



# Social Emotional Learning, Teens and Afterschool Programs



By Sam Piha & Samantha Fasen

# OPENING

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## About The Authors

**Sam Piha** has served as founder and president of Temescal Associates since 2007. Sam began his career in 1974 as an afterschool worker, an experience that led to 13 years of classroom teaching and work as a child and family counselor and school social worker. Between 1989 and 2006, Sam managed school-based youth programs at the regional and national levels. He later founded Temescal Associates and The How Kids Learn Foundation, both dedicated to improving the quality of afterschool programs. Sam served as editor and contributing author of several important practice guides and journals on afterschool programming. Sam holds a master's degree in Social Welfare.

**Samantha Fasen** joined Temescal Associates and the How Kids Learn Foundation in 2019 and has fully embraced her work with the afterschool field. She helps to coordinate and develop marketing campaigns and multimedia elements to reach a wider audience and share with people the importance of out-of-school time and youth development.

## About The Organizations

[Temescal Associates](#) is dedicated to building the capacity of leaders and organizations in education and youth development who organizations, and policy makers.

[The How Kids Learn Foundation](#) (HKL) is a 501(c)(3) organization. It is dedicated to improving the effectiveness of settings that support the education and healthy development of youth. This includes schools and out-of-school time programs. The HKL Foundation provides educational and training activities that promote the capacity of organizations that support the education and healthy development of youth. Examples of activities include conferences, speaker forums, screenings of relevant films, training sessions, coaching sessions, the awarding of digital badges to acknowledge exemplar programs and the learning that happens within these settings. Activities also include the development and distribution of educational materials (papers, self-assessment tools, videos, program guides, etc.).

## Acknowledgements

SPECIAL THANKS to all of the individuals and organizations that were referenced in this paper, and for all of their contributions to the field. We also want to thank Ren Daraio, our co-director, for her on-going support.

## Dedication



This paper is dedicated to Roger P. Weissberg (1951—2021), one of the earliest and leading voices for social and emotional learning. He dedicated his career to improving the lives of children and was CASEL's chief knowledge officer, board vice chair, and co-founder, as well as Distinguished Emeritus Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Dr. Weissberg was always generous with his time to assist afterschool colleagues and he will be missed.

## Introduction

We know from research that social emotional learning (SEL) is vital for young people’s healthy development. We also know that out-of-school and afterschool youth programs are excellent settings to promote the SEL skills of older youth. We’ve seen that programs focused on SEL skills are better with younger children but for older youth, ages 13-18, this is more complex.

The purpose of this paper is to inform and encourage afterschool programs to think more deeply about the SEL needs of older youth and how they can best offer youth opportunities to build their SEL skills. This paper also includes a discussion of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and examines how the SEL framework fits within other important youth program frameworks.

***“Experts in social-emotional learning and child development say the secondary school years are a crucial time to focus on teaching skills, such as responsible decision-making, emotional management, and nurturing relationships.”***<sup>1</sup> – Arianna Prothero, Ed Week

**(Note:** There are many terms that refer to school-based and community-based youth programs outside of the classroom. They include “afterschool,” “out-of-school time (OST),” “expanded learning programs,” and “youth programs.” For the purposes of this paper, we will primarily use the term “afterschool” to refer to all these programs.)



# ABOUT SEL

## What is SEL?

According to *Navigating SEL from the Inside Out*<sup>2</sup>, “Broadly speaking, social and emotional learning (SEL) refers to the process through which individuals learn and apply a set of social, emotional, and related skills, attitudes, behaviors, and values that help direct their thoughts, feelings, and actions in ways that enable them to succeed in school, work, and life. However, SEL has been defined in a variety of ways. The term has served as an umbrella for many sub- fields of psychology and human development, each with a particular focus (e.g., emotion regulation, prosocial skills, aggressive behavior problems) and many types of educational interventions (e.g., bullying prevention, character education, conflict resolution, social skills training). The scope and focus of SEL interventions also vary: some focus on one set of skills (e.g., recognizing and expressing emotions), while others are broader, and some include cognitive regulation and executive functioning skills (e.g., the mental processes required to focus, plan, and control behavioral responses in service of a goal), while others do not.”

## History of the SEL Movement

The ideas around SEL are not new. The importance of social emotional learning is built into many early and more recent youth development program frameworks. (See Frameworks Crosswalk on page 24). However, few know the history of the SEL movement.

According to Edutopia<sup>3</sup>, “The roots of SEL are as old as ancient Greece. When Plato wrote about education in *The Republic*, he proposed a holistic curriculum that requires a balance of training in physical education, the arts, math, science, character, and moral judgment. ‘By maintaining a sound system of education and upbringing, you produce citizens of good character,’ he explained.

*Preparing children to be responsible, productive, caring, and engaged citizens is a timeless pursuit that continues to be the goal of education today. How best to do this in our modern school system, however, is a relatively recent and still evolving area of study and practice, and it’s the main question the SEL movement seeks to answer.*

*The concept of SEL was propelled into the popular culture in 1995 with a book by New York Times science reporter Daniel Goleman. With support from Fetzer, Goleman published *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, in which he argued that character matters and, more significantly, the skills that build character can be taught.”*

From the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)<sup>4</sup>: “The history of the social and emotional learning (SEL) movement is the story of a simple, but powerful idea: What if education fully supported the social, emotional, and academic development of all children? Beginning in 1994, to address this question, CASEL was formed, growing from a small conference in New Haven to partnerships across the country and an audience around the globe. Since then, CASEL has served as a leader of the global movement and a trusted voice in the rapidly growing SEL field to make SEL an integral part of education.”

