



Indicator Explanation



DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Instruction	Remove barriers and provide opportunities	3C.5 Teachers teach and reinforce social/emotional competencies (positive social skills, self-respect, relationships, resiliency, and responsibility for the consequences of decisions and actions).

What are social/emotional competencies and how do they impact student learning?

Social-emotional competency, one of four personal competencies within recent personalized learning frameworks, fosters a level of concern and respect for oneself and others, and strengthens students' skills in self-management and productive decision-making (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Educator Competencies, 2015; Redding, 2016). Specifically, social-emotional learning (SEL) helps students use their "sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions" (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015, p. 2). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013), has developed a framework that identifies five social/emotional competency clusters as critical for young people's success. The behaviors that characterize these competency clusters are:

- Self-awareness—the ability to identify one's emotions and how they influence behavior;
- Self-management—the ability to calm oneself down when upset, to set goals and work toward them, and to manage and control emotions;
- Social awareness—the ability to recognize what is appropriate in certain settings and empathize with others;
- Responsible decision making—the ability to make decisions that take into account social standards, consequences, and context; and
- Relationship skills—the ability to communicate well, to listen and respond appropriately, and to negotiate conflict.

Social/emotional competencies can be taught and developed in every type of school and in students of diverse backgrounds and ages, and research suggests that academic achievement, motivation, behavior, and peer relations improve when social/emotional competencies are taught (Corcoran et al., 2018; Hart et al., 2020; Mahoney et al., 2018; Mart et al., 2011; Durlak et al., 2011). Students who set high academic goals, have self-discipline, self-motivate, manage stress and organize their approach to work learn more and get better grades (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Research has shown that students who have had training in social-emotional competency are better students, better citizens, and better employees later in life, with reduced rates of negative or risky behaviors and disciplinary issues (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013; CASEL, 2015). In fact, a recent meta-analysis of 162 studies found that students with strong levels of social-emotional competency have higher levels of academic performance, strengthening the case for school programming to address this competency (MacCann et al., 2019).



How can teachers promote social/emotional competencies?

Students develop social competencies in part through instruction, but also “through the modeling, encouragement, and caring exhibited by teachers and other people they respect” (Redding, 2014a, p. 7). A teacher’s “relational suasion” refers to their capacity to influence their students’ learning, motivation, and metacognitive and social/emotional competencies through their personal knowledge of and interaction with students and their families (Redding, 2013). Using their relational suasion, teachers can:

1. Systematically teach, model and facilitate the competency behaviors described above, in ways that allow students to apply them as part of their daily repertoires (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013); where appropriate evidence-based programs that enhance social/emotional competency should also be adopted (e.g., see CASEL, 2015).
2. Establish classroom norms—Classroom norms are specific expectations that teachers establish for students’ behavior. They are ways of behaving that are established by the teacher and that define the culture of the classroom. Establishing norms in the classroom is part of what brings students together as a single group, developing the interconnections between individuals. This process is one of the most important influences on academic achievement (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). Together, teachers and students should establish and define classroom norms (Finley, 2014).
3. Be attentive to students’ emotional states and guide students in managing their emotions. Teachers may need training in trauma-informed approaches that target social/emotional development and problem solving in order to build resilience and hope for the future, particularly for students living in high stress environments (Baum et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2015). Teachers also must be well informed about what supports and services are available (e.g., multi-tiered support systems, positive behavioral interventions, trauma-informed programs, and wraparound services) and how best to connect at-risk students to appropriate prevention and intervention services in a timely manner.
4. Use cooperative learning methods that encourage questioning, seeking help from peers, and offering help to peers. Cooperative learning methods involve students working together in small groups to help each other learn academic content (Slavin, 2015). Effectively working in these groups requires some student mastery of relationship skills (e.g., active listening/communicating, negotiating conflict constructively, asking for help, etc.) (Weissberg et al., 2015). Teachers must first enlist a variety of ideas by enabling learners to ask questions of one another and the teacher (Sharan, 2015); these opportunities build students’ confidence in the value of their opinions and ideas and set the stage for successful cooperative learning (see Sharan, 2015 for further description of cooperative learning methods).

How can students’ social/emotional competency be further enhanced within the school community?

School climate is intertwined with social-emotional competency, and research shows that improving school climate can enhance social-emotional competency, and vice versa (Osher & Berg, 2018). Research has found “supportive relationships, engagement, safety, cultural competence and responsiveness, and academic challenge and high expectations can help build social and emotional competence” (p. 5). Recommended strategies include:

- Build supportive, respectful, trusting adult-student relationships and encourage positive interactions
- Create a safe school environment
- Develop a sense of belonging or connection between adults and students
- Develop teacher and school staff cultural competence and responsiveness through high-quality professional learning
- Provide safe spaces and anti-harassment policies
- Implement universal trauma-sensitive interventions
- Enlist family and community support
- Include character and moral education, civic education, and risk/mental health education
- Implement School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports



States and districts can also prioritize this emphasis through policy and inclusion of social/emotional competencies within learning standards and guidelines. Teachers must also explicitly address social/emotional competency within their curriculum guides and lesson planning. By purposefully planning out ways to help students manage their emotions, build relationships with others, set goals for themselves, and make responsible decisions, these behaviors will become more embedded into the instruction and culture of the school.

Since much of a student's self-concept and social skills have their roots outside of the school building, schools must also ensure that families understand social/emotional competency. Involving families in social/emotional competency work allows for better coordination between what happens at school and at home and builds positive relationships between families and educators (CASEL, 2012; CASEL, 2015; Weissburg & Cascarino, 2013). Having teachers and parents sharing these messages of positive social and emotional habits can increase these positive outcomes, as students will see that their teachers and family share an interest in their well-being and have a consistent set of expectations for their behavior and academics at home and at school (CASEL, 2012; Redding, 2013). Schools will likely need to provide training and support to families, and resources in the form of workshops, family-school compacts, and invitations to the classroom in order to give them tools to use with children at home that they know will be effective and consistent with school expectations (Albright et al., 2011; Redding, 2014).

Social/emotional competencies should also be reflected within key school documents and communications. These documents may include the school's mission statement, compact with parents, school improvement plans, staff employment manuals, and student handbook. Documents should clearly describe how social/emotional competency is promoted in the school, and should be posted on the school's website and used as a planning guide to identify supportive school rituals and routines (Redding, 2014b). Technology can further be used to recognize and celebrate social/emotional competency through social media networks and in-school chat groups, and can communicate anti-bullying guidelines for both face-to-face and virtual interactions (Redding, 2014b).

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