



Introduction Handout 1b: SEL Truth or Myth Answer Key

Source: This activity was adapted from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, [*Social and Emotional Learning in Washington Schools: Building Foundations and Strategies*](#). Used with permission.

Directions

Use Handout 1b to check your answers from Handout 1a. If you are in a group, have a discussion about those responses that you did not get correct or something in the rationales that you found particularly interesting.

Answer Key

Statement	Answer	Rationale
1. SEL is synonymous with behavior management.	Myth	Although social and emotional learning (SEL) has been shown to improve student behavior, behavior management can be seen more as a byproduct rather than the main purpose or output. SEL is about helping students develop the social and emotional competencies — each competency being a combination of certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes — needed to be successful in life, which reaches far beyond following directions and behaving appropriately. Keep in mind that eliminating misbehavior does not necessarily mean that a student has mastered the social and emotional competencies.
2. Children who are developmentally on track also need social and emotional competency development.	True	A common misconception is that students who are on track developmentally do not need to further develop their social and emotional competencies. However, students, like adults, have both strengths and weaknesses in these areas. For example, some youth need more targeted supports around tolerance and accepting diversity, where others need more focus on their social skills, and still others need to become more self-aware in order to recognize what they do and do not know. Similarly, typically developing children often struggle to accept children who do not appear to behave or present ways that a typical child perceives to be “typical” — perceptions that often are based on experience, culture, and perceived values. Thus, all students can benefit from SEL.

Statement	Answer	Rationale
3. After we develop a social and emotional competency, we use it consistently across contexts.	Myth	SEL is not only about building student competencies; it also is about providing supports for students to continue to develop and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that make up the various competencies. For example, a student may be a great communicator but might not have the chance to demonstrate those communication skills if the classroom is dominated by teacher talk. Thus, it is important that we create the conditions and supports necessary for students not only to develop their competencies, but also to apply them.
4. Social and emotional competencies are consistent across cultures.	Myth	Although broad social and emotional competencies — such as being aware of oneself and forming meaningful relationships — are developed by individuals across all cultures, the way that individuals exhibit or demonstrate these competencies may vary depending on an individual's culture.
5. Social and emotional competencies are only taught in preschool and early elementary.	Myth	Research has demonstrated that certain social and emotional competencies are best developed in early childhood (e.g., executive function). However, all individuals (including adults) can continue to hone their social and emotional competencies. Many educators believe SEL is only needed in lower grade levels because teachers at these levels have students all day long, and their lessons often naturally include teaching social and emotional competencies (e.g., sharing), whether planned or unplanned. However, social and emotional competencies are important to teach at all levels because these competencies become more complex as individuals develop over time.
6. Social and emotional competencies are multifaceted and complex.	True	SEL enhances students' capacity to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and Sub-Competencies promote intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competence. SEL involves recognizing other people's emotions and reacting accordingly. It also involves deescalating situations, dealing with conflict, learning ethical behavior, and making responsible decisions.
7. SEL aligns well with a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS).	True	SEL is considered a Tier 1, or universal, approach to learning. SEL lays the foundation to support student growth and development in multiple facets of students' lives inside and outside of school. Thus, it aligns well with MTSS given that it supports instruction that is good for all students, reducing the opportunity gap by providing all students with the skills they need to be successful in school. Invariably, some students will need additional support (e.g., small-group or individualized interventions) to master and apply the full range of social and emotional competencies, but this number should be greatly reduced if all students have opportunities that support SEL in the classroom.

Statement	Answer	Rationale
8. SEL is focused only on skills that make children better students.	Myth	Although SEL has been shown to improve academic learning, it also is the key to successful relationships in school with other students or teachers and later in life with spouses, family, children, coworkers, and peers. Through SEL, individuals learn about themselves and how to identify their strengths and weaknesses, both inside and outside of the classroom. It takes an entire community to teach social and emotional competencies; it is something that cannot be taught only in schools.
9. SEL is best for students with disabilities or those who lack social skills.	Myth	<p>SEL benefits students of all abilities, regardless of their baseline social skills. Between 1980 and 2012, jobs with requirements for high social skills grew by nearly 10 percentage points as a share of the U.S. labor force. In contrast, the proportion of math-intensive but less social jobs (including many science, technology, engineering, and mathematics occupations) shrank by about 3 percentage points during that same period. Employment and wage growth was particularly strong for jobs requiring high levels of both cognitive skill and social skill (<i>The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market</i>).</p> <p>While SEL is needed for all students, some students in special education may need more SEL support than those who are not in special education.</p>
10. Choosing an SEL program is the first step in implementing SEL.	Myth	<p>Although there are multiple evidence-based SEL programs that support students' development of social and emotional competencies, most people recognize that one of the first steps in implementing any SEL program or effort is to focus on adult social and emotional competencies. To model and encourage positive student interactions, teachers themselves need the social and emotional abilities required to communicate effectively with students and to handle stressful situations that can occur in classrooms.</p> <p>Source: Brackett, M. A., Patti, J., Stern, R., Rivers, S. E., Elbertson, N., Chisholm, C., & Salovey, P. (2009). A sustainable, skill-based model to building emotionally literate schools. In R. Thompson, M. Hughes, & J. B. Terrell (Eds.), <i>Handbook of developing emotional and social intelligence: Best practices, case studies, and tools</i> (pp. 329–358). New York, NY: Wiley.</p>
11. SEL should be taught throughout the year.	True	A common misperception is that SEL should only be taught at the beginning of the school year. However, SEL is not the same as setting expectations or behavior management, and it is best if it is ongoing and woven throughout the curriculum.

Statement	Answer	Rationale
12. Family engagement is a key component of SEL.	True	Social and emotional competencies are exhibited across multiple contexts, including home, school, and the community. Thus, it is important to have consistent messages about the social and emotional competencies that students may need to use across these varying contexts. Educators and families should have strategic conversations with each other and with their students about the social and emotional knowledge, skills, and attitudes students will need to be successful in school, at home, and in their communities, and they should find ways to model and reinforce those skills.

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