

Chapter 1

Overcoming Educational Challenges Through Social and Emotional Learning: Significance for the Whole Child

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the chapter is to examine the importance of social and emotional learning (SEL) when supporting K-12 students in academic learning for success. Components of SEL such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making will be covered. A brief look at emotional intelligence is incorporated in the contents as well. The author provides evidence-based reasons why teaching SEL is beneficial for K-12 student success in numerous aspects of their educational career. Not only K-12 students be the focus of implementing SEL, but the teacher's role in implementing SEL in the classroom is explored. Various skills taught in SEL is discussed in detail as well as the impact of SEL at various grade levels.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, the focus of education has been upon academic learning. As this served its purpose for the decades following the Industrial Revolution, academic learning is only a part of the total picture. In the era in which creativity and higher-level thinking, as well as living in a cooperative and interconnected community are critical for the

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advancement of our society, our students require more. We now find ourselves in the midst of the information age in which data and facts can be easily accessed through technological devices. As educators, we understand that this is the time in which we need to focus on educating a fully functioning, integrated student. It is important to consider the physical, mental, and emotional aspects of self. That acknowledgement requires educators to address all three components. In this chapter, the importance of social and emotional learning, or SEL, will be examined.

BACKGROUND

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

Social and emotional learning education is broad in scope. According to The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2019), social and emotional learning includes the following competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. The goal is to help our students become knowledgeable, responsible, and caring. Elias, Zins, Weissberg, Frey, Greenberg, Haynes, Kessler, Schwab-Stone, and Shriver (1997), explain that, "Social and emotional competence is the ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development" (p.2). Essentially, social and emotional learning is important for life. According to Elias, Ferrito, & Moceris (2016), "SEL refers to a set of skills that are important elements of everyday life and are present and relevant from infancy to old age: recognizing and managing emotions, developing empathy and concern for others, establishing effective relationships in one-on-one and group contexts, making responsible and ethical decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively" (p.4).

When considering the emotional skills component of SEL, understanding the concept of emotional intelligence is essential. Emotional Intelligence refers to skills "which include self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself" (Goleman, p.xxii). The Five Factors associated with emotional intelligence as: Self Awareness, Managing emotions, Self motivation, Recognizing the emotions of others- Empathy, and Handling relationships (Goleman, 2006). To further explain, Goleman (2006), states that emotional intelligence includes, "abilities such as being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress from swamping one's

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