

What Is SEL?

Article



by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), March 2021

SEL is...

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

SEL advances educational equity and excellence through authentic school-family-community partnerships to establish learning environments and experiences that feature trusting and collaborative relationships, rigorous and meaningful curriculum and instruction, and ongoing evaluation. SEL can help address various forms of inequity and empower young people and adults to co-create thriving schools and contribute to safe, healthy, and just communities. (Read about the definition updates in December 2020 from CASEL's CEO at <https://www.the74million.org/article/niemi-casel-is-updating-the-most-widely-recognized-definition-of-social-emotional-learning-heres-why/>.)

Benefits of SEL

Research confirms and teachers, parents, and principals agree: social and emotional competencies can be taught, modeled, and practiced and lead to positive student outcomes that are important for success in school and in life.

Decades of research studies demonstrate the following benefits of SEL:

- Improvement in students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, relationships, academic performance, and perceptions of classroom and school climate
- Decline in students' anxiety, behavior problems, and substance use
- Long-term improvements in students' skills, attitudes, prosocial behavior, and academic performance
- Wise financial investment according to cost-benefit research

Learn more about CASEL's research-practice-policy partnership approaches that advance ways that SEL supports equitable learning environments and optimal developmental outcomes for diverse children, adolescents, and adults. To learn more, visit <https://casel.org/impact/>.

SEL: What are the Core Competence Areas and Where are they Promoted?

The CASEL 5. The CASEL 5 addresses five broad and interrelated areas of competence and highlights illustrative examples for each: *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *social awareness*, *relationship skills*, and *responsible decision-making*. The CASEL 5 can be taught and applied at various developmental stages from childhood to adulthood and across diverse cultural contexts. Many school districts, states, and countries have used the CASEL 5 to establish preschool to high school learning standards and competencies that articulate what students should know and be able to do for academic success, school and civic engagement, health and wellness, and fulfilling careers.

Key Settings. CASEL's framework takes a systemic approach that emphasizes the importance of establishing equitable learning environments and coordinating practices

across key settings of classrooms, schools, families, and communities to enhance all students' social, emotional, and academic learning. Quality implementation of well-designed, evidence-based, classroom programs and practices is a foundational element of effective SEL. We believe it is most beneficial to integrate SEL throughout the school's academic curricula and culture, across the broader contexts of schoolwide practices and policies, and through ongoing collaboration with families and community organizations. These coordinated efforts should foster youth voice, agency and engagement, establish supportive classroom and school climates and models of discipline, enhance adult SEL competence, and be grounded in authentic family and community partnerships. To learn more, visit <https://casel.org/sel-framework/>.

SEL: Our Theory of Action for Effective Implementation

To be most effective, it is essential that states, regions, districts, and schools infuse the principles of SEL across practices and policies such as curriculum and instruction, extra-curricular activities, discipline, student-support services, professional learning, and ongoing assessment for continuous improvement.

CASEL's Theory of Action at the state, district, and school level addresses four key elements that are necessary to comprehensively support quality SEL implementation throughout the system:

- Build foundational support and plan;
- Strengthen adult SEL competencies and capacity;
- Promote SEL for students; and
- Reflect on data for continuous improvement.

To learn more, visit <https://casel.org/theory-of-action/>.

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