## SEL'S Five Core Skills



*“In general, there is now growing evidence that success in school and later life is not dependent solely on one’s cognitive or intellectual abilities. The different domains of functioning are not independent. We have shown that fostering students’ personal and social development via SEL programs can also improve their academic development.”*<sup>5</sup> - Joseph Durlak, Ph.D, Loyola University, Chicago

CASEL defines the five core skills in their SEL framework as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Victoria Sambursky defines these core skills in her article, *How SEL Prepares Teens for Life After High School*<sup>6</sup> and they are presented below:

**Self-Awareness** - In [SEL](#), self-awareness is the ability to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and influence behavior across contexts. When teenagers learn these skills, especially emotional regulation, they can carry this ability into several facets of their adult life.

**Self-Management** - [Self-management functions](#) often include learning how to deal with stress, setting goals, and motivating oneself. As [teens](#) learn these skills and others like time management, they can continue these practices well into adulthood. When students develop motivation, healthy habits, and stress management skills, they learn to overcome procrastination and develop resilience, especially as they tackle several [academic](#), social, and job demands.



*“When we regulate our emotions, we are using processes that impact which emotions we have, when we have them, and how we experience and express them.”*<sup>7</sup> – James Gross, Researcher

**Social Awareness** - [SEL's social awareness](#) component involves understanding and empathizing with others, particularly with people from different backgrounds. However, according to an article in Berkeley's [Greater Good in Education](#), the skills that develop social awareness go far deeper including, identifying social cues to determine how others feel, recognizing situational demands and opportunities for support and identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones. The [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#) also adds that SEL helps meet the workforce needs for "soft skills," such as solving problems and collaborating with diverse colleagues.

**Relationship Skills** - CASEL defines [relationship skills](#) as establishing and maintaining healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigating settings with diverse individuals and groups. This framework includes having clear communication skills, critical thinking, and working collaboratively to solve and negotiate conflict constructively. Skills like relationship-building, collaboration, and team building are highly sought after in today's workforce.

**Responsible Decision-Making** - SEL's [responsible decision-making](#) component includes making caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacity to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being. An [American Institutes for Research](#) report states an increased capacity for abstract reasoning and systematic reasoning during adolescence, which are all relevant to decision making. For example, through SEL, adolescents can improve their systematic reasoning ability. This skill provides teens with the capacity to imagine future outcomes, allowing them to determine the consequences of their actions.

***"Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of education and human development. SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, 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."*** <sup>8</sup> -

CASEL



## Benefits Of Social Emotional Learning

There are many benefits<sup>9</sup> that come about as a result of acquiring SEL skills. There is ample research on this topic. They include:

- Academic success
- Positive social behavior
- Fewer behavioral problems
- Less emotional distress

***“While some argue the cost to implement an SEL program or training for educators is costly, it’s wise to look at the long-term effects. Columbia University found that, on average, for every \$1 invested in SEL programming, there is an \$11 return. While there shouldn’t be a price on social and emotional wellness, it’s more cost effective to proactively address stress, trauma, and SEL in the classroom before achievement and funding take a turn for the worse.”***<sup>10</sup> – Kellie Lauth, Getting Smart

## SEL In Afterschool Settings

According to an examination of social and emotional learning in OST settings for the Harvard Graduate School of Education<sup>11</sup>, *“There are many reasons to expect that embedding social and emotional learning (SEL) into out-of-school-time (OST) programming would benefit children and youth. OST settings provide a unique opportunity for promoting SEL as they tend to have greater flexibility in their goals and mission and do not face the curricular demands that can undermine SEL efforts during the school day. OST settings also tend to be less formal and structured, offering increased opportunities to develop the type of close, trusting relationships that enhance SEL. In addition, many of the goals of OST programs are also the goals of SEL programs, and at least one study indicates that OST leaders are more likely to say that SEL is central to their mission than education leaders.”*



***“The concept of social emotional learning has come to a frenzy in the past couple of years. Where does afterschool fit in to all of this? You would hope that we’d be right at the forefront. We’ve been doing this for years we know how to do it.”***<sup>12</sup> – Karen Pittman,

Forum for Youth Investment

*“Research suggests that focusing on SEL in OST settings is beneficial for children and youth across a variety of desirable outcomes. A rigorous review of afterschool programs targeting SEL found that program participants demonstrated positive changes in feelings and attitudes, behavioral adjustment, and academic performance. In addition, evidence suggests that SEL outcomes improve when children and youth have opportunities to practice SEL skills across settings (i.e., school, home, afterschool), and when adult expectations are aligned across these settings. Not surprisingly, research also suggests that*

OST programs are most successful when they address the needs of the whole child, including social and emotional learning goals.”<sup>13</sup>

**“Evidence suggests that teens cannot easily be taught social- emotional skills with a top-down curriculum. They develop these skills most effectively through direct experiences. Youth programs, we believe, are better designed to facilitate this experiential learning.”**<sup>14</sup> - Reed Larson

Reed Larson<sup>15</sup> writes, “Where can teens develop emotional knowledge and skills? Some policy makers are looking to schools to take this on. But can we expect already overburdened middle and high schools to make the changes needed to focus on teenagers’ emotional learning? Further, evidence suggests that teens cannot easily be taught social- emotional skills with a top-down curriculum. They develop these skills most effectively through direct experiences.

