

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 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. [New York: Teachers College Press, 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 approach 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: WestEd, 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.
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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 practicing the skills they need to face daily challenges.
- It allows students to realize their potential as positive leaders by providing 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, and 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.

"I think that it is not only our jobs as counselors, teachers, and administrators to help foster social skills, I think that it is absolutely the number one priority we need to be looking at right now. Having the Safe & Caring Schools program to help us do that makes our job that much easier."

COUNSELOR, ARLINGTON SCHOOL

SAFE & CARING PROMISE

We promise to ourselves and everyone here to do our best to follow the rules, be respectful, and make



a Safe & Caring School.



Student Signatures

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Teacher(s)



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 circle time/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



SKILLS FOR SCHOOL. SKILLS FOR LIFE.

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

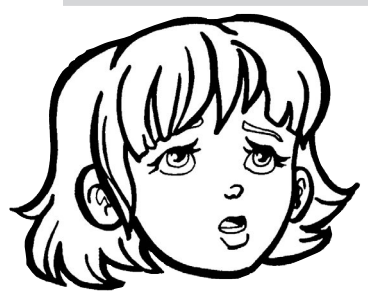
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. My students feel safe at school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. My students understand the school and classroom expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. My students follow the school and classroom expectations. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. My students know how 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 children. | 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 |

A BETTER WAY TO SAY IT

Hurtful Words

Respectful Words

MARCH



Stop it!

Go away!
I don't want to
play with you!

I don't like you!

Give me that!

You're not my
friend anymore!

We are
a safe
& CaRiNG
SCHOOL.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I GET



ANGRY?

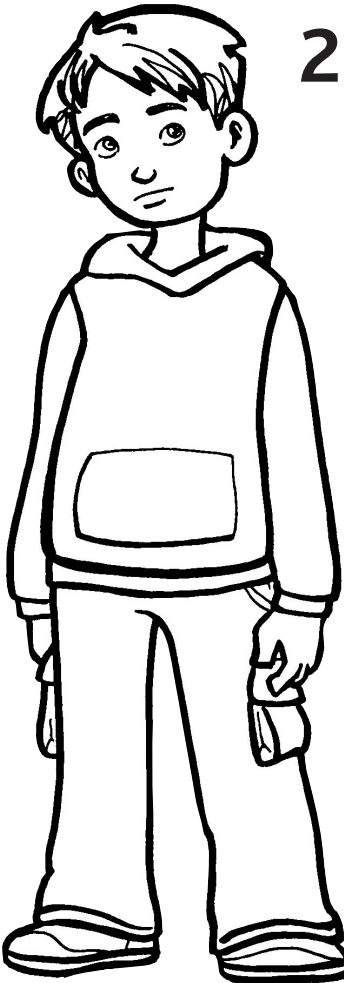
1. When I get angry...

- my heart races.
- my face feels hot.
- my eyes hurt.
- my muscles get tight.
- I get sweaty.
- my hands turn into fists.
- I get a headache.
- my stomach hurts.

2. I feel better when I...

- read.
- exercise.
- draw.
- listen to music.
- talk to a friend.
- breathe deeply.
- talk to a grown-up.
- count to 10.
- have quiet time.
- take a walk.

3. Now I'm calm.



**We are
a safe
& CaRiNG
SCHOOL.**