Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Resources

- Building Social and Emotional Learning into the School Day: Seven Guiding Principles (white paper)
- Supporting English Learners with Social and Emotional Learning (guide)
- SEL by grade level (shown in the *Wonders* literacy currculum; 2-page flyer)

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Building Social and Emotional Learning Into the School Day: Seven Guiding Principles

Second Edition

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Table of Contents

Foreword from Kelly McGrath, Chief Academic Officer

In the two years since these guiding principles were first created, the field of education has witnessed a remarkable and transformative surge of interest in social and emotional learning (SEL)—a domain that was once considered of relatively little importance, and perhaps even outside the scope of school instruction.

Once termed "soft" or "noncognitive" skills, SEL is now understood to be directly tied to academic and workplace success. Proficiency in SEL is key to building relationships, emotional and behavioral regulation, and making decisions, all of which play important roles in how we learn and engage with the world around us. In fact, SEL has been found to be as vital to school and work success as academic knowledge, and it takes dedication and hard work from both students and their teachers to develop these skills.

Our understanding of the influences and implications of SEL is evolving at an astounding pace, and educators are already working diligently to apply this growing body of research to practice within the classroom. Indeed, in a recent survey we conducted, nearly three-quarters of the teachers who participated indicated that they were devoting more time to SEL than they did five years ago, and 93% of teachers ranked SEL of equal importance in relation to academic content learning.

It is not always easy to figure out how to integrate SEL into existing school practice. When we first set out to build this guide, we drew from an extensive research literature base, synthesizing strategies and recommended practices from various research studies into a cohesive set of guiding principles that every teacher can use when embarking on this important work. We also created model scenarios to illustrate each principle in action, based on actual experiences with students and teachers in every grade level in school settings across the country.

The response to these guiding principles has been overwhelming and serves as another strong indicator of how vital SEL has become toward our collective efforts to address the learning needs of all children. As we at McGraw-Hill Education continue to learn through our collaborations with organizations such as Sesame Workshop®, social and emotional skills are not "soft" skills, but rather a strong foundation of all that we do inside and outside of school.

Moreover, emerging research is now underscoring the fact that social and emotional development is nuanced and complex, and that instructional support in this area must reflect these complexities. For example, a number of studies have demonstrated that SEL programs are more effective when they incorporate culturally responsive practices: This is particularly important for students whose home cultures may differ significantly from school cultures or the cultures of their teachers.

As such, we felt that it would be important to address these and other research developments in the second edition of our guiding SEL principles. As a learning science company, we understand that both research and practice continually evolve, and we are proud to help translate ongoing research into practical support for educators as they engage in their noble and critical work with students.

To close, please note that this guide is not intended as an endpoint, but rather a beginning. As you read, we encourage you to think of this as our invitation to you. We hope you will engage with us as we all work together to effectively build SEL integration into the school day.

If you would like to share your own experiences with SEL instruction, share successful strategies you have employed in your classroom, or if you have questions about this guide, please visit bit.ly/SELPrinciples.

Introduction

From the day we are born, our brains are primed and ready to learn. We enter the world equipped to gather, interpret, synthesize, apply, and modify the enormous amount of information that is available to us through our senses. Together, these processes allow us to learn a remarkable variety of skills and content—everything from complex mathematics to driving a car to reading Shakespeare.

Interestingly, our brains are *equally equipped* to learn skills and content related to social behaviors and emotions, or what is now termed social and emotional learning (SEL). Moreover, research studies have demonstrated that all forms of learning, whether academic, social, or emotional, are inextricably linked (Zins, 2004). Stated another way: How we feel influences how we think, and conversely, how we think influences how we feel.

Furthermore, researchers have found that instruction in SEL is as critical to development and school success as academic instruction. For example, in a pivotal study of SEL programs across K–12 settings, Taylor and colleagues (2017) found that students who received social and emotional instruction and support programs gained 13 percentile points in academic performance, social skills, behavioral skills, and attitudes over students who did not receive these programs.

This study, along with a great many others, provides a compelling argument for the integration of social and emotional learning into K–12 instruction. However, in order for students to reap the full benefits of SEL, it is important to ensure that SEL instruction takes place every day, in every school setting. With all that must be accomplished in a school day, how can teachers, administrators, and school staff also make time for social and emotional skills?

We have created this guide to help answer this question, drawing upon the extensive research that has informed the development of the field of social and emotional learning. This guide is intended to support all stakeholders in the important work of building SEL into the academic day, at every grade level and in every setting.

Within this guide, readers will find seven general principles for SEL integration, along with corresponding strategies for applying each principle. Each section also includes an example of a typical situation in which these strategies may be applied. Because every student and every school is different, we invite readers to incorporate their own strategies into this framework. Indeed, rather than a "how-to" resource, we encourage readers to use this guide as a starting point for the development of their own strategic plans and practices for building social and emotional learning into the school day.

SEL Core Competencies

Based on decades of research on how children feel, behave, and interact both in and outside of school settings, experts have created a number of frameworks for categorizing and studying the social and emotional skills that develop during the school years. One of the most frequently cited frameworks was developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), building upon several foundational research studies and meta-analyses (e.g. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Greenberg, Domitrovich, Weissberg, & Durlak, 2017; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

Under the CASEL framework, the skills for building positive relationships, managing emotions, and making decisions are all organized across five core SEL competencies. Each competency can be thought of as an umbrella that encompasses related functional skills, though in some cases these skills overlap across competencies:

Five Core SEL Competencies (CASEL framework)

Self-awareness: The capacity to reflect on one's own feelings, values, and behaviors

Social awareness: The ability to view situations from another perspective, respect the social and cultural norms of others, and celebrate diversity

Relationship skills: The ability to initiate and sustain positive connections with peers, teachers, families, and other groups

Self-management: The set of skills that includes self-motivation, goal-setting, personal organization, self-discipline, impulse control, and use of strategies for coping with stress

Responsible decision-making: The ability to make choices that consider the well-being of oneself and others

Each of the core competencies are developed throughout the life span and are all vital to success, not only during the K–12 years but also in post-secondary education and the workplace.

It should be noted that since social and emotional learning is a lifelong process, teachers subsequently have the dual responsibility of supporting SEL among their students and continuing to refine and develop their own SEL competencies. Research suggests that this more comprehensive view of SEL is more effective than a focus on students alone (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

Applying SEL Research: McGraw-Hill Education SEL Principles

How can we apply SEL research to actual practice? Helping students master SEL core competencies during a busy school day is not always easy or straightforward but having a framework of concrete strategies can help. Building from an extensive review of SEL research literature, we have curated and synthesized seven guiding principles that were designed to help in SEL planning, professional development, and instruction at the classroom, school, and district levels. Each principle includes specific, tangible ideas and approaches for supporting the broad scope of social, emotional, and behavioral development encompassed in the core competencies identified by CASEL.

