

Why is Ohio Focused on Social-Emotional Learning?

The Ohio Department of Education, through the State Board of Education, adopted Ohio's strategic plan for education, [Each Child, Our Future](#), which supports the collaborative, schoolwide effort of all educators, administrators, families and students in supporting social-emotional learning. In this plan, Ohio articulates one vision: ***Each Child is challenged to discover and learn, prepared to pursue a fulfilling post-high school path and empowered to become a resilient, lifelong learner who contributes to society.***

To achieve this vision and create a responsive, preK-12 system to meet the needs of the whole child, Ohio identified four equal learning domains that contribute to each child's success: (1) Foundational knowledge and skills that include literacy, numeracy and technology; (2) Well-rounded content that includes social studies, sciences, languages, arts, health, and physical education; (3) Leadership and reasoning that includes problem-solving, design thinking, creativity and information analytics; and (4) Social-emotional learning that includes processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2017). The skills associated with social-emotional learning provide the foundation for effective communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, resiliency, perseverance and teamwork — all of which are necessary for individuals to be successful in a technical or career field and postsecondary work.

The Framework for Systemic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2017) identifies and defines five competencies, which Ohio used as its basis for the standards. These are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

- **Self-Awareness** – The ability to accurately recognize one's own emotions and thoughts, including how they relate to one's identity and culture and how they influence behavior. Self-awareness is the ability to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations with a sense of integrity, confidence and optimism.
- **Self-Management** – The ability to navigate one's emotions, thoughts and behaviors in different situations while managing stress, controlling impulses and motivating oneself. Self-management includes the ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.
- **Social Awareness** – The ability to consider the diverse perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from different backgrounds and cultures. Social awareness also reflects the ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior across settings and to be able to identify and use family, school and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship Skills** – The ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups. Developing relationship skills promotes the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist social and peer pressure, negotiate conflict and seek help or offer it to others.
- **Responsible Decision-making** – The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions in the context of ethical standards, safety concerns and social norms. Responsible decision-making involves making realistic evaluations of the consequences of one's actions and considering the well-being of one's self and others.

Research

There is strong, [compelling research](#) to support using social-emotional learning approaches in schools. Social-emotional learning has been evaluated in more than 500 research studies conducted in schools for more than 20 years. They involved students from preschool through high school and include a series of meta-analyses. Collectively these studies demonstrate the positive impact social-emotional learning has on a variety of important student outcomes (Weissberg, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015), including academic achievement,

discipline and conduct, prosocial behavior, and emotional distress and anxiety. These studies (including the meta-analyses) also have demonstrated that to be highly effective, social-emotional learning instruction should be well-designed and well-implemented.

From a child's infancy, relationships are key to brain development (Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond, & Krone, 2018). Since academic, social and emotional learning is a social experience, children's development of social, emotional and academic skills can be fostered through positive interactions and relationships.

As children grow, ***social-emotional learning contributes to their connections to school and community, reduces dropout rates and truancy*** (Smith & Low, 2013), and predicts important life outcomes, such as increased likelihood of graduating on time, full-time employment by age 25, higher earnings and financial stability; and decreased likelihood of receiving public assistance or being arrested (Gabrieli, Ansel, & Krachman, 2015; Jones Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

Social-emotional learning also is associated with improved school climate. In addition to improving academic performance, students who receive instruction in social-emotional learning feel more connected to school and [feel safer at school](#).

Social-emotional learning promotes resiliency and builds protective factors that can help a child cope with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) (O'Reilly, 2017) by helping students develop a variety of skills they need to help navigate their trauma, including regulating emotions in potentially triggering situations. Social-emotional learning also helps break down barriers to discussing sensitive issues (Futures Without Violence, 2014). Thus, the research confirms the importance of social-emotional learning for improving students' physical, emotional, academic and career outcomes.

