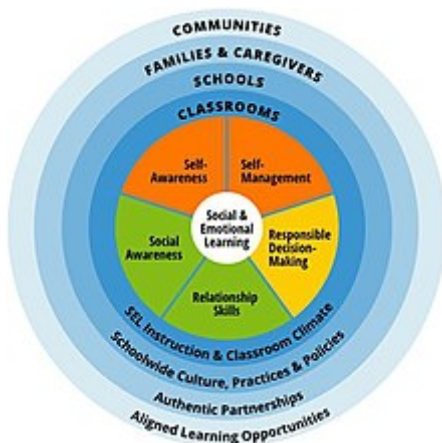


Social-emotional learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is an [education](#) practice that integrates social and emotional skills into school curriculum. SEL is also referred to as "**socio-emotional learning**", "**social and emotional learning**", or "**social-emotional literacy**". In practice, social-emotional learning emphasizes social and emotional skills to the same degree as other subjects, such as math, science, and reading.^[1]



CASEL SEL Framework

The five main components of social-emotional learning are:

1. [Self-awareness](#)

2. [Self-management](#)
3. [Social awareness](#)
4. [Relationship skills](#)
5. [Responsible decision-making](#)

Self-awareness is the skill of having knowledge of one's own emotions and developing a positive [self-concept](#).^[2] Self-management is the ability to [regulate one's own emotions](#) and monitor one's own behaviors.^[3] This also pertains to intrinsic motivation and setting personal goals.^[4] Social awareness is the ability to have awareness of the emotions and social situations of other people.^[5] Relationship skills are defined as the skills to foster relationships and communicate within them.^[6] As the saying goes, "treat others how you want to be treated".^[4] Finally, SEL prioritizes responsible decision-making as the ability to solve problems and hold one's self accountable.^[7] These core ideologies help students to live socially and emotionally healthy lives both during and after their time in the school system.^[8]

SEL uses school-family-community partnerships so that youths and adults alike are able to continue the practices of SEL beyond the classroom.^[8] Ultimately, SEL ensures that students have the foundation to improve their academic performance by means of less social and or emotional stress.^[9]

The leading source for information on SEL is the [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](https://casel.org/about-2/) (<https://casel.org/about-2/>) . CASEL identifies "The CASEL 5" which are the key elements of social-emotional learning (self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making). These core components were created so that school systems have clear goals and a framework for implementation.^[10] CASEL also defines the best methods for implementing SEL at different levels, such as classrooms, schools, families and caregivers, and communities.^[11]

Social-emotional Learning in Classrooms

Most students need to feel connected to instructors for optimal learning.^[12] Aside from being present and hearing our students we need to be willing to listen to what they are saying. There are often misconceptions in schools today concerning the topic of inclusion.^[12] As educators and administrators, it is important to remember that being fair is not always being equal.^[13] Some students need more or less support and all students need opportunities to practice proper SEL skills regularly.^[12]

Social-emotional learning fosters empathy and compassion is imperative for a successful school that effectively supports the mental wellbeing of staff and students.^[14] Speaking on

the importance of empathy, Molecular Biologist [John Medina](#) believes that the more empathy training everyone (students and teachers) get, the better the grades will become.^[15] He shares that it is all about making the classroom feel like a safe place for students to learn.^[15]

Studies have shown that programs such as SPARK have been a successful tool for schools with a diverse population to introduce and encourage Social-emotional learning skills.^[16]

History

Social-emotional learning began in the 1960s at the Yale School of Medicine in the Child Study Center. Here, [Professor James Comer](https://medicine.yale.edu/profile/james_comer/) started the Comer School Development Program where he focused the education systems of low income African American communities, particularly the elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut due to their poor academic report cards.^[17] The Comer Development school implemented programs into this school that focused on the social and emotional needs of the students. Soon after, New Haven public schools became the charter for social-emotional learning due to their proximity to Yale University.

Research

The implementation of SEL is shown to improve the social dynamics of schools by decreasing physical aggression^[18] and reducing bullying of students with disabilities.^[19] SEL can improve academic performance by 11 percentile points.^[20] Additionally, the implementation of SEL programs in schools as early as kindergarten decreases the likelihood of students growing up to use public housing, having involvement with the police, or spending time in a detention facility.^[21]

Policy

In 2019, Congressman Tim Ryan introduced [H.R.4626 - Social Emotional Learning for Families Act of 2019](https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/4626/text) on October 18, 2019, in the 116th Congress. The purpose of this bill was the to create a grant program that supports the creation and implementation of a program in schools that helps to develop social and emotional habits. This bill was cosponsored only by Rep. Debbie Mucarsel-Powell [D-FL-26]. The last action of the SELF Act was an introduction to the [House Committee on Education and Labor](#). Applications for this grant program must demonstrate the physical ability to implement the program, a dedication to faculty and staff training,

assurance that the program will serve disadvantaged communities, and that the institution can host the program long-term.

Importance of SEL to Education

Social Emotional Learning helps students to understand and control their emotions as well as learn to accept and understand the emotions of their classmates as they navigate through their educational careers.^[22] SEL is important for teachers to understand and demonstrate in their classrooms in order to make the learning process more natural and easier to adjust to for students. Things like responsible decision making and positive relationship building are much easier to learn for students who are constantly exposed to examples of the behavior.^[22] When SEL is woven into lessons and the school environment, students relate better to the content, are more motivated to learn, and understand the curriculum more easily.^[22] SEL can also lead to students learning important skills for the workplace as well, like teamwork, time management, and communication skills. Despite this, only three states (Illinois, Kansas, and Pennsylvania) have SEL standards for their K-12 curriculum.^[22]

SEL Standards

As mentioned above, Illinois is one of the three states that has standards in place for their K-12 curriculum. Below are the guidelines for those standards.^[23]

The main goals of SEL for the [Illinois State Board of Education \(ISBE\)](#) are to:

1. Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.
2. Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.
3. Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

As you can see, these align with what has already been discussed in this article. ISBE just groups the five components into 3 goals to better organize lessons and standards for teachers.

The ISBE website shows their framework for how they present the SEL standards. The diagram is in the form of a pyramid. From top to bottom, the sections are: goals, learning standards, benchmarks, and performance descriptors. The goals are broad statements that encompass the purposes of SEL. The learning standards are more specific and pertain to one of the goals. The standards are also grouped together by grade-level clusters: early

elementary (grades K-3), late elementary (grades 4–5), middle/junior high (grades 6–8), early high school (grades 9–10), and late high school (grades 11–12).^[24] Benchmarks are even more specific and address to one standard. One of their main functions is making the standards specific to each grade-level cluster. The performance descriptors add more specificity to the standards and benchmarks. They are meant to help teachers design activities and performance-based assessment for each of the grade-level clusters.^[24]

SEL in Sports

Research has also shown that sports offer prime opportunities for youth to practice SEL skills authentically.^[25] Sports often offer opportunities for each of CASEL's core competencies to be tested in a real way.^[25] It can be assumed then, that athletes with these specific set of skills will help to build sports environments that are more rewarding, enjoyable and valuable for all participants.^[25]

SEL in Canadian Schools

There are alarming statistics of Canadian children and youth who suffer from mental anguish today.^[26] **Mental health** promotion and prevention is key for the solution to this ongoing problem.^[27] Implementing programs that support the components of Social-emotional learning would support the movement to a better and brighter future of mental health for the children and youth in Canada.

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