These guiding principles do not take the place of the CASEL core competencies. Instead, they are designed to extend instruction in practical ways that allow for SEL development within existing school practices. When applied, each principle supports multiple core competencies through active and thoughtful learning supports.

Seven Guiding Principles (McGraw-Hill Education)

Create: Consciously create a nurturing, caring, and safe environment for students.

Integrate: Whenever possible, incorporate SEL skill-building into academic instruction.

Instruct: Provide explicit guidance and instruction in SEL skills.

Reflect: Reflect on how social and cultural contexts are embedded into SEL.

Respect: Foster respect for one's self and others.

Communicate: Exchange ideas about SEL with all stakeholders, early and often.

Empower: Enable students to take charge of their own social and emotional learning.

Guiding Principle 1: CREATE

Consciously create a nurturing, caring, and safe environment for students.

The creation of a safe, positive environment is at the foundation of all SEL efforts, both within and outside a classroom's walls. This principle can extend from the physical environment (e.g. posters on the walls, flexible seating), to classroom rules, to the everyday emotional practices that let students know they are in a caring and safe space at school.

Though every school and every classroom will implement this principle differently, it can be helpful to start by implementing one or more of the following strategies, such as:

CREATE strategies:

1. Greet each student by name, every day.
2. Collaboratively develop classroom rules and expectations with students.
3. Encourage students to hold each other accountable for meeting behavioral and social interactions.
4. Provide multiple ways for students to report, discuss, and work through conflicts.
5. Reward positive behaviors such as demonstrating respect.
6. Establish a schoolwide anti-bullying policy, and monitor all school settings, including playgrounds, bathrooms, and cafeterias.

Example: Mr. Wheeler teaches fourth grade. In his school, students switch classes for math and ELA instruction, so he works with over 45 different students in any given day. Despite this volume, Mr. Wheeler makes a point of saying, "hello" to each student every day, and asking one personalized question (e.g. "Jana, is your baby brother feeling any better?").

Even though it took a little while, Mr. Wheeler worked with each section of students at the beginning of the year to come up with a set of shared classroom guidelines. Students agreed to follow these guidelines and worked together to build their own poster, which is proudly displayed in the classroom along with their signatures.

When Mr. Wheeler notices exemplary student behaviors that demonstrate mastery of the shared classroom guidelines, he asks those students to choose "power badges" corresponding to those behaviors. For example, a student who helps another student who was injured on the playground earns a "hero" badge, which is placed on his or her desk for the week. Mr. Wheeler also encourages students to award each other badges, which reinforces a sense of community.

Guiding Principle 2: INTEGRATE

Whenever possible, incorporate SEL skill-building into academic instruction.

It can be challenging to fit everything into the school day. Instead of viewing SEL as one more requirement to fit into an already busy school day, consider how you might integrate SEL and academic content into your existing instruction.

In fact, learning science supports this type of integration because so many of the cognitive processes involved in learning academic content are tied to those involved in emotion, behavior, and decision-making. You may notice a natural alignment between SEL skills such as working toward goals, attentional control, or perseverance, and the academic work that your students encounter each day. Approaches to SEL integration vary depending on instructional needs and available resources, but should include content and problem-solving opportunities that are relevant to students' lives.

INTEGRATE Strategies:

1. Choose a text with an SEL-related topic for use in a literacy lesson.
2. Offer a problem-based project that is based on your students' topics of interest.
3. Design a full classroom unit based on a real-life theme (e.g. helping a local organization increase environmental sustainability).
4. Point out how academic skills, such as persuasive writing, can also promote positive and constructive social interactions.
5. Build creative writing and/or activities into the day that allow students to express emotions in a safe space.
6. Metacognition (thinking about one's own thinking) is an important part of SEL. All content area instruction can be enhanced by offering opportunities for self-reflection on students' own problem-solving, tool selection, organizational strategies, and other thought processes.

Example: Ms. Navarro teaches in a fully-inclusive setting, with six English learners and several students who require instructional accommodations. Because she must address such a wide variety of learning needs, Ms. Navarro is hesitant when the district first announces its commitment to SEL programming.

However, with the help of other teachers on her team, including the school counselor and the reading coach, Ms. Navarro discovers that many of the instructional activities in her classroom are perfectly suited for including SEL components. In November, Ms. Navarro introduces a student-led, problem-based unit on games. During the unit, students work collaboratively to research games throughout history, write stories around game narratives, explore the mathematics involved in games such as dominoes, and design games to be played with the younger first- and second-grade students in the school.

Reflecting on student outcomes, Ms. Navarro finds that this SEL-enhanced instructional unit allowed students to develop and practice academic skills and SEL-related skills simultaneously. For example, when testing out their game ideas, Ms. Navarro coached students to view the game from another child's perspective: "This makes sense to a third grader, but how would a kindergarten student play if she doesn't know how to multiply yet?" The collaborative nature of the project also ensured students had plenty of rich opportunities throughout the day to practice conflict-resolution, problem-solving, and metacognition.

Guiding Principle 3: INSTRUCT

Provide explicit guidance and instruction in SEL skills.

Just as with academic content, social and emotional learning is achieved through instruction and practice. Although many SEL skills may seem intuitive or easy for adults, these same skills may be new, confusing, and unfamiliar to students. By providing explicit guidance and instruction, educators can ensure that students have a clear understanding of SEL content and expectations.

Often, guidance in social interactions, behavior, and emotions is offered at a "crisis" point, only after a negative incident has taken place. Teachers and school staff can work together to build in teachable SEL moments before such incidents, using the same sorts of strategies they use to teach academic skills and content.

INSTRUCT Strategies:

You can enhance children's SEL learning by following a general process for introducing and developing each new SEL skill:

STEP 1 - Provide a rationale: To increase student motivation and attention, explain why the SEL skill will be important for everyone to learn. If possible, offer one or two real-world examples.

STEP 2 - Define the skill: Provide a concise, concrete definition of the skill. Use straightforward, objective language, and check to make sure students understand the definition.

STEP 3 - Model how to use the skill. Offer students examples of how the skill may be used in different contexts. If possible, ask students to help role-play use of that skill in these different contexts.

STEP 4 – Present opportunities to apply the skill. Class activities such as games or short hands-on exercises can be effective tools for allowing students to practice applying a new skill. Be sure to point out when that same skill can be used in other settings as well, such as during a math lesson or during recess. The more opportunities students have to practice, the better! As in any other learning process, feedback from both teachers and peers is an important part of the application stage.

