

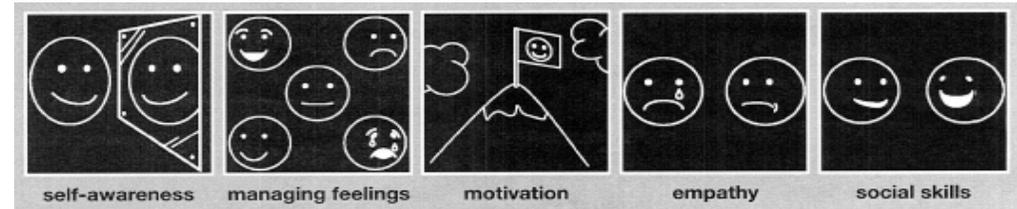
What are the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning?

And why should we focus on them?

Various terms are used nationally and internationally to describe social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL), including personal and social development, emotional literacy, emotional intelligence, and social and emotional competence and social, emotional and behavioural skills.

Social, emotional and behavioural skills underlie almost every aspect of school, home and community life, including effective learning and getting on with other people. They are the shared experiences that bind us all together, the human connections we make on a daily basis that create the environments we live and work in, and determine how we relate to one another.

The five broad social and emotional aspects of learning are:



Where pupils have developed their skills in these areas, and are educated within an emotionally safe environment, they will be motivated to, and equipped to:

- be effective and successful learners;
- make and sustain friendships;
- deal with and resolve conflict effectively and fairly;
- solve problems with others or by themselves;
- manage strong feelings such as frustration, anger and anxiety;
- be able to promote calm and optimistic states that promote the achievement of goals;
- recover from setbacks and persist in the face of difficulties;
- work and play cooperatively;
- compete fairly and win and lose with dignity and respect for competitors;
- recognise and stand up for their rights and the rights of others;
- understand and value the differences and commonalities between people, respecting the right of others to have beliefs and values different from their own.

We cannot 'teach' these skills as a one-off. There is a need to revisit and develop the concepts, understanding and skills over time, building on what has been learned previously. When we give pupils regular, planned opportunities to refer to and make appropriate use of SEAL across the curriculum, and in the choices they make about their behaviour and attendance – only then can we honestly say we have equipped our pupils with the skills they need to realise their full potential.

Why are the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) still relevant today?

Linking emotions to learning is nothing new. 'All learning has an emotional base,' Plato (428-348 BCE).

What has changed is that there is now a broad range of evidence that supports claims for the effectiveness of this work to develop children's social, emotional and behavioural skills, in a number of areas:

- greater educational and work success;
- improvements in behaviour;
- increased inclusion;
- improved learning; and
- greater social cohesion.

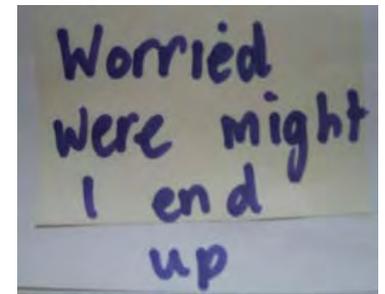
Longitudinal studies are showing that children with emotional and behavioural problems are prone to mental illness problems in later life, and have increased likelihood of school exclusion, offending, antisocial behaviour, marital breakdown, drug misuse, alcoholism and mental illness in adolescence and adulthood. Conversely, those with high levels of emotional and social competence do better in school, at work, and in their personal life. The development of emotional and social competence and well-being can **reduce mental health problems of young people and their teachers**, e.g. depression, anxiety, suicide, eating disorders, stress.

Recently, research has focused on the beneficial effects of concentrating on social and emotional aspects of learning (within a supportive setting or whole-school environment) not just in terms of children having better goal-setting skills, social interactions and conflict resolution skills, but in terms of improved academic performance.

Simone (pupil aged 13) appreciates staff who:

- ✓ **Cheer me up when I'm down;**
- ✓ **Motivate me to do my best in school by reminding me of what I've achieved in the past;**
- ✓ **Help me out with my problems – helping me control my anger;**
- ✓ **When I'm frustrated I can go to and have a chat and they make me feel better about things;**
- ✓ **Help me understand how other people are feeling, by helping me to put myself in their shoes; and**
- ✓ **Discuss what's bothering me and help sort it out using a calm voice.**

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In summary, most learning takes place within a social context. Before pupils can begin to tackle the cognitive demands of any task, they need to be able to address the social and emotional components that accompany the activity.

Pupils need regular opportunities to reflect upon and articulate their personal development and discuss their progress – knowing that the skills they are developing can be applied to school, home, their wider communities and future employment.

So what are the implications for staff?

