

SELAS

Social Emotional Learning for Academic Success Skills for Learning, Skills for Life

2007-2008 Information Sheet

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations constructively. (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, CASEL, at UIC, www.casel.org). Social and emotional skills are most effectively promoted in the context of a safe and supportive school, family, and community. SEL is fundamental not only to children's social and emotional development, but also to their health, ethical development, citizenship, motivation to learn, and academic learning.

Why is SEL important for my child's learning?

Student success depends not only on academic achievement, but on what is considered "the other side of the report card," or those skills that reflect the student's ability to manage himself and interact successfully with others. These skills also align with those that many employers today call the necessary 21st century skills: communication skills, creative thinking, problem solving, and personal management which includes goal-setting, self-motivation, cooperation and leadership. SEL helps students develop the ability to manage themselves and interact successfully with others while creating a safe and supportive environment in which all children learn to their greatest capacity.

What does a socially and emotionally skilled student "look" like?

These students have self-confidence, hopefulness, impulse control, sensitivity and empathy, the ability to resist social pressure and prevent violent and risky behaviors, and the capacity to contribute to the well-being of their schools, families, and communities. In D181 it is our strong academic curriculum supported by social and emotional learning which helps students develop and practice skills that will contribute to their success in school and in life.

How does SEL work in our schools?

All District 181 schools provide a coordinated approach to SEL which involves classroom lessons from the Lions-Quest curriculum, PTO/PTA support for parent learning about SEL, special assemblies and activities. Activities offered at the schools such as the Kids Care Clubs, Sister School programs, service projects, and cultural arts programs provide opportunities for students and their families to put SEL into action. This all-school approach establishes the school's values about non-violent behavior, inclusiveness, fairness, and caring for others through classroom discussion and hands-on projects.

What is the Lions-Quest curriculum?

In the district's seven elementary schools, the Lions-Quest *Skills for Growing* curriculum includes lessons that address coping with feelings, recognizing abilities, giving and receiving, making positive decisions, and growing up drug-free. Each school has planned ways to use this curriculum at each grade level with stand-alone lessons and by integrating it within the typical academic subject areas in order to enhance its meaning and comprehensiveness. The elementary program includes the *Together Times*, a set of take-home worksheets for children to complete with their parents.

The Lions-Quest *Skills for Adolescence* curriculum used at HMS and CHMS consists of seven skill-building units which have been adapted by the staff to meet the needs of students during advisory and language arts, social studies, and health class. These units include Entering the Teen Years, Building Self-Confidence and Communications Skills, Managing Emotions in Positive Ways, Improving Peer Relationships, Strengthening Family Relationships, Making Healthy Choices, Setting Goals for Healthy Living, and Developing Your Potential. Parents of 6th graders will receive *The Surprising Years, Understanding your Changing Adolescent*, a concise, constructive guide to the issues faced in raising children during the middle school years.

See <http://www.lions-quest.org/> to learn more about these programs.

What kinds of issues does SEL address?

Our teachers and support staff strive to create an overall positive school climate, and model positive social skills. Yet behaviors like bullying and risk-taking cannot always be prevented. Through SEL, students have the opportunity to learn problem solving and decision-making skills as well as an awareness of others. When individual students need more support than is provided through classroom learning, help is available through the district's social workers, counselors, and other staff.

How can District 181's Social Emotional Learning for Academic Success initiative (SELAS) help parents?

The SELAS network provides parents with information to gain greater understanding of their children's development and learning of important life skills. Through SELAS, the district's classroom teachers have been trained to teach social and emotional skills through the Lions-Quest curriculum. When the lessons taught at school are backed up at home and visa versa, children learn even more effectively. The SELAS committee also links to parents in each school to offer support through workshops, book talks, guest speakers, newsletter information, links to resources, and suggested reading material.

How can parents help? Model, mentor, and monitor.....

SEL is most effectively taught when it is modeled by teachers and parents. With regard to ways to model behavior for children, adults can consider how well they have mastered the five social and emotional competencies (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making skills). Adult behavior goes a long way in transmitting expectations and skills to children.

Parents can reinforce the curriculum and mentor their children by explaining to them that the lessons and skills are important, just as important as math and reading, for instance. They teach children how to get along, see other's viewpoints, set goals, deal with challenges and disappointments, and so on. This kind of learning can help everyone in daily lives, school work, and later in careers. Children should know that parents value these social emotional skills and support the school in helping to teach them.

Parents can also support their children's social emotional learning by (1) being attentive to how their children are acquiring these important life skills at school, at home, and in the community, (2) being good listeners to their children, (3) letting children attempt to solve their problems by not solving them immediately for them, and (4) making sure the bonds their children are forming with others promote the values that are important to the family by getting to know the families of their friends.

Parents monitor children's academic growth by understanding the expectations of the school and being attentive to their child's academic performance. Monitoring children's social and emotional growth involves being aware of children's normal developmental stages, setting appropriate limits and being disciplined in keeping them, and communicating with other adults who share the child's social environment, such as teachers, parents, and neighbors.

All together, by modeling, mentoring, and monitoring children, adults help them understand expectations and values, and provide essential adult relationships for every child.

What's coming up this school year from SELAS?

Please plan to attend the SELAS-sponsored parent program entitled "Helping Children Thrive in a Socially Challenging Environment" on Wednesday, Jan. 30. Speaker James Garbarino, PhD, professor at Loyola University Chicago and author of *Parents Under Siege, And Words Can Hurt Forever, Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment* and more recently, *See Jane Hit*, addresses the influence of the cultural, social, and economic environment on children's development. The program starts at 7 pm at the Community House and is open to all. It is supported by the D181 PTOs and PTAs, the D181 Foundation, and The Community House. Look for related events at your school.

SELAS 2007 Survey Report: In early 2007 students, teachers, and parents were surveyed about the school experience. The report on the data from this survey will be presented to the Board of Education in September and will be made available on the district's website.

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