NATIONAL
AfterSchool
ASSOCIATION

The Afterschool Guide to
Social and Emotional Learning

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Introduction

Academic skill-building is only one part of educating youth. Creating a caring, empathetic environment with socially and emotionally conscious students is also an essential part of youth development. Development of interpersonal and communication skills, social and emotional intelligence, and attitudes are the "soft skills" that determine youth success in life and career. The practice and implementation of these "soft skills" has evolved into what is now commonly known as social emotional learning, or SEL.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was an innovator of the SEL movement and continues to be a leader of SEL practice. CASEL defines SEL as "the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." (CASEL, 2019) SEL is not a particular curriculum, program or set of lessons, it is methods of practice in both teaching and learning. Within their framework of practice, CASEL has identified five competency areas at the core of SEL. While there are other frameworks of practice, such as 21st century skills, mindsets, and non-cognitive factors, the competencies are similar across these frameworks (Afterschool Alliance, 2018). These competencies are (CASEL, 2019):

Self-awareness: Individuals are able to identify their own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they impact behavior

Social awareness: Individuals are able to empathize with others and understand other's perspectives from diverse backgrounds and cultures

Responsible decision-making: Individuals are able to incorporate ethics, social norms and safety considerations to make positive and effective choices about their behavior and social interactions

Self-management: Individuals are able to regulate their emotions and behaviors in various situations, including motivating self and managing impulses and stress

Relationship skills: Individuals are able to develop and cultivate valuable relationships among diverse people and groups

The **Afterschool Guide to Social and Emotional Learning** is a compilation of a variety of resources to help afterschool professionals better understand SEL, the competencies, and the role SEL plays within afterschool programs. These resources provide information about the importance and benefits of SEL, strategies to integrate SEL practice into afterschool programming, and examples of successful programs built around SEL practice. Regardless of proficiency with SEL practice, the resources within this guide may be used to enhance the SEL experiences offered to youth.

The Benefits and Impact of SEL

Social and emotional learning develops skills that youth carry with them into adulthood. Its woven throughout every discipline and every aspect of life. SEL practices have life-long impact on youth and their relationships within their communities and society at large. The extensive research on SEL learning reports its impact across a broad scope of fields and developmental areas. CASEL shares many of these impacts that include (CASEL, 2019):

Long-term benefits that extend months and years past youth exposure to SEL practices
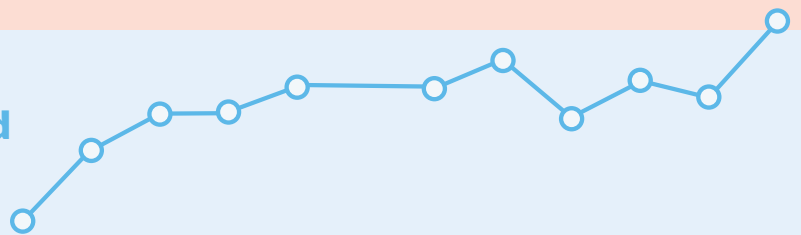
Improved academic achievement

Improved social skills, behaviors, and attitudes, such as teamwork, empathy and stress management

Improved mental health

Decrease in classroom and social conduct issues

Decrease in dropout rates, drug use and teen pregnancy

Return of **$11** for **every $1 spent** on **SEL programming**

The following resources provide a deeper look into the impact and benefits associated with SEL.

3 Things Everyone Should Know about SEL in Afterschool

Learn more

This article outlines the impact of combining afterschool programming and SEL and how afterschool programming can benefit SEL learning.

SEL in Afterschool - An Infographic by WINGS for Kids

Learn more

This infographic defines SEL and outlines the impact afterschool SEL programs have on student outcomes and the key components of these programs.

Emotional Intelligence: How It Interfaces with SEL

Learn more

This video presentation discusses the relationship and commonalities between SEL and emotional intelligence competencies as they exist in both youth and adults.

What If "Soft Skills" are as Important as STEM Skills?

Learn more

With so much focus on the need for cultivation of STEM skills for student success in the professional realm, this article stresses the importance of also developing SEL or "soft" skills in order to incorporate STEM skills in a socially and emotionally competent manner.

Ready for Work? How Afterschool Programs Can Support Employability Through Social and Emotional Learning

Learn more

This research brief by the American Institutes for Research summarizes the research findings about the importance of SEL competencies related to employability and how SEL practices integrated in afterschool settings can develop employability skills.

Afterschool and Summer Learning as a City Strategy for Workforce Development, College & Career Readiness

Learn more

This article describes three briefs provided by the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education, and Families about how SEL learning in afterschool and summer learning programs can impact workforce development, college and career readiness, and public safety.

SEL Practice in the Afterschool Environment

While many SEL program models are geared toward the classroom setting, afterschool programs offer a unique environment for supporting SEL learning. An environment that is flexible and encourages youth voice and choice is ripe for infusing the development and practice of SEL competencies throughout program activities. The flexibility of the afterschool environment also allows for greater ease of adapting school-based SEL programs to the afterschool setting. The following resources encompass a variety of strategies for implementing SEL practices in the afterschool setting. Key among these strategies are training staff in SEL practices and cultivating strong partnerships with schools.

Key Findings: NAA Membership Survey on SEL in Afterschool
Learn more

In 2015, The National Afterschool Association, in partnership with the American Institutes for Research, conducted an online survey to learn more about program practices and practitioners' understanding, implementation and needs around SEL. The outcome of the survey defined three calls of action for incorporating SEL into afterschool programming, which are outlined in this resource.

An Ideal Opportunity: The Role of Afterschool in Social and Emotional Learning
Learn more

This brief provides a synopsis of the importance and benefits of SEL skill development and the current challenges that exist with implementation. In addition, the brief describes why afterschool programs can be ideal settings for development of SEL skills by integrating SEL into their mission and creating intentional activities that promote SEL, prioritizing staff development, creating relevant project-based experiences, and promoting youth voice.

