

What is Social Emotional Learning?

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) describes the development of skills in three domains: self, others, and responsible decision-making.

"Self" includes:

- self-awareness skills such as the ability to identify and recognize emotions
- self-management skills such as perseverance and the ability to manage impulse control.

"Others" includes:

- relationship skills such as cooperation, empathy, and respectful communication
- social awareness skills such as the ability to recognize diverse thoughts and opinions.¹

Combined, the above skills support responsible decision-making.

"Responsible Decision-Making" includes:

- Behavioral skills such as situation analysis, anticipating consequences, and generating alternative solutions.
- Cooperative skills such as balancing personal and group expectations.

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Music Education and SEL: An Advocacy Tool for Music Educators



How are music educators well-suited to help students develop socially and emotionally?

- Music educators often work with the same students in class multiple years, positioning them well to positively impact students' individual growth.
- The most conducive environment for SEL is one that includes positive developmental relationships. Music education can provide contexts for those relationships through encouraging collaboration and creativity in a safe environment.
- Musical experiences can help us connect with deep emotions. Sometimes music even elicits measurable physiological responses such as "chills" or "goosebumps," providing students the opportunity to reflect on the influence emotions have on their physical and psychological states.
- Music programs involve school staff, families, and local communities, support-ing alignment of the parties necessary to support social emotional development.



What does research tell us?

- **Self-Awareness:** Compared to other students, those with high arts engagement, including music, exhibit higher levels of self-concept in how they value themselves, their abilities, and their achievements. Specifically, active music education experiences seem to be correlated with measures of *self-efficacy*.²
- **Self-Management:** Success in music depends on exercising *perseverance*, as evidenced by the ability to self-monitor one's progress and delay gratification in the pursuit of mastery. Regular and sustained practice leads to increased abilities in performance skills and self-evaluation. These become impetus for further practice.³
- **Social Awareness:** Cooperative music-making experiences which occur in group settings can positively impact participating students' proclivity for *empathetic* thinking and behavior.⁴
- **Relationship Skills:** Music classes incorporate community-advancing activities which provide students with "opportunities to express themselves, interact in novel ways, and work collectively, practicing and developing interpersonal skills such as *collaboration, communication, and conflict resolution*."⁵

Musician-ship encourages responsible decision making in several ways: Student musicians depend on each other to be on time for rehearsals, prepare for performances, and to act honorably as ambassadors of their community.

How can we connect music education and social emotional learning?

Teachers can...

- Create a classroom environment that is student-centered and driven by students' social and emotional needs.
- Develop students' social-awareness and empathy by reflecting on the diversity present in music classrooms by creating a classroom inclusive of all students with culturally-responsive music and composers.
- Support students in setting goals, self-assessing, and reflecting in and through music to broaden student voice and their ability to choose and capitalize on their connection with music and in their lives.
- Intentionally integrate SEL into music education instruction modeled after the National Core Arts Standards and the CASEL Framework for SEL and draw connections between the two.

School administrators can...

- Understand that for SEL to be effective, it must be embedded across the school including in music education and facilitate embedding SEL across school curriculum.
- Support certified music educators' professional growth with professional development in SEL.
- Become knowledgeable about the deep connection between SEL and music education.

School boards can...

- Provide resources to support music educators' professional growth with professional development in musical SEL.
- Ensure adequate mental health resources (including counselors, social workers, and psychologists) are available for students and staff to support teachers in implementing SEL.