*Youth programs, we believe, are better designed to facilitate this experiential learning. They create a safe and supportive environment for youth-driven learning processes. Participants develop trusting relationships with staff, within which they feel comfortable and empowered to experiment and learn about emotions. Authentic youth-driven activities, collaborative projects, and supportive relationships with peers and staff all make programs rich contexts for emotional learning. Indeed, in survey research, youth report more emotion learning experiences in programs than in school classrooms. The important role of programs in supporting emotional learning deserves greater recognition.”*



## RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE:

Websites:

- [CASEL](#)

Videos:

- [The Limits and Possibilities of Social Emotional Learning](#)  
In a brief (23 min) video presentation, Dr. Shawn Ginwright (SFSU) discusses the importance of cultural context and SEL work with youth of color.
- [The Clover Leaf SEL Model](#)  
In a brief (25 min) video presentation, Dr. Gil Noam (Harvard University) describes the Clover Leaf SEL Model.



# CONSIDERING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic



*“My worries are plain and simple, COVID-19. Though we’ve returned to in-school learning, the pandemic has yet to leave us for good. Sadly, as it was just dying down, the number of cases shot back up with the Delta variant. I am worried that my family and friends will catch the virus and fear for their lives. I am even worried about this year*

*as I am not able to balance all of my plans and schedules.”*<sup>16</sup> - Pachia Xiong, junior at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, Ca.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on children and adolescents. More than a year and a half of virtual learning resulted in a loss of in-person or more-informal access to valued teachers and afterschool staff. This meant young people had fewer adults in their lives to help them. We know that opportunities for work is very important to older youth. This has also been impacted by the COVID pandemic, as a recent study found young people’s hope about their future work lives is in jeopardy.<sup>17</sup>

***“Even in normal times, the journey through grades 6-12 can be fraught for students, but the pandemic has made it especially complicated as many are struggling with more anxiety, depression, grief, uncertainty, and loneliness.”***<sup>18</sup> - Arianna Prothero, ED Week

Since COVID-19, there has been a rise in interest among educators and afterschool leaders in promoting social and emotional learning to help youth handle the pandemic’s impacts. According to developmental psychologist, Nancy Hill, *“While the focus is on academic learning, rightfully so, for adolescents, we should not ignore the significance of the loss of peer relationships and friendships on their mental health and wellbeing.”*<sup>19</sup>

***“So, what happens if you throw a pandemic, isolation, educational disruption, and economic upheaval into the mix? It’s too early to really be able to answer that question definitively, Chung said, but added, “as far as the pandemic and its impact on identity, I think it’s fair to assume it has been and will continue to be really substantial.”***<sup>20</sup> - Alyson Klein, ED Week



## Supporting Teenagers in the Pandemic

It is important that we know the signs of distress that adolescents may show due to the pandemic<sup>21</sup>:

- Changes in:
  - mood that is not usual for the young person, such as ongoing irritability, feelings of hopelessness or rage, and frequent conflicts with friends and family.

- behavior, such as stepping back from personal relationships. For example, if an outgoing teen stops spending time or texting or video chatting with friends, this may be cause for concern.
- appetite, weight or eating patterns, such as never being hungry or eating all the time.
- appearance, such as lack of basic personal hygiene.
- A loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed.
- A hard time falling or staying asleep or starting to sleep all the time.
- Problems with memory, thinking, or concentration.
- Less interest in schoolwork and drop in academic effort.
- An increase in risky or reckless behaviors, such as using drugs or alcohol
- Thoughts about death or suicide or talking about it.

***“Adolescence is hard enough. The pandemic has made it harder, injecting loneliness, depression, and grief into the mix. But chances are that secondary students are not getting the social emotional learning they need to cope with these new and perennial challenges. They need guidance on forming healthy relationships, especially sexual ones. They need SEL lessons that aren’t ‘lame.’ They need to feel useful.”*** <sup>22</sup> - ED Week

Emily Boudreau, author of *Supporting Teenagers in a Pandemic* <sup>23</sup>, identified ways that youth programs can support youth and their families. They are well aligned with the SEL framework and include:

- Promote social connections with peers and caring adults.
- Engage students in group projects that require them to reach out and collaborate.
- Promote opportunities to feel competent - In addition to feeling capable, adolescents like to contribute to and feel valued by their communities. Especially in a pandemic when powerlessness and helplessness are common, teens need to feel they have control over their lives and can make a difference. Empower young people by providing opportunities for civic engagement, community service, or volunteering their time, and letting them know the work they’re doing in the school and a/s is valuable and worthwhile by finding ways that it can connect to their own goals and interests.
- Promote mental health - according to a recent study by young minds,<sup>24</sup> 80% of students said that the pandemic has made their mental health problems worse. Losing school routines can cause an increase in feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and isolation. Support student mental health by connecting kids with a staff member or mentor and recognizing students and their families are struggling to balance different demands.

***“Two very influential statewide education leaders stated publicly that expanding learning is going to be a very critical, essential component to the reopening of schools.”*** <sup>25</sup> - Michael Funk, Director, Expanded Learning Division, California

## RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE:

### Websites

- [Pandemic Project](#)

### Videos:

- [COVID- related Speaker's Forums](#)

These videos from The How Kids Learn Foundation feature presentations from Pedro Noguera, Shawn Ginwright, Stu Semigran and others.

### Writings (articles, papers, blogs, reports, etc)

- [Afterschool Program Changes due to COVID-19 Prevention Efforts](#)
- [LIAS Blogs on SEL](#)

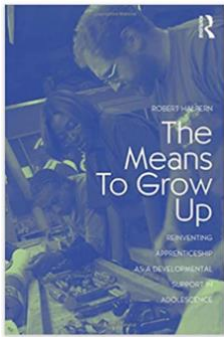


# SEL FOR TEENS

## Developmental Tasks of Older Youth

When we think about SEL programming, we generally think of younger kids, but SEL is also very important for older youth as they develop.

