

# Social Emotional Learning at a Glance

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## Definition

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is an approach to education that **supports students' learning skills** and strategies to **help them be successful** in interpersonal relationships, make healthy choices, and prepare for life beyond the classroom.

It is a prevention-based approach to **reducing conflict and violence** by teaching skills early on.<sup>1</sup>

## Quick Facts - SEL is:

- An emphasis on developing socially valued competencies such as creative problem-solving and teamwork.<sup>2</sup>
- An approach to improve academic performance by ensuring that social and emotional needs are met.<sup>3</sup>
- A way to foster a supportive classroom and school climate.<sup>4</sup>
- Relevant throughout developmental stages and across diverse cultural contexts.<sup>5</sup>

## Misunderstandings - SEL is Not:

- Designed to diagnose, treat or provide mental health interventions to students.<sup>6</sup>
- A short-term solution.<sup>7</sup>
- A replacement to academic learning.<sup>8</sup>
- A one-size-fits-all intervention.<sup>9</sup>
- Affiliated with critical race theory.<sup>10</sup>



## Did You Know:

- When done well, social-emotional learning programs can lead to **decreases in aggression** and **increases in social competence and academic engagement** for elementary school students.<sup>11</sup>
- Research demonstrates that education that promotes SEL has many positive impacts for students, school staff and communities including **academic performance, healthy relationships and mental wellness**.<sup>12</sup>
- SEL supports **positive development of students** from diverse backgrounds and geography.<sup>13</sup>
- Students participating in SEL programs showed **improved classroom behavior**, an **increased ability to manage stress**, and **better attitudes** about themselves, others, and school.<sup>14</sup>

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## About the National Center for School Safety

The National Center for School Safety (NCSS) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded training and technical assistance center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. As a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional center focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence, the NCSS team is composed of national leaders in criminal justice, education, social work, and public health with expertise in school safety research and practice. NCSS provides comprehensive and accessible support to Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence grantees and the school safety community nationwide to address today's school safety challenges. NCSS serves as the national training and technical assistance provider for the STOP School Violence Program.

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