



CORE FUNCTION	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Social/Emotional Competency	Provide instruction, modeling, classroom norms, and caring attention that promotes students' social/emotional competency	ALL teachers are attentive to students' emotional states, guide students in managing their emotions, and arrange for supports and interventions. (5124)

What Does the Research Evidence Say?

Social emotional learning (SEL) “is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identifies, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, n.d.). Students’ capacity to express their emotions and understand the emotions of others is a critical aspect of development, learning and relationship building (Bailey et al., 2019; Kostelnik et al., 2012; MacCann et al., 2019). Negative or inappropriately managed emotions can adversely affect a child’s attention, thinking and behavior. Positive or appropriately managed emotions can support children’s attending to details, setting goals, planning, problem solving, and decision making (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004; Raver et al., 2007). Children’s emotional states also have a powerful impact on their social relationships (Eisenberg et al., 2006); Mahoney et al., 2018. Children who better understand their own emotions, as well as those of others, are more likely to behave sympathetically, help others, and share. The evidence clearly finds that children with strong emotional skills have better academic and social outcomes in later years (Durlak et al., 2011; Hart et al., 2020; Taylor et al., 2017). Mart et al (2011) describe key skills that should be part of schools’ social-emotional learning (SEL) programs:

Social and emotional learning teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically. These skills include knowing how to recognize and manage our emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively and ethically. These skills also are the ones that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices (p. 38)

SEL also “helps teachers become more effective by fostering their own social and emotional development and supporting a caring and challenging classroom climate” (Bridgeland et al., 2013, p. 8). Adults often need to develop their own competency in this area (Ferreira et a., 2020). Professional development to support teacher knowledge and sound practices enhances effective social-emotional learning implementation (Reyes et al., 2012). Recent national research shows that three-quarters of teachers received SEL-related professional development (PD) during the 2018-19 school year, and that elementary teachers reported higher levels of PD and school supports than secondary teachers (Hamilton & Doss, 2020). However, many teachers believed that outside factors beyond their control limited their ability to impact students’ SEL, and accountability/achievement pressures also made it difficult to properly address SEL. The researchers reported that teachers needed additional supports, including in the areas of awareness of SEL standards, instructional leadership for SEL, and collegial support networks (Hamilton & Doss, 2020). It is of critical importance that all teachers are capable of gauging students’ emotional states, providing strategies to help students manage their emotions, and are able to determine appropriate supports and interventions to meet students’ social-emotional needs.



Evidence-Based Practice

According to the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2019b), school leadership teams should consider the following high-impact actions as they seek to foster teachers' capacities to assess and support students' social-emotional competencies and arrange for needed interventions or programs:

- Engage all school-based staff in a professional learning agenda around building positive adult-student relationships.
- Interview or survey students and families (e.g., school climate survey) to determine whether the school provides a safe and positive environment that allows students to thrive.
- Use a social and emotional competencies framework, identifying opportunities to explicitly teach the vocabulary and practices of social and emotional development and embed opportunities to develop social-emotional competencies in academic instruction.
- Review instructional materials to ensure authentic connections to social and emotional learning and supplement as needed; adapt lesson planning templates or other artifacts that guide instruction and pedagogical decisions to provide opportunities to embed social and emotional development explicitly within academic instruction.
- Prioritize collaborative professional learning in the master schedule to allow for sufficient time for teachers to identify opportunities to reinforce social-emotional skills during lessons, and to collaborate with social-emotional support staff around how to meet the needs of individual students.
- Evaluate student need, teacher need, and resources within your school community; identify, for example, how an SEL specialist, federal Title I funds, and other grant allocations are used to support social-emotional development and note opportunities to better align existing resources, and any initiatives that are duplicative or disconnected from the school's vision, which can drain scarce resources.
- Conduct an asset mapping of community resources to determine community resources such as after school care, health/mental health center, and nonprofits that support children and families.

Additionally, many schools and districts are now using Multitiered Systems of Support (MTSS), Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS), systems of care, and/or wraparound services. All of these are aimed at collaboratively intervening (ideally as early as possible) for students who need extra supports. System of care initiatives, for example, have emerged across the U.S, promoting communication and collaboration among systems serving children, community and social service agencies, and families (Kutash et al., 2005). Teachers and other school staff should be kept well informed about what supports and services are available and how best to connect at-risk students to appropriate prevention or intervention services in a timely fashion. Some schools have people designated to assist in this process, such as school counselors, family liaisons, parent involvement facilitators, or care coordinators (see, e.g., Anderson et al., 2010; Ferrara, 2015).

Training in trauma-informed approaches which target social-emotional development and problem-solving is also gaining traction to support teachers and paraprofessionals working in high-poverty areas where children may be exposed to many environmental stressors (Cavanaugh, 2016). School staff can learn and then teach coping skills and also help children process their emotions to build resilience and create hope for the future (Baum et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2015). Paraprofessionals and other classroom staff are often overlooked or receive inconsistent training and PD; it is important for the health of the school community that they also be included in learning how best to support all students' social-emotional competencies (Anderson et al., 2015).

Teachers may also need PD to feel prepared to communicate optimally with families (Symeou et al., 2012), as well as PD on how to build their own social and emotional competencies (Aspen Institute, 2019b). Many teachers report high levels of daily job-related stress, which can in turn affect their own well-being and social-emotional competencies, resulting in a lack of capacity to support their students' social and emotional development (Greenberg et al., 2016; Jennings et al., 2019). Teachers and other school staff also need extra support during and after traumatic community events, such as the death of a student or a natural disaster. School communities should do their best to prepare for such occasions, including having conversations among school and community leaders, adopting proactive policies, and providing PD that supports teachers so that they, in turn, are better equipped to support their students should a crisis arise (Mutch, 2016).



Other Examples of Evidence-Based Practice

Many schools educate student populations where trauma is prevalent within their communities, and are implementing evidence-based trauma-informed approaches as Tier 2 supports. For example, “check-in, check-out” processes, which include a student or students being assigned to a mentor who provides positive adult interaction that includes feedback on progress towards meeting behavioral and academic goals along with positive reinforcement for goal attainment, are often used at the secondary level (Cavanaugh, 2016). Tier 3 supports may include individualized supports informed by data collected from functional behavioral assessments which include determining environmental variables that predict and sustain problem behaviors (e.g., preparing a student in advance who acts out when triggered by loud noises for fire alarm drills (Cavanaugh, 2016; Crone et al., 2015). The North Carolina Resilience and Learning Project provides a whole school, whole child framework to develop trauma-sensitive schools to improve academic, behavioral, and social-emotional student outcomes. The project includes professional development and ongoing coaching with school teams that both teaches and supports social-emotional or coping skills, and helps schools develop a more positive school climate where supportive relationships set the stage for children to feel physically and emotionally safe so that they can focus on learning. See <https://www.ncforum.org/nc-resilience-and-learning/>.

Want to Learn More?

Take a look at a series of videos on how schools are implementing strategies to become more trauma-informed: <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/53092/strategies-schools-can-use-to-become-more-trauma-informed>

Connecting the Research to Our Practice: Assessing Your School’s Needs Related to This Indicator

Assessing your school’s needs is a critical first step in identifying evidence-based practices appropriate for your school and planning for improvement. The suggested needs assessment questions below encompass three areas: data review; programs, policies and procedures; and implementation of programs, policies and procedures. You can adapt the questions to fit your school’s context as needed, and/or add or remove questions as desired.



I. What Data are Currently Being Provided?

<i>Questions to Consider</i>	<i>Discussion of Data/Responses</i>
1. What do school climate data reveal about students' level of social-emotional competency? Do students/teachers/parents believe the school provides a safe and supportive school environment?	
2. What do school disciplinary or other related data show about students' social-emotional competency?	
3. How do teachers perceive students' level of social-emotional competency? Special educators/EL educators? Other school personnel?	
4. How teachers perceive their own level of social-emotional competency? What are the stress levels of your school staff?	
<i>What needs can you identify based on the responses?</i>	

II. What (if any) Programs, Policies, or Procedures Are Already Being Implemented and How Well Are They Being Implemented?

<i>Questions to Consider</i>	<i>Responses</i>
1. How does the school currently foster students' social-emotional competency? What programs and curriculum components are provided at the schoolwide and/or classroom level? How are supports tiered to address students' needs? How are social-emotional competencies and programs addressed within key school documents and communications?	
2. What if any professional learning and/or coaching have teachers participated in to address students' social-emotional competency? What evidence do school leaders have that PD is resulting in implementation as intended? What is educators' level of awareness of available services or other supports for students who are struggling socially/emotionally?	



3. Are teachers given planning time to collaborate with other relevant staff to integrate social-emotional competencies into instruction and support individual students/needs?	
4. What if any social-emotional supports are provided to teachers and other school staff? Are these approaches effective to reduce stress and support educators social-emotional functioning?	
<i>Consider the data and needs identified from Tables I and II, and responses to these questions. What is needed to foster this effective practice? What gaps (if any) can be identified between what we’re implementing and evidence-based practice?</i>	

What actions, customized for your school’s needs, will ensure that this Success Indicator will be fully met? How will the team monitor implementation and success?

<i>Begin Date</i>	<i>End Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Monitoring Process/Data Collected</i>	<i>Desired Outcome/Need Met?</i>



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Additional Resources

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- National Association of School Psychologists (n.d.). *School safety and crisis*. <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis>
This webpage provides information on war and terrorism, preventing youth suicide, threat assessment, grief, trauma, bullying prevention, media and crisis, and more. Tip sheets for parents and educators are also available.
- The CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs is available in either the Preschool and Elementary Edition or the Middle and High School Edition. These are updated periodically and available from the CASEL website: <http://www.casel.org/guide>