***“This SEL model is incredibly beneficial during high school when adolescents navigate academic challenges, social groups, and learning to regulate their emotions.”*** <sup>26</sup> - Victoria Sambursky



In his book, [\*The Means to Grow Up: Reinventing Apprenticeship as a Developmental Support in Adolescence\*](#), author Robert Halpern describes the developmental tasks of older youth. The development of SEL skills aligns well to promote with Halpern’s list of developmental tasks, which include:

- Asserting control over their lives and the forces that affect them and their communities, while balancing preoccupation with self and commitment to others;
- Beginning to think about the adult world, how it works, make sense of it, and discern their role;
- Ability to carry out more complex tasks: to plan, apportion time, sustain attention and effort, gather and organize information, monitor one’s work, recognize problems, seek help when appropriate, revise as needed. (These are all important workforce skills);
- Forging a sense of identity and voice as someone who has power, can positively impact others, and can demonstrate real accomplishment and achievement that has meaning.

## Benefits of SEL for Teens

According to researchers Reed Larson and Natalie Rusk, “Adolescence is an important period for emotional learning. Teens become able to develop powerful new skills for understanding and managing their emotions. They also are able to learn powerful skills for using the valuable functions of emotions, including using them for motivation, assessing situations, and developing positive relationships.” <sup>27</sup>

A report from CASEL<sup>28</sup> found when properly implemented, SEL for teens has a measurably positive effect on learning engagement. In high schools with strong SEL programs, 88% of students felt motivated to work hard and do their best in school, compared to 39% of students in “low SEL” schools. Similarly, in strong SEL schools, 81% of students were engaged in the learning material, compared to just 16% of students from weak SEL schools.

## The Challenge of SEL for Teens



***“Social and emotional learning approaches used with young children are unlikely to be effective with teens. As part of their natural urge to become independent, teenagers often will disengage from programs that directly teach skills. Using SEL programs that make teens feel valued. How can an SEL solution instill these feelings among a discerning teenage audience.”***<sup>29</sup>

*- Professor David Yeager, University of Texas, Austin*

In *Why High School SEL Programs Feel ‘Lame’—and How to Fix Them*<sup>30</sup>, author Stephen Sawchuk writes “The big problem, researchers and practitioners say, is that too much of what constitutes SEL learning feels patronizing to teenagers and fails to address their core psychological needs and motivations.

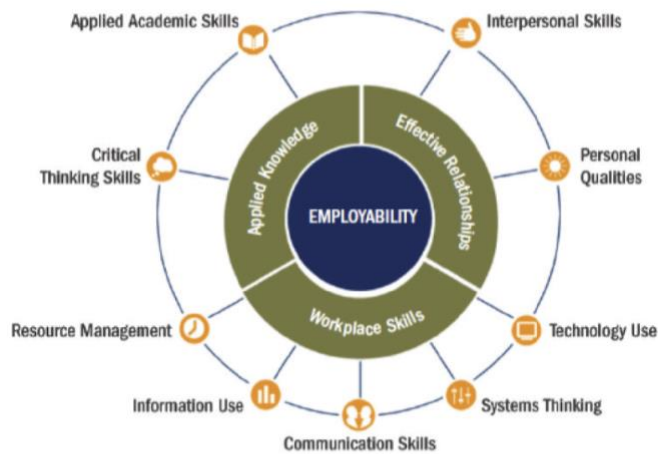
*Programs that explicitly teach SEL skills generally have a good track record for younger children. But for older students, the paradigm looks different. It’s less explicit and requires creating leadership opportunities—formal and informal—where students will have to exercise their relationship and self-regulation muscles. “*

***“Social and emotional learning approaches used with young children are unlikely to be effective with teens. As part of their natural urge to become independent, teenagers often will disengage from programs that directly teach skills. Professor David Yeager, a developmental psychology researcher at the University of Texas in Austin, suggests using SEL programs that make teens feel competent, autonomous, and valued.”***<sup>31</sup>

Kognito.com

## SEL and Employability/ Workforce Skills

Developmentally, adolescents are “beginning to think about the adult world, how it works, make sense of it, and discern their role.”<sup>32</sup> This includes the world of work. SEL skills are well aligned with the employability and workforce skills cited by business leaders. They include self-management, cross-cultural sensitivity, teamwork and collaboration, and flexibility/adaptability. If these employability skills are addressed in afterschool programs, they need to be intentionally promoted and taught. Below is a chart showing a side-by-side comparison of the U.S. Department of Education’s, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education’s Employability Skills Framework and CASEL’s Social and Emotional Learning Framework.



Source: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education. (n.d.). *Employability skills network*. Washington, DC: Author.



Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2015). *Social and emotional learning core competencies*. Chicago, IL: Author. Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner.



Below is a chart <sup>33</sup> that details some of the SEL-related skills that are important in the workplace.

## Social-Emotional Skills Are Workplace Readiness Skills

Highly valued by companies and potential employers, SEL prepares tomorrow's workforce by instilling these competencies:



Empathy



Emotion Management



Emotion Recognition



Solving Problems



Impulse Control



Calming Down



Communication



Assertiveness

***“When a foundation for social and emotional skills is established early on, students transform into effective adults.”*** <sup>34</sup> - Becky Ballbach, Director of Student Support Services

### RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE:

Websites:

- [Committee for Children](#)

Videos:

- [SEL & Workforce Readiness](#)  
In a brief (2 min) video, the Committee for Children show how SEL skills align with workforce readiness skills.
- [“The Employability Skills Framework”](#)  
In a brief (15 min) video presentation, Laura Rasmussen Foster (RTI International) shares the Employability Skills framework.

Writings: (articles, papers, blogs, reports, etc.)

