

Skills for School. Skills for Life.

The mission of the Safe & Caring Schools (SCS) program is to create sustainable, positive systemic change by infusing social and emotional learning (SEL) and character education into daily academic instruction from preschool through grade 8. This takes place in partnership with educators, counselors, administrators, parents, and community members to improve academic achievement and school climate.

“When you educate the whole child, you can count on academic growth as well, even if that’s not the primary intent.” These words from “The Whole Child,” a 2007 report from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, reinforce the value of social and emotional learning. SEL is no longer seen as an option to be taught separately from academics; rather, it can be taught and implemented in schools in a number of ways.

SCS supports the idea that reaching the hearts of children is equally as important as reaching their minds. As one teacher who uses SCS explains, “I have learned that if I want my students to succeed academically, I need to teach them how to listen, follow directions, communicate effectively, resolve problems, and make good choices.”

Teaching kids life skills needs to become part of the daily routine. Learning to get along with others, accepting responsibility for one’s own actions, and making better choices takes practice and needs the guidance and ongoing support from the adults in kids’ lives. Consistency and repetition, as well as modeling desirable behaviors, will increase students’ ability to internalize and use new skills in real-life situations.

Research Foundation

For several years now, there has been a growing body of scientifically based research supporting the idea that enhanced social and emotional behaviors can have a strong impact on kids’ success in school and, ultimately, in life (*Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* Edited by Joseph E. Zins, Roger P. Weissberg, Margaret C. Wang, and Herbert J. Walberg. Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 2004). The research substantiates that effective strategies for educational reform involve (1) a central focus on school climate change and (2) infusing SEL into regular academic lesson plans. Giving children a balance of intellectual and emotional instruction leads to more complete psychological development and helps them become better learners.

This idea is supported with hard data. For example, The Lucile Packard Foundation for Children’s Health and the William T. Grant Foundation funded an analysis of 207 studies of social and emotional learning programs involving 288,000 elementary and secondary students from a cross section of urban, suburban, and rural schools. The results of the analysis are summarized in a 2008 report, “The Benefits of School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs” from CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning). In evaluating academic outcomes, the study found that in schools where SEL is integrated into the regular programming, students scored 11 percentile points higher on standardized tests compared to students in schools not using an SEL program. Even though incorporating SEL activities required time in the school day, it did not negatively affect students’ academic performance; rather, time spent on SEL improved academic performance. This project, conducted by Joseph A. Durlak of Loyola University in Chicago and Roger P. Weissberg at the University of Illinois at Chicago, was the first meta-analysis of research on the impact of SEL programs on students. Their full report is titled *The Effects of Social and Emotional Learning on the Behavior and Academic Performance of School Children*.

SCS incorporates a holistic approach in working with children, combining several research-based strategies into one program in order to nurture the whole child and promote student well-being. SCS defines student well-being as “the development of knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors that maximize students’ functioning in environments where they live and work—school, home, and community” (Romano, J. L. *Journal of Educational Research*, 90, 1996). SCS provides you with a comprehensive set of core materials to enhance student well-being in a manner that is easily infused into your daily routine.

SCS materials incorporate a strengths-based approach that fosters resiliency in children to enable them to thrive and become successful in school and in life. Recent research shows that focusing on strengths is one of the key elements in supporting our youth, and schools play a critical role in the development of the strengths or assets in students.

As Bonnie Benard writes in *Resiliency: What We Have Learned* (San Francisco: West Ed, 2004):

A framework, research support, and a rationale for resilience-based prevention and education include the following assumptions:

- Resilience is a capacity all youth have for healthy development and successful learning.
- Certain personal strengths are associated with healthy development and successful learning.
- Certain characteristics of families, schools, and communities are associated with the development of personal strengths and, in turn, healthy development and successful learning.
- Changing the life trajectories of children and youth from risk to resilience starts with changing the beliefs of the adults in their families, schools, and communities.

SCS uses a complete and comprehensive plan that makes sense and works.

- It complements and enhances the well-being of children by promoting self-awareness, self-respect, integrity, and compassion to help them become productive citizens of any community.
- It encourages students to take risks and become active learners, regardless of their abilities, language barriers, or cultural differences.
- It leads students to make connections with the world around them by creating opportunities to practice the skills they need to face daily challenges.
- It allows students to reach for their full potential of becoming positive leaders by promoting social and emotional education as part of academic learning.

SCS activities support standards and comply with best practices for SEL infusion at school while providing opportunities for you, the teacher, to use your creativity. When aligned with the key competencies of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the SCS activities clearly address those key SEL competencies: 1) Awareness of self and others, 2) Positive attitudes and values, 3) Responsible decision making, 4) Social interaction skills.

