



What Is Social Emotional Learning and Why It's Important

Social emotional learning (SEL) involves [skills](#) needed for social interactions, managing emotions and behavior, setting goals, increasing self and social awareness, making decisions, and solving problems. Strengthening these skills can help children and young adults develop relationships and resolve conflicts in more positive ways. Families have an important role in supporting [social emotional skills at home](#), and there is a great opportunity to further develop social emotional skills in educational settings.

Social Emotional Learning at School

Students can work on developing SEL skills in different ways at school such as working collaboratively in groups or one-on-one with peers. Additional ways to help students develop their SEL skills is to offer regular student check-ins where students can reflect on and communicate how they are feeling, acknowledge student efforts on assignments, and provide students with opportunities to receive constructive feedback and support for building self-awareness and self-esteem.

Teaching Social Emotional Skills

SEL is not taught in a single class but is a part of a process of learning throughout the school day which teaches students ways to think about their own actions and the actions of others. SEL does not instruct students WHAT to think but can help students look at themselves as a whole person and reflect on reasons for their own actions, emotions, goals, and needs.

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SEL Is Inclusive of All Students

Educational settings provide opportunities to teach vital social emotional skills, reducing the need for taking action after the occurrence of certain behaviors. Proactively supporting SEL skills can help students become more self-aware by recognizing how they are thinking and feeling and by changing responses to their thoughts and feelings. Strengthening skills for coping and learning strategies for self-management benefits all students, with or without disabilities. For example, if a student is overwhelmed by a difficult assignment, learning to ask for help using any communication method (e.g., visuals, text-to-speech, verbally) can be more effective than acting out and potentially reduce or prevent the behavior from happening. Learning, practicing, and strengthening these skills can lead to improved relationships, communication, and mental health outcomes.

Families and SEL

Families are their children's first teachers, and they can work together with schools to help build stronger social emotional skills. Families can also benefit from practicing and learning about SEL with their child as their child improves communication skills and learns tools for managing conflicts, making decisions, and solving problems. By practicing SEL in and out of the classroom, children can greatly benefit in learning and retaining skills which can have a positive impact throughout their lifetime.

Example Questions for Families to Ask Your School About SEL

1. How does the school teach SEL?
2. Is the staff trained in SEL?
3. What training or information do you offer families?
4. How will you communicate with me about my child's social emotional needs?
5. How do you set social emotional goals for my child?
6. In what grades is SEL taught?
7. How many hours a week or month are spent on SEL?

Resources



- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
 - » [SEL with Families and Caregivers](#)
 - » [What is Social Emotional Learning? \(Video 3:23\)](#)
 - » [SEL Bright and Ripe Spots for Teachers and Parents of Students with Special Education Needs \(Video 56:49\)](#)
- [Michigan Department of Education: Social Emotional Learning](#)