STEP 5 – Revisit the skill throughout the year. Research has shown that short-duration, single-topic SEL programs are less effective than more comprehensive programs that allow students to review and practice skills over time (or even from grade to grade). Every week or two, review earlier skills and point out ways that those skills may connect to what you are currently working on together.

A number of additional strategies may also be used to provide explicit guidance and instruction in SEL:

- For SEL skills that require students to follow a recommended process (e.g. resolving a disagreement with a peer), you may wish to place visual reminders of the process throughout the classroom. Posters and small reminder stickers for desks are often used for this purpose.
- The differentiated learning practices used in academic instruction should be extended to any SEL content that is taught. Based on the individual and group needs of students, be sure to include multiple methods and modalities for each SEL skill (e.g. include writing activities, dramatic play, media, and discussion).
- Short, personalized illustrative texts such as the Social Stories first introduced by Carol Gray in the 1990s (Gray & Garand, 1993) are effective tools for explicitly illustrating a focused SEL concept. These stories are typically written by teachers and are tailored for specific students or groups of students to illustrate SEL content via a customized, safe, and positive format.
- Explicitly teach protocols and procedures for handling challenging social situations. Recognize that time spent on topics such as conflict resolution counts as "a teachable moment" just as time spent on academic content.
- Set specific individual and class goals for specific time periods. For example, when students are learning how to offer constructive feedback to peers, encourage students to provide at least three positive comments and three helpful comments during each work session.
- Invite family and community members to contribute tips and tricks that they use to effectively manage emotions and social interactions.
- Whenever an example of a social and/or emotional skill is presented, whether in real-time in the classroom or as part of classwork (e.g. watching a video clip), take a moment to describe and discuss that skill with students.

Example: Grady is a student teacher in the second semester of his pre-service training. He has been placed in a bilingual kindergarten class under the guidance of a veteran teacher, Mrs. DeFusto. A strong advocate of integrating SEL into instruction, Mrs. DeFusto has worked throughout the year to help Grady develop his understanding of social and emotional development among young children from a wide variety of cultures.

At the beginning of the year, Mrs. DeFusto modeled how to develop classroom rules and expectations together with students. However, both teachers have begun to notice an increase in problematic behaviors, particularly right after lunch and recess. Mrs. DeFusto decides to hold a class meeting to review the classroom rules and expectations, but Grady notices that several students still have trouble transitioning from the playground to the classroom without losing belongings, having trouble lining up, or entering the classroom without disturbing the class next door.

Later that week, Grady invites a few of the classroom's volunteer parents to brainstorm a solution together over lunch. The group creates an acronym, CALM, which they introduce to the class the next morning:

C – Check yourself. Check around you to make sure you have your lunchbox, your jacket, and anything else you brought with you. You should also check to make sure you understand any directions.

A – Ask questions. If you aren't sure what to do, ask a friend or an adult.

L – Line up. When it is time to move from one place to another, line up with your class buddy.

M – Move carefully. Please walk quietly and carefully from one place to the next. Please don't touch anyone around you, and keep your voice at whisper-level.

The class makes laminated pocket cards with the CALM acronym, which they bring with them for the first few weeks as they learn how to follow each step. A few students still have some difficulty with the process. Grady spends time with them engaging in role play to demonstrate the process in different contexts. With time and practice, the CALM strategy becomes a natural part of their classroom transitions.

Guiding Principle 4: REFLECT

Reflect on how social and cultural contexts are embedded into SEL.

Experts in social and emotional development are increasingly coming to understand that SEL is not the same for everyone. Specifically, what works for supporting the social and emotional growth of some children may not work for others.

To address this, the principle of reflection is key and may take two forms:

1. Social and cultural reflection
2. Self-reflection

Each form of reflection is related to the other; when implemented together they can both help establish a learning environment in which all students can succeed. Researchers have found that while SEL-integration into the school holds great promise for students, the cultures and social contexts of students themselves must be reflected in instruction (see Gregory & Fergus, 2017 for an in-depth discussion of these practices).

To achieve this, teachers and students must engage in continuous ***social and cultural reflection*** in order to examine the social and behavioral practices that are part of each individual's home culture (including the teacher's!). Throughout the school year, it is important to observe and understand the social and cultural influences that home-contexts have on the learning experience.

For example, some cultures value the use of humor to diffuse interpersonal conflict. If a student seems to "laugh off" a conflict or not take a situation seriously, that student may in fact be engaging in an approach that is considered normal and positive within his or her home culture. Another common example is the concept of personal space. What feels like a comfortable proximity to some students can feel like aggression or a threat to others, and these feelings will influence how students behave and how they learn together.

Self-reflection is a second, complementary process for building an equitable and supportive SEL environment and addressing the diverse needs of learners, staff, and families. Often, teachers and students are unaware of how their own beliefs, behaviors, expectations, and norms can affect the classroom environment. It is critical that teachers continuously engage in self-reflection on each of these components of SEL to better understand potential barriers as well as potential areas of growth.

Strategies for embedding social and cultural reflection into SEL:

- Move beyond high-level celebrations of diversity (such as annual "multicultural days"), and dive deeper by establishing ongoing group forums for discussing and demonstrating practices, values, beliefs, academic pursuits, and art across all cultures represented in the school.
- Invite guests from the cultures represented in the school to attend and hold events, training, workshops to build awareness, and understanding among students and school staff.
- Critically examine school practices related to classroom management and discipline to ensure fair and positive support for all students.
- Regularly invite students to participate in "from my eyes" activities, in which students can describe situations from their own cultural perspective. Be sure to offer students the option of anonymity.
- During instruction and class activities, acknowledge and honor the wide variety of learning norms found in world cultures. For example, recognize that a student may not necessarily be trying to cheat when asking another student about a question during a test, especially if group learning is considered the norm in that student's home culture.
- Offer multiple venues for positive academic, social, and emotional expression (e.g. written text, visual art, theater, computer programming, etc.).

Strategies for self-reflection:

- Critically examine a lesson plan through a culturally-responsive lens. Do the materials reflect your own home culture, that of your students, or some combination? Do class activities offer multiple forms of knowledge application and expression? What are the ways students can work with others? How can they ask for help?
- Co-develop a self-reflection checklist with other teachers that can be used before, during, or after a lesson is taught. Include questions that may help promote growth (e.g. When students did not respond to a question, what did I do? How did I explain my expectations for the assignment? What might a student from another culture than my own say about the lesson?)
- Ask other teachers, particularly from cultures other than your own, to observe your lessons and provide feedback.

- Keep a journal to document your self-reflection journey, including any changes you have made in your practice.
- Design and implement an action-research project around your self-reflection or self-reflection among students. You may wish to share your findings with colleagues to further increase the impact of your work.

