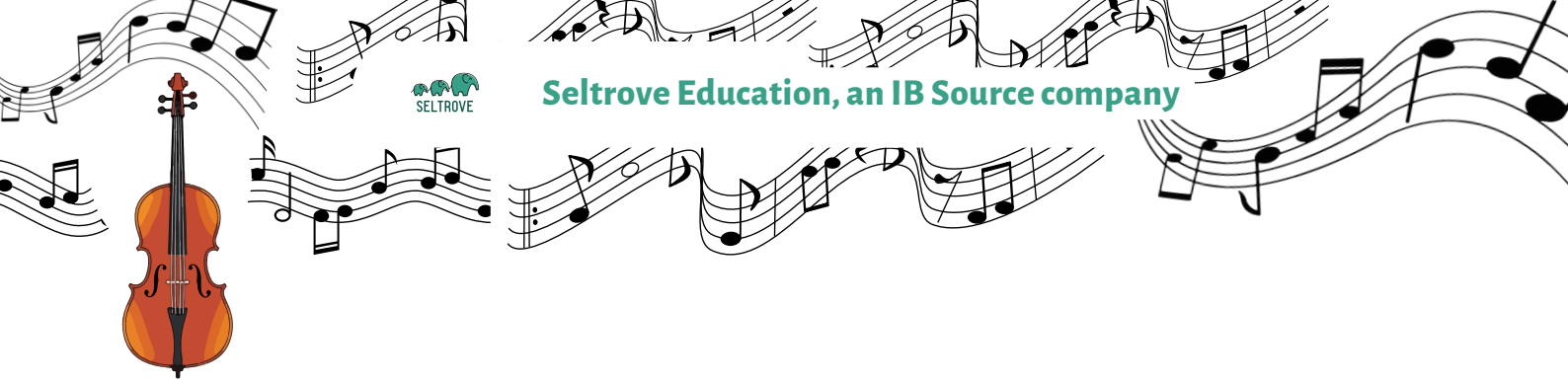
# Empathy & Perspective in Collaboration

### **Essential Question**

How does understanding other people's perspectives improve collaboration?

### **Core Idea**

Collaboration works best when we try to understand how others think, feel, and experience situations.



# Lesson Plan: Empathy & Perspective in Collaboration

## Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

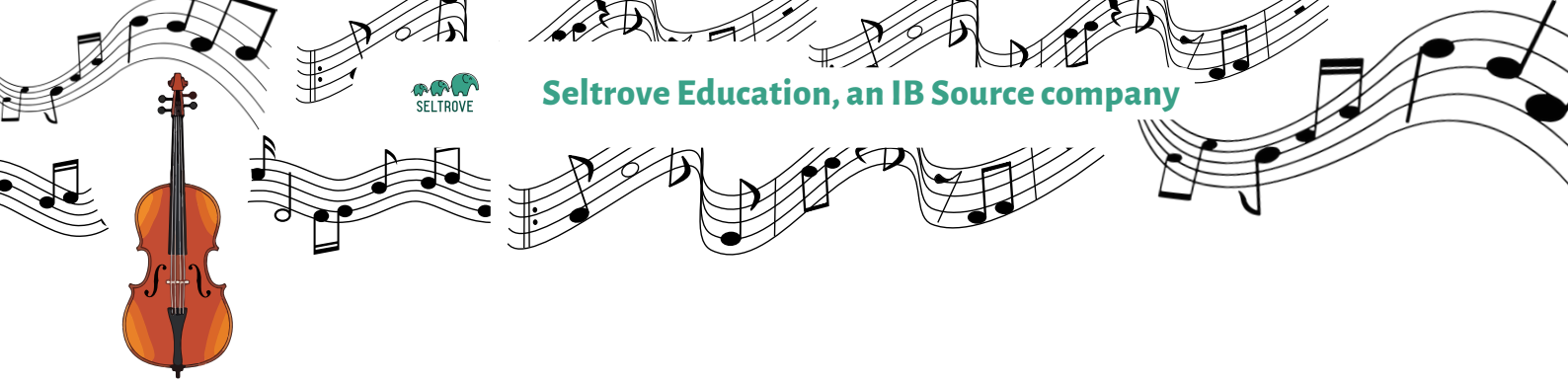
1. Explain what empathy and perspective-taking mean in collaborative situations.
2. Recognize that people can interpret the same situation in different ways.
3. Identify how assumptions can lead to misunderstandings in group work.
4. Describe how considering others' perspectives can improve communication and outcomes.
5. Reflect on how their words and actions may be experienced by others.
6. Apply perspective-taking skills to real-life collaboration scenarios.

## Learning Rationale

In middle school, students are increasingly expected to work with others in both academic and social settings. These interactions often involve differing opinions, experiences, and communication styles. Without strong perspective-taking skills, misunderstandings can easily occur, leading to frustration, exclusion, or conflict.

This lesson introduces empathy and perspective-taking as foundational skills for effective collaboration. Students begin to recognize that their own perspective is only one of many, and that understanding others is essential for working productively in a group.

By developing awareness of how others may think and feel, students are better equipped to communicate thoughtfully, respond with intention, and contribute to more positive and effective collaborative experiences.



# Lesson Plan: Empathy & Perspective in Collaboration

Read the **Student Lesson** out loud. Ask students to share their ideas after reading the Reflection Question, if they wish.

## Activity 1: Assumption vs. Reality

- Read the directions to your students.
- Emphasize: Assumptions feel true but aren't always accurate.
- Encourage multiple possible realities (not just one).
- Push students beyond surface-level rewrites.
- Model one example out loud first.

## Activity 2: Pause & Respond Challenge

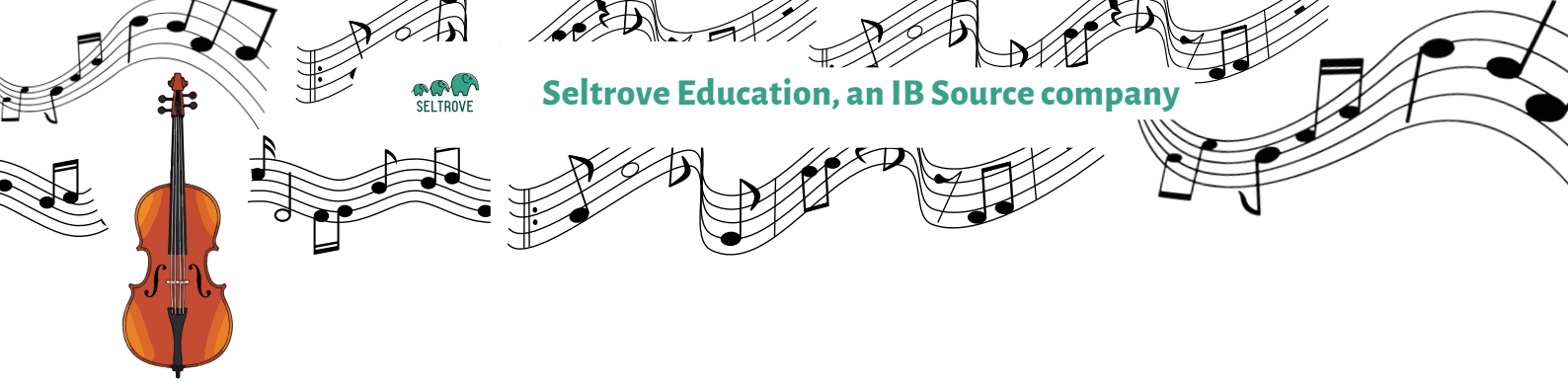
- Read the directions to your students.
- Reinforce: Pause = power
- Normalize strong first reactions (don't shame them).
- Ask: "What might the other person be thinking?"
- Highlight growth between first and second response.

## Activity 3: Same Situation, Different Stories

- Read the directions to your students.
- Push students to go beyond obvious answers.
- Encourage emotional + situational reasoning.
- Ask: "What don't we know here?"
- Highlight how quickly judgment happens.

## Activity 4: Empathy Explorers

- Read the directions to your students.
- Encourage students to see things from vastly different perspectives than their middle-school perspective.
- Remind students that we may not know the whole story.
- Highlight how quickly judgment happens.



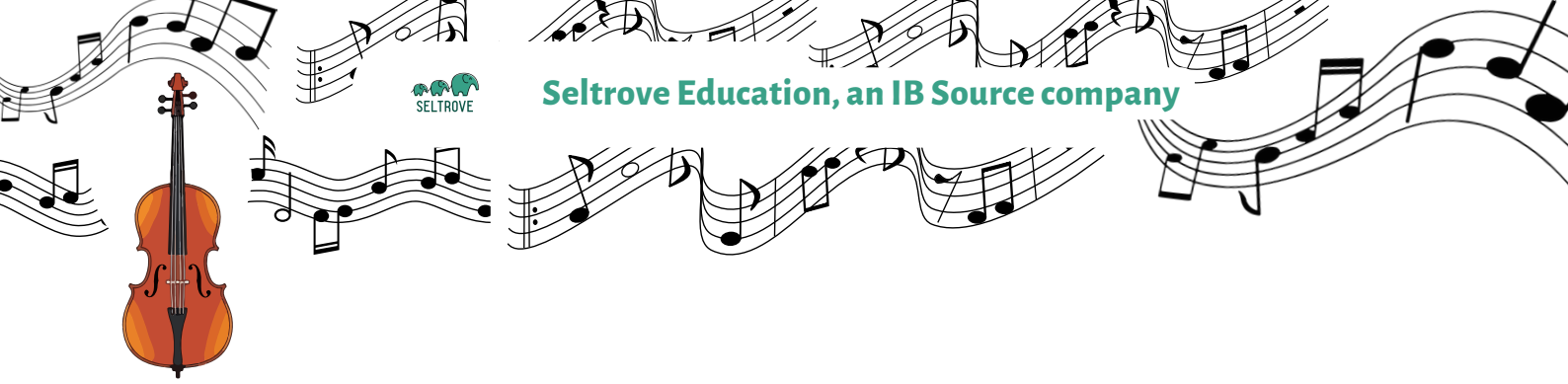
# Lesson Plan: Empathy & Perspective in Collaboration

## Activity 5: Real-Life Reflection Mapping

- Read the directions to your students.
- Encourage honesty but keep it private if needed.
- Offer option to use a low-stakes example.
- Circulate and support students who get stuck.

## Activity 6: Build the Better Response

- Read the directions to your students.
- Focus on tone, not just wording.
- Ask: “How would this feel to hear?”
- Encourage realistic—not overly scripted—responses.
- Highlight strong examples to share.



# Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Supports

## Engagement — Multiple Ways to Motivate & Sustain Interest

- Lessons use realistic, relatable scenarios from school, friendships, family, and social situations to increase relevance and connection.
- Activities progress from low-risk thinking (identifying assumptions) to higher-risk reflection (real-life mapping), allowing students to build confidence gradually.
- Students are encouraged to explore multiple perspectives, which increases curiosity and reduces judgment-based thinking.
- Opportunities for both individual reflection and optional sharing allow students to engage at their comfort level.
- Activities like Pause & Respond and Build the Better Response tap into real emotional reactions, making learning feel authentic rather than abstract.
- Reflection is framed as growth-focused, helping students see that understanding others is a skill that develops over time.

## Representation — Multiple Ways to Understand the Skill

- Key concepts (empathy, perspective, assumptions) are introduced through a mix of short reading passages, clear definitions, and real-life scenarios.
- Abstract ideas are consistently connected to concrete, familiar situations (group work, group chats, family interactions).
- Scenarios provide context-rich examples, helping students visualize situations rather than relying on abstract explanations.
- Teachers model thinking out loud (e.g., identifying assumptions, rewriting responses), making invisible thinking processes visible.
- Concepts are revisited across activities (assumptions → reactions → perspectives → responses), reinforcing learning through repetition in different contexts.

## Action & Expression — Multiple Ways to Show Learning

- Students demonstrate understanding through a variety of formats.
- Activities allow for multiple correct responses, encouraging critical thinking rather than one “right answer.”
- Structured formats (tables, prompts, guided questions) support students who benefit from clear organization and scaffolding.
- Open-ended reflection (Real-Life Mapping) allows students to apply learning to their own experiences at an appropriate level of depth.
- Teachers can highlight and share strong examples to model effective, realistic responses, reinforcing expectations.