- [Engaging Youth as Workers in Afterschool Programs](#) by Sam Piha and Samantha Fasen
- [Preparing Youth for the Workforce of Tomorrow](#), CASEL
- [LIAS Blog: Employability Skills Framework](#)

# IMPLEMENTATION



We have learned from afterschool leaders that promoting SEL skills is more than incorporating a framework or curriculum - adults must do things differently regarding their program design and culture, and staff development.

## The Importance of Adult Staff and Their Own SEL Skills

***“For successful delivery of SEL content has to do with the need to model it to the students to effectively teach it. SEL is necessarily responsive and works moment-to-moment over time; because it’s all about behaving and interacting, a “do as I say, not as I do” approach doesn’t work. Students learn and emulate self-awareness from someone who is demonstrating it. For this reason, educators must continue to develop their own social emotional skills so they can set the example — working on their personal development, becoming more self- and socially aware, learning how to manage their own stress, and walking the talk.”*** <sup>35</sup> - Heather Daly, Courageous Hearts and Normandie Nigh, A World Fit for Kids

Dr. Dale Blyth, University of Minnesota, emphasizes that social emotional skills are “taught” through direct instruction and “caught” through adult modeling and the program values and culture. We know that the success of any program to promote social emotional and character skills is partially dependent on the social emotional and character skills of the adult leaders. <sup>36</sup>



**“Whoever our students may be, whatever subject we teach, ultimately we teach who we are.”** <sup>37</sup>- Parker Palmer, Educator

Below is a reflection from Stu Semigran <sup>38</sup>, Founder of EduCare Foundation, on the importance of adult staff and their social emotional skills.



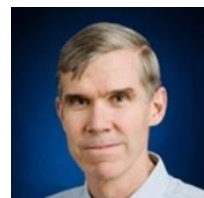
*“We can only truly teach or impact our students in the value and competencies of SEL to the degree that SEL is becoming part of our own repertoire... our own way of being. As we commit to our personal SEL self-development, this naturally influences our instructional practices, programs, and decisions. SEL becomes more than a collection of lesson plans, activities, or programs. It becomes a way of teaching... a way of being... a way of living. Then we as role models can deeply assist our students as they evolve in*

*their own mastership of SEL. This has implications for how we hire and provide professional development.*

*There are a variety of valuable SEL skills that can be addressed through staff professional development. EduCare Foundation teaches “Eight Skills for Heartset® Education”<sup>39</sup>. Some of these include tools for self-awareness, mindfulness, self-forgiveness, and empathetic listening. When these and other SEL skills are personalized and become our baseline, then we are more equipped to create an SEL styled climate with SEL curriculum and activities that can really “stick with” and impact our students.”*

## Program Design and Culture, Staff and Organizational Practices

Reed Larson is a pioneer researcher on youth development and has studied youth programs for decades. Dr. Larson and Dr. Natalie Rusk recently published a study entitled, *Youth Programs are Important Spaces for Emotional Learning* <sup>40</sup> Based on their research findings, they made several suggestions of how to ensure that program design and culture and staff and organizational practices support the learning of emotional skills. These suggestions are listed below.



Program Design and Culture - The program culture is dependent on values that are represented by the program and constantly reinforced by its leaders. The program design is fully aligned with these values, from a program culture in which SEL skills are both taught and “caught.”

- Design programs to provide environments of trust, safety, and mutual caring.
- Cultivate a program culture where youth are respected and supported as active agents of their learning, including their emotional learning. Recognize how they learn through feeling, noticing, describing, managing, and reflecting.

- Provide opportunities for youth to talk about emotions and share strategies for managing and using emotions.
- Structure programs to engage teens in meaningful projects. These provide authentic experiences of learning to manage and use emotions in work youth care about.
- Recognize that people from different cultural backgrounds may have different experiences, values, and strategies for handling emotions.

Staff Practices - These are done by all adult workers within the program. They are explicitly expected of all staff and are aligned with how staff are evaluated.

- Acknowledge youth's emotions and be ready to talk about them.
- Encourage youth to view emotions as signals to pay attention to and interpret, to examine the causes and effects of emotions and learn from peers and support each other's emotional learning.
- Help youth view emotional situations from different perspectives.
- When appropriate, offer strategies that youth might try for managing emotions.
- Encourage youth to reflect on the usefulness of emotions, for example, for motivating work, evaluating situations, cultivating relationships, and ethical learning.
- Support youth as they develop standards and criteria for feeling satisfaction or pride in their work.
- Recognize that staff are valuable emotional models for youth.



Organizational Practices - These are things that the organization, not individual youth workers, are responsible for. These often come in the form of policies and formal agreements.

- Provide resources and support for staff to develop their skills for facilitating youth's emotional learning.
- Arrange regular time and support for staff members to process and discuss unfolding emotion-related issues in the program (e.g., issues in youth projects, youth's reactions to a situation, and staff's self-care needs.)
- Encourage and invest in research on emotional learning in adolescence, especially applied research on staff practices and youth's emotional learning in programs.