Example: Sam, Aditi, and Helena make up the new seventh-grade math team in an urban middle school. They serve a student population that mirrors the highly diverse, changing demographics of their city. They are each in their third year of teaching, having joined the school as a cohort.

Over the past few months, Sam has noticed that several of his students regularly refuse to answer questions when going over the homework together as a class. When he asks them if they understand a mathematical process, they often nod or smile, but Sam is not entirely sure that they really have a grasp of what is being taught. He wonders if his instruction is too boring or if the students simply don't care about learning.

During a tam meeting, Aditi and Helena tell Sam they have noticed the same behaviors, and Aditi suggests that they examine whether this is due to different practices within those students' home cultures. The teachers agree to meet regularly outside their usual team meetings with the goal of increasing their cultural understanding. Together, they decide to create and distribute a survey to gather information about how students prefer to learn new information, demonstrate understanding, work with peers, and interact with adults.

From the results of the survey, Sam is surprised to learn that many of his students do not like to speak up in class because they consider it disrespectful and rude: They were taught to stay silent when adults are at the front of the class. The teachers also discover that several students were unhappy that they were not allowed to do more work together, since they were accustomed to working through problems in groups in their homes and communities. At the same time, other students expressed a desire for the opposite—more individual work!

As they continue to work towards becoming more reflective and culturally responsive, the team leads a schoolwide initiative of inviting students and families in for "learning design" nights, which are held in locations throughout the community. During these popular sessions, teachers, students, and families work together to design and implement math-learning experiences; share feedback on methods; and problem-solve approaches, materials, and even assessments. Though they are still relatively new teachers, the math team is later chosen to lead additional, schoolwide cultural-reflection workshops and events.

Guiding Principle 5: RESPECT

Foster respect for one's self and others.

Respect is a multi-faceted construct, one that has a strong influence on social, emotional, and behavioral development throughout the lifespan. This construct is also central to promoting educational equity, which, by definition, requires all stakeholders to respect and positively respond to the diverse needs of others.

Mutual respect in the classroom is built upon the attention and consideration of personal beliefs, values, and actions, and is typically demonstrated through care, assistance, and concern for others. In school settings, the concept of respect can be applied to all school-based relationships, including:

- Respect for one's self
- Respect among students
- Respect between students and school staff
- Respect among school staff; collegial respect

Respect also encompasses care and consideration for the particular culture, values, learning needs, home situations, and norms of each individual, whether student or staff. This is especially important in highly diverse settings, as behaviors that are seen as respectful in some cultures may not be considered respectful in others. Care must be taken to acknowledge and honor these differences, which often requires flexibility and positive collaboration on the part of both students and school staff.

RESPECT strategies:

1. Respect can be tricky to both define and understand, so it is helpful to provide students with concrete examples through stories or roleplay. Be sure to explore and discuss situations in which a behavior might be seen as respectful by some but disrespectful by others.
2. Provide consistent guidelines for constructive listening and follow up by offering opportunities for students to speak. (Here, too, it will be important to understand and honor the cultural norms of each student regarding speaking and listening.)
3. Use academic content to support or instruct concepts of respect, as applicable.
4. Model respectful behaviors toward colleagues; treat each interaction with staff as a teaching opportunity.
5. Discuss the concept of self-respect and provide supporting activities (e.g. asking students to complete a personal strengths survey or teaching a lesson on self-care).

6. Integrate and explicitly highlight opportunities for building student-to-student trust and respect into existing classroom activities.
7. Regardless of grade level, clearly outline and explain expectations for respectful behavior and celebrate instances when they have clearly been followed.
8. Examine your own definitions of respect and those of your students, and discuss these definitions and how they relate to learning in the classroom.
9. Try pedagogical approaches, such as the jigsaw method, that encourage students to work cooperatively and respectfully together in order to succeed at academic tasks.
10. Perhaps most importantly, respect the personal stories, situations, and emotions of each student. Demonstrate this respect by modeling positive listening and response practices.

Example: All of the students in Mr. Jude Cortez 's class roll their eyes or laugh at the beginning of every one of his high school world history classes, because he always begins them the same way:

"Okay class, welcome and please remember. Always do unto others…."

Once the class responds with "as you would have done to you," the students and Mr. Cortez take a few minutes each day to share an example of the golden rule (or failure to follow the golden rule) from their own personal history or from world history.

Because the study of history by default is built upon stories told from different perspectives, Mr. Cortez often blends his instruction of content with explicit instruction and discussions of the nuances behind respectful and disrespectful behavior. For example, when studying the famous Salt March, during which Mohandas Gandhi led thousands of fellow Indians in a non-violent 240-mile march to protest a salt tax and British rule, students engage in a group project to examine primary sources from the time.

As part of the project, students engage critically and deeply with each primary source, both to understand the historical context and the concept of civil disobedience, and to understand the perspectives of different groups at the time. After completing their research, students create and present a project telling the story of the Salt March as if it were happening today (e.g. a Twitter feed coming from British rulers). Throughout the project, students also keep a personal journal, answering the following prompts each time:

- What examples of respect or lack of respect in historical times did you see in what you learned today?
- Do these examples connect to any examples from your own life? If so, how?
- How can we, as citizens, apply what we have learned about respect to the history we are creating right now?

Guiding Principle 6: COMMUNICATE

Exchange ideas about SEL with all stakeholders, early and often.

Effective implementation of SEL instruction is not a lone venture. To provide a rich social and emotional learning environment, all stakeholders must exercise their own SEL competencies, beginning with strong communication and the establishment of a solid SEL vision.

How to begin? It can be helpful to first identify any and all stakeholders who will be involved in SEL efforts. These may include:

- Students
- Families
- Teachers
- School staff
- Administrators
- Community members

These stakeholders are all part of the important work of social and emotional learning, and strong communication will help ensure that students reap the full benefits of SEL programming.

Studies in school, family, and community partnerships have helped establish a number of strategies for effective communication across various groups.

COMMUNICATE Strategies

Communicating with Families

- Provide families with the same general SEL concepts you are presenting to students. For example, if you are encouraging students to follow a specific process for responding to another's feelings, explain that same process to family members so that it can also be modeled at home.
- Learn about your students' families, ideally through face-to-face interactions. This will help ensure your SEL instruction is culturally responsive and builds on the strengths and habits of families.
- Demonstrate and model the same empathy you are helping your students develop. Offer respect and understanding for the unique circumstances of each family.
- Send home short notes to families when a student has successfully demonstrated an SEL skill (e.g. "When another student fell on the playground, Jess came right over to make sure she was okay!").

Communicating with School Staff/Colleagues

- Teacher preparation is key to successful SEL implementation. However, many school staff do not receive instruction in SEL as part of their pre-service training. Ongoing professional development training is a critical way to communicate internally about SEL.
- Researchers recommend that schools form a core team of school staff and administrators to lead in the communication and integration of SEL into schoolwide practice.
- School staff may wish to hold regular observation and coaching sessions for each other in order to practice, refine, and discuss SEL strategies.

