

Social and Emotional Learning



Fact Sheet

What is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?

The term Social and Emotional Learning, sometimes abbreviated to SEL, can be thought of as the process of acquiring particular skills or competencies that contribute to social and emotional wellbeing, or to resilience.

The Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) suggests the following framework of social and emotional competencies:

Self-awareness - knowing what we are feeling in the moment; having a realistic assessment of our own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence.

Social awareness - understanding what others are feeling; being able to take their perspective; appreciating and interacting positively with diverse groups.

Self-management - handling our emotions so they facilitate rather than interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals' persevering in the face of setbacks and frustrations.

Relationship skills - handling emotions in relationships effectively; establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation, resistance to inappropriate social pressure, negotiating solutions to conflict and seeking help when needed.

Responsible decision making - making decisions based on an accurate consideration of all relevant factors and the likely consequences of alternative courses of action, respecting others and taking responsibility for one's decisions.

Why is it important?

The skills and competencies acquired through SEL help us to achieve a state of social and emotional wellbeing (sometimes called mental health).

They may also help us to maintain or re-establish our wellbeing when we are faced with change or challenges.

Research suggests that these skills also:

- Support better academic outcomes, attitude toward school, and attitudes about self and others;
- Reduce challenging behaviour, conduct problems and levels of emotional distress; and
- Prevent problems such as alcohol and drug use, violence, truancy, and bullying.

What can teachers do?

Ideally, these skills are acquired during children's development, through positive interactions in the family, children's services settings, school and broader community. Creating a caring and supportive early childhood setting or promoting a positive school climate are important ways to foster wellbeing, development and learning.

Research also suggests that social and emotional skills can be enhanced by integrating them into the curriculum. This could occur through the use of special programs or lessons shown to promote these skills (sometimes called SEL programs).

It may also be useful to integrate key principles into everyday instructional techniques and classroom practices. Do this by looking for opportunities to encourage students to explore emotions, work collaboratively, develop respect for others and learn to manage their own behaviour.

Sources and Links

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) www.casel.org

Stafford, K., Moore, C., Foggett, K., Kemp, E., & Hazell, T. (2007). Proving and improving: Exploring the links between resilience, behaviour and academic outcomes. *Proceedings of the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference*. Available on www.responseability.org

