

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) FAQs

1. What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

There are five facets to SEL: Self-management (managing your own behaviors), Self-awareness (recognizing one's emotions as well as your strengths and challenges), Responsible decision-making, Relationship skills (forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing with conflict), and Social Awareness (showing understanding and empathy for others). The goal of SEL is to explicitly teach these skills.

In other words: **Life skills**. The world around us is changing and kids are having to deal with bigger emotions than ever before. Managing emotions, learning to deal with conflict in a healthy way, coping skills, relationship skills, and responsible decision making skills are important whether you are 4 or 40. While talking to a friend of mine, recently, who had a troubled childhood, she mentioned the value of these life skills and how she is learning them through counseling at 39. Having SEL explicitly taught early and consistently will prove to have positive, lasting benefits seen in various areas of students' lives. For more information on how SEL has proven to positively impact the lives of students, click on the following link:

<https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Practical-Benefits-of-SEL-Program.pdf>

2. What exactly are you going to be teaching?

After significant and thorough research, looking at the research-based curriculum options that would work with a connections-type schedule, and meetings and support from the county-level Wellness committee, I will be teaching the PATHS curriculum (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies). It has been around for 30+ years! <https://pathsprogram.com>

3. Are you going to be a health teacher?

The plan is to integrate as many state-mandated health and wellness standards as possible into the curriculum that I am going to be teaching. Aligning those standards with the curriculum being used will allow all the students to receive those standards without classroom teachers having to feel the pressure to "get it all in," but any reinforcement they receive will be an added bonus.

4. Are you still going to be a certified teacher?

Yes. My Specialist degree is in “Gifted and Creative Education,” so this classroom will give me the opportunity to be creative in my SEL teaching! My heart and passion for kids learning to make healthy life choices is what fueled my decision to accept this position.

5. Are you a second counselor?

No. While I will receive some additional training in SEL, and I am always willing to help however I can, I am not certified in counseling. With the training I receive, I will be an additional RTI /MTSS team member with knowledge of students and how to best support and serve them related to their social emotional learning and development.

6. What is the rationale behind this class? What makes us think it is going to benefit our students?

Kids struggle. They have trauma and difficult situations in their lives that they are trying to make sense of every day, while managing their academics. This class will allow students a specific time to explicitly learn practices that will strengthen their mental and emotional health. Additionally, this topic was mentioned in our faulty meeting breakout groups as a non-academic need of our students having lived through a pandemic year.

CASEL (the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) has research on various SEL programs. Following the link you can see that the evaluation outcomes using the PATHS curriculum included *improved academic performance, increased positive social behavior, reduced conduct problems, reduced emotional distress, improved academic behaviors, improved climate, improved social and emotional attitudes and skills.*

<https://casel.org/guideprogramspaths-promoting-alternative-thinking-strategies/>

7. What other questions can you think of?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask! As we approach next year, I’m sure there will be more information to share. I am so excited about the potential for this class for the kids. Keeping a growth mindset, I expect to have a steep learning curve, make mistakes, and learn from my experiences all the while growing and stretching as a professional educator. I appreciate your support and grace. ☺

For those learning more about SEL: Social Emotional Learning is a concept that, at first, can be misunderstood typically due to an uncommon language. The infographic below may help as we begin to develop a common language together.

Keep it Simple...
So what we say is what parents *hear*

When We Say...

- Self Regulation
- Grit
- Growth Mindset
- Executive Function

Parents Think...

- ...like therapy?
- Grit sounds negative, like a struggle.
- Seeing a different picture? I'm not sure...
- Going to the bathroom?

Try This...

- Self Control
- Taking on challenges. Learning from effort.
- Learning from mistakes.
- Organizational Skills

SEL References and Resources

CASEL (The Collaborative for Social Emotional Learning), www.casel.org

PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies), www.pathsprogram.com

Be a Learning Hero,

<https://bealearninghero.org/research/#developing-life-skills-in-children-a-road-map-for-communicating-with-parents>