ELEARNINGNEWS ARTICLE

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Social and emotional learning: what it is and why it's important

Discover how Social and Emotional Learning develops essential emotional and social skills for academic and personal success, and how eLearning makes SEL more accessible and personalized for all students.

Social and Emotional Learning, in English called **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**, is an educational approach aimed at developing emotional intelligence, social skills, and self-awareness necessary for children and young adults to thrive not only in school but also in relationships and life.

SEL competencies

SEL focuses on promoting five fundamental competencies:

1. **Self-awareness**: understanding one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, and the values that guide us.
2. **Self-management**: learning to regulate our emotions, manage stress to help us achieve our goals.
3. **Social awareness**: developing empathy and understanding towards other people from different backgrounds.
4. **Relationship skills**: developing the ability to build healthy relationships, work in groups, and resolve conflicts.
5. **Responsible decision-making**: making ethical and thoughtful decisions in social and academic situations.

These competencies are fundamental not only for academic success but also for emotional well-being and positive social interactions throughout life.

The importance of SEL education

SEL education is crucial because it has a direct impact on students' **mental health**, their academic performance, and their future success in personal and professional spheres. Here are the main benefits of this approach.

- **Better academic results**: SEL ensures higher academic results; emotionally well-adjusted students can focus better and engage in learning. The 2011 study " **The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions**" by J. Durlak shows that from an academic standpoint, students who participated in SEL programs recorded an 11% increase in overall grades and better attendance.
- **Better mental health**: students who participate in SEL programs often show reduced rates of anxiety, depression, and behavioral problems, contributing to a healthier school climate. The same study mentioned earlier indicates that, at an individual level, it has been shown that the skills learned in an SEL program help students better manage emotional stress and solve problems.
- **Improvement of social skills**: the SEL program promotes better communication, **collaboration**, and conflict resolution skills, which are increasingly important in today's interconnected and diverse world. A **report** by the AEI/Brookings group on poverty and opportunity noted that despite their focus on education, employment, and family life, major educational and social reforms of the school system in recent decades have not focused sufficiently on the socio-emotional factors that are crucial for learning. In particular, the report indicates this lack for the age group from 5 to 18 years.
- **Long-term success**: some studies have shown that students with solid SEL foundations are more likely to have successful careers and relationships in adulthood.

With growing concerns about the mental health of children and young adults, the importance of SEL has become more evident, especially in the wake of global upheavals such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has increased students' anxiety and social isolation. If educators can identify students who have problems related to self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, and decision-making abilities, they can work better with them from an early age and help them develop better self-control,

empathy, and other positive qualities. Learning these positive behaviors goes beyond the purely academic level. This approach can indeed help students develop the **soft skills** required in many areas, such as teamwork, the ability to understand others, and problem-solving. This can help prepare students for success during school years and beyond.

SEL market dimensions

With the growing awareness of the benefits of SEL, the demand for tools and services that support social and emotional learning in schools is also growing. According to some research, the global SEL market is expected to register substantial growth in the coming years.

Market research indicates that the global Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) market was valued at $2.13 billion in 2021 and is expected to grow by 24.8% between 2021 and 2030. This is due to:

- an increase in government funding and policies that encourage SEL in school curricula.
- the increased demand for mental health and emotional well-being programs in schools.
- the growth of digital learning platforms offering scalable and flexible SEL programs.

This growth highlights the growing recognition of SEL as a fundamental component of modern education.

Key elements of the SEL market

The SEL market extends across multiple dimensions and involves both traditional and digital approaches to promote emotional intelligence and social skills. Here are the key elements useful for implementing an SEL program.

- **Teaching and curricular programs**: SEL programs integrated into school curricula, which help students develop emotional and social skills through guided lessons.
- **Teacher training and professional development**: professional development programs provide educators and teachers with the tools and techniques necessary to guide students in their social and emotional development.
- **Assessment tools**: the SEL method includes tools to assess students' emotional growth, such as DESSA (Devereux Student Strengths Assessment) and various self-assessment tools to monitor students' SEL progress over time.
- **Digital platforms and eLearning**: one of the fastest-growing areas of the SEL market. SEL digital platforms use **interactive games**, activities, and multimedia resources to teach social and emotional skills. These platforms offer scalable solutions that can be customized for individual students or groups.

How eLearning contributes to SEL market growth

ELearning has become a powerful tool for advancing SEL education, transforming the way social and emotional skills are transmitted. Here's how eLearning supports the SEL method.

- **Increased accessibility**: eLearning platforms break down geographical barriers, making SEL programs accessible to students in urban, rural, and underserved areas. Whether it's apps, online courses, or digital content, SEL programs are always available to many users.
- **Engagement through technology**: eLearning platforms use engaging multimedia elements such as videos, **simulations**, and interactive games to teach SEL skills. These features make learning more interesting for students, especially younger ones, who are accustomed to digital experiences.
- **Personalized learning experiences**: one of the strengths of eLearning is its ability to provide **personalized learning paths**. Thanks to adaptive technologies, digital SEL platforms can assess a student's emotional and social skills and offer personalized lessons that respond to specific needs, providing targeted support in different areas.
- **Scalable solutions**: online platforms offer schools and educators the flexibility to implement SEL programs without the logistical challenges of transporting physical resources or large-scale teacher training.
- **Real-time feedback and assessment**: SEL platforms often incorporate tools for real-time monitoring and evaluation of progress. This approach allows educators to monitor students' emotional development, providing indications of areas that might require further support or attention.
- **Flexible integration**: eLearning allows for seamless integration of SEL programs into existing school curricula or home

learning environments. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools turned to digital platforms to continue SEL education, ensuring that students could continue to engage in critical emotional development activities despite school closures.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is a rapidly growing educational field, recognized for its profound impact on students' **emotional well-being**, academic success, and ability to provide social skills for life. With the growth of the SEL market, eLearning will continue to play a fundamental role in equipping the next generation with the tools necessary for success both within the classroom and in the world of work.