

CONVERSATION GUIDE

Social-Emotional Learning

Part 2: The importance of supporting social-emotional learning in schools

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Social-emotional learning has important benefits for students, families and communities, and contributes to the creation of welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments.

Key understandings:

- Social-emotional learning core competencies, as defined by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning) include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
- Social-emotional learning is a strengths-based approach that is grounded in developmental theory and focuses on what students *can* do.
- A meta-analysis of students engaged in programming to develop social-emotional learning showed gains in academic performance, social-emotional skills, pro-social behaviours, and positive attitudes toward self and others.

Elementary grades

- Social emotional competencies are connected to early learning success and school readiness.
- In early learning social-emotional learning competencies are predictive of later classroom adjustment and academic success.
- Self-regulation, inhibitory control, emotional knowledge, social problem solving, and relationship skills are also indicative of early academic success.

Middle school and junior high

- Key social-emotional competencies for middle school and junior high students include conscious self-control, ability to abide by rules and play games with rules, the ability to use language to regulate behaviour and influence emotions (including the ability to use solution-focused rather than emotion-focused language), the ability to learn from discussion, and the ability to be interested and involved with peers and have cooperative interactions with others.
- Social-emotional learning competency in junior high predicts present and future achievement scores.

Supporting Every Student Learning Series

The importance of supporting social-emotional learning

Key understandings (cont.):

Senior high school

- High school students deal with physiological-biological changes, and may face additional pressures such as learning to drive, working, dating, and increased responsibilities.
- For high school students, the most effective social-emotional learning interventions are in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.
- High school programs with a strong social-emotional component tend to lead to increased achievement, decreased detention, decreased intent of using substances, increased emotional competence, increased positive teacher-rated behaviour, increased school engagement, decreased dropout, increased positive identity, and an increased sense of self and decision-making.

In summary

- Social-emotional learning competence increases the likelihood of high school graduation, readiness for post-secondary, career success, positive family and work relationships, better mental health, and engaged citizenship.
- Conversely, the absence of competencies have been related to interpersonal problems, high school dropout rates, and adult unemployment.
- A number of social-emotional learning programs are found to be promising, but very few have been thoroughly evaluated.
- Classroom practices, school climate, teacher practices, and home-school partnerships are important factors in social-emotional learning.
- Ongoing research and evidence gathering related to social-emotional learning programs is important to help us know what works best for students.
- Partnerships between schools and research and training institutions are critical for program evaluation.

Questions for reflection and discussion:

- What general signs do you see in your school or school authority that students would benefit from more intentional and systematic social-emotional learning instruction?
- Considering the developmental needs of students, how would senior high programming to support social-emotional learning look different from elementary programming? What aspects would look similar?
- Who might be some of the potential community or research partners who could collaborate and support social-emotional learning in your school or school community?

For more information:

- Alberta Government [information on social-emotional learning](#), including a [video](#), related [conversation guide](#), and a [fact sheet to help choose resources](#) and [links](#) for further information.