Communicating with Community Partners

- Invite members of the community (e.g. business owners, librarians, fire fighters) to present a specific SEL topic to your class. A sample topic might be how teamwork impacts their work in the community.
- Together with students, write newsletters describing some of the SEL-related work that takes place in the classroom. Note: Be careful to take precautions around student privacy (e.g. names, photographs).
- Feature any SEL-related activities or events on the school website, and send links to key members of the community.

Example: Hillview Elementary School has recently incorporated SEL into its school mission. At the beginning of the school year, the principal sent home a special bulletin to help students and families understand the definition and core competencies of SEL and why it is so important to student success.

A new SEL page on the website was created to feature related topics and activities. The page includes a "family corner" with resources for connecting SEL skills learned at school to practice at home. SEL-related events, such as the town's upcoming multicultural feast, are highlighted in the news section of the website. The page also includes games and role-playing activities for students to try at home and at school.

Students have an important role in Hillview's SEL communications. This year, the fifth-grade students have taken on the role of "reporters," looking for and writing about specific student actions and behaviors that demonstrate SEL competencies. Each week, the students focus on a new SEL skill. For example, this week, fifth graders are reporting on demonstrations of respect for others. These stories are then published (with pseudonyms substituted for student names) in the school's print and digital newsletters.

Guiding Principle 7: EMPOWER

Enable students to take charge of their own social and emotional learning.

To reap the full benefits of social and emotional instruction, it is essential that students of all ages are offered continuous opportunities to apply what they have learned, both in and out of the classroom.

Teachers, administrators, and other school staff can foster this by creating a culture of student empowerment. This does not mean that adults should give up full control of what happens in school. Rather, adults can spend some of the school day as facilitators who help students build positive, safe environments and provide guidance and support as needed.

EMPOWER Strategies

- Examine your own beliefs as an educator. If you believe that students are talented, engaged, and intelligent individuals who are capable of incredible growth, it becomes more likely your students will believe this themselves. This belief sets the stage for positive social and emotional development.
- Provide data and feedback that students can use to modify and extend their own application of SEL strategies learned in the classroom.
- Include student-led activities throughout the school day: Adults can serve as facilitators, but students direct the interactions.
- Involve students in discussing and solving real-world problems. This helps connect skills to content and provides rich and complex situations for practicing discrete skills independently.
- Hold regular class meetings to allow students extra practice with skills such as self-management in a group, turn-taking, and communicating with others.
- Offer choices throughout the school day to encourage a sense of autonomy and promote decision-making skills. Verbalize the thought process behind making a careful and thoughtful choice.
- Provide opportunities to for students to safely fail and learn from that failure.
- Offer students scheduled time to interact with students from other classes or grades. Encourage students to alternately play the role of teacher, coach, and student.
- Ask students about what they need. Establish multiple venues for expressing thoughts, feelings, and needs (e.g. a class mailbox, lunch with a teacher, or voice recorders for students who may prefer talking over writing).

Example: It is no secret that students in Christine Cook's third-grade class love coming to school, and when asked, Ms. Cook often says it begins with a handshake. Every morning as students enter the classroom, Ms. Cook greets them with a handshake. She then distributes a morning "thought question." As students settle in before the school announcements, they are encouraged to use their computers or devices to type their anonymous responses to the question into a digital document that is then shared after the announcements. Whenever possible, the thought question is tied to one of the day's lessons. For example, one recent thought question was, "Would you rather use your knowledge of coordinate grids to help plan out a community garden and feed people in the neighborhood or to help design a playground for kids on your block, so they have a new place to play?"

Students lead the daily class meeting, starting by reading a few of the responses to the thought question. Taking turns, students are encouraged to spend a few minutes offering constructive feedback or asking follow-up questions. During the meeting, students are also in charge of communicating the daily schedule and collecting any questions they may have for Ms. Cook.

At times, Ms. Cook uses the thought question to introduce academic content. In the coordinate grid example, Ms. Cook asked students to work in small groups later that day, in order to solve a series of math problems culminating in the design of a hypothetical playground. When students made mathematical errors, Ms. Cook encouraged groups to share and examine these errors as a concrete demonstration of how failure can lead to learning and later success.

Joining Hearts and Minds Through SEL

Education is a remarkable, intricate, and constantly-changing paradigm. No two students or teachers or classrooms are the same. However, at the core of every educational endeavor is one constant: We are, all of us, human. As such, we must recognize that our astonishing capacity to learn extends not only to the rich academic content encountered in schools, but also to our emotions and relationships with others.

The principles and strategies shared here offer a framework for addressing this fundamental human truth by helping educational partners support both the hearts and the minds of all students. By pairing positive social and emotional learning with high-quality academic instruction, students will not only capitalize on their powerful, innate learning abilities, but will build skills that can have a positive impact on lives throughout their school years and beyond.

Prepared by the Applied Learning Sciences division of McGraw-Hill.

The Applied Learning Sciences team within the McGraw-Hill School Group reviews existing scholarship and literature from multiple sources across a variety of domains that influence, inform, and strengthen content, pedagogy, and implementation. This whitepaper is a synthesis of existing research, intended to enlighten and inform the field of Applied Learning Sciences in general. The various ways in which learning sciences-research manifests itself within each of our programs is specifically managed by a research lifecycle, efficacy studies, and additional internal and external factors embedded in product development-processes for each program (including ongoing iterative research with teachers and in the field).

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ED-TECH POINT OF VIEW

Supporting English Learners with Social and Emotional Learning

CONTENTS

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Supporting English Learners with Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning can be a critical factor in helping close achievement gaps among English learners. Here's why—along with strategies for success.

When a seventh-grade student named Javier (real name withheld for privacy) arrived in North Kansas City, Missouri a few years ago, his English skills were somewhat limited. But that was just one of the many challenges he faced in his education.

Javier, whose first language was Spanish, was a U.S.-born English learner (EL), and his education had been interrupted as a result of transiency and homelessness. He had plateaued at the intermediate level of language proficiency and was lacking the academic English skills necessary to do well in core content courses.

Javier's family had been on the move for years as his single mother looked for work to support her six children. Because they moved frequently, Javier and his siblings had not been to school for the six months before enrolling in the new school. Javier and his family were living in an apartment when he first enrolled, but they were soon evicted and moved into a series of homeless shelters. Because some of these shelters were outside the school district's boundaries, Javier often had to take a cab to school.

Not only was Javier trying to learn English and master the seventh-grade curriculum simultaneously; he was also adjusting to yet another community while helping to take care of his siblings and dealing with crushing poverty.

