

STRATEGY FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

HOW SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING HELPS
KIDS ACHIEVE



Anchorage School District
Educating students for success in life.



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A NOTE FROM CAROL

We live in a diverse and complex world. Children who are intentionally taught how to work together, build relationships and handle their emotions are more successful than their peers who haven't developed the same skills.

The successes of social and emotional learning are supported by research and, in my many years in education, I have personally seen how social and emotional skills keep students moving forward and becoming productive members of society.

Our young people must be able to feel emotionally and physically safe at school. When they can put their personal life distractions aside and focus on what they're learning, they'll excel.

That's why it's essential that parents and school staff work together to develop the whole child. This includes teaching them core academic skills such as reading, writing, math and science, as well as social and emotional skills.

In the Anchorage School District, we began working to intentionally help students build developmental assets and skills in the mid-1990s. Over the years, we've seen that our most successful young people are the ones who have strong social and emotional skills, or developmental assets.

Despite budget constraints, we strive to maintain a comprehensive educational program that includes academics, art, music and co-curricular activities. Our students have many opportunities to get involved and find their passion. They need to be able to relate to something we have to offer so they can build connections and relationships within our schools. That is what will keep them on the right track.

In a time of high-stakes testing, we can't lose sight of our future, which will be led by well-rounded individuals who have the skill set to succeed in today's world.

Most Sincerely,

Carol Comeau

Carol Comeau, Superintendent
Anchorage School district



What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which we learn to recognize and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviors. It is the process through which students enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to achieve important life tasks.

SEL makes good things happen for students. Research has shown that skills like managing your emotions, showing consideration and demonstrating responsibility can be taught by schools and those skills can withstand whatever pressures the students may encounter outside of the school grounds.

Students in effective school-based programs improved social-emotional skills by 23 percentile points, positive social behavior by 9 percentile points and perhaps most significantly, their academic performance increased 11 percentile points. (Durlak, 2009)



Why is SEL important?

Social and emotional awareness enhances the potential for individual and social growth and learning.

SEL builds success in academics and productive relationships with others, now and in the future.

Integrating SEL skills and academic skills prepares our students for life in the world. This is what employers are asking for.

It is easier for students to discover solutions to their problems when they are aware of their emotions and know how to express them in a positive manner. Without such awareness, the problems are likely to repeat.

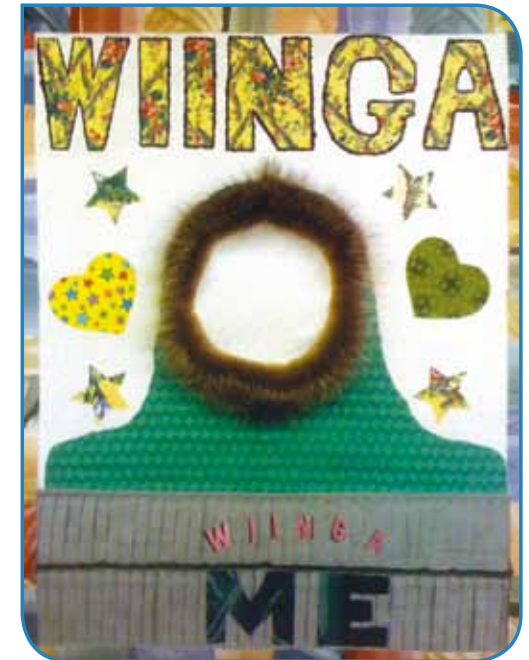
When a school teaches and models positive SEL skills, students see that SEL skills are valuable.

Academics/school involvement increases greatly when students are respected as individuals and

feel like they belong to the fabric of the school. Students who feel this way become leaders and success stories.

Students are social beings and need to be able to interact appropriately.

SEL is at the core of human existence and is a compassionate way to build community.



How does SEL lead to better academic skills?