[From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#) implores education leaders to implement social-emotional learning thoughtfully, but immediately, and includes policy, practice, research recommendations and calls to action. The report stands on scientific evidence that supporting students' social, emotional and academic development benefits all children and relates positively to attendance, grades, test scores, graduation rates, college and career success, engaged citizenship and overall well-being. Although these skills are important for all students, attention to equity also is critical, because not all students are the same. Providing equitable opportunities for developing young people's social, emotional and academic growth requires calibrating each student's and school's individual strengths and needs—ensuring those with greater needs have access to greater resources.

Given the strong scientific evidence behind social-emotional learning, there is a demand for social-emotional learning from educators, administrators, families, students and employers who want social-emotional learning to be taught and reinforced as a more integral part of the schooling experience (*2018 Social and Emotional Learning Report, 2018*; Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum). The links below offer additional information connecting social-emotional learning to student, educator and workforce outcomes.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

- [A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 separate, school-based studies of social-emotional learning programs](#), with students in kindergarten through high school, found an 11-percentile point gain in academic grades and test scores for students who received well-designed, well-implemented instruction in social-emotional learning compared to students who did not receive instruction in social-emotional learning. The same meta-analysis also showed students who received social-emotional learning had improved social behavior, reduced conduct and discipline problems and reduced anxiety compared to students who did not receive social-emotional learning instruction (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011).

- [A 2017 meta-analysis of 82 separate studies of social-emotional learning interventions](#) showed even stronger results, for example, a 13-percentile point improvement in academic grades and test scores, while also demonstrating that the effects of social-emotional learning programming were lasting over time. Researchers saw these benefits regardless of student socio-demographics (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak and Weissberg, 2017).
- [Early Social-Emotional Functioning and Public Health: The Relationship Between Kindergarten Social Competence and Future Wellness](#) Teachers' ratings of student social and emotional competence in kindergarten predicted an increased likelihood of on-time high school graduation, graduation from college and full-time employment by age 25. They also predicted a decreased likelihood of police involvement in the child's life before adulthood or of being arrested and of being on a waitlist for public housing or receiving public assistance.
- [A Gradient of Childhood Self-Control Predicts Health, Wealth and Public Safety](#) This study sought to measure the level of self-control of children as they grew up, trying to understand any potential covariates. Following a cohort of 1,000 children from birth to the age of 32, researchers learned the effects of children's self-control could be disentangled from their intelligence and social class, as well as from mistakes they made as adolescents. The study shows childhood self-control predicts physical health, substance dependence, personal finances and criminal offense outcomes.
- [Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers](#) In her review of the literature, the author summarizes the evidence between classrooms with warm teacher-child relationships and deep learning and positive social and emotional development among students. Research shows teachers can foster positive student-teacher relationships and create supportive and caring classroom environments, and when they effectively integrate social-emotional learning programs into their practices, their students have better outcomes.

EDUCATOR OUTCOMES

- [Educators' Social and Emotional Skills Vital to Learning](#) This article summarizes the research showing teachers' social and emotional competencies influence teacher-student relationships, classroom management, effective instruction and teacher burnout. The article recommends integrating practices that build emotional awareness, incorporate reflection into daily practice, tackle personal and professional stress, and create a culture of continuous improvement and learning.
- [The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey and How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools](#) This report summarizes data collected through a nationwide telephone survey in 2012 (n=605 preK through grade 12 teachers). Results included 93 percent of teachers wanting a greater focus on social-emotional learning in schools. These educators know that social and emotional skills are teachable and are calling for schools to prioritize integrating social-emotional learning practices and strategies into the curriculum and school culture.
- [The Practice Base for How We Learn Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development](#) Teachers who integrate social, emotional and academic development are more effective at engaging students in learning, resolving conflicts and managing their classrooms. They create safe, supportive settings where students can take the risks necessary for academic growth and personal development.
- [Ready to Lead: A National Principal Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Prepare Children and Transform Schools](#) School principals say social-emotional learning is essential but want more guidance, training and support to teach these skills effectively. Virtually all principals in the study believed a stepped-up focus on social-emotional learning would make a positive impact on school climate, build citizenship, improve relationships between students and teachers, and decrease bullying.