But because the city's school district has integrated social and emotional learning (SEL) strategies and trauma-sensitive teaching practices into its EL classrooms, Javier is now thriving in his new environment.

"Even with all of that chaos in his life, with strong structures, routines, and high expectations from the EL teacher, he grew to be on grade level in math by the spring semester and exited the ELL program that same year," says Laura Lukens, ELL (English language learner) coordinator for North Kansas City Schools. "By the following year, he was on grade level for English as well."

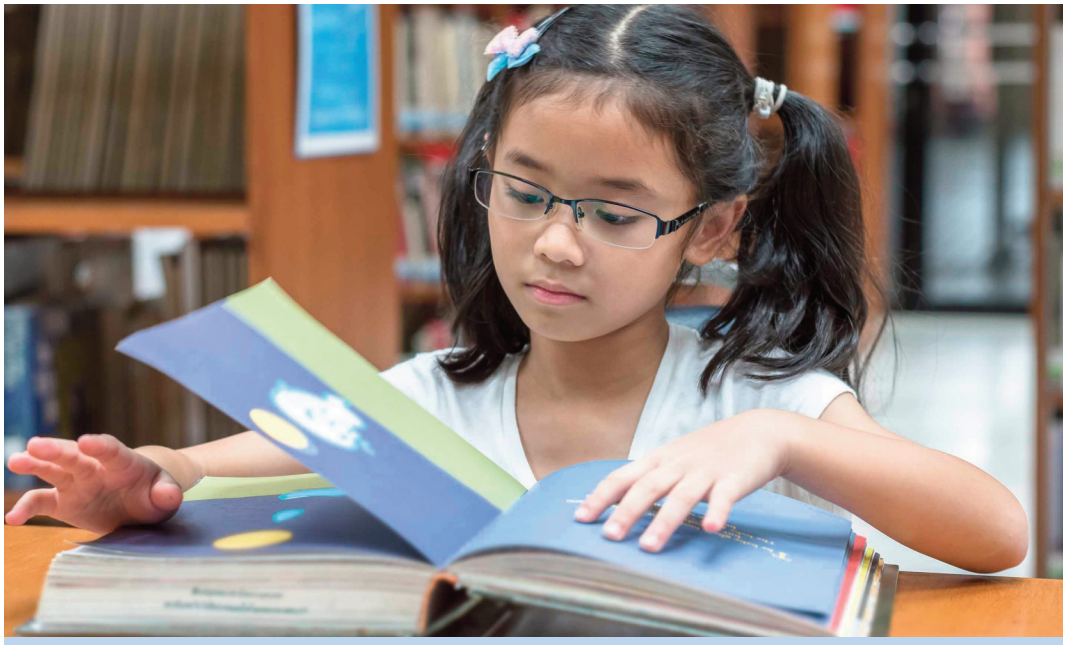
ELs face tremendous challenges in achieving high standards, and educators face a number of hurdles in teaching them. Aside from overcoming the obvious language barrier, ELs often must adjust to a new culture, and many have experienced trauma or adverse circumstances they must rise above as well.

Of course, not all ELs have endured the kind of hardships that Javier had to overcome. But focusing on social and emotional needs can play an important role in helping all ELs succeed, regardless of their particular circumstances.

According to CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2018), SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply five core competencies: learning how to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve goals, feel and show empathy, build and maintain positive relationships, and make better, more responsible decisions.

Although K-12 schools have a long way to go in supporting the diverse needs of EL students, instructional approaches that use research-based SEL practices and culturally responsive teaching strategies hold tremendous promise in helping these students achieve high standards.

"SEL instruction is critical to closing achievement gaps among students with varying needs, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences," says Christine Gouveia, Vice President of Applied Learning Sciences for McGraw-Hill Education's School Group.



"SEL instruction is critical to closing achievement gaps among students with varying needs, cultural backgrounds, and life experiences."

The Relationship between SEL and Achievement

In schools across the country, educators are paying more attention to the importance of incorporating SEL into instruction at all grade levels – and with good reason.

"Research shows that academic learning is inextricably linked to social and emotional development," Gouveia says. "We know that SEL is critical to a child's development, and it's critical to school-wide success. Research increasingly suggests that SEL programming leads to better student outcomes, such as enhanced academic performance, fewer conduct problems, and increased pro-social behaviors."

For instance, a meta-analysis published in 2017 (Taylor et al.) reviewed 82 different school-based SEL interventions serving close to 100,000 children. Students who participated in these programs "fared significantly better" in academic performance, social skills, behavioral skills, and attitudes than their peers who did not have access to SEL instruction, the study found.

With an increasing focus on learning science research, which includes understanding how the brain develops and how children learn most effectively, "we're able to support students better than ever before with SEL instruction," Gouveia says. "We know through research that social and emotional skills can be developed. And we know this should be integrated holistically, across a variety of settings. SEL should be taught explicitly in the classroom and reinforced throughout the entire fabric of a school."

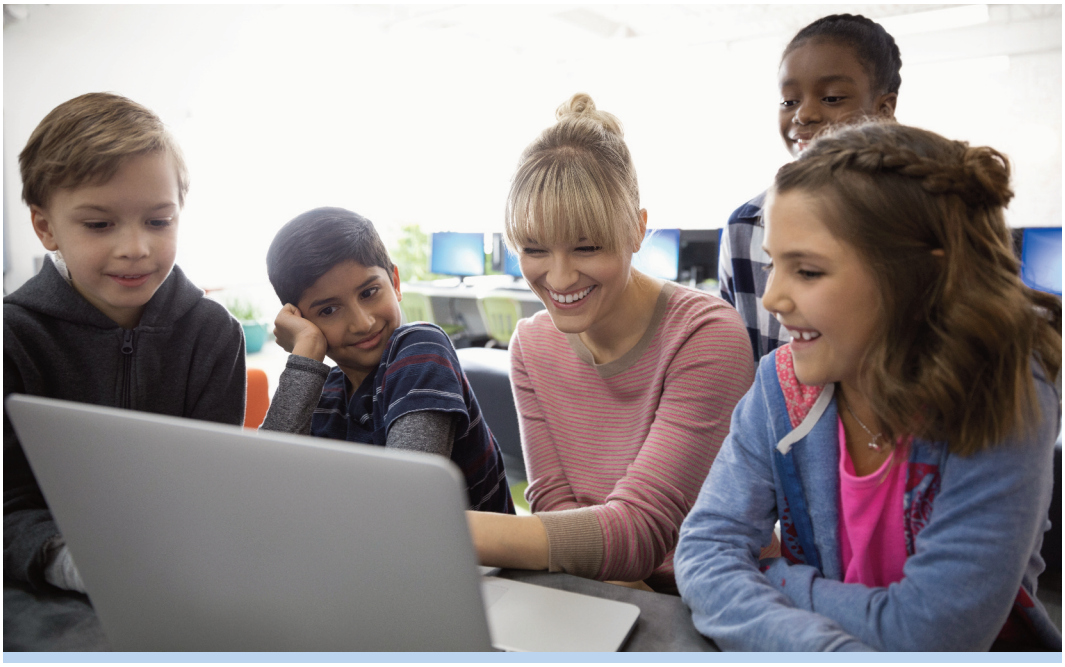
The core competencies of SEL are critical to empowering any child, but for traditionally underserved populations such as ELs, a strong focus on these competencies can have a huge impact on their success in the classroom – and beyond.

