

What is Social Emotional Learning?

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) describes the development of skills in three domains: self, others, and responsible decision-making.

“Self” includes:

- self-awareness skills such as the ability to identify and recognize emotions
- self-management skills such as perseverance and the ability to manage impulse control.

“Others” includes:

- relationship skills such as cooperation, empathy, and respectful communication
- social awareness skills such as the ability to recognize diverse thoughts and opinions.¹

Combined, the above skills support responsible decision-making.

“Responsible Decision-Making” includes:

- Behavioral skills such as situation analysis, anticipating consequences, and generating alternative solutions.
- Cooperative skills such as balancing personal and group expectations.

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Music Education and Social Emotional Learning



How are music educators well-suited to help students develop socially and emotionally?

- Music educators often work with the same students in class multiple years, positioning them well to positively impact students' individual growth.
- The most conducive environment for SEL is one that includes positive developmental relationships. Music education can provide contexts for those relationships through encouraging collaboration and creativity in a safe environment.
- Musical experiences can help us connect with deep emotions. Sometimes music even elicits measurable physiological responses such as "chills" or "goosebumps," providing students the opportunity to reflect on the influence emotions have on their physical and psychological states.
- Music programs involve school staff, families, and local communities, supporting alignment of the parties necessary to support social emotional development.



What does research tell us?

- **SELF-AWARENESS:** Compared to other students, those with high arts engagement, including music, exhibit higher levels of self-concept in how they value themselves, their abilities, and their achievements." Specifically, active music education experiences seem to be correlated with measures of *self-efficacy*.²
- **SELF-MANAGEMENT:** Success in music depends on exercising *perseverance*, as evidenced by the ability to self-monitor one's progress and delay gratification in the pursuit of mastery. Regular and sustained practice leads to increased abilities in performance skills and self-evaluation. These become impetus for further practice.³
- **SOCIAL AWARENESS:** Cooperative music-making experiences which occur in group settings can positively impact participating students' proclivity for *empathetic* thinking and behavior.⁴
- **RELATIONSHIP SKILLS:** Music classes incorporate community-advancing activities which provide students with "opportunities to express themselves, interact in novel ways, and work collectively, practicing and developing interpersonal skills such as *collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution*."⁵

Musicianship encourages responsible decision making in several ways: Student musicians depend on each other to be on time for rehearsals, prepare for performances, and to act honorably as ambassadors of their community.

How can public policy support music education and Social Emotional Learning?

Schools can...

- Hire full-time, certified music educators to teach music classes.
- Support participation in music through thoughtful crafting of class schedules.
- Support music educators' professional growth with professional development that is relevant to the courses they are teaching.

States can...

- Adopt robust state standards modeled after the National Core Arts Standards and the CASEL Framework for Social Emotional Learning and draw connections between the two.
- Include access to music education as an accountability measure on school evaluation metrics.
- Support music as an integral part of early childhood care and education.

Congress can...

- Fully fund Title IV, Part A 'Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grant' which supports a well-rounded education, effective use of technology, and safe and healthy schools.
- Fully fund Title I, Part A, Title II, Part A, and Title IV, Part F, which can also support access to music education for all students.
- Pass the Guarantee Access to Arts and Music Education Act (GAAME), which clarifies specific eligibility for funds to support music education for students in need.