As with the introduction of any cross-curricular resource, planning will need to include professional development for your staff. The development of children's social, emotional and behavioural skills involves both the formal and informal curriculum, and it is therefore important that aspects of the professional development opportunities include all staff (lunchtime supervisors, caretaker, secretarial and administrative staff and any other staff who have direct contact with the pupils).

The primary resource includes a **'Purple set'** for flexible use within school to meet the professional development needs of all staff. The sets consist of:

- an introductory set in the *New Beginnings* theme about developing social, emotional and behavioural skills as a whole-school approach, and
- a theme-by-theme set of ideas to support staff as they work on that theme with their class groups.

The theme-by-theme **Purple sets** of ideas and information can also be used by schools in staff meetings, twilight sessions or within INSET days. They provide an opportunity for staff to explore the theme content, understand some underlying concepts and make links between their own experiences and those pupils may bring to the work. If you would like some support with CPD within your school or setting please contact: Katie Tilley at ktilley@lambeth.gov.uk or call **07903 713821**

Professional development activities should emphasize the essential role of all staff in modelling the social, emotional and behavioural skills that the materials seek to develop in pupils.

Social and emotional aspects of learning	Adult behaviour and language that helps to develop children's individual social, emotional and behavioural skills within each aspect
Self-awareness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Awareness of our own moods and circumstances that affect our behaviour (e.g. <i>'Sorry, I didn't mean to snap at you, it's just that I'm feeling really tired today, didn't get enough sleep last night that's all.'</i>)
Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being able to empathize with pupils and understand when things go wrong (e.g. <i>'Don't worry, we all learn from our mistakes.'</i>) ▪ Understanding pupils' cultural, social and religious backgrounds.
Managing Feelings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Being aware of our own feelings and not projecting these onto our pupils. ▪ Giving children some dignity and time to calm down from an emotional outburst.
Motivating ourselves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Showing enthusiasm. ▪ Sharing our own personal goals with pupils and celebrating our achievements both in and out of school (e.g. completing a marathon).
Social skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Managing feelings throughout the day and when interacting with other staff, especially in times of stress. ▪ Demonstrating Conflict Resolution skills. ▪ Being objective and impartial when dealing with a challenging situation.



Family SEAL



Photograph courtesy of Swindon's Behaviour Support Team

How SEAL supports schools' engagement with parents and carers:

In all the primary curriculum themes there are ideas for activities children can do at home with their families, to support their work in school and build on the partnership with parents/carers that has been established, these are found in the **Gold set**.

In accordance with the revised Ofsted framework (2009), schools will be judged on the effectiveness of their engagement with parents and carers [A4.4].

SEAL can contribute to an 'outstanding' Outcome when families are given regular opportunities to contribute to the work to develop social, emotional and behavioural skills in classes (for example, where visitors are involved in speaking about their experiences) and are invited to take part in the assemblies that launch and conclude each theme. Families will be interested in the whole school or setting focus for noticing and celebrating achievement, and may want to have a similar focus at home. They will also be interested in key concepts, such as the problem-solving strategy that children learn, and need to know the rationale that underpins them.

Newsletters, the annual school profile or governors' report to parents/carers and information in the school's brochure are other vehicles for ongoing communication that should all share your school's commitment to this work.

Families are the key to developing children's social, emotional and behavioural skills. They are the experts on their own child, and their knowledge about their child's developing skills can provide enormously valuable information about what is working and what is needed.

Many schools have launched their work on the curriculum materials with an introductory workshop to which all parents and carers of pupils in a year group are invited and encouraged to attend. This event should include a short introduction, a performance from the pupils and opportunities to complete a range of activities with their parents/carers. The families are then asked to 'sign up' to attend a further seven workshops. These workshops mirror the content of the child's formal SEAL curriculum and give families the opportunity to; experience their child's social and emotional and behavioural development within a supportive environment and explore some of the concepts, strategies and vocabulary used which can develop their own skills back at home.

For an electronic copy of the additional set of *Family SEAL* resources and/or support in setting up workshops, contact: Katie Tilley at: ktilley@lambeth.gov.uk

It is necessary to challenge assumptions that some groups will not be interested in what your school has to offer. There may be a need for extra encouragement or support to enable them to be actively involved. Demystifying education and explaining, sometimes to targeted groups (for example those who are 'hard to reach' and families with Persistent Absenteeism) how parents and carers can support their children in developing social, emotional and behavioural skills is vital in overcoming fears and other hidden barriers they may have.

Through these family learning workshops you will grow your own community of parents and carers, '**SEAL Champions**', who support other families in becoming involved with your SEAL programme and who are strongly engaged with, and committed to, their child's learning and your school's vision.