Making Sure Everyone Feels Safe and Respected

For educators who work with ELs, the difficulties inherent in teaching a diverse set of students with varying needs aren't new.

ELs are the fastest growing student population in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were 4.8 million ELs enrolled in the 2014-15 school year, which is 10 percent of the total K-12 population.

"Between the 2009-10 and 2014-15 school years, the percentage of ELs increased in about half the states, with an increase of 40 percent in five states," says Ed Lamprich, Vice President of EL Strategy for McGraw-Hill Education's School Group.



"Creating a classroom culture where every student feels respected, and treats others with respect, accelerates language acquisition and builds confidence in a student's own proficiency."

Although more than 75 percent of ELs in the United States speak Spanish as their home language, there are more than 400 languages spoken by U.S. students. Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Hmong, Russian, and Portuguese are also prevalent languages.

"English learners are a really diverse population, not only culturally but linguistically," Lamprich says. "As ELs develop their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, teachers might have students in the same classroom who are new to the country with no English skills, as well as students who are much farther along in terms of English proficiency. That creates a significant challenge, and teachers have told us that they are interested in receiving more professional development training so they can better meet their EL students' needs."

Research shows that if ELs are paired with students who are proficient in English, they learn the language faster. For instance, Gernsten et al. (2007) notes that peer-assisted learning, in which ELs interact with English-speaking partners during class time, generates feedback on language skills, forces syntactic processing, and challenges ELs to engage at higher proficiency levels.

However, this type of interaction requires students to build trusting, supportive relationships with each other, which is a core SEL competency. Without a school-wide focus on teaching students how to be kind and empathize with one another, ELs are likely to feel inhibited from engaging with their English-speaking peers.

"Nobody wants to feel vulnerable or different," Lamprich says. "They want to fit in, and they don't want to be laughed at. Language is one of those areas where you just put everything right out there, and you may get it wrong. You're taking a huge risk."

He adds: "Creating a classroom culture where every student feels respected, and treats others with respect, accelerates language acquisition and builds confidence in a student's own proficiency."

Navigating Cultural Differences

Another way that ELs can feel vulnerable or different is through their cultural identity. Educators must find ways to create safe and inclusive learning spaces that affirm each student's culture, a task that relies on culturally responsive teaching practices.

This means embracing racial and ethnic diversity, valuing each student's background and experience, recognizing and celebrating various cultures both inside and outside the classroom, and using curriculum materials that show people from different cultures. Studies suggest that ELs have the most success when they see their own cultural identity reflected in the curriculum and can relate their own experiences to it.

"In addition to learning a new language, ELs must acclimate to a new culture," Gouveia says. "It's important for educators to create learning environments that both validate students' cultural identities and support this acclimation process."

One of the five "Guiding Principles of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)" developed by the Applied Learning Sciences team at McGraw-Hill Education is to create a safe, nurturing environment for all students. To do this, Gouveia recommends that teachers develop classroom rules and expectations collaboratively with students, greet each student by name every day, reward positive behaviors, and teach students multiple strategies to work through conflict with their peers.

Lukens says it's important for teachers not to take a one-size-fits-all approach in their classroom.

"Being culturally responsive also means being aware of how cultural values influence the learning process," she explains. "Many ELs come from collectivist cultures, which value group achievements more than individual accomplishments. These students might not want to raise their hand to be called on individually, and they might prefer to work more in a group setting. In U.S. classrooms, the culture tends to be very individualistic. We should be mindful of these differences during instruction."

Dealing with Trauma

One of the biggest challenges in teaching ELs is that many have experienced some form of trauma.

North Kansas City Schools serves about 1,400 English learners who speak 125 different languages. Some are immigrants or refugees from Asia, Africa, or the Middle East.

"Some of our refugees have lost friends and family to violence and have been displaced from their homes," Lukens says. "Of course, there is a lack of basic health care in the refugee camps they have come from, as well as a lack of consistent education. Our refugees also experience a lot of trauma in their journey to the U.S."

"We're looking to create an environment where school becomes a place of order and dependability, and where students know what to expect, so they can focus on learning."

In addition, many of these families have relocated to neighborhoods with high poverty and crime rates. Also, for the children of immigrants, some of whom might not be documented, there is constant anxiety over whether they (or their parents) will be deported.

Students who have experienced such adverse circumstances are more likely to have trouble concentrating on school and maintaining good behavior, and therefore they are at a greater risk of being suspended, expelled, held back, or classified with a disability. Focusing on SEL instruction, and using trauma-sensitive teaching practices, can help them regulate their emotions and make them feel safe and supported.

North Kansas City Schools has adopted strategies described in the book *Teaching to Strengths: Supporting Students Living with Trauma, Violence, and Constant Stress*, by Debbie Zacarian, Lourdes Alvarez-Ortiz, and Judy Haynes (ASCD Press, 2017). A key takeaway from this book is the need to develop "strength-based relationships" between teachers and students.

"We are focused on identifying students' strengths, rather than their deficits," Lukens explains. "It's easy to look at a refugee who hasn't had much formal education and think: 'You don't know anything.' We want to turn that around and realize: This student has survived for years in a refugee camp, then made a difficult, dangerous journey out of that war-torn area, and so he or she must possess tremendous assets that can transfer to the student's new environment. That's what educators should look for."

Giving students some control, and using predictable classroom routines, are important strategies as well. "We're looking to create an environment where school becomes a place of order and dependability, and where students know what to expect, so they can focus on learning," Lukens says.

Having ELs talk about their emotions can also be beneficial. This helps them learn to understand and regulate their emotions, while at the same time developing their English skills. "Providing structured opportunities for communicating about emotions helps reduce anxiety and also increases language acquisition for ELs," Lukens says.

Family Engagement

CASEL notes that family engagement is critical to effective SEL instruction. Unlike academic learning, so much of a student's social and emotional development happens at home, and it's important for educators and families to be on the same page in terms of priorities and learning strategies.

"Many times schools will work through community organizations and churches to provide EL training and offer a trusted haven for families."