## SEL Practices and Activities for Programs Serving Teens

***“In high school, SEL activities help bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood and help prepare students for college and for life in the workforce. They are vital to helping students understand who they are and who they want to be — and key to helping them thrive in their postsecondary years”***<sup>41</sup> - Naviance

Below are some of social emotional learning practices and activities for older youth that can be seamlessly incorporated into afterschool programs:



**Mindfulness** - “The term ‘mindfulness’ is often associated with calm or total peace. But that’s not what it’s about. Mindfulness is a practice — meaning, something to be returned to again and again — that involves focusing on the present moment and accepting whatever is showing up. Doing this each day can help foster a feeling of centeredness, which in turn can result in reduced stress

and more regulated emotions.”<sup>42</sup>

**Engaging Youth in Civic Action** – In her article, *How to Teach Older Students Social-Emotional Skills? Try Civics*, Arianna Prothero makes the case that *“Understanding other points of view, solving problems collaboratively, and building relationship skills all come to mind [in teaching civics]. For many educators, those skills will sound familiar, because they’re many of the same taught through social-emotional learning...Civic engagement can be a meaningful way to teach and reinforce social and emotional skills. That’s especially true for middle and high schoolers who are searching for their place in their communities and the world and might not otherwise connect with traditional social-emotional lessons.”*<sup>43</sup>



**Circle Meetings** - We know that bringing together young people and offering them the opportunity to have their individual voices heard in the larger community is an important practice. We are referring to ‘talking or sharing circles’ - bringing youth together in a circle and asking each individual to speak while the rest of the group practices active listening. In youth programs, these circle meetings are often called ‘sharing circles’ or ‘community circles.’”<sup>44</sup>

**Masks** - *The Ever Forward Club* developed an exercise where young people write down words that describe who they are on the outside (the outside mask) and words that describe who they are on the inside (the inside mask)- the things that no one sees. (On their website, Ever Forward Club offers a curriculum on how to utilize this exercise).<sup>45</sup>



According to Darius Simpson, a former Ever Forward staff member, “A mask is a metaphor representing what we allow the world to see about ourselves. We all wear masks for different reasons, at Ever Forward we don't believe the mask is an inherently bad thing. Sometimes a mask is necessary to survive, get from one place to the next. What we've found is that when people, young men specifically, don't have a space to take off their masks and deal with what's really happening for them, the mask becomes a part of them. That's where the conversation about what is living in what we call ‘the back of the mask’ comes into our workshops and circles.”<sup>46</sup>



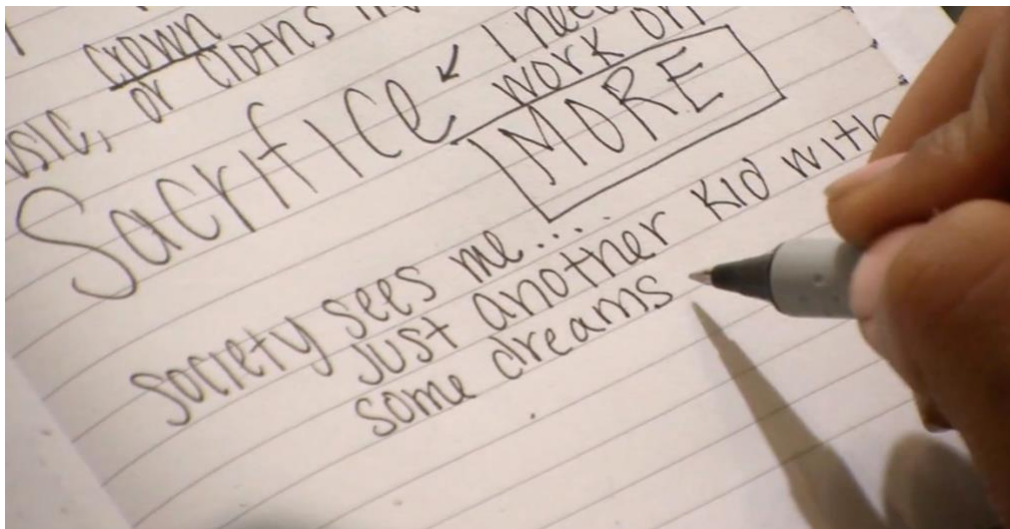
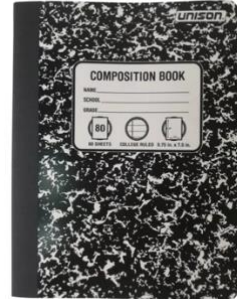
**Journaling-** Introducing journal writing, whether it's once a week or daily, is good for all, and fosters SEL skills, especially self-awareness. *“Journaling activities can be designed to help young people gain insights into the major areas of their lives. Its purpose is to help adolescents gain a more positive perspective on their lives by developing an awareness of events, memories and feelings in their lives and learn coping skills that can be used throughout life. At the same time, journaling can also help adolescents to use their imaginations and natural creative talents, to improve their communication skills, and to realize self-interests and possibilities.”*<sup>47</sup> - Lynn Blinn Pike, University of Missouri, Extension

***“It is important to provide youth with opportunities to reflect on and/or express themselves and their feelings because they HAVE them and don't always have space to express them. Journal writing is a good way to provide these opportunities. Even if it's just a stream of consciousness writing. Journaling allows you to slow down and notice yourself and your thoughts, which is greatly therapeutic!”***<sup>48</sup> – Daniel Summerhill, California State University, Monterey Bay



### Tips for journaling with teens

- Ignore outsiders who proclaim “those kids won’t go along” [referring to adolescent boys or boys of color].
- Agree with your teens whether their journals will be fully private or if the adult leaders are allowed to read them. Remember that entries may involve things that adults are required to report, such as endangerment or abuse.
- To personalize and encourage buy-in, begin by asking youth to decorate and personalize the cover of their journal. Be sure to have art materials and magazines with pictures if some prefer to create collages.
- A sturdy and inexpensive journal book is a composition book.
- Journal entries can take many forms: writing, drawing, collage, etc. Youth will be more interested if they don’t have to worry about spelling or grammar. They can use “inventive spelling.”
- “A writing prompt is an excellent tool to get kids of all ages putting pencils to pages! Since it’s not always easy to think of something specific to write about, it’s not a bad idea to make a Journal Jar and fill it with ideas.”<sup>49</sup> Youth can add their own ideas to the journal jar and be invited to pull out the journal prompts. There are many ideas for journal prompts on the internet, such as [Daring to Live Fully](#).



