



SPARKING CHANGE IN YOUR DISTRICT



Four Strategies for the Successful Integration of Social-Emotional Learning and Personalized Learning



What it means to be college- and career-ready is changing.

Education must respond as the traditionally perceived “soft” skills become increasingly critical to future success. Personalized, competency-based learning and social-emotional learning (SEL) go hand-in-hand in recognizing the unique skills, experiences and interests that a student brings with them into the classroom, and in supporting educators in helping students make meaningful connections to what they’re learning.

An intentional focus on social-emotional learning – *developing a learner’s capacity to manage emotions, practice empathy, solve problems, make responsible decisions and maintain healthy relationships* – benefits all learners, no matter their experiences or needs.

Personalized learning environments should strive to integrate social-emotional learning into every aspect of the school and classroom culture. When done well, these learning environments exhibit the following best practices:



1 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IS A CORE COMPONENT OF THE DISTRICT'S VISION.

It's more than just a slogan on a wall or something included at the bottom of a school newsletter. It's a driver of culture, decision-making and perceived success for all students.

✧ Windsor Locks Public Schools in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, developed a profile of a graduate that centers on a self-directed learner “prepared to make a difference,” an individual who has demonstrated the ability to collaborate, to communicate clearly and effectively and to approach problems with creativity. According to Windsor Locks Middle School principal David Prinstein, “by factoring in social and emotional intelligence into the way that we prepare students, we are accounting for individual students’ multiple intelligences and, at the same time, molding them into the graduates most likely to take on the team- and thinking-based jobs of tomorrow.”

2 SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS ARE EMBEDDED IN CURRICULUM AND RECOGNIZED AS ESSENTIAL FOR FUTURE SUCCESS. Rather than focusing on these skills as add-ons, integrated social-emotional learning provides students the opportunity to make choices, to analyze and reflect and to engage in meaningful feedback and conferencing with their teachers and their peers. Each learning community will identify their own SEL core competencies, incorporating skills like self-awareness, empathy, growth mindset and others directly into their competency-based learning continuum. By doing so they ensure that students are mastering academic content at the same time as critical skills.



Student agency and ownership drive learning at R-5 High School in Grand Junction, Colorado. The structures and supports available to students honor the different factors that may be impacting their ability to learn: whether they have jobs, are taking care of siblings, family members or their own children, or whether they've previously dropped out of school. Through direct engagement with their community as part of the learning process, students are developing a service orientation and a recognition of their roles as problem solvers and productive citizens. “Students are required to either have a job, go to a community college or university, volunteer or participate in our work experience class in the afternoons at our facility,” said Trujillo. “We take pride in skill-building. We focus on complex problem solving, creativity and coordinating with others.”





3 GOAL-SETTING AND LEARNING TARGETS REFLECT THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING. Because learning targets are transparent in a personalized, competency-based learning environment, students are aware of where they stand and what they need to do to move forward to ensure mastery of academic content and critical SEL skills. They set goals for themselves and work with their teachers to meet them.

✧ Students and teachers in Marysville Exempted Village Schools District in Marysville, Ohio, partner to develop personal learner profiles that not only help them get to know themselves as learners, but also allow them to set meaningful goals related to their learning and their own growth. Ashley Thompson, principal of the Marysville TRI Academy, highlights the importance of providing explicit opportunities around social-emotional learning. “We can’t just tell students to be responsible,” says Thompson. “We have to give them strategies to increase their responsibility. By creating language and norms around the kinds of skills we want to see students demonstrate, we are helping them to self-monitor, to think about what kinds of efforts they’re going to need to put forth to reach their goals and define how they’ll know they’ve made progress. The ultimate goal is just to help kids be their best selves in school, to be autonomous learners and to have the highest level of engagement that they can attain, for them.”

4 RISK-TAKING AND FAILURE ARE RECOGNIZED AS PART OF THE LEARNING PROCESS FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS. Learners are provided multiple opportunities and means of demonstrating mastery, encouraging problem-solving and critical thinking. It’s not about what they don’t know – but what they don’t know yet. Teachers operate with the full support of district leadership in doing what’s best for the learners in their classrooms, ensuring the development of a growth mindset for all.



At Independent School District #192 in Farmington, Minnesota, teachers are using a design thinking process to understand that taking risks, making mistakes and failing forward is all a part of growing and learning. They are building out standards-based learning experiences where students are problem-finding and problem-solving – which includes opportunities for students to make mistakes so they can figure out how to fix them. “We give our educators multiple entry points into personalized learning through our strategic plan to think about what they’re really excited about,” says Jason Berg, executive director of educational services at Farmington Area Public Schools. “It becomes their work. They’re excited, and asking for more professional development, asking those tough questions: How can we get smarter at this, better at this? If it becomes people’s work you can’t get in their way.”



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Future of Learning: Redefining Readiness from the Inside Out

<https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/future-learning-redefining-readiness/>

Three Core Social-Emotional Skills Students Need to Succeed in 2040 and Beyond

<https://knowledgeworks.org/resources/social-emotional-skills-students-2040/>

Core SEL Competencies

<https://casel.org/core-competencies/>

The Flexible SEL Classroom

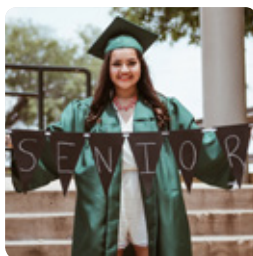
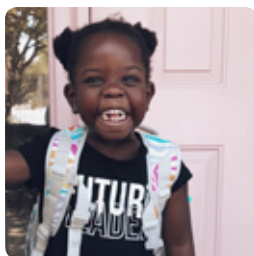
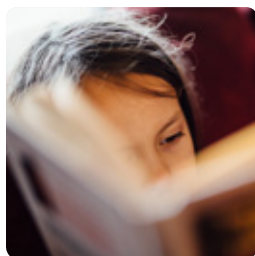
by Amber Chandler

The Formative Five: Fostering Grit, Empathy, and Other Success Skills Every Student Needs

by Thomas R. Hoerr

Students at the Center: Personalized Learning with Habits of Mind

by Bena Kallick and Allison Zmuda



KnowledgeWorks is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing personalized learning that empowers every child to take ownership of their success. With nearly 20 years of experience exploring the future of learning, growing educator impact and working with state and federal policymakers, our passionate team partners with schools and communities to grow a system-wide approach to sustain student-centered practices so that every child graduates ready for what's next.

Get more resources to help make personalized learning a reality at KnowledgeWorks.org.