ECONOMICS, SKILLS, AND WORKFORCE READINESS

- [*The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*](#) This research presents a benefit-cost analysis of social-emotional learning interventions across six different programs. The results showed a ratio of \$11 in benefit for every \$1 invested equally across the six programs.
- [*Respected: Perspectives of Youth on High School and Social and Emotional Learning*](#) A 2018 report shows that less than half of recent graduates felt prepared for success after high school. Only 41 percent felt prepared for jobs or careers. The report recommends implementing policies that prioritize equity, are informed by local context, and begin and end with the voices of young people.
- [*The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market*](#) Between 1980 and 2012, jobs with high social skill requirements grew by nearly 10 percent as a share of the U.S. labor force. In contrast, math-intensive but less social jobs, including many science, technology, engineering and mathematics [STEM] occupations, dropped by about 3 percent over the same period. Employment and wage growth were particularly strong for jobs requiring high levels of both cognitive skill and social skill.
- [*Opportunity, Responsibility, and Security: A Consensus Plan for Reducing Poverty and Restoring the American Dream*](#) by the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution. social-emotional learning competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today's economy.
- [*Why Social and Emotional Learning and Employability Skills Should Be Prioritized in Education*](#) According to a 2013 survey of 704 employers conducted by The Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media's Marketplace, half of those surveyed said they had trouble finding recent graduates to fill vacancies in their companies. Though applicants had the technical prowess, they lacked the communication, adaptability, decision-making and problem-solving skills needed to do the job.

Conclusion

The goal of Ohio's [*strategic plan for education*](#) is, in part, to help create optimal conditions for social and emotional development during the time students spend in school. Ohio is not alone in its decision to support social-emotional learning. Fourteen other states already have published social-emotional learning competencies or standards for their kindergarten through grade 12 students (See [*State Frameworks Brief*](#)).

Moreover, social-emotional learning is part of the work Ohio teachers and administrators already are doing. In a [*statewide survey*](#) of Ohio educators involving 8,314 respondents, 85 percent said they see “many” or “some” opportunities to integrate social and emotional skills into their own students’ learning and instruction. Educators embed social-emotional learning as they help students participate more fully in academic endeavors, enhance learning situations and increase student motivation to learn. The social-emotional learning standards provide a framework for educators of all grade levels and academic specialties to focus systematically on fostering environments that maximize student learning.

Parents and families are critical in developing social-emotional skills and competencies in young children as they grow. Because parents and family members are their children’s first and most significant teachers, Ohio created its proposed social-emotional learning standards with the irreplaceable role of parents in mind. It is through strong partnerships between families and schools, educators and communities that our children will receive the support to become lifelong learners who make significant contributions to the world.

Social-emotional learning must be implemented with culture and equity at the forefront. Cultural consciousness is vital for educators to help students achieve social-emotional learning objectives. **Educators need support** to understand how school and classroom policies, practices and procedures can be inequitable to some student populations, perpetuating disparities in educational experiences and opportunity gaps.

Educators teach social-emotional learning effectively when they can recognize that their lens on social-emotional learning may differ from that of their students and families and when they seek input from students and families on the social-emotional learning standards (Waitoller & Thorius, 2015).

The social-emotional learning standards are part of larger set of [resources](#) that will support implementation through an equity-focused, evidence-based, social-emotional learning effort. This effort honors parents and families who are at the center of student social, emotional and academic learning to make sure all the adults in our students' lives are well equipped to support their social and emotional development. By offering these resources and supports, Ohio recognizes that all students need the social, emotional and academic skills that can make them successful in school, prepared to engage fully in the workforce, and equipped to become productive and informed citizens.