



# *5 Things to Know*

Before Implementing Social Emotional Learning in Your School or District



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A mindset is a collection of ideas and beliefs that shape how you think, drives your feelings and emotions, and ultimately determines one's behaviors and actions. Before implementing social and emotional learning (SEL), it's important to create a common mindset across your leadership and educator teams that can set you up for long-term success with your SEL initiatives. But there are key things you must first consider that will help your school or district lay the groundwork for SEL implemented with a high level of fidelity.



### *1. To win with students, you must first win with teachers.*

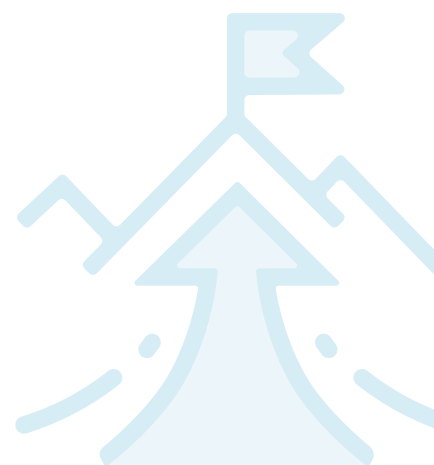
Social and emotional learning starts with teachers. They're the ones who teach SEL strategies and reinforce them throughout the day. However, if teachers themselves don't have social-emotional well-being, they won't be able to address the SEL needs of their students. You've likely heard that it takes the "whole" teacher to develop the "whole" child. Before implementing SEL, make sure the adults in the building have supportive growth-based relationships. Give them the tools, incentives, and strategies to be successful. And make sure you support and nurture them along the way.

### *2. Celebrate wins and manage challenges compassionately.*

They say energy flows where attention goes. In other words, the things we focus on will become the foundation for growth. Teachers with a strong SEL focus will have early successes. Create time to celebrate what's going right. It will create positive energy and is a great way to share best practices and strategies that are impacting students' lives. Likewise, some will struggle. Know that this is completely normal. Many teachers will not feel comfortable and confident, and that is okay. SEL is important, and everyone needs to know they can and will become competent, and that we'll all do it together.

### *3. Teachers must find their authentic voice. They must connect to the content personally.*

What often makes someone a great history teacher is that they enjoy history and have connected to it at an intellectual and emotional level. The concepts taught through your SEL curriculum are not just concepts. They're principles. And they're just as important and empowering to adults as they are to children. Help teachers connect the concepts to their own lives and experiences and have them find their own stories so they can deliver the content authentically and in a manner that allows students to engage authentically as well.



### *4. In real estate, it's location, location, location. With SEL, it's conversation, conversation, conversation.*

When you observe a classroom, the most important thing to ask yourself is: "Are the students talking?" If there's good healthy conversation, the program is working, and students' lives are being impacted. In fact, if you get them talking, don't worry about anything else—and keep talking until the bell rings. The activities and assessment questions can wait or be omitted altogether. The discussion is the goal of SEL. It means they're engaged, that we've made the information relevant, and that they're making meaningful connections to their own lives.

### *5. Those who seem like they're getting the least, are actually getting the most.*

Many times, you will find students who don't seem engaged. You may think that they're not getting anything out of the discussion. It has been our experience, and the experience of many educators, that it's often these students who benefit the most. We have many stories of that quiet student writing a note or sharing a story of how SEL has transformed their lives. Take comfort that every student learns and processes differently.

Social emotional learning can transform school culture, impacting students, educators, and staff. Understanding and integrating these five ideas can ensure your SEL program is implemented with fidelity, leading to a more effective, impactful, and successful SEL initiative and a more positive and productive school community.