

Social & Emotional Learning (SEL): Importance, Survey

SELECT KEY POINTS

Per CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is...

The process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, & Academic Development: Sept 2017, Council of Distinguished Scientists issued a brief on the connections among social, emotional, and academic development. Select conclusions:

- ✓ *SEL development essential to success in school, workplace, home, community*
- ✓ *Social & emotional abilities are malleable/teachable*
- ✓ *Schools play a central role in healthy social, emotional, and academic development*
- ✓ *For types of gains produced, supporting integration of SEL is a wise use of resources*

**** INTERACTIVE SURVEY - Using chat window, briefly answer the following questions: ****

1. **What kinds of things is your school explicitly doing to focus on students' social and emotional development? (Name programs, curricula, activities, etc.)**
2. **On a scale of ?-10, how well are the actions above meeting stated objectives for kids?**
3. **On a scale of ?-10, how well are the actions above being implemented?**

Notes, Reflections

How do we **DO** SEL?!

SELECT KEY POINTS

Programming, professional learning are booming—and for all parts of social and emotional learning.

Just 'doing' SEL is not as easy as it may seem, though, and it's frustrating some practitioners and experts.

- ✓ Carol Dweck's Growth Mindset research (which promises that a certain attitude—or mindset—about learning can lead to better decision-making, higher motivation, etc., has been under some fire recently, with Dweck responding that it's far too often misunderstood/misapplied in education.
- ✓ While Angela Duckworth ('grit' pioneer) is solid on grit's importance, she admits to having been less successful at changing young people's self-control. (Note difference between motivation and volition.)
- ✓ Duckworth and David Yeager, two leaders in developmental research, have issued strong warnings/cautions about the use of non-cognitive skills/SEL measurements as accountability metrics. They're useful, but not so reliable as to be judging effectiveness against—at least at this point in time.
- ✓ Also, schools' plates are quite full. Where should new SEL activities go? Can they fit at all?

Notes, Reflections

Practices Over Programs to Build SEL

SELECT KEY POINTS

More research emerging that social and emotional learning may happen best not as “another thing”, but something that’s part of everything.

- ✓ See shift in Paul Tough’s 2012 and 2016 books.
- ✓ A more productive approach may be thinking of how to maximize academic/learning environments to build the social and emotional strengths we want to see in students. (Like Kalenze’s marathon and swimming pool analogy.)
- ✓ Carol Dweck has suggested the same in response to criticism of her research and informed by her observation of education: growth mindset does not grow via learning about growth mindset so much as it does when the expectations and conditions of the learning environment encourage students to relish challenges.
- ✓ Similarly, Hunter Gehlbach:
 - “Simple motivational strategies—such as giving choices on homework assignments—can improve feelings of competence as well as actual competency on exams... The motivational climate and the types of goals that teachers promote in the classroom are no less important.”
- ✓ ...and David Yeager:
 - “The question of whether character can be learned is unambiguously yes, but intentional efforts are far less successful than unintentional ones.”
 - “A real challenge is to not make purpose be an addition—an extra thing like a music class or an after-school activity. Instead, it should be an assumption of the class. As we think about adolescent SEL, let’s try to weave SEL together with our academic content rather than separating it out as an extra program.”

Notes, Reflections

To Build Practices, Use a Different Approach

SELECT KEY POINTS

- ✓ In light of research like that mentioned above about how effective SEL appears to be happening, Search Institute encourages the schools we work with to adopt an approach to practice-building that is strategic, continual, and research-based, supported by practical tools—not just solely “attending some workshops” or “bringing in a program.” Several pieces make up this strategic approach: learning workshops, instructional resources, survey resources, design facilitation work.
- ✓ With REACH (which seeks to build effective relationships with students to build their motivation), we use measurement tools and a practice-design process to help school teams design and carry out research-supported motivating practices with students. Some models of how schools implementing are supplied.
- ✓ (We also show schools how to monitor such practices, but such not included in this webinar.)
- ✓ We fully realize, however, that many complex professional development and structural considerations are in play and that schools sometimes can only work with parts of that whole. As such, there are several engagement levels schools work with us at: Awareness, Awareness + Action, and Practice Transformation.

Notes, Reflections, Items to Share with my Staff