



Social and emotional learning: Making the case

The foundation for healthy and positive development is the possession of strong social and emotional skills and competencies that help youth do well academically, maintain positive relationships, be physically and mentally healthy, and become civically engaged.^{1,2,3} According to a bipartisan report by the Brookings Institution and the American Enterprise Institute, social and emotional competencies are critically important for the long-term success of all students in today’s economy.⁴ Afterschool and summer programs are key partners in young people’s learning. They help young people develop the social and emotional skills to become resilient, engaged, and productive adults.



“After-school programs promote young people’s social and emotional learning (SEL) skills – whether the programs use that term or not.”⁹

– The Future of Children Report, Princeton University & Brookings Institution

According to a 2016 member survey by the Business Roundtable, the following skills were both relevant to the vast majority of open positions but also difficult to find in qualified candidates:



Communications skills

Relevant to 100% of openings, but 71% of businesses had difficulty finding qualified applicants who had strong communication skills



Teamwork

Relevant to 96% of openings, but 55% of businesses had difficulty finding qualified applicants with strong teamwork skills



Leadership

Relevant to 100% of openings, but 79% of businesses had difficulty finding qualified applicants who had strong leadership skills



Critical thinking and problem solving

Relevant to 99% of openings, but 83% of businesses had difficulty finding qualified applicants who had strong critical thinking & problem solving skills



Cognitive flexibility

Relevant to 96% of openings, but 74% of businesses had difficulty finding qualified applicants who had strong cognitive flexibility

- **SEL improves academic performance:** Studies have found that young people who participate in evidence-based SEL programs show an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement.⁵
- **The benefits of SEL last for years:** Studies show that young people who participate in SEL-focused programs continue to benefit for months and even years afterwards! Young people who participate in these programs have fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and lower rates of drug use than their peers.⁶
- **For every \$1 invested in SEL programs, there are \$11 in benefits:** A 2015 study found that for every \$1 invested in high-quality SEL programs, there was a return of \$11 in benefits.⁷
- **Afterschool builds social and emotional skills:** According to a survey by the Riley Institute, “the top 5 skills developed by afterschool are teamwork, communication, problem solving, self-confidence, and critical thinking.”⁸
- **SEL-focused programs have a wide range of positive effects:** High-quality, evidence-based afterschool programs targeting SEL outcomes have a wide array of positive effects:
 - ↑ Improve young people’s self-confidence and grades
 - ↑ Increase positive attitudes toward school, positive social behavior, standardized test scores, and attendance rates
 - ↓ Reduce aggression and drug use⁹

Demand for SEL component skills is high:



Teachers want SEL: 93% of teachers believed that SEL is important for their students' experience in school. They help to develop the critical social and emotional skills that set children up for success in adulthood.¹⁰



Principals want SEL: 99% of principals believed that an increased focus on SEL would have a major benefit on promoting a positive school climate.¹⁰



Parents want SEL: In the Afterschool Alliance's survey of parents *America After 3PM*, 71% of parents agreed that afterschool programs should help develop skills like teamwork, leadership and critical thinking.¹¹

“My afterschool program helped shape me into a young woman who is determined, confident, and not afraid to stand up for what she believes is right. Because of the experiences I had in my program, I am constantly seeking new opportunities to challenge myself to become a better student, a better leader, and a better human being.”

– Susanna Pradhan



For more information on social and emotional learning, visit afterschoolalliance.org

Sources

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⁹ Princeton University & Brookings Institution. (2017). Social and Emotional Learning. The Future of Children. Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 2017. Retrieved from: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/FOC-Spring-Vol27-No1-Compiled-Future-of-Children-spring-2017.pdf>

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¹¹ Afterschool Alliance. (2014). *America After 3PM: Afterschool Programs in Demand*. Retrieved from: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/>