Social and emotional learning helps students become knowledgeable, capable, caring and responsible through the teaching of SEL skills. SEL is not about teaching values, but rather about equipping students with the skills that they need to achieve important life tasks.

SEL can greatly impact student learning and school success. If teachers model positive SEL behaviors and positively reinforce SEL skills, students are more likely to feel comfortable approaching teachers and classmates. This strengthens their relationship skills.

When a student thinks that their school is safe, caring, and well-managed, that student is more likely to become engaged in and attached to their school. Students who are engaged and attached to school have better attendance, higher grades, higher standardized test scores and higher graduation rates. Students who are attached to school are also less likely to engage in risky behaviors and more likely to engage in positive social behaviors.

SEL instruction gives students basic skills such as good decision-making and refusal skills. This contributes to a decline in high-risk behaviors, which are associated with poor academic performance. These same skills help students function in the social learning environment of the classroom, leading to fewer disciplinary referrals and improved academic performance.

CAREER READINESS

ASD's mission is to prepare all students for success in life. This includes arming students with the skills necessary to compete in today's workforce. Each of the social and emotional learning standards have a direct correlation with the Youth Employability Skills (YES!) identified by CEOs, personnel directors and other employer representatives and assembled by *Alaska's Youth: Ready for Work*.

Anchorage School District believes that students who practice Social Emotional Learning skills are better able to perform at their best, academically and in life. Therefore, ASD will work with families and the community to help all students make measurable progress toward age-appropriate proficiency in SEL standards. Educators will teach SEL skills by clearly and consistently incorporating the essential SEL elements of positive school climate, direct instruction of skills, and blending SEL into curricula and practices.



SEL SUPPORTS WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

SEL Skill	How do students demonstrate the skill?	What do employers look for?
Student demonstrates awareness of their emotions	Acknowledge an emotion and determine the appropriate time and place to safely digest it.	Employee does not let personal problems interfere with getting the work done, either by being distracted at work or by failing to come to work or be on time.
Student uses effective decision-making skills	Consider ethical, safety and societal factors when making decisions. Apply decision-making skills to develop responsible social and work relationships and to make healthy life-long choices.	Employee can identify source of problem; demonstrates good common sense; is creative and innovative.
Student demonstrates ability to set and achieve goals	Set goals for life after high school, with action steps, timeframes and criteria for evaluating achievement.	Employee sets personal goals. Able to see long-term results of efforts on the job and put in time and effort before expecting a promotion.
Student demonstrates awareness of other people's emotions and perspectives	Identify verbal, physical and other cues that indicate how others may feel. Can talk with people to understand their perspective. Express empathy towards others. Value and learn from the perspectives of others.	Employee understands customer's expectations.
Student uses positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.	Demonstrates strategies for working as a team with peers, adults and others in the community. Offer and accept constructive criticism in order to make improvements. Use assertive communication to get their needs met without negatively impacting others.	Employee expresses ideas clearly and concisely to individuals and in groups; has good customer communication skills. Able to comprehend what is said and take action. Able to work as a productive team member. Shares information, works well and credits other workers.



Source: "Want a Great Career? Alaskan Employers Expect:" poster, Alaska Process Industry Careers Consortium.

www.apicc.org





What does the research show?

- Students in a supportive learning environment are more likely to participate fully in academics and to display an attachment to their school. This has a significant impact on student academic performance. (Osterman, 2000)
- When teachers used proactive classroom management, interactive teaching methods, cooperative learning techniques and interpersonal skills instruction, students' positive attitudes and commitment to school significantly increased, as did the grades and standardized achievement scores of males. (Hawkins, God, Hill, Battin-Pearson & Abbott, 2001; O'Donnell, Hawkins, Catalano, Abbott & Day, 1995)
- SEL instruction can produce significant improvements in school attitudes, school behavior, and school performance. (Zins, et al., 2003).
- Students in schools using a program designed to create more supportive and cooperative learning environments had significantly lower rates of drug use and delinquency than comparison students. (Battisch, Schaps, Watson, Solomon & Lewis, 2000)
- Students in supportive and cooperative learning environments also scored significantly higher on measures of cognitive problem-solving skills (e.g., interpersonal sensitivity, consideration of others' needs, means-end thinking), and used more positive conflict resolution strategies than comparison children. (Battisch, Solomon, Watson, Solomon & Schapes, 1989)
- Schools that taught SEL skills daily, worked to maintain a positive schoolwide-climate, and had strong community/parent involvement significantly decreased the number of violence incidents and suspensions and increased students' attendance and academic achievement on standardized tests. (Flay & Allred, 2003)

