

#SELDAY: What is Social Emotional Learning?

Dilrooh Israil

In the past, education has prioritized academics in a way that neglected overall well-being in students. Rigor and health did not often go hand-in-hand, giving school a reputation as a [stressful environment](#). Institutions even glorified poor well-being, attributing it to academic dedication. The “tortured artist” was always the most successful. The genius was always the most isolated. As university education became more accessible, this unhealthy standard eventually trickled down to high schools and middle schools. Eventually, it became normal, romanticized and rewarded to be unwell as a student. Ever heard two teens compete over who slept the least the night before?

That’s not to say that schools are toxic environments that don’t promote well-being. Children and students learn social skills and life skills inside and outside the classroom. But there should be more emphasis on character development skills that can help enhance performance in students overall. That’s where SEL comes into play.

Social Emotional Learning and character development skills are the ability to form an analytical and refined relationship with one’s internal and external behavior. It’s the ability to monitor thoughts, label emotions, and control behavior in a healthy manner that benefits both the individual and their social circle. [SEL teaches](#) self awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These characteristics positively impact classrooms, schools, families, and communities.

There are countless ways these 5 core competencies can help individuals. Self-management promotes healthier coping with adverse life events. Social awareness endorses creating welcoming environments for all. Relationship skills affect all social circles and can especially prepare people for excelling in work

environments. Responsible decision making is a skill that can sustain overall health long-term. Self-awareness helps supervise mental health which builds self-efficacy. On a societal level, SEL can advance equity by recognizing systemic racism and working to unlearn unconscious biases. It promotes inclusive and cultural environments in communities like work and school.

While students are the target for SEL programs, it is also important for adults to learn SEL too. It is never too late to adopt healthy interpersonal and self-management competencies, and it can be used to teach youth as well. Parents and teachers are advised to learn SEL skills so that they can properly guide children and students into adopting these useful skills. As society becomes more globalized, everybody could benefit from refining their soft skills that benefit both themselves and others.

That's why [SEL4US](#), the Social Emotional Learning Alliance for The United States, is spreading SEL initiatives state-by-state. They build national awareness for SEL, advocate for state and local policies, connect local SEL stakeholders to share their best practices, and celebrate international SEL day. Through the hashtag, [#SELDAY](#), SEL4US aims to spread awareness and celebrate successes achieved through their strong promotion and endless support. Mar 10, 2024 marks the fifth international SEL Day with over eight thousand participants in over eighty countries and all fifty US states. Visit [selday.org](#) or visit the hashtag #SELDAY on any social media platform to learn more and show support for SEL advocates.