



## How can social and emotional learning and mental health supports be incorporated into summer learning?

The pandemic has had a profound impact on student learning. Additionally, according to the [National Alliance of Mental Health](#), students' mental health has suffered as a result of physical distancing and isolation, lack of routines and other recent and past traumatic stressors. Now more than ever, it is imperative that the mental health needs of students be addressed.

The information in this document was developed to provide flexible, evidence-based guidance for districts to consider as they develop and implement summer programming.

### THINGS TO CONSIDER

Districts and schools can help students and communities heal over the summer. Research has shown that strong, supportive and sustained [relationships with adults](#) in schools consistently predict students' capacity for resilient behavior, even in the face of [traumatic experiences](#).

[Social and emotional learning \(SEL\)](#) teaches children and adults to identify and manage their thoughts, emotions and behaviors to maintain positive and healthy lifestyles. In a [recent report](#), experts found that SEL provides an important foundation for supporting students and adults who are enduring situations of significant uncertainty and stress, ultimately creating long-term pathways toward healthy, thriving school communities.

When students learn SEL skills, their [emotional intelligence](#) grows and leads to better mental health, more classroom engagement, stronger decision-making and healthier relationships.

These skills in turn create schools with safer, more caring and more effective environments.

Due to the effects of the pandemic, many students are facing a multitude of traumatic stressors – the illness or loss of friends or family, child abuse, food and income insecurities and more. Social and emotional learning helps support student mental health needs by fostering a sense of safety and security, building positive relationships with others and providing equitable support to learning. The combined impact is a strengthened school community.

It is more important than ever to remember that students must “[Maslow before they can Bloom](#).” This means that their basic needs – including food, rest, emotional safety and sense of belonging – must be met before learning can occur. This hierarchy of needs applies equally to adults in the school setting. SEL and mental health are strengthened with a combined

## KEY INSIGHTS

- Now more than ever, schools need comprehensive SEL and mental health programs to meet students' emotional needs.
- It takes a collaborative approach to meet the SEL and mental health needs of students.
- Providing equitable access to SEL and mental health resources that consider students' race and ethnicity, language, developmental level and background is vital for student success and well-being.

## SEE ALSO

- [How can schools plan for effective summer learning experiences?](#)
- [How can school and community partnerships support the mental health needs of students?](#)
- [How can schools and communities partner to provide summer learning experiences?](#)

approach of building relationships with students and caring for the well-being of everyone in the school community during summer programming and the traditional school year.

## ATTENDING TO EQUITY

Students with unique experiences and needs represent a particularly vulnerable population during a crisis. To ensure all students feel supported, be [sensitive to cultural and language differences](#), medical needs and other issues that may make them feel isolated or marginalized. Schools are often places where students feel safe and make connections to trusted adults like teachers, coaches and staff. When educators have individual conversations with students, they should make sure students can identify at least one trusted adult in their life.

This [sample needs assessment](#) can be adapted for summer programming to help determine students' needs. When developing resources, consider using multiple formats and the home language of students' families. If possible, provide help for those who need assistance with sign-up forms and other paperwork.

## RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

- Administrators play an important role in supporting student and adult social and emotional learning and mental health. In order to cultivate student well-being, [adults in the school must also feel supported](#), valued and cared for. Consider reviewing and enacting the [Social and Emotional Well-Being Quality Assessments and Screeners for Educators](#) to support staff members engaged in summer learning.
- Educators and caregivers who support students through summer learning experiences should consider their own self-care and can access resources, including: [Self-Care for Teachers and Educational Professionals](#), [Mindful Practices](#), [Self-Care Strategies](#) and [Creating a Self-Care Plan](#).
- Family and caregivers will spend the majority of time with students over the summer and can help cultivate student SEL and mental health. Resources like [a PBS video series](#), [social emotional activities](#), SEL books for [children](#) and [adults](#), [cultivating mindfulness videos](#) and this [SEL podcast for children and adults](#) could be shared with families and caregivers.
- Districts could also consider sharing OSDE guidance for [self-care](#); [building relationships, hope and resilience](#); supporting [SEL in virtual or distance learning settings](#) and [these additional resources](#) to support student mental health and well-being. Additionally, families and caregivers can access [suicide prevention support and resources](#) or support with food, rent, utilities and more through [211Oklahoma](#).