A review of school-based programs to promote students’ social and emotional learning: Positive results and their implications for future research, practice and policy

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“...promoting social, emotional, and behavioral well-being is an integral part of a child’s healthy development”

What is social and emotional learning (SEL)?

IN GENERAL:
- process for helping children, adolescents, or adults develop the fundamental skills for success in life.

How to handle effectively and ethically:
- 1. Ourselves: feelings, thoughts, needs, and behaviors
- 2. Our relationships: getting along well with others
- 3. Our school/work: meeting developmental challenges and tasks

www.CASEL.org
SEL Key Components

- **Self-Awareness**: Identification and recognition of one’s own emotions, recognition of strengths in self and others, sense of self-efficacy, and self-confidence.

- **Social Awareness**: Empathy, respect for others, and perspective taking.

- **Responsible Decision Making**: Evaluation and reflection, and personal and ethical responsibility.

- **Self-Management**: Impulse control, stress management, persistence, goal setting, and motivation.

- **Relationship Skills**: Cooperation, help seeking and providing, and communication.
Expected Benefits from SEL Interventions

- Youth will be able to:
  1. Manage their emotions and behaviors appropriately
  2. Develop caring and concern for others
  3. Learn how to work effectively with others (adults and peers)
  4. Establish positive relationships with others (adults and peers)
  5. Make responsible decisions
  6. Handle challenging situations
  7. Do better in school
Can children learn important life skills?

YES!
Method

Include if:

- Qualifies as a universal intervention (no known pre-existing problems)
- Intervention sought to promote ≥ 1 SEL skill(s)
- There was a control group
- Targeted school children in kindergarten through high school
- We could calculate an effect size for at least one outcome measure
- Study reported in English and appeared by December 31, 2007.
Method

Exclude if:

- Intervention has a primary academic component
- Interventions whose exclusive purpose was to prevent drug use, pregnancy, HIV/AIDS or promote physical development
Study Sample for Review

- 213 Interventions involving 270,034 students
- One-third appeared in 2000 or later
- Most not evaluated in previous meta-analyses or narrative reviews
- 81% appeared in published reports
- 87% conducted in the United States
- 56% done with students in grades K-5
- 31% done with students in grades 6-8
- 13% done with those in grades 9-12
Outcomes and Findings

Positive Results for:

- Skills and attitudes
  - SEL skills
  - Positive attitudes (school and self)

- Behavioral adjustment
  - Positive social behaviors
  - Conduct problems
  - Emotional distress

- Academic performance
  - Tests and grades
What Features are Associated with Better Outcomes?

We hypothesized the most important moderators would be:

- 1. Following recommended practices for promoting skills
- 2. Implementing the intervention to a sufficient degree
Effective Programs are S.A.F.E.

- **Sequential**: sequenced activities to achieve skills
- **Active**: interactive forms of learning
- **Focused**: focused on personal or social skills
- **Explicit**: targeting of specific skills
Outcomes and Findings

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Outcomes and Findings

Positive Results for:

Process of Implementation

- No Problems
  - Skills and attitudes
    - SEL skills
    - Positive attitudes (school and self)
  - Behavioral adjustment
    - Positive social behaviors
    - Conduct problems
    - Emotional distress
  - Academic performance
    - Tests and grades

- Problems
Ruling Out Alternative Possibilities

- QUALITY OF RESEARCH:
  - Randomization
  - Attrition
  - Quality of outcome measure

- CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTERVENTION & PARTICIPANTS
  - Who did the intervention: researcher or regular teacher?
  - Duration of intervention
  - Age of student
  - Locale of school: urban, rural or suburban area
Major Conclusions

- Students can learn SEL skills
- SEL interventions are associated with positive effects in several areas of child development
- Four recommended (SAFE) practices associated with better outcomes
- Adequate implementation is also important
Putting Findings in Context

- What have others found for similar types of outcomes?
Results from Our Three Reviews

1. Universal school-based programs

2. Indicated school-based programs

3. After-school programs
Universal School-Based and Other Reviews

![Graph showing effect sizes for various student outcomes.](image)
Indicated School-Based and Other Reviews

![Bar chart showing effect sizes for different student outcomes]

- SEL Skills
- Attitudes
- Positive Social Behavior
- Conduct Problems
- Emotional Distress
- Academic Performance

Current Review vs Previous Reviews
After-School Programs and Other Reviews

![Bar Chart]

- **Effect Sizes**
  - **Self-Perceptions**
  - **School Bonding**
  - **Positive Social Behavior**
  - **Conduct Problems**
  - **Grades**
  - **Achievement Tests**
  - **Drug Use**
  - **School Attendance**

- **Current Review**
- **Previous Reviews**

Student Outcomes
Two Primary Questions

- Do SEL skills mediate obtained outcomes?
- If so, which skills or what combination is best for different outcomes?
Implications for Future Research

Research needs to examine:

- which SEL skills
- in which programs best enhance development
- on which outcomes
- for which children
- at what times
- and for how long
Implications for Policy and Practice

- Educational policies should promote use and evaluation of SEL programs
- SEL interventions should be integrated into educational curricula
- Effective professional development programs needed for school staffs
References


THANK YOU!

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