Yet, communicating with the families of EL students can be a challenge because of language and cultural barriers. Teachers need help in overcoming these barriers, and using technology to translate material into families' home languages is one useful strategy. What's more, administrators must provide opportunities for in-person meetings and make sure that families of ELs feel welcome in their schools.

Community partnerships can also play a critical role in engaging families and providing wraparound support services that allow ELs to succeed.

"Educators need to be aware of the compounding effect that culture shock can play with students who have experienced trauma and should be ready to intervene with outside resources if things get more intense than what they are prepared to deal with at school," Lukens says. North Kansas City Schools has formed partnerships with refugee resettlement agencies, homeless shelters, and mental health agencies to help bring awareness to school personnel and provide additional support for students.

"It can be challenging to get families to come to school because of their own low English proficiency or comfort level. Many times schools will work through community organizations and churches to provide EL training and offer a trusted haven for families," Lamprich observes.

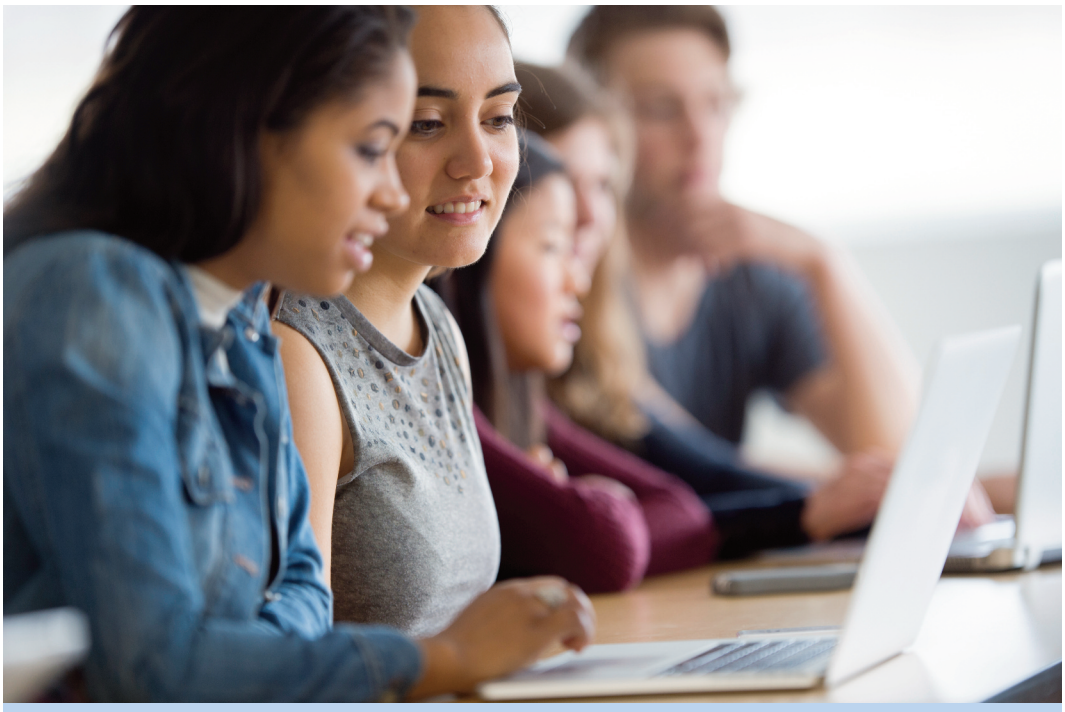
A Complex Issue

The landscape of SEL for K-12 English learners is complex. ELs are a diverse population who have historically been underserved, and there are a number of reasons for this – including gaps in cultural awareness, barriers to family communication, and the role of trauma in their lives.

Creating a safe, nurturing environment for all students, adopting culturally responsive and trauma-sensitive teaching practices, building strength-based relationships with students, finding creative ways to engage with families, and turning to community organizations for support are all promising solutions.

"We can't let our own bias, even if it is only implied bias, get in the way of reaching every EL or giving them support as they try to learn grade-level content in a language that is not their own," says Lamprich.

"We still have a long way to go," Gouveia concludes. "It's incredibly complicated, but I'm hopeful that with these research-based practices for ELs, we are starting to make good progress."



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Social Emotional Development

	KINDERGARTEN	GRADE 1
Emotional Self Regulation Maintains feelings, emotions, and words with decreasing support from adults		As the child collaborates with a partner, the child uses appropriate words calmly when disagreeing.
Behavioral Self Regulation Manages actions, behaviors, and words with decreasing support from adults		
Rules and Routines Follows classroom rules and routines with increasing independence		Transitioning from one activity to the next, the child follows established routines, such as putting away materials, without disrupting the class.
Working Memory Maintains and manipulates distinct pieces of information over short periods of time		
Focus Attention Maintains focus and sustains attention with minimal adult supports		During Center Time, the child stays focused on the activity assigned and is able to stop working on the activity when it is time to move on to a different task.
Relationships and Prosocial Behaviors Engages in and maintains positive relationships and interactions with familiar adults and children		
Social Problem Solving Uses basic problem solving skills to resolve conflicts with other children		
Self Awareness Recognizes self as a unique individual as well as belonging to a family, community, or other groups; expresses confidence in own skills		
Creativity Expresses creativity in thinking and communication		
Initiative Demonstrates initiative and independence		When working independently, the child understands when to ask for help and gets the help needed.
Task Persistence Sets reasonable goals and persists to complete the task		
Logic and Reasoning Thinks critically to effectively solve a problem or make a decision		
Planning and Problem Solving Uses planning and problem solving strategies to achieve goals		
Flexible Thinking Demonstrates flexibility in thinking and behavior		

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Throughout the grades, *Wonders* students continue to progress in each aspect of their social emotional growth. See the Social Emotional Development checklists for each grade span to monitor students' progress.

GRADE 2	GRADE 3	GRADE 4	GRADE 5
		During class discussions, the child can wait until called upon to provide a response, without shouting out.	
When responding to a text, the child can identify text evidence from notes previously recorded.			
	The child willingly works with any other child in the class on partner or group activities that are assigned.		
When working on a project in a small group, the child negotiates roles and cooperates with others to complete the task.			
	In class discussion, the child is not fearful of sharing a unique perspective while respecting the opinions of others.		
The child finds a creative way to gather information needed for a writing assignment.			
		When assigned to read a diffcult text, the child applies routines or strategies learned to complete the reading.	
Through logic and reasoning, the child is able to figure out how the author's choices of words and structures affect the communication of ideas.			
	When working on a long-term research project, the student can think through how to complete the different parts of the assignment over a period of time.		
As the child struggles with an activity, she can determine a different way to complete the activity successfully.			

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