SEL in Catholic School Communities

Guidelines for a Sustainable Whole-school Approach to Social and Emotional Learