Social-emotional Learning: *Important for All*

COVID webinar series *Saving Lives, Protecting Workers*

New Jersey Work Environment Council
Our Focus Today

What we are seeing in our schools in NJ

What is SEL and why it can help

What type of supports are available
SEL4NJ is an affiliate of SEL4US, a national network of state alliances promoting the importance of social-emotional learning and related approaches (SEL) to be systematically and intentionally integrated in schools and other organizations, as well as fostering implementation support for those efforts.
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF SEL4NJ

• Build **statewide awareness** for SEL and related approaches.

• Provide support for **state and local SEL-related policies** and funding.

• **Connect** local **SEL stakeholders** to learn about and share research and best practices.

• Provide resources and **implementation support** to schools and other institutions.
**SEL Broadly Defined**

**SEL4NJ** defines “SEL” as an umbrella term that includes systematic efforts to promote any or all of the following:

- social and emotional development
- character education
- mental and physical health
- bullying prevention
- positive youth development
- substance use prevention
- Promotion of moral and performance values

- caring schools and communities
- positive school climate and culture
- whole child/whole school approaches
- educational equity
- an appropriately challenging academic experience
- *a trauma informed, equity, and anti-racism practice*
The social-emotional skills of students and staff create the foundation for a positive school climate.

In a positive school climate teaching and learning can happen and all are respected, heard, valued and supported.
Teacher’s were stressed before the pandemic....

Unprecedented levels of teacher and principal stress

- **58% of teacher respondents** said their mental health was “not good” (2017 Educator Quality of Work Life Survey, AFT & BAT)
- 2x the rate in general workforce
- Lower health outcomes compared to general workforce
- Less sleep than general workforce
• U.S. public-school teachers surveyed in January and February 2021 reported they are almost twice as likely to experience frequent job-related stress as the general employed adult population.

• Teachers are almost three times as likely to experience depressive symptoms as the general adult population.

• Nearly one in four teachers may leave their job by the end of the current (2020–21) school year, compared with one in six who were likely to leave prior to the pandemic.

• Teachers who identified as Black or African American were particularly likely to consider leaving.

“Job-Related Stress Threatens the Teacher Supply: Key Findings from the 2021 State of the U.S. Teacher Survey” was supported by the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

What We are Hearing from the Schools...

Teachers and administration

“Everyone has such a short fuse’

“IT FEELS LIKE MARCH…..”

‘I THOUGHT IT WOULD FEEL DIFFERENT BEING BACK’

‘I have no room for anything extra at all…. I am spent’

Why…..

• Ongoing ambiguity and uncertainty
• Lack of subs / paraprofessionals
• Pandemic is not over – health and safety concerns
• Family stress/ student needs
• An enormous ask was made of our educators and they rose to the occasion
What the students experiencing..

Students

- Delayed by 18 months +
  - Lockers, lunchroom behavior ...
  - Study techniques
  - Social skills
- Incongruent experiences
  - Great responsibility at home or no responsibility at home.. Makes re-entry difficult
CASEL 5: SEL Competencies

- Identifying emotions
- Self-perception/Identity
- Recognizing strengths
- Sense of self-confidence
- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others
- Communication
- Social engagement
- Building relationships
- Working cooperatively
- Resolving conflicts
- Helping/Seeking help

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Perseverance
- Goal-setting
- Organizational skills
- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility

www.casel.org
A 2017 research study finds that SEL programs benefit children for months and even years.

82

different programs reviewed
(38 outside U.S.)

97,000+

Students, kindergarten through middle school

Effects assessed
6 mo – 18 yrs
after programs completed

SEL Students Benefit in Many Areas

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<tr>
<th>Academic performance</th>
<th>Conduct problems</th>
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<td>SEL skills</td>
<td>Emotional distress</td>
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<td>Positive attitudes</td>
<td>Drug use</td>
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<td>Positive social behaviors</td>
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Higher social and emotional competencies among SEL students at the end of the initial intervention was the best predictor of long-term benefits.

Benefits were the same regardless of socioeconomic background, students’ race, or school location.

The best place to start...

With the Adults

(Who are having a very tough time at the moment..)
SEL benefits adults:
Positive impact on teachers

Teachers who possess social and emotional competencies are more likely to stay in the classroom longer.

Teachers with high levels of social competence are better able to protect themselves from burnout by:

- developing and managing nurturing relationships with their students
- managing behavior in their classrooms
- serving as behavioral role models for children
- regulating their own emotions
- create the positive climate where learning can happen

Emotions Are Contagious

Higher cortisol levels have been found in students whose teachers reported high levels of stress and burnout.

Higher cortisol levels can lead to:

- Anxiety and depression
- Headaches
- Heart disease
- Memory and concentration problems
- Problems with digestion
- Trouble sleeping
- Weight gain

......Individuals co-regulate each other’s physiology.

In Order to Learn and Thrive ...

Students Need to Feel Emotionally and Physically Safe
Resources in the state

• National
  • Casel.org
  • Aspen Institute - National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development
  • Edutopia

• Statewide
  • SEL4NJ
  • NJ Department of Education [https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/](https://www.state.nj.us/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/)

• District level – some fabulous examples!
Social and emotional learning starts at home. Parents play a critical role in children’s social and emotional development. They can help children learn the skills and behaviors we want all children to master, and they can be important advocates for SEL at school.
WELCOME TO THE SEL SPOT!

Please watch the introduction video to learn more about The SEL Spot before exploring our webpage!
Priorities in this time of COVID

Adults must be emotionally healthy (emotions are contagious).

We (students and adults) are all experiencing significant stress and many are experiencing compounded trauma.

A trauma-informed approach to everything and with everyone is key…
In the classroom, students of trauma may exhibit:

- Disrupted ability to process verbal information
- Less skill in using language to forge relationships
- Lowered executive functioning
- More skill in using language to build walls
- Limited problem-solving skills
- Slow to trust adults or peers
- Struggle with sequential ordering, internalizing cause & effect, seeing another's point of view, focusing, engaging with academic material effectively, self-regulating or recognizing emotions.
Our Learning Brains

• Optimal brain development fostered by:
  • Emotional well-being
  • Positive social relationships
  • Feelings of safety
  • Feelings of belonging

• Brain development **negatively** impacted by:
  • Stress
  • Loneliness
  • Threats to feelings of safety
“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship.”

--Dr. James Comer
Elizabeth Hansen Warner (Liz)

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