These SCS materials have been tested with teachers and students of all abilities and backgrounds in public, private, city, and suburban schools. The program has been successful due to the commitment of staff, ongoing support from leadership, and awareness that all student needs—emotional, social, and intellectual—must be met. The schools that had the most success with the program developed strong relationships with their students by infusing SCS principles into the culture of the school, rather than just using occasional add-on SEL or character education units. At these schools, teachers brought the activities to life by modeling desirable behaviors and creating an environment where all students felt safe, accepted, recognized, and celebrated for their individuality every day.

A Schoolwide Commitment

To improve classroom and school climate, the SCS materials can be used by an individual teacher or by an entire school or district. Either approach will work, but a systemic change can be realized only when an entire school makes a commitment to become a safe and caring place. By choosing the schoolwide approach, a school has the benefit of teamwork and support from all staff, plus parents and community members. Through the common language of clear expectations, consistency of messages, modeling of desirable behavior, and the use of vocabulary that will help everyone communicate more effectively, you will be able to create positive systemic change in your school.

To implement a schoolwide SCS program:

- Include social and emotional learning in your mission statement.
- Establish clear expectations for positive behavior.
- Be consistent with expectations and consequences.
- Establish a yearlong plan to reinforce parent involvement.
- Create a support system for all students, staff, and parents.
- Coordinate communication among all staff, including teachers, specialists, administrators, counselors, support staff, substitute teachers, and aides.
- Plan opportunities to recognize and celebrate successes.

Although classroom teachers are the primary implementers of the SCS lessons, administrators, counselors, social workers, health teachers, and other staff can be actively involved in the effort to infuse SEL into all areas of the school. Creating a schoolwide program takes thought and planning, but it's well worth the effort.

What Can Be Done About Bullying? Beyond Policy and Procedures

An essential goal of the SCS program is to create clear schoolwide and classroom expectations about bullying

and its consequences. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of adults to create an environment where students feel protected once they report bullying as they witness or experience it. If adults are not consistent with this protection, students will quickly learn to either take matters into their own hands or remain silent.

- Establish a coordinated plan where staff, parents, and students work together to respond to bullying in a proactive and timely manner. Help parents understand the seriousness of this issue and give them the tools to help their children along the way.
- Provide ongoing training and support for all adults to teach them how to respond when they witness or hear about bullying behavior, and how to provide timely follow-up.
- Administer a survey to students to help you assess bullying behavior in your school and to find out if your students know where bullying takes place and how and where they can go for help.
- Set clear guidelines for coaching and supporting students who have been bullied as well as students who bully others if you wish to create systemic change.

Create a safe environment where students are encouraged to become positive bystanders. By creating a climate that encourages students to become positive bystanders and report bullying, you'll be sending a message to students that bullying is taken seriously in your school. Middle school students often report that while they don't like witnessing bullying behavior, they don't know how to help without getting themselves in trouble. Students also share that they choose not to get involved out of fear they will be bullied, excluded, or isolated by the kids who bully. Along with your support, give students clear strategies while always keeping their personal safety in mind.

- Ask for help from an adult you know and trust.
- Reach out to the student who is being bullied.
- Ask the bully to stop only if you feel safe and are not alone.
- Refuse to join the bully; don't laugh or encourage the situation.
- Do not look the other way when someone is in trouble.
- Break the silence about bullying with help from your friends and adults.

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TEACHER SURVEY—PART 1

SCHOOL/CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Using the 1 to 5 scale, circle the response that best describes your actions and proficiency at this time.

1 = Consistently 2 = Often 3 = Occasionally 4 = Infrequently 5 = Never

- | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I set clear expectations in my classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I enforce classroom and schoolwide expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. I teach students about being accountable for their own actions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I recognize my students for using their social and emotional skills by choosing them as Ambassadors of Peace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I develop a sense of community in my classroom. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I use advisory/classroom meetings to review new ideas and to practice social and emotional literacy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I use cooperative groups to reinforce teamwork and peer teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I model and use teachable moments to reinforce social and emotional learning in the lessons I teach. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. I teach social and emotional literacy by infusing activities from the Safe & Caring Schools resource guide. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. I teach students strategies to help them deal with bullying behavior. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. I teach students conflict resolution and problem-solving strategies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I meet with other staff to discuss and plan schoolwide activities to reinforce social and emotional learning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. I seek support from my colleagues when problems arise in my classroom so I can solve them more effectively. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I assess the effectiveness of my efforts to include social and emotional learning in my daily teaching practice. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I connect with parents to be partners in teaching and supporting social and emotional learning at home as in school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

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TEACHER SURVEY—PART 2

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

Using the 1 to 5 scale, circle the response that best describes your actions and proficiency at this time.

