

Why Parents Should Lobby For Social & Emotional Learning Classes



Children today are taught many things in school, from the core basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic, to technology skills, a foreign language, and even how to prepare for an emergency. But what's sorely missing is the integration of Social and Emotional Learning classes.

What is social and Emotional Learning? According to www.CASEL.org, the official definition is: "SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge and skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions."

Translation: These classes and lessons help to raise children who can be stand-up citizens. They can become collaborative problem-solvers. They practice life skills and emotional skills building, which prepares them for real life. As a result, they learn at a young age that violence, yelling, and displaying negative feelings will not resolve their problems.

SEL, through role-playing scenarios, where children replicate the positive actions of a model, asks children how they would feel if the shoe was on the other foot. SEL gets to the why – over the how – we do something.

Parents can teach many values to their kids – as they should – including tolerance, sharing, respect for others, friendship, etc., but some lessons are best learned and reinforced in a group setting. SEL classes allow kids to work with one another and to cooperate to achieve their goals.

SEL courses also help children appreciate and celebrate the cultures and lifestyles of others. Children also learn to speak up on behalf of others against inappropriate behavior. Kids learn to be empathetic, inclusive, and even heroic.

Decades of research studies demonstrate many benefits of SEL, including:

- Improvement of social and emotional skills, attitude, and relationships of kids.
- An increase in a child's academic performance.
- A decline in students' anxiety and behavioral problems.
- Long-term improvements in students' skills, attitudes, and social behavior.

I encourage parents to lobby their school boards and local educators to implement SEL classes into their curriculum. To learn more, consult resources at www.casel.org, www.nationathope.org, and The Aspen Institute National Commission in Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. Together, we can make a better world and provide a brighter future for our children.

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