



## Social-Emotional Learning Online Summit: Key Takeaways

***Thank you to those who joined us for this event, which took place on Tuesday, April 14, 2020.***

Nearly every student in the United States is out of school this spring, shut out of their traditional schools and classrooms for a prolonged period to slow the spread of COVID-19, the illness caused by the novel coronavirus. It's an unprecedented disruption of academic routines—with a high-risk of profound learning losses. It's also a troubling disruption to the norms of teaching social-emotional learning skills such as managing emotions and resiliency at a time when children will need it the most.

Even with prevalent support for teaching social-emotional learning and a growing understanding of how deeply intertwined skills like building healthy peer relationships and responsible decision making are with academic success, there are big challenges when it comes to the reality of teaching SEL on a grand scale when times are normal. But these are not normal times, so what can schools do to keep social-emotional learning going when the kids are at home and the educators are too?

In this online summit, Education Week reporters and expert guests discussed the kinds of preparation and support teachers need to develop students' social-emotional skills both in regular classrooms and virtual interactions, what districts leaders can do to support schools' efforts to implement SEL when schools are open and when students are learning at home, and how educators can make good decisions about SEL curricula and programs that fit the needs of their students, teachers, and families.

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



## What Does Social-Emotional Learning Look Like in High School?

▸ **Moderator: Arianna Prothero**, Staff Writer, Education Week

▸ Many educators see SEL as something that's best suited for the elementary grades. But experts say high school—when students are dealing with a combustible mix of issues such as increased rates of depression, exposure to drugs and alcohol, and uncertainty about their futures—is a critical time for schools to promote and teach social emotional skills.

▸ **Guests:**

▸ **Christina Rodriguez**, Administrative Intern, Dallas Independent School District (ISD)

▸ **Juany Valdespino-Gaytán**, Executive Director of Engagement Services, Dallas Independent School District

There are special considerations when it comes to teaching social-emotional skills to older students—and that holds true even as many schools are closed to in-person instruction during the coronavirus pandemic. Top of mind for many participants was how to honor graduating seniors and help them cope with the loss of important milestones such as prom and walking across a stage to accept an diploma. Don't just skip these milestones, the team from Dallas Independent School District recommended, but start planning now for other options. One suggestion: create a student committee to come up with alternatives. In addition to teaching important social-emotional skills by giving students a leadership opportunity, they'll also be more likely to generate ideas that other students will want to participate in.

"The students are your best resource," said Rodriguez. "Ask the teachers to start the conversation with their students and nominate students with passion or a real desire to help fix this issue within the study body."

### **Key Takeaways:**

- **Supporting students' social-emotional development remotely is important and doable.** In Dallas, the district has put SEL activities specifically designed for secondary students online for families to do at home. Discussing current events with students—such as prompting them to examine the social-emotional skills being used by leaders—is another strategy. More resources: **[[[ARI NEEDS TO PROVIDE THESE]]]**
- **Be ready for using SEL to help transition students back into school.** Making space and time on a regular basis for students and teachers to discuss what they are experiencing and feeling will be key. Schools will have to grapple not only with academic setbacks but emotional ones as well.
- **Making time for social-emotional learning when resources are tight.** It's an age-old issue for schools: how to carve out time—and get buy-in—for a new program or initiative from teachers and administrators when there are so many demands on time and resources. This can be especially difficult since social-emotional learning may not be a tested subject that teachers and schools are evaluated on. The team from Dallas Independent School District suggested having teachers devote 20 minutes a day during students' advisory periods to SEL. Weaving SEL into the core curriculum—and sharing

the benefits on student learning outcomes—is another way to both make time for SEL and get buy-in from staff and administrators.

**Read more here:**

“How to Teach Social-Emotional Learning When Students Aren't in School”

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/30/how-to-teach-social-emotional-learning-when-students.html>



**Superintendents. Principals. Teachers.**

**How These Key Players View Social-Emotional Learning in Schools**

- **Moderator/Guest: Holly Kurtz**, Director, Education Week Research Center
- The Education Week Research Center shares results from its national survey of district leaders, principals, and teachers on their attitudes about social-emotional learning and what they see as the biggest challenges and opportunities for wide adoption and practice of SEL in schools.

**Key Takeaways:**

- **Close to three-quarters of our survey respondents say their districts or schools teach SEL.** But teachers and administrators aren't necessarily in agreement. Sixty-nine percent of teachers say their schools teach SEL as compared to 78 percent of principals and 87 percent of district leaders.
- **There should be a collaborative process that occurs with school systems.** The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) advises that schools will be better able to meet SEL needs and build a commitment to teaching those skills if they create SEL teams consisting of administrators, teachers, non-instructional staff, after/before-school providers, other community partners, students, and families.
- **The move to distance learning because of the coronavirus pandemic has not impacted and may have further increased the need for SEL.** Based on Edweek's coverage as well as feedback from guests, the demand has not gone away. Students and staff are facing

many new stressors that require strong social-emotional skills. Read more here: <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/30/how-to-teach-social-emotional-learning-when-students.html>

- **Few leadership opportunities for students.** Widespread leadership opportunities can help students develop social-emotional skills. However, close to half of educators say their districts or schools offer only very limited and traditional leadership opportunities (such as student councils) that tend to provide only a few select students with opportunities to develop these skills.
- **The survey found that student discipline data is the most common method of measuring SEL.** But are these policies encouraging social-emotional growth? It depends who you ask. Principals are significantly more likely than teachers or district leaders to perceive that their discipline policies possess each of the nine SEL-aligned qualities included in the survey. For example, 91 percent of principals say their discipline policies are respectful of students as compared to 71 percent of teachers and 73 percent of district leaders.