1 = Consistently 2 = Often 3 = Occasionally 4 = Infrequently 5 = Never

1. My students feel safe at school.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My students understand the school and classroom expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
3. My students follow the school and classroom expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My students know how to ask for help.	1	2	3	4	5
5. My students use conflict-resolution skills to deal with problems.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My students identify and express their emotions appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My students use good manners.	1	2	3	4	5
8. My students show respect toward adults and students.	1	2	3	4	5
9. My students show empathy toward others.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My students appropriately deal with bullying behavior at school.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My students practice active listening.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My students demonstrate the ability to make good choices.	1	2	3	4	5
13. My students recognize their gifts and talents.	1	2	3	4	5
14. My students know how to set goals.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My students have positive dreams for the future.	1	2	3	4	5



WHO IS A TRUE FRIEND?

It can be tricky sometimes but it's important to know...

A true friend is someone who...

- accepts you for who you are True or False
- dares you to do things that might get you in trouble True or False
- cares about how you feel..... True or False
- takes time to help..... True or False
- calls only when he or she needs something..... True or False
- demands you do something you don't want to do if you want to stay friends True or False
- you can call if you need to talk about something..... True or False

Do you have a friend you can count on?



Yes
.....
No

If yes, what are a few things you like about your friend?

Describe the qualities you look for in a friend.



If no, what can you do to change that to a yes?

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RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS QUIZ

True or False (circle the correct answer)

- 1) Using good manners helps when we want to be accepted by others. True / False
- 2) Giving others compliments isn't cool; it's silly and old-fashioned. True / False
- 3) If people aren't careful with their privacy, then it's fair to find out whatever I can. True / False
- 4) Spreading rumors and gossip is fun because you're able to do something to somebody without really hurting them. True / False
- 5) Even though some things are not fair, it is still important to strive for fairness and justice. True / False

Multiple Choice (circle the correct answer)

- 6) At our Safe & Caring School:
 - a. we are respectful by accepting one another for who we are.
 - b. girls and boys have equal rights.
 - c. we create a positive place with our language and behavior.
 - d. all of the above
- 7) Gossip and rumors:
 - a. can be prevented when we get the facts and try to be fair.
 - b. aren't really serious, just having fun.
 - c. can have a negative effect on how kids feel at school.
 - d. a and c
- 8) Apologies are important because:
 - a. they can fool someone into thinking you really care.
 - b. they help people work out problems with each other and move on.
 - c. adults require you to do it.
 - d. none of the above

Fill in the Blanks

- 9) R_____ for others at school helps build a p_____ community.
- 10) Everyone has d_____, but we can a_____ to others, forgive them, and move on.

Real-Life Writing

At a Safe & Caring School, we are committed to including and supporting everyone. How can you make everyone feel respected and included in the community, whether they are boys, girls, have different abilities, or come from a different culture?

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FEBRUARY

Teaming Up for Success

- **Social Interaction Skills**
 - **Responsibility**
 - **Decision Making**
 - **Teamwork**
 - **Sharing**
-

Monthly Objectives

Students will:

- learn the importance of cooperation in all aspects of their lives
- practice the skills of responsibility and accountability
- learn and practice leadership and teamwork skills
- learn and practice communicating effectively with others

Social Emotional Definitions

Accountability: Taking responsibility for something you've done. Being answerable to someone.

Cooperation: The ability to work together toward a common goal.

Creativity: Using your imagination to develop new ideas.

Initiative: The ability to act and make decisions to get an important task completed.

Leadership: The ability to guide, direct, or influence people.

Responsibility: Following through with what you are expected to do.

Social Interaction: Communication or activity involving two or more people.

Teamwork: A cooperative effort by a group to complete a task.

Tolerance: The acceptance of other people's views and beliefs that may differ from your own.

Wisdom: Helpful perspective that comes from life experiences.

TEACHING TIPS

- Cooperation is one skill that takes time to teach. Being part of a team is not always easy for children, because they may have a hard time sharing, listening, taking turns, or following directions.
- There are many valuable lessons children can learn while working in large and small groups. Explain to children that they have a right to their own opinions and feelings, even if they differ from the group's.
- Use teachable moments to highlight the importance of good communication and teamwork.