

Social-Emotional Learning in Schools Summit

Online Summit Takeaways

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). Student Voice. School Climate. Student Motivation.

Developing a child's social and emotional skills is as important as building his or her academic skills, but who is most responsible for doing this? There's an emerging recognition that schools and educators will be more successful if they consider students' social and emotional development as they teach lessons and craft school policies. Strengths in those areas translate to success—both in the classroom and in life, SEL advocates say. But there are some daunting gaps between that understanding and the reality of weaving SEL into the fabric of everyday schooling.

Here are takeaways we've distilled from those discussions with you, the Education Week readers.



Strategies for Social-Emotional Learning at the School and District Level

Intro: How does a school develop and integrate an SEL strategy schoolwide and work with teachers to carry it out? What role does the district need to play in helping schools weave SEL into their daily classroom teaching? What are the major hallmarks of a meaningful social-emotional learning strategy? In this discussion room, **Evie Blad**, our lead reporter on SEL, talks with leading experts who will provide insights into best practices for district and school-level social-emotional learning strategies.

🗉 **Guests:** **Melissa Schlinger**, Vice President of Practice and Programs, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL); **Karen VanAusdal**, Senior Director of Practice, CASEL

Key Takeaways:

Our discussions were extensive. And we could not get to everything in these takeaways. We encourage you to go back into the summit and read the discussions for this topic.

Educators are interested in social-emotional learning, but they aren't always sure where to start.

National efforts to emphasize “whole child education,” including recent work by the the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, have sparked interest among schools and districts. But educators are craving concrete information, and they are looking for clear starting points in developing their own SEL strategies. The Aspen commission recommends working with educators, students, and community members to create a vision that can guide efforts.

Our guests from CASEL shared insights into how districts have navigated everything from defining standards or benchmarks for SEL competencies to teacher professional development. You can learn more about that work through [CASEL's online resources](#).

There are some persistent misconceptions about social-emotional learning.

SEL is not a discipline strategy or an intervention for students with behavioral challenges. Rather, SEL advocates bill it as a comprehensive approach that involves three key elements:

- Direct instruction on concepts like self-management and relationship skills through evidence-based programs.
- Incorporation of those skills and strategies into classroom work in traditional subjects, like math and social studies.
- Changing school and district strategies in areas like discipline and family engagement to better support children's development in these areas.

Schools are searching for support in adapting their approaches to meet the needs of all students.

Many of our participants asked about ensuring that SEL strategies are culturally responsive and engage students from a variety of backgrounds. Teaching students to solve problems and build stronger relationships inherently involves understanding and engaging their culture, and schools want to be thoughtful about how they do that.

Several participants also said they need resources to support students who've been affected by traumatic experiences, like parental divorce or exposure to violence.



Principals and Teachers Need Strong Social-Emotional Skills, Too

Intro: Happy principals lead to happy teachers and happy teachers lead to happy students, educators and researchers say. As schools across the country put more of a focus on social-emotional learning for their students, experts have come to realize that teachers' social-emotional competencies, especially their stress-management skills and their ability to regulate their emotions, are a vital piece of that puzzle. Principals play a huge role in creating a healthy climate for their teachers and staff. In this discussion room, staff writer **Denisa Superville** explores how schools are succeeding at this and how it can lead to better social-emotional instruction for students.

🗉 **Guests:** **Elizabeth Congdon-McGee**, Counselor at Whaley School; Korinne Engstrom, Assistant Principal of Whaley School; **Robyn Harris**, Principal of Whaley School in Anchorage, Alaska

Key Takeaways:

- There was a lack of clarity and/or agreement among participants—and it seems, educators—about what practices constitute self-care and what practices are considered SEL.
- Participants were interested in learning how school administrators can get the staff to buy into SEL for staff members. Our guests recommended starting with those who were already on board and working to expand that circle. Show evidence of the effectiveness of your strategies, and work with those who are hesitant to find out the reasons for their reluctance.
- Being consistent and persistent also help.
- There's great need and demand for resources to help principals launch SEL for staff and to help teachers put SEL strategies into practice in their classrooms.
- A few discussants thought that SEL should be taught in teacher-prep programs, both how teachers can implement SEL in classrooms and how teachers and other educators can use those strategies themselves.