#### Resources

- <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/data-how-district-leaders-principals-and-teachers.html>
- [https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning\\_social\\_emotional/2018/09/3\\_tips\\_for\\_talking\\_to\\_parents\\_about\\_social\\_and\\_emotional\\_learning.html](https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/learning_social_emotional/2018/09/3_tips_for_talking_to_parents_about_social_and_emotional_learning.html)
- <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/08/striving-for-a-high-school-where-no.html>
- <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/03/30/how-to-teach-social-emotional-learning-when-students.html4>
- <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/09/11/can-bite-sized-lessons-make-social-emotional-learning-easier.html>
- <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/07/17/teachers-support-social-emotional-learning-but-say-students.html>
- <https://casel.org/>



## How Can Teachers Keep SEL Going When Students Aren't in School?

► **Moderator: Evie Blad**, Staff Writer, Education Week

► Students need strong coping skills more than ever as they deal with massive upheaval to their educations and daily lives. How can educators help students adjust to this new reality and foster their social-emotional skills when they aren't in class together? Two experts discuss which SEL skills schools should be focusing on for students and how teachers can do that work in a remote environment.

► **Guests:**

► **Rose Prejean-Harris**, Director of Social-Emotional Learning, Atlanta Public Schools

► **Marc Brackett**, Founder and Director, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence; Professor, Child Study Center, Yale University

### **Key Takeaways:**

Educators should look for ways to continue classroom routines in virtual learning environments, or to consider creating new ones. During a time of dramatic change in schooling, life, and possibly in their own families, students need some sense of routine to feel safe enough to engage in learning, participants said. That builds on a core aim of comprehensive social-emotional learning: to build a sense of belonging and consistency for students.

Educators said they're using a variety of strategies to continue existing routines, like moving restorative circles to video conference platforms. And some started to build new daily routines, like asking students to do show-and-tell with items from their homes as an invitation to share more about their own experiences.

Students may need help identifying and addressing anxiety. Children's anxiety can manifest in a variety of ways. It can look like fear, defiance, or sleeplessness.

Another core aim of social-emotional learning is helping children to recognize and manage their own emotions. And that may be key as they confront a changing reality, participants said.

Brackett recommended the use of the Mood Meter, developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence to help students identify their emotions and to communicate them to others. Here's an explanatory video: <https://youtu.be/qj6AlczvDhg>

The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence has also compiled a resource page of webinars and materials to explain concepts of emotional regulation and supporting teachers during coronavirus-related school closures. <https://www.rulerapproach.org/coronavirus-covid-19-resources-webinars>.

Engaging parents, caregivers, and communities continues to be key for schools' social-emotional learning strategies.

Parents and caregivers are a key part of the remote learning experience. They help children stay engaged and motivated, and they connect them to online materials and classes. Schools need to work to ensure families feel engaged and supported as they work with educators in an uncharted learning environment, participants said.

That touches on a core part of SEL, even when schools are meeting in-person: engaging families and communities.

Educators reported regular check-ins with students and their parents through phone calls, emails, and video chats. Some said schools had sent surveys to families to gauge their needs. Prejean-Harris said the Atlanta district planned a virtual “parent happy hour” on Zoom to give families a place to discuss their concerns and experiences.



## **Making SEL Manageable for Teachers**

- **Moderator: Madeline Will**, Staff Writer, Education Week
- There’s a big gap between educators’ desire to teach SEL in schools and their ability and skills to do it well. Much of that gap, experts and advocates agree, stems from too little professional development for teachers already working in schools and little to no curriculum in teacher-preparation programs. What can schools do to ensure that teachers know how to incorporate the teaching of SEL skills into their everyday classroom practice?
- **Guests:**
  - **Pamela Lathrop**, Principal, High Plain Elementary School, Andover, Mass.
  - **Julie Carter**, Social Emotional Learning Behavior Coach, North East Independent School District, San Antonio, Texas

### ***Key Takeaways:***

The success of SEL initiatives can hinge on teachers. Principal Pamela Lathrop and SEL Coach Julie Carter shared some insights on how best to support teachers during this work.

**With schools closed, teachers need support to address social-emotional learning more than ever.** Carter said her social-emotional learning department started a YouTube channel for students and staff with videos on breathing techniques, calming or self-regulation activities,

and short information on the SEL competencies. Another attendee said that her school counselor posts a “Mindful Monday” and a “Wellness Wednesday” lesson on SeeSaw every week. In her role as principal, Lathrop said she makes it a point to be upfront and ask teachers how they’re doing and let them know that she’s available to offer support.

