



TRAILS Social and Emotional Learning

Frequently Asked Questions

For Families and Caregivers

What is SEL?

SEL is the process through which students learn skills for identifying and managing their internal thoughts and feelings, establishing and maintaining healthy relationships, and navigating problems and decisions. The SEL skills students are developing fall into the following categories:

- **Self-Awareness:** Noticing our thoughts, feelings, and urges to act
- **Self-Management:** Using skills to manage thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in ways that are helpful in the short- and long-term
- **Social Awareness:** Understanding the perspectives and feelings of others, and responding to them with empathy and respect
- **Relationship Skills:** Initiating, defining, and maintaining healthy relationships with others
- **Responsible Decision-Making:** Approaching problems and decisions systematically, using our values and goals as a guide

You may hear more about each of these areas from the teacher throughout the school year, and can view this video from CASEL: [SEL 101 \(CASEL\)](#) (4:51) for more information.

Why is my student learning SEL in the classroom?

The positive impacts of SEL for students are broad and long-lasting! There is a robust amount of research to indicate that students who learn social and emotional skills demonstrate **increased academic performance** as compared to their peers who do not receive these skills. With SEL, students can better cope with stress, navigate relationships, and solve problems effectively. All students benefit from these skills, which bolster their ability to function most fully in every aspect of their lives.

What is TRAILS SEL?

The TRAILS SEL Curriculum is grounded in cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) and mindfulness, two approaches proven to work in promoting mental health in students. CBT states that the way we think impacts how we feel and what we do. Mindfulness is the act of focusing our attention on what we're experiencing in the present moment. These core skills help students manage stress, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and problem-solve effectively.



Is my student's teacher doing therapy?

Classroom instructors are not doing therapy. Rather, they are teaching strategies to foster these incredibly important social and emotional skills in students to help them succeed in every aspect of their lives.

How will my family's values be incorporated into SEL?

Every student comes to school with unique values, families, interests, identities, and perspectives. SEL in the classroom acknowledges that these factors influence how students think about their own experiences, interact with others, and deal with problems. Integrating SEL into the classroom honors the uniqueness of and connections between each student and provides consistent skills and strategies for success individually, in relationships, and in other areas of their lives.

How can I stay informed on what SEL skills my student is practicing?

Be sure to connect with your child's teacher about the specific SEL skills being practiced in the classroom! Additionally, your child's teacher may send home informative letters as your student moves from topic-to-topic as it relates to SEL.

How can I reinforce SEL skills at home?

Practicing SEL skills outside of the classroom is incredibly important. Caregivers and families play a crucial role in instilling and reinforcing SEL skills at home. Regular practice of these skills helps to strengthen them in students as they see adults modeling and using the skills alongside them. Your child's teacher can point you to suggestions and strategies for practicing and reinforcing these skills at home!