Ed-Tech Companies Are Tracking Students' Emotions. The Promise and the Peril

Intro: There's a growing presence of educational technology used in schools that can pinpoint when students are feeling happy, bored, or engaged, part of a broader push to leverage technology to help measure, monitor and modify students' emotions and mindsets. But the ways in which ed-tech companies and researchers are building tools to understand the 'whole child' is sparking fears over privacy and surveillance. In this room, staff writer **Ben Herold** and his guests explore what ed-tech tools

do this, the promise that some believe this holds for improving student learning, and fears that critics have raised.

🗉 **Guests:** **Wayee Chu**, General Partner, Reach Capital; **Jaclyn Ocumpaugh**, Associate Director, Penn Center for Learning Analytics, University of Pennsylvania

Key Takeaways:

- There's a lot of interest in this space! Our discussion included teachers, online educators, curriculum and instructional specialists, program designers, researchers, entrepreneurs, and more.
- Researchers and companies alike are very interested in using technology to promote and assess the development of emotions like curiosity, boredom, frustration, and delight, as well as social-emotional skills like grit and growth mindset—all of which have been tied to stronger learning outcomes.
- Measurement is a major challenge: the most commonly used method is self-report surveys, but there are questions about how reliable those are. Other methods, like tracking students' eye movements, heartbeat, or keystrokes, come with big privacy concerns.
- There was a strong belief among educators, researchers, and those on the industry side that efforts to use tech to promote and measure SEL should be embedded in regular classroom learning activities—not something separate, like in a lab.
- Privacy and consent are huge concerns. Parents and students should know what is being collected and why, and an atmosphere of trust is important to using these tools in safe and respectful ways.
- Further attention must be paid to how SEL technology tools are used with different populations of students, including young children, English-language learners, and students with disabilities. There's a lot of opportunity for technology to help, but no one should assume that a tool will work the same with all students.



Amplifying Student Voice

Intro: Schools around the country say that they want student input and opinions, but how many education leaders use that input to shape their policies and practices? Advocates say that student voice can be a powerful tool for building a safe and welcoming school environment and that their efforts to gather students' insights and use them to inform decision making send an important message to young people and encourage them to be more engaged in their schooling.

🗉 **Moderator: Alyson Klein**, Assistant Editor, *Education Week*

🗉 **Guests: Michelle Hammond**, Student Voice Coordinator, Washoe County School District, Reno, Nev.

Key Takeaways:

Student voice is a term that gets used a lot but what does it actually mean? Authentic student voice is when schools and districts give students agency to participate in decisions that affect their education and experiences in school.

The most effective student voice initiatives are inclusive and ensure that the students who are heard from are not limited to the usual academic high flyers or student leaders. One strategy districts can use to cast a wide net for student voice is to require schools to identify and bring in students from different academic levels, races, and backgrounds, such as students who are in special education or who are English-learners.

Student voice efforts are going to look different depending on students' ages and grade levels. For younger students in the elementary grades, one approach is to engage students in project-based learning, which exposes children to taking ownership of what they are learning.

To help get staff buy-in for elevating student voice, some superintendents take the lead in setting and communicating the expectations that all adults will take feedback from students seriously. When the expectations are set from the top, and the top leaders demonstrate how they are tapping into student voice, other staff will buy in.



The Student-Teacher Relationship: What the Research Says About Empathy

Intro: Assistant Editor **Sarah D. Sparks** leads a conversation with leading researchers on how teachers can build relationships of empathy and respect with their students, which studies have shown have a strong, positive effect on how children feel about school and how hard they are willing to work in class. Emerging research suggests some small changes can create a healthier, more productive learning environment and drive down behavior issues.