**Teacher wellness is a must for successful social-emotional learning.** Attendees spoke about the importance of supporting teachers’ own social-emotional competencies and helping them manage stress. “We know that we have to take care of the adults so they can take care of the students,” Carter said. “It’s just like when you are on an airplane and they talk about the oxygen mask, you put yours on first before helping those around you.” School leaders should model in their interactions with staff what they want teachers to do with students, attendees said.

**Many new teachers didn’t learn how to address SEL in their preparation programs.** A mentorship program could help, as well as incorporating SEL training in new teacher PD.

**Some teachers might be reluctant to try SEL practices at first and need ongoing support and encouragement.** Lathrop said it’s important to remember that “a lot of times, resistance is because of fear: Teachers like to do their jobs well, and opening up and being vulnerable is risky.” That’s why it’s so important for school leaders to be supportive and an active player with this work, she said. Another big roadblock is time. Carter said she hears from teachers who are concerned that their days are already full with academic demands. “What I try to express to them when we get to that impasse is that they are going to get more bang for their buck if they make the time,” she said. “If you take the time to build the relationships and address their basic social and emotional needs, the academics will follow.” In her role as a SEL coach, Carter focuses on what teachers are already doing with SEL in their classroom, to highlight how simple it can be.

**Read more here:**

"Every Opportunity": A video that shows the importance of the whole school community <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxyxywShewl&feature=youtu.be>

"Putting an Emphasis on Educator Self-Care" by the Committee for Children <https://www.cfchildren.org/blog/2020/04/putting-an-emphasis-on-educator-self-care/>

"Video Chats, Phone Calls, Postcards: Teachers Rebuild Connections With Students During Coronavirus Pandemic": <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/02/video-chats-phone-calls-postcards-teachers-rebuild.html>



## **Social-Emotional Learning and Curriculum: How to Make Smart Choices for Your Schools**

▸ **Moderator:** Catherine Gewertz, Senior Contributing Writer, Education Week

**Guest:** Alexandra Skoog-Hoffman, director of research-practice partnerships at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

The discussion centered on helping school and district leaders as they choose a curriculum for social and emotional learning. Key lessons emerged from the discussion and the advice of experts Education Week interviewed for the [underlying story](#).

### ***Key Takeaways:***

Ground Your Choice in Good Research. Overwhelmingly, our experts and district leaders urged colleagues to use three key guides that evaluate the research on SEL curricula. (Included in Resources, below)

Take a Team Approach. Getting input from a wide array of stakeholders is crucial when you're deciding on an SEL curriculum. The views of administrators, counselors, psychologists and – importantly—teachers are all distinct and important in considering which curriculum will work best.

Take Inventory. Revisit your school or district's vision and priorities to see what kind of SEL curriculum fits best with the programs you already have in place.

Consider Your Population. Take stock of your students—and your staff – and tailor the choice of SEL curricula to their needs.

Opt for Integrated and Explicit. SEL instruction that is woven throughout the academic disciplines is more effective than pull-out programs. Curricula should provide explicit instructions in what social and emotional skills look and feel like in action.

Plan for Long-Term Training. Teachers need both initial and ongoing professional development for SEL curricula. Any good curriculum should come with PD, and if it doesn't, that's "a red flag," Skoog-Hoffman warned.

Find a way to measure the impact of your SEL curriculum and strategies. Whether it's through a formal assessment, or something qualitative like a survey, a feedback loop is important to gauge how well it's going and to make changes.

### **Resources**

**CASEL's free resources for SEL support during coronavirus:**

<https://casel.org/covid-resources/>

**Guides that evaluate the research base for SEL curricula:**

**CASEL guide**

<https://disq.us/url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcasel.org%2Fguide%2F%3AW0xJicEKXIOjpBHXWjSz-5GexwM&cuid=3792773>

**What Works Clearinghouse**

<http://disq.us/url?url=http%3A%2F%2Fstaging.evidenceforessa.org%2Fprograms%2Fsocial-emotional%3Aeh2L3e1Wh15NILP0YeSVyHuWy0E&cuid=3792773>

**RAND Corp. guide:**

[https://disq.us/url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rand.org%2Fpubs%2Fresearch\\_reports%2FRR2133.html%3A8958acFdXCAvo0CfaOjve3AgXRg&cuid=3792773](https://disq.us/url?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.rand.org%2Fpubs%2Fresearch_reports%2FRR2133.html%3A8958acFdXCAvo0CfaOjve3AgXRg&cuid=3792773)

**Education Week story on choosing an SEL curriculum:**

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/04/08/dos-and-donts-when-choosing-social-emotional-learning.html>

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**For more information about the “Social-Emotional Learning: Making It Work” special report, read the entire report here: [www.edweek.org/go/2020SEL-report](http://www.edweek.org/go/2020SEL-report).**

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