



SEL Helps Valued Outcomes to Happen: A Series of Examples...

Does SEL Interfere with Academic Learning?

The short answer is “NO!” The longer answer is that lack of Social Emotional Competencies harms academic learning

But don’t take our word for it!

- **SEL increases college graduation rates and speed.** If you want your children to graduate- and do so in 4 or 5, vs. 6 or more years – it’s important to remember your own college experience. So much of the benefits of college happen outside of formal (graded) classes. That’s why college success is associated strongly with emotional intelligence. This is even true for high school completion: A study of 276 Virginia high schools found that a school climate characterized by lower rates of bullying and teasing was predictive of higher graduation rates four years later (Cornell, Gregory, Huang, & Fan, 2013)¹. Schools with high levels of bullying and teasing had dropout rates 29% above the state average, compared with schools with a low level of bullying and teasing, which had a dropout rate 28% below average.
- **SEL improves career prospects.** The literature on workplaces could not be clearer. Advancing in one’s job and career is more strongly related to SEL/Emotional Intelligence than other factors.
- **SEL skills help students learn better.** How well will your child do if he or she can’t manage their strong emotions, learn how to deal with critical feedback, work with other people, focus on tasks, be organized and planful in meeting various school responsibilities, and appreciate the feelings and perspectives of students around them? These all are SEL skills. Consider this:

“Even when conditions are ideal, think of all the emotions that are involved in mastering a hard subject like algebra: curiosity, excitement, frustration, confusion, dread, delight, worry and, hopefully, perseverance and joy.... You’ve got to have an educated emotional vocabulary to maneuver through all those stages.”²

¹ Cornell, D., Gregory, A., Huang, F., & Fan, X. (2013). Perceived prevalence of bullying and teasing predicts high school dropout rates. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105, 138-149.

² Brooks, D (2019) *Students Learn from People They Love*. New York Times Opinion Article <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/opinion/learning-emotion-education.html>

The accumulated evidence is compelling. Recently, a review of over 200 studies by Joe Durlak and colleagues published in *Child Development*³ found that in schools intentionally implementing comprehensive and continuous social-emotional learning programs for multiple years, students' attitudes toward school and learning improved. Further, they gained an average of over 10 points on standardized academic tests, and their problem behaviors, including violence, diminished. These benefits not only matter for academics – students feeling engaged and connected to schools of social-emotional competence and character is among the most important factors in life success and feeling a sense of pride and purpose in life, according to a 2004 book summarizing the research on Social-Emotional Learning by Joe Zins and colleagues.⁴

Parents can and should feel confident that the renewed emphasis on SEL is a benefit for their children. Academic success now, and increasingly so in the future, is a joint product of SEL, character, intellect, and ability to manage relationships. If any one of those falters, our children are at risk. When SEL is present, our children are more likely to enter and progress through life's opportunities and reach their potential.

This information sheet was provided by SEL4NJ, the Social-Emotional Learning Alliance of NJ, a voluntary, grass-roots organization working with schools and communities to promote social-emotional and character development and supportive, engaging, inclusive, equitable classroom and school environments for learning. Prepared by Maurice Elias, SEL4NJ Trustee and Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab and William Trusheim, SEL4NJ Trustee and President of the NJ Alliance of Social, Emotional, and Character Development. You can reach us at info@sel4nj.org and join at www.SEL4NJ.org.

³ Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K. (2011). The impact of enhancing social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82 (1), 405-432.

⁴ Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R.P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.) (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York: Teachers College Press.