***"After doing these (journaling) activities I am glad...because it's good for me to think about myself and my thoughts and feelings, which I don't always do on a regular basis."*** — youth, 17-year-old

Below are several more SEL activities recommended by [Naviance](#).<sup>50</sup>

*“Goal-Setting – Even when the future feels unpredictable, setting goals is a powerful way for students to motivate themselves. Goal-setting aligns with self-management, and it helps set a strong foundation for a growth mindset — a key capacity that allows students to adjust and adapt when things blow off course. Setting goals, no matter how big or small they may seem, is easy and effective.*

*Stress Toss – Sometimes it helps to get physical. Ask your students to write down all of their expectations and insecurities on a piece of paper — and then have them rip it up and throw it away. This act can be a powerful release, as well as an important acknowledgement of everyone’s individual and collective negative feelings.*

*Story Time – Select a book that deftly explores a range of emotions through a character or characters. Then break the class into small groups and encourage students to identify an emotion the character felt and talk about how and why they can relate to it.*

*Motivation Identification – This one is deceptively simple: Have your students write down what motivates them and explain the reasons why. It’s a straightforward exercise but one that can help vastly improve students’ understanding of themselves.*

*Switch Perspectives – Discuss a book’s protagonist and antagonist. Create a series of questions for each and ask students how they think the protagonist saw the situation compared with how the antagonist saw the situation. This is a wonderful exercise in encouraging students to see different perspectives.*

*Interest Presentations – Allow for five minutes at the beginning of class for kids to present on any topic that they are interested in. At the end of the semester, collect notes from students that share what they learned about each other through this process.*

*Hold “Office Hours” for SEL – Letting your students know that you’re available to discuss SEL topics ... can be a wonderful way to foster positive relationships with them. Host an office hour dedicated to SEL topics discussed in class.”*





## SEL Framework Crosswalk

In the chart below, we use the CASEL SEL framework (core skills) as our baseline and align other important program frameworks with them.

| SEL                                | YOUTH DEVELOPMENT <sup>53</sup>   | AFTERSCHOOL STANDARDS <sup>52</sup>   | LEARNING IN AFTERSCHOOL & SUMMER <sup>53</sup> | WHOLE CHILD/ SoLD <sup>54</sup>                     | WORKFORCE SKILLS <sup>55</sup>   | FOUNDATIONS FOR YOUNG ADULT SUCCESS <sup>56</sup>   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|--|---|
| <b>Self-Awareness</b>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Supportive Relationships</li> <li>Meaningful Participation</li> <li>Community Involvement</li> <li>Challenging and Engaging Learning</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversity, Access and Equity</li> <li>Active and Engaged Learning</li> </ul> | Expands Horizons                               | Rich Instructional Experiences                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive Attitude</li> <li>Flexibility</li> <li>Open to Learning New Skills</li> <li>Sense of Self-Worth</li> <li>Ability to Innovate</li> <li>Confidence</li> </ul>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency</li> <li>Integrated Identity</li> <li>Competencies</li> </ul> |
| <b>Self-Management</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Supportive Relationships</li> <li>Community Involvement</li> </ul>  | Diversity, Access and Equity  | Meaningful                                     | Integrated Supports                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiative</li> <li>Works Well Under Stress</li> <li>Punctuality</li> <li>Detail-Oriented</li> <li>Time Management</li> <li>Reliability</li> <li>Self-Discipline</li> </ul> | Integrated Identity   |
| <b>Social Awareness</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple Supportive Relationships</li> <li>Community Involvement</li> </ul>  | Healthy Choices and Behaviors   | Expands Horizons                               |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-cultural Sensitivity</li> <li>Ability to Work with People of Different Backgrounds</li> <li>Respects People's Differences</li> </ul>                                  |   |
| <b>Relationship Skills</b>         | Multiple Supportive Relationships   | Safe and Supportive Environment   | Collaborative                                  | Developmental Relationships                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening Skills</li> <li>Conflict Resolution</li> <li>Works Well with Others</li> </ul>  | Self-Regulation   |
| <b>Responsible Decision-Making</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meaningful Participation</li> <li>Challenging and Engaging Learning</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth Voice and Leadership</li> <li>Skill Building</li> </ul>                | Collaborative                                  | Development of Critical Skills, Mindsets and Habits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Critical Thinking</li> <li>Reasoning</li> <li>Integrity</li> <li>Civic Engagement</li> <li>Carefully Observes</li> <li>Problem Solving Skills</li> </ul>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values</li> <li>Knowledge and Skills</li> </ul>                      |

## RESOURCES TO LEARN MORE:

### Websites:

- [Greater Good Science Center](#)
- [Ever Forward Club](#)
- [Inner Explorer](#)
- [Harvard University Explore SEL](#)

Look Inside Frameworks: Use the Framework Profiles Website to learn more about a specific framework and compare it to others in the field.

