**THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING**

**A position statement by the Louisiana Reading Association**

**Approved January 15, 2022**

**What Is Social-Emotional Learning?**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is the lifelong process of developing the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital to success in school, work, and relationships. Research verifies that SEL skills can be taught and nurtured in schools so that students increase their abilities to integrate thinking, emotions, and behavior in ways that lead to positive school and life outcomes.

SEL goes by many other names, such as character education, 21st-century skills, or soft skills. At its center, SEL involves children’s ability to learn about and manage their own emotions and interactions in ways that are beneficial to themselves and others. The organization CASEL (Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) provides a framework for social and emotional learning, consolidating research on SEL into five broad competencies. These competencies include:

* *Self-awareness* – the ability to identify one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and understand how these traits guide behavior;
* *Self-management* – the ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, dependent upon the situation and the ability to set and work toward goals;
* *Social awareness* – the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others and to understand social and ethical norms for behavior;
* *Relationship skills* – the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressures, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed; and
* *Responsible decision-making* – the ability to make constructive choices about one’s own personal and social behavioral choices based on ethical standards, safety, and social norms.

**Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning**

Stated simply, teaching social and emotional skills to children results in improved academic outcomes, school behavior, and social skills. A strong SEL program provides benefits that are long-term and global. Benefits include:

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| --- | --- |
| **Short-Term Student Outcomes** | **Long-Term Student Outcomes** |
| * Social and Emotional Skills
* Positive Attitudes Toward Self, Others, and Tasks
* Positive Social Behaviors and Relationships
* Fewer Conduct Problems
* Reduced Emotional Distress
* Academic Performance
 | * High School Graduation
* College and Career Readiness
* Healthy Relationships
* Improved Mental Health
* Reduced Criminal Behavior
* Engaged Citizenry
* Equity and Inclusion
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**Quality SEL Programs**

For an SEL program to be effective, it must work to develop key skills across the many domains of childhood development, and — importantly — it must promote and support teachers’ own social and emotional competencies as well. The program should also set reasonable short- and long-term goals and build partnerships with the family-school community. Interventions that appear the most effective are those in which the program content and the method of delivery are developmentally appropriate.

Programs that are designed to teach social-emotional learning must:

* take a whole-school approach, involving every student and every adult in every part of the school building;
* offer all-staff trainings and the use of school-wide strategies; and
* proactively consider the SEL needs of staff, with support from administrators and other school leaders.

**In Summary**

The Louisiana Reading Association believes that programs that effectively address social-emotional learning must be embedded in our schools. Research makes clear that quality SEL programs positively impact school achievement, improve social and behavior skills, and have lifelong impact. High-quality SEL programs are a worthwhile investment in our Louisiana schools.

**Resources**

Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org).

Jones, Stephanie M. and Emily J. Doolittle, “Social and Emotional Learning: Introducing the Issue,” *The Future of Children* (Volume 27, Number 1, Spring 2017).

Shafer, Leah, “Selecting the Right SEL Program,” retrieved from [www.gse.harvard.edu](http://www.gse.harvard.edu) on November 7, 2021.

Shafer, Leah, “What Makes SEL Work,” retrieved from [www.gse.harvard.edu](http://www.gse.harvard.edu) on November 7, 2021.