RESEARCH SUMMARY

stopbullying.gov

Social Emotional Learning and Bullying Prevention

Social emotional learning (SEL) is an educational approach that helps people develop social skills and awareness of themselves and others. School-based SEL can help students improve their academic and interpersonal success. It focuses on the positive behaviors of students instead of the negative behaviors to promote youth development.[1]

Benefits for Students and Schools

Developing social and emotional skills can have many benefits. It can significantly enrich students' mental health, behavior, and education. An evaluation of 213 school-based SEL programs showed these students had improved relationships with peers, teachers and school. When children learn social and emotional skills in school, it can also help them improve academically.[2] The evaluation also found a decrease in student conduct problems, substance use, and emotional distress.[2]

Developing students' social and emotional skills is a promising approach to prevent bullying. Studies have shown that these skills help protect students from becoming targets of bullying. They can also lower the risk of someone bullying others.[3] Through SEL students can develop empathy and resolve conflicts better. They can also build particular skills that can prevent students from getting involved in bullying.[3] These skills include self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision making.[2]

SEL in the Classroom

Here are some ways to include SEL within the classroom:

- **School-wide SEL framework:** The program works to create a positive school environment. Teachers, staff, students, and sometimes parents participate.
- **Formal integration of SEL into curricula:** This might include scripted, step-by-step trainings. It often has clear, structured, strategies.
- **Teacher-led integration of SEL:** Teachers can bring this learning into their classes and teaching practices. [1]

There are many resources and programs available to train educators how to teach SEL. These programs also help educators build their own emotional and social skills. Teachers with good social and emotional skills tend to have greater job satisfaction, express more positivity towards students, and have less problems managing classrooms.[3]   SEL works best when the whole school is aware of and commits to positive behaviors.

1. Nickerson, A; Fredrick, S; Allen, K; Jenkins, L. "Social emotional learning (SEL) practices in schools: Effects on perceptions of bullying victimization", Journal of School Psychology, (73) 74-88. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2019.03.002
2. Durlak, J; Oberle, E; Taylor, R; Weissberg, R. "Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-up Effects", Child Development, July/August 2017, Volume 88, Number 4, Pages 1156–1171. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12864
3. Farrington, D; Ttofi, M; Zych, I. "Protective factors against bullying and cyberbullying: A systematic review of meta-analyses", Aggression and Violent Behavior, Volume 45, March-April 2019, Pages 4-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2018.06.008