### Videos:

- [“Just Breathe” by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman \(Wavecrest Films\)](#)
- [“The Mask You Live In” Official Trailer](#)

### Writings: (articles, papers, blogs, reports, etc.)

- [Mindfulness in Afterschool: A 16-Session Curriculum of Mindfulness Activities](#)
- [Youth Civic Engagement and Activism in Expanded Learning Programs](#)
- [LIAS Blogs on Circle Meetings](#)
- [LIAS Blogs on Masks](#)
- [LIAS Blogs on Civic Engagement](#)
- [LIAS Blogs on Mindfulness in Afterschool](#)
- [LIAS Blog, For Effective SEL, Staff Need To Learn New Skills, Too](#)
- [Boost Your Teen’s Mood and Self-Esteem with Journaling](#) by Lisa M. Schab, LCSW
- [University of Missouri, Journaling With Teens](#)
- [Write Brain Books, Write Brain is SEL](#)
- [Afterschool Snack, Youth voice and self-expression in afterschool: Journaling, poetry, and spoken word](#)
- [Promoting SEL and Character Skills In Expanded Learning Programs](#) by Sam Piha and Rozel Cruz
- [Youth Development Guide 2.0](#), Temescal Associates and Community Network for Youth Development
- [Multiple Reflections: Comparison of Frameworks for Promoting Youth Learning and Healthy Development](#) by Sam Piha and Samantha Fasen



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND END NOTES

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We cited additional resources at the end of each chapter above. We also recommend the resources cited in the End Notes (pages 28-30). We also advise that one can access additional resources using internet searches. Lastly, Temescal Associates and The How Kids Learn Foundation have published many resources which are catalogued [here](#).

## END NOTES

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<sup>3</sup> Edutopia, *Social and Emotional Learning: A Short History*, <https://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning-history>

<sup>4</sup> CASEL, *Our History*, <https://casel.org/about-us/our-history/>

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Durlak, *LIAS Blog: The Importance of Social Emotional Learning*, <http://blog.learninginafterschool.org/2012/11/the-importance-of-social-emotional.html>

<sup>6</sup> Victoria Sambursky, *How SEL Prepares Teens for Life After High School*, <https://www.endominance.com/how-sel-prepares-teens-for-life-after-high-school/>

<sup>7</sup> Greater Good Science Center, *SEL for Adults: Emotion Regulation*, <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/my-well-being/sel-for-adults-self-awareness-and-self-management/sel-for-adults-emotion-regulation/>

<sup>8</sup> CASEL, *Fundamentals of SEL*, <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>

<sup>9</sup> Options for Youth, *Four Major Benefits to Social/ Emotional Learning*, <https://ofy.org/blog/four-major-benefits-of-social-emotional-learning/>

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<sup>11</sup> Stephanie Jones, Rebecca Bailey, Katharine Brush, Jennifer Kahn, *Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time Settings*, <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Social-and-Emotional-Learning-Out-of-School-Time-Settings-Brief.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Karen Pittman, *The History of Afterschool in America* Documentary, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F15pPfiMWkw>

<sup>13</sup> Stephanie Jones, Rebecca Bailey, Katharine Brush, Jennifer Kahn, *Social and Emotional Learning in Out-of-School Time Settings*, <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Social-and-Emotional-Learning-Out-of-School-Time-Settings-Brief.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Reed Larson, Natalie Rusk, *Youth Programs are Important Spaces for Emotional Learning*, <https://jyd.pitt.edu/ojs/jyd/article/view/211604TLC01/1353>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Larry Ferlazzo, *What Students Think About Their Third Year of Pandemic Schooling*, <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-what-students-think-about-their-third-year-of-pandemic-schooling/2021/10>

<sup>17</sup> America's Promise Alliance, *The State of Youth Employment-Navigating the World of Work During COVID-19*, [https://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/FINAL\\_StateofYouthEmployment\\_May%2017.pdf](https://www.americaspromise.org/sites/default/files/d8/FINAL_StateofYouthEmployment_May%2017.pdf)

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- <sup>18</sup> Arianna Prothero, *Middle and High School Students Need Social-Emotional Learning, Too. Are They Getting It?*, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/middle-and-high-school-students-need-social-emotional-learning-too-are-they-getting-it/2021/10>
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- <sup>20</sup> Alyson Klein, *The Pandemic Has Shaken Students' Sense of Themselves*, <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/the-pandemic-has-shaken-students-sense-of-themselves/2021/10>
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- <sup>23</sup> Emily Boudreau, *Supporting Teenagers in a Pandemic*, <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/20/08/supporting-teenagers-pandemic>
- <sup>24</sup> Young Minds, *The Impact of COVID-19 on Young People with Mental Health Needs*, <https://www.youngminds.org.uk/about-us/reports-and-impact/coronavirus-impact-on-young-people-with-mental-health-needs/>
- <sup>25</sup> Ursula Helminski, *Expanded Learning 360/365 Blog: Re-Opening: The Big Picture & Practical Realities For Afterschool*, <http://www.expandedlearning360-365.com/blog/re-opening-the-big-picture-practical-realities-for-afterschool>
- <sup>26</sup> Victoria Sambursky, *How SEL Prepares Teens for Life After High School*, <https://www.endominance.com/how-sel-prepares-teens-for-life-after-high-school/>
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- <sup>28</sup> Jennifer L. DePaoli, Matthew N. Atwell, John M. Bridgeland & Timothy P. Shriver, *Respected Perspectives of Youth on High School & Social and Emotional Learning*, <https://casel.s3.us-east-2.amazonaws.com/Respected.pdf>
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- <sup>31</sup> Kognito.com, *SEL for Teens: A Powerful Learning and Life Skillset*, <https://kognito.com/blog/sel-for-teens-a-powerful-learning-and-life-skillset>
- <sup>32</sup> Robert Halpern, *The Means to Grow Up: Reinventing Apprenticeship as a Developmental Support in Adolescence*, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238398824\\_The\\_Means\\_to\\_Grow\\_Up\\_Reinventing\\_apprenticeship\\_as\\_a\\_developmental\\_support\\_in\\_adolescence\\_by\\_Robert\\_Halpern](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/238398824_The_Means_to_Grow_Up_Reinventing_apprenticeship_as_a_developmental_support_in_adolescence_by_Robert_Halpern)
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