🗉 **Guest: Mary-Helen Immordino-Yang**, Professor of Education and Psychology, University of Southern California; **Vicki Nishioka**, Senior Research Advisor, Education Northwest

Key Takeaways:

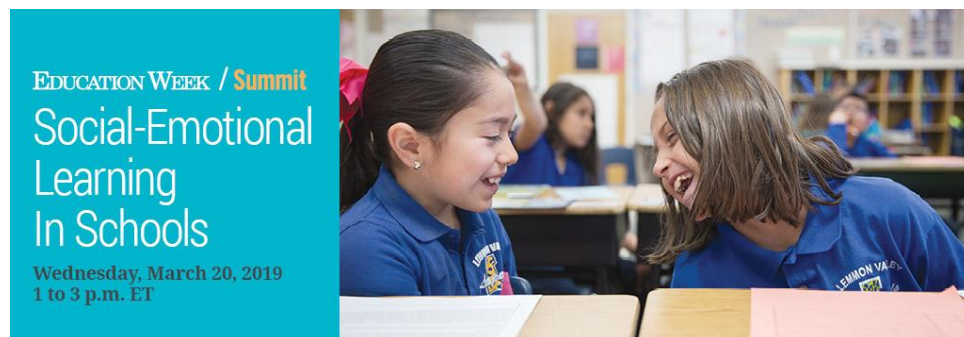
Often teachers and principals find it challenging to not only talk about this but to be able to act on this. Where do students come from not only academically, but also emotionally? And what factors underlie student behaviors?

Strategies we heard about over and over is how little professional development there is for teachers on this. One of the key strategies was to go through perspective taking. How would a specific type of student feel in a given situation? Connecting with students even just a minute or two every day, outside of their school work, can help.

For high school educators, maximizing the exposure to your students is important. It doesn't take a lot of time to connect with students, it's about a consistent connection with a student. One elementary teacher uses a chart of feelings. Kids can just point to the emotion on the chart without getting into a discussion with the teacher.

A lot of people feel that student-teacher relationships are important. But you should not assume teachers know enough about each student. Teachers may not know how to manage that path to the student.

Demonstrating empathy isn't pity or letting a student get away with something. It's about asking the right questions to get what is causing the student behaviors. The students feel more listened to, and it can help the teachers feel less burned out if they see the student's behavior as a piece of the larger puzzle of the student, rather than just open defiance.



Leveraging Federal Dollars (Title IV of ESSA) to Support School Climate and SEL

Intro: This \$1.2 billion pot of federal money is intended to give school districts discretion to use on a wide range of student supports and academic enrichment. And a 2018 survey of district leaders showed that to help students become more well-rounded, 53 percent said they plan to spend Title IV money on social-emotional learning. And in general, 63 percent said they plan to use Title IV money to help create safe and drug-free schools. **Andrew Ujifusa**, assistant editor, *Education Week*, examines what that work looks like. And what strategies and initiatives district leaders are using with the support of Title IV money.

Guest: **Amanda Fitzgerald**, Director of Public Policy, American School Counselor Association

Key Takeaways:

Title IV is actually new in ESSA. It's officially called the "Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants."

It has three buckets:

1. Funding for academic enrichment (things like dual-enrollment, foreign language and arts education programs, etc.)
2. Funding for student well-being and school climate (things like school nutrition programs, dropout prevention efforts, etc.)
3. Funding for education technology infrastructure and programs (things like blended learning efforts, etc.)

Most districts aren't getting a huge amount of money from Title IV, although each district is supposed to get at least \$10,000. It's possible this funding could supplement districts who are already under way in the SEL journey.

Title IV is a potential source of funding for SEL work in schools. A lot of district leaders are clearly interested in exploring this source of funding.

The Trump administration wants to eliminate the \$1.2 billion in funding Title IV currently receives. But Congress is likely to reject that idea and could decide to increase funding for it. After the Parkland shooting tragedy, Congress increased funding for it by about \$700 million. It's been authorized by Congress for \$1.6 billion.

Original date of online summit: Wednesday, March 20, 2019 ▪ 1-3 p.m. ET

www.edweek.org/go/SELsummit