Strategies for Getting Started with Afterschool SEL
Learn more

This article discusses a step-by-step method for building SEL practice into an afterschool program as recommended by the experts at WINGS for Kids in Charleston, South Carolina.

Six Tips for Teaching Social and Emotional Skills After School
Learn more

Based on recommendations by the WINGS for Kids program in Charleston, South Carolina, this resource discusses six tips for incorporating SEL skill building into afterschool programs, including training staff in SEL basics and behavior management techniques, focusing on positive feedback and community building, integrating intentional SEL lessons, and making connections with the school.

Kernels of Practice for SEL: Low-Cost, Low-Burden Strategies
Learn more

This brief by the Harvard Graduate School of Education describes what kernels of practice are and how they work with SEL skills and align with SEL program implementation.

Five Ways to Teach Kids to Value Improvement Over Winning
Learn more

This article discusses the differences between a mastery climate and performance climate in sports and activity, including five practices to create a mastery climate for youth.

Webinar: 4 Easy Strategies to Build Supportive Afterschool Relationships
Learn more

This webinar reviews the Sanford Harmony SEL program for Pre-K to 6th grade youth. Program strategies for building relationships, teamwork, respect, and kindness are shared in this webinar.

Looking to Integrate STEM and SEL... and Don't Know How?
Learn more

This article shares the thoughts of STEM leaders on the importance of incorporating SEL into STEM practices and how to do so.

Social and Emotional Learning for Out-of-School Time Settings
Learn more

This brief by the Harvard Graduate School of Education shares examples of SEL programs designed for afterschool environments and the approaches these programs utilize for implementing SEL practices. The brief also outlines considerations for adapting SEL programs to the afterschool environment and steps for selecting an ideal SEL program.

Strengthening SEL Practice with Schools

A notable feature of afterschool programs is the partnerships with schools and communities they create to support youth in their development. Building a connection with schools is a key component of integrating SEL into afterschool programming. While methodology toward achieving SEL goals may differ between schools and afterschool programs, afterschool leaders should welcome opportunities for conversations between themselves and schools to align these goals. The stronger the connection between schools and afterschool programs, the greater the benefit to youth. The following resources address approaches for enhancing this connection and aligning SEL practices.

Afterschool and In-School Educators: A Combined SEL Approach
Learn more

The article provides a brief overview of the American Institutes for Research (AIR) work regarding how in-school and afterschool practitioners can work together to promote and develop SEL. Links are included to the AIR briefs referenced in the article.

Connecting Social-Emotional Learning During and Beyond the School Day
Learn more

Linked in this overview is the brief released by the Partnership for Children & Youth (PCY), that provides language and strategies so that school-day and afterschool programs can better align their SEL practices for greater impact.

Examples of Afterschool Programs that Support SEL

The following resources feature practitioners whose programs main focus is SEL. The first of these resources feature various national influencers and leading SEL program providers. The remaining resources provide more extensive information into two highly regarded afterschool programs, **Girls on the Run** and **WINGS for Kids**.

**NAA's Most Influential in Health and Wellness**
Learn more
In this article, organizations and individuals honored by NAA as most influential in health and wellness share their greatest achievements and goals for their continued work.

Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out *Looking Inside and Across 25 Leading SEL Programs: A Practical Resource for Schools and OST Providers*
Learn more
The guide linked in this resource, developed by the Wallace Foundation, provides detailed information about 25 evidence-based SEL programs. Practitioners can utilize the guide to make informed decisions about adopting and adapting SEL programs.
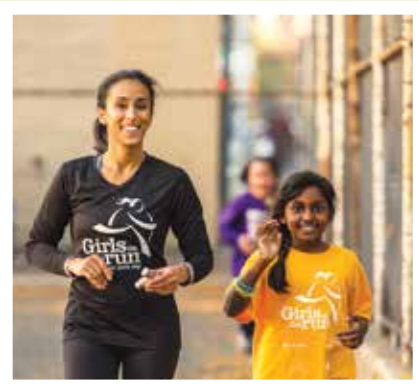
Girls on the Run (GOTR)

Girls on the Run Program Infographic
Learn more

The main components and objectives of the Girls on the Run program are highlighted in this infographic.

Girls on the Run: A Longitudinal Study of Program Impact
Learn more

Results of the longitudinal study of the Girls on the Run program conducted by Positive Youth Development expert Maureen R. Weiss, PhD, are detailed in this resource. The study intended to explore the developmental improvements made by participants in the program and sustainability of those outcomes after the program ended, as well as a comparison of outcomes with girls who participated in the program with girls who did not.

Girls on the Run Longitudinal Study Infographic
Learn more

This infographic highlights the findings resulting from the 2016 longitudinal study of the GOTR program conducted by Positive Youth Development expert Maureen R. Weiss, PhD.

WINGS for Kids

WINGS for Kids
Learn more

This WINGS for Kids webpage highlights the web-based training sessions created for parents that guide and provide them with techniques to help their children develop and practice social emotional skill building.

Evaluating and Improving the WINGS for Kids After-school Social and Emotional Learning Program
Learn more

An evaluative study of the WINGS for Kids afterschool program was conducted to determine the impact the program has on students' relationships and behavior competencies at home and school following the first and second year of program participation. Access to the reports and documentation resulting from this study are linked in this overview.

Resources

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), What is SEL?, 2019. Retrieved from https://casel.org

Afterschool Alliance. (2018). An ideal opportunity: The role of afterschool in social and emotional learning. Issue brief No. 71. Retrieved from http://afterschoolalliance.org//documents/issue_sel_71.pdf

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