

5 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

As awareness of social and emotional learning (SEL) grows, so do questions about what it is and why it is important. Use the guidance to help address questions about SEL as you work with your communities.



HOW ARE SEL AND ACADEMICS RELATED?

A [large, rigorous research base](#) demonstrates that SEL improves academic performance.

- A 2011 meta-analysis (213 studies involving 270,000+ students) showed that SEL programs that address CASEL's five core competencies increased students' reading and math scores by 11 percentile points, compared to students who did not participate.
- Students participating in SEL programs also showed improved classroom behavior, an increased ability to manage stress and depression, and better attitudes about themselves, others, and school.
- A 2017 meta-analysis of 82 research studies involving 100,000 students showed that SEL can have a positive impact up to 18 years later on academics and other outcomes. Additional studies echoed these findings.



WHAT DOES SEL TEACH?

SEL teaches knowledge, skills, and attitudes that support college, career, and life success. SEL should be aligned with local priorities and goals.

- SEL teaches five core competencies that help students perform academically, achieve their goals, and succeed in college and career: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
- [Employers](#) want and are in need of employees with social and emotional skills.
- SEL is not "one size fits all" but tailored to local priorities and needs. Schools and communities can work together to develop a vision, graduate profile, and/or learning goals that articulate what students should know and be able to do. They can then align SEL programs and practices to support these goals.
- Evidence-based SEL programs can offer a scope and sequence for teaching competencies effectively and in developmentally-appropriate ways. They have been scientifically evaluated and shown to produce improvements in student outcomes.



IS SEL TIED TO A POLITICAL PARTY/AGENDA?

SEL is not tied to a political party or agenda. SEL has had broad [bi-partisan support](#) because it helps develop productive, responsible community members. SEL can help us heal divisions and come together to build a stronger community/country.

- Majorities of teachers, principals, parents, and students [agree](#) that SEL is important.
- SEL supports goals that people across the political spectrum agree on: helping young people develop skills and have opportunities to succeed in college and career, contribute positively to their communities, have healthy relationships, and avoid risky behaviors (e.g., drug use, violence, bullying, and dropping out).
- SEL does not teach students what to think, but helps them develop the skills to communicate their own ideas, listen respectfully to different perspectives, and make responsible decisions after analyzing data and facts.



WHY SHOULD SEL BE TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS?

SEL bolsters academics and productive classrooms. Families are children's first teachers and play an essential role in shaping SEL implementation in schools.

- SEL teaches knowledge, skills, and attitudes that help students succeed academically, feel motivated to learn, and persist through challenges.
- SEL also helps teachers and students build supportive relationships that improves student engagement/motivation and classroom management.
- [93% of teachers](#) want a greater focus on SEL in schools, because they know that it improves academic performance, behaviors, and attitudes about school.
- By working in partnership, schools and families can develop effective SEL strategies and reinforce the social and emotional skills that students are learning in schools and homes.



WHAT DOES "SEL ADVANCES EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE" MEAN?

SEL helps create high-quality educational opportunities and environments that promote all students' healthy social, emotional, and academic development.

- SEL can help educators to better attune to and appreciate students' developmental needs and unique strengths, build an awareness of students' cultures and backgrounds, and create classroom environments that are more inclusive of all learners.
- SEL helps students, families, educators and community partners build relationships, discuss challenges, and come up with solutions together.
- SEL helps young people and adults better understand and express their views, listen to and empathize with others who have different viewpoints and experiences, and talk through disagreements and conflict.