Read the full research brief at <http://casel.org/publications/sel-and-academic-performance-research-brief/>.

Additional Resources

ON THE WEB

ASD Social and Emotional Learning page (www.asdk12.org/depts/SEL)

ASD's SEL wikispace (<http://asd-sel.wikispaces.com/>)—Keep up with the latest developments in SEL

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (www.casel.org)—An organization whose mission is to establish SEL as an essential part of education.

AASB/Alaska Initiative for Community Engagement (alaskaice.org/school-climate/sel/)

ACT for Youth (www.actforyouth.net)—New York state communities involved in positive youth development

Austin Voices for Education & Youth (www.austinvoices.org)—Implementing Youth Engagement Programs

BOOKS FOR PARENTS

All Kids are our Kids: What Communities Must Do To Raise Caring And Responsible Children and Adolescents, by Peter L. Benson. (Jossey-Bass, 1997)

Emotional Intelligence: Why it Can Matter More than IQ, by Daniel Goldman (Bantam, 1994)

Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: How to Raise a Self-Disciplined, Responsible, Socially Skilled Child, by Maurice Elias, Steven Tobias and Brian Friedlander. (Harmony Books, 1999)

Raising Emotionally Intelligent Teenagers, by Maurice Elias, Stephen Tobias and Brian Friedlander (Random House, 2000)

Raising a Thinking Child: Help Your Young Child To Resolve Everyday Conflicts and Get Along With Others: The "I Can Problem Solve" Program, by Myrna Shure. (Pocket Books, 1996)

Raising a Thinking Preteen, by Myrna Shure. (Henry Holt, 2000)

"Anchorage is a national leader in providing quality education to promote the social, emotional, and academic learning of all students. CASEL and the field of social and emotional learning have learned a lot from the outstanding educators of the Anchorage School District."

Roger P. Weissberg, PhD
President and CEO
Collaborative for Academic, Social,
and Emotional Learning (CASEL)



What can parents do?

AT HOME

Focus on strengths. Talk about what your child did well before talking about what could be improved.

Ask children how they feel. This lets your child know that feelings matter and that you care. Use feeling words around your child to explain your own emotions.

Be willing to apologize. This shows your child how important it is to apologize after hurting someone, physically or emotionally.

Ask questions that help children solve problems on their own. For example, "What do you think you can do in this situation?" or "What do you think could happen if you made that choice?"

Read books and stories together. Stories can help your child explore how people deal with common issues like losing friends or handling conflicts.

Give your child a chance to set goals, and cheer for them as they make progress.

Choose a few responsibilities that your child can do successfully at home, and encourage them to help.

This helps them learn cooperation and responsibility.

WITH YOUR SCHOOL

Focus on the value of learning. Ask what your child learned in school today, but also ask how he or she gets along with other students and how he or she feels about school.

Create a positive learning environment at home. Make regular times and provide a quiet, well-lit place for homework. Work with your child to develop rules for dealing with interruptions, such as phone calls or visitors.

Set up a school bulletin board at home. Display the school calendar, newsletters and flyers. Help your child get involved in interesting school activities.

Help your child set priorities for school work. If your child is struggling, don't give them the answers to their assignments, but help them work through their issues.

Adapted from "Ten Things You Can Do at Home" and "Ten Things You Can Do with Your School," by the Committee for Children.
www.cfchildren.org



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