

For immediate release

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Programs that teach social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools have long-term impact. New research analysis finds SEL students' academic performance 3.5 years later is higher by 13 percentile points compared to non-SEL peers. More positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems, and lower drug use also found.

July 12, 2017, Chicago -- Social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, which previously have been shown to immediately improve mental health, social skills, and academic achievement, continue to benefit students for months and even years to come, according to new research from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), the University of Illinois at Chicago, Loyola University, and the University of British Columbia.

For example, 3.5 years later, SEL students' academic performance was an average 13 percentiles higher than their non-SEL peers. At other follow-up periods, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use were all significantly lower for SEL students. Benefits were similar regardless of students' race, socioeconomic background, or school location.

The new study analyzed results from 82 different interventions involving more than 97,000 students from kindergarten to high school where the effects were assessed at least six months and up to 18 years after the programs ended. Thirty-eight of the studies were from outside the U.S., indicating that SEL programs are being conducted in several countries around the world.

Social and emotional learning teaches children to recognize and understand their emotions, feel empathy, make decisions, and build and maintain relationships. A widely cited 2011 meta-analysis showed that incorporating these programs into classrooms and schools improves learning outcomes and reduces anxiety and behavioral problems among students. Some schools have incorporated social and emotional learning programs - like PATHS and Positive Action - into classrooms while other school systems, including 10 U.S. large urban school districts working with CASEL, are embracing it more systemically on a district-wide basis.

Also of note:

(1) Higher social and emotional competencies among SEL students at the end of the initial intervention was the best predictor of long-term benefits, demonstrating how important it is to develop these competencies in students.

(2) Several individual studies found a variety of other important benefits favoring program participants over controls. For example, SEL participants later demonstrated a 6% increase in high school graduation rates, and an 11% increase in college graduation rates. In other cases, SEL participants were less likely to have a clinical mental health disorder, ever be arrested or become involved with the juvenile justice system, and had lower rates of sexually transmitted infections, and pregnancies.

"This comprehensive meta-analysis makes a strong case for the lasting benefits that school-based SEL interventions can have in the lives of young people. Investing in students' social and emotional development continues to pay off. The competencies they build contribute to improved academics and more pro-social behaviors, as well as reductions in conduct problems, emotional struggles, and

substance use,” said Rebecca Taylor, a former CASEL researcher and current senior legislative assistant in the United States House of Representatives.

“This is an important meta-analysis that systematically looks at the *long-term effects* of school-based SEL programming, and the results are positive,” said Roger Weissberg, CASEL’s Chief Knowledge Officer and UIC Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Education, and one of the study’s co-authors.

“This study further solidifies the already powerful case for action—for a significant shift in how we think about education and the urgency of scaling evidence-based programs that unite head and heart,” said Tim Shriver, CASEL Chair and Co-Chair of the Aspen Institute’s National Commission on Academic, Social, and Emotional Development.

Joseph Durlak, a co-author and Emeritus Professor of Psychology at Loyola University, said, “Evidence is accumulating that SEL programs can not only have significant immediate positive effects on students’ behavior and academic performance, but also can lead to lasting changes on several additional and important developmental outcomes long after the program has ended.”

The [study](#), “Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects,” was published in *Child Development*.

Practical and Monetary Benefits of Some SEL Programs

Selected outcomes showing the mean advantage for SEL participants compared to non-SEL students, expressed in percentages and, when possible, monetary terms.

	Percentage Advantage per SEL Student	Monetary Benefit Per Student
More/better/higher...		
High school graduation rates	6%	\$367,687
College attendance	11	\$637,621
College degrees	11	\$1,138,054
Less/fewer/lower....		
High school dropouts	7.5-26%	
STD diagnosis	39	\$ 9,940
Arrests	19	\$175,702
Any clinical mental health disorder	13.5	
Diagnosis of conduct disorder	10	\$3,950,000

Explanation of monetary benefits. These monetary figures are drawn from available economic analyses conducted by other researchers, are presented in US dollars as of 2015, and are expressed in lifetime benefits either for each SEL student, or what society would save in expenses for every SEL student who does not experience the negative outcome. For example, graduating from high school is estimated to be worth a total lifetime income benefit of \$367,687 dollars *for each graduating student*, whereas a college degree is worth approximately \$1,138,054 in additional lifetime earnings. *Each individual arrest* that is averted can save a total of \$175,702, and preventing the occurrence of a single case of conduct disorder could save nearly 4 million dollars.

CASEL is the world’s leading organization advancing the practice of promoting integrated academic, social, and emotional learning for all children in preschool through high school. The Chicago-based nonprofit was formed in 1994.