

PRIORITIZING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

How can schools implement systems that foster social and emotional learning for students?

The importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) cannot be overstated. These skills are critical to maintaining healthy lifestyles, enabling children and adults to identify and manage their thoughts, emotions and behaviors. During the pandemic, high school students receiving virtual or blended instruction more [frequently reported](#) that their mental or emotional health worsened.

Regardless of the instructional model, the most effective way for schools to support SEL and student wellness, connection and achievement is to create a positive school climate. Teaching social and emotional skills improves the overall mental and behavioral health of children, families and communities. This brief outlines approaches to implementing social and emotional learning opportunities for students.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

[The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning](#) defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set positive goals, show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

[Schoolwide SEL](#) integrates academic, social and emotional learning across all school contexts. This approach provides a learning environment that infuses SEL into all aspects of instruction and promotes equitable outcomes for all students. Central to this system is high-

quality professional learning and the use of data for continuous improvement. When fully implemented, schoolwide SEL contributes to more successful and equitable outcomes for young people and is evidenced by schoolwide SEL indicators.

There are several examples of effective schoolwide SEL. CASEL has identified ten indicators of schoolwide SEL to provide schools with evidence of high-quality implementation. Their [video collection](#) addresses these indicators and provides practical applications for districts pursuing quality schoolwide SEL.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Indicators of systemic, schoolwide social-emotional learning include:
 - Explicit SEL instruction
 - SEL integrated with academic instruction
 - Youth voice and engagement
 - Supportive school and classroom climates
 - Focus on adult SEL
 - Supportive discipline
 - A continuum of integrated supports
 - Authentic family partnerships
 - Aligned community partnerships
 - Systems for continuous improvement

Note: SEL practices should be evidence-based and non-discriminatory or harmful to historically underserved students and their families.

SEE ALSO

- [How can summer enrichment experiences support student learning, well-being and success?](#)
- [How can social and emotional learning and mental health supports be incorporated into summer learning?](#)

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

[Educational equity means](#) that “every student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, family background or family income.” Striving for educational equity challenges us to examine biases and modify inequitable practices that may exist to create inclusive school environments that cultivate the interests and talents of children, youth and adults from diverse backgrounds. Successful implementation of SEL occurs when all students’ and adults’ cultural values, socioeconomic status, race, gender and disability are affirmed and respected.

SEL practices should be evidence-based and nondiscriminatory or harmful to historically underserved students and their families.

Diverse student cultural experiences should be appreciated and respected as sources of strength and healing. For more information on how to advance equity through social and emotional learning, see CASEL’s resources on [transformative SEL](#).

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

- The OSDE Office of Student Support offers [training opportunities](#) for school staff to build foundational knowledge and awareness of the need for SEL and [curated resources to support student and staff SEL](#). The upcoming OSDE SEL Implementation Guide (to be released in fall 2021) will support schools in incorporating SEL skills into every aspect of the school day.
- Consider using the [Oklahoma Family Engagement Framework](#) as a guide to effectively engage and partner with families and communities. [The Wallace Foundation](#) and CASEL also offer a wealth of resources, including guidance on planning and implementing [systemic SEL](#).
- Districts and schools can prioritize adult SEL and self-care by providing time for adult learning, collaboration and modeling in the five core SEL competencies of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.
- SEL should be integrated throughout the academic day to ensure continuous practice of social, emotional and behavioral skills. The upcoming OSDE SEL Implementation guide will provide guidance on how to teach the core competencies using classroom-embedded strategies that also support academic learning. Schools and districts may also identify an SEL curriculum or program using the OSDE Prevention Programming Planning Guide (to be released in fall 2021) to explicitly teach SEL.
- Implementing systemic SEL is not a one-time process; practices should be reviewed and evaluated for effectiveness and sustainability. Use [implementation and outcome data](#) to continuously improve all SEL-related systems, practices and policies with a focus on equity.