



SEL Research

Research finds SEL provides solid growth for students

A recent study led by Christina Cipriano, PhD, and Michael Strambler, PhD, from Yale University, offers compelling evidence on the effectiveness of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in enhancing students' academic performance, well-being, and perceptions of school safety amidst a national mental health crisis. Analyzing 424 experimental studies worldwide, this comprehensive review covers over 250 discrete SEL programs involving more than half a million kindergarten to 12th-grade students.

The findings reaffirm the significant positive impact of SEL on students' academic achievement, engagement, and social-emotional skills, including self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism. Furthermore, SEL participation correlates with reduced anxiety, stress, depression, and suicidal thoughts, alongside improved peer and teacher relationships.

This meta-analysis, the first to explore specific domains like school safety and civic behaviors, uncovers new insights. Notably, SEL programs greatly enhance students' feelings of safety and inclusion at school. They also positively affect prosocial and civic behaviors, underlining the importance of SEL in fostering supportive and safe educational environments. The study advocates for high-quality, teacher-delivered SEL programs characterized by sequencing, active engagement, focus, and explicit goals, which show the most substantial benefits for students.

Looking ahead, the study's findings have significant implications for educational practice. It calls for a nuanced understanding of SEL's role in promoting educational equity. It urges the SEL community to expand research methodologies to better measure, evaluate, and understand SEL's diverse impacts. This research underlines SEL's critical role in addressing the child's mental health crisis. It emphasizes the need for continued commitment to SEL as a vital component of education that supports all students' holistic development.