



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Guiding Principles for Social and Emotional Learning

Vision

We want all students in Wisconsin to graduate from high school socially and emotionally competent by possessing and demonstrating social and emotional knowledge, skills, and habits.

Definition

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an evidence-based practice with a deep research base. The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) defines SEL as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.



Commit to Equity

All SEL work must be done with a foundation built in and through equity. It is both competency development and a powerful tool to disrupt inequities; helping to ensure that all students graduate college and career ready.



Adopt a Systems Approach

Social and emotional learning is most effective when it is implemented across systems and aligned with other programs and practices. In a systemic approach, SEL is by all, for all, extending beyond the classroom to include active participation of diverse stakeholders throughout the school, district, and community. The explicit teaching of SEL competencies, and the continual, embedded modeling and rehearsal of these skills, across environments, allows individuals the opportunity to apply what they have learned and grow.



Employ a Strength-Based Lens

A strengths-based approach to SEL means building on and honoring what an individual already does well, the assets they bring to any situation, and their capacity for growth. Interactions, language, curriculum, and more should be inclusively designed to respond to an individual's strengths in an additive way.

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Strengthen Adult Capacity

Focusing on the social and emotional competence of adults can improve adult well-being, create positive work environments, increase feelings of competence and self-efficacy, aid adults in modeling skills for students, and build and support educators' resilience. Adult capacity affects and improves SEL implementation, and SEL is a lifelong learning process.



Partner with Students, Families, and Communities

Harnessing the potential of relationships with all stakeholders by decentralizing power and facilitating co-learning, authentic collaboration, and agentic engagement in all aspects of social and emotional learning will support the learning and development of both youth and adults.



Build and Sustain Resilience

Individuals who have SEL competence are better able to build and manage wellness and mental health, and cope with mental health challenges. Implementing SEL universally ensures that individuals will develop necessary skills proactively.



Assess to Learn

To assess SEL, a clear purpose must be articulated, an SEL definition agreed upon, and an understanding shared that SEL assessment is not the same as behavioral assessment or social and emotional behavioral health screening. Data should be used to guide educator practices that effect positive change and growth, rather than for student or teacher accountability.



Want to Know More?

Visit the DPI webpage for more information:
[dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/
social-emotional-learning](https://dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/social-emotional-learning)

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