

Subtopic 4: Structured vs. Unstructured Free Time

Students benefit from having both planned activities and free play in their lives. This topic helps them understand the value of each and how a mix can help them feel balanced and happy.

Student goals:

- Learn the difference between structured (planned) and unstructured (free choice) time, and explore how they can add structure to unstructured time when helpful.
- Identify their own preferences for different types of time and understand how both can support their well-being.

Time Frame:

- 20–30 minutes Flexible timing/ adaptable format: Can be completed in short segments or extended across multiple sessions.

Example Conversation Starters:

“What’s something you do at a set time every week?”

“What do you get to choose for yourself during the day?”

“Do you like to plan what you’ll do, or do you like to decide in the moment?”

These questions can be used during planning or reflection about how students use their free time, whether in or out of school.

Activity:

- Identify what type they do most often and how they feel about that. Which part felt more fun? More free? More structured? (Use recess, free time or another experiential activity to demonstrate this)
- Discussion: Which do you have more of—structured or unstructured time? How do you feel about that?
- What do you do in your structured time? What do you do in your unstructured time? What Live Your Why wellness themes/benefits do you get in each? When do you get more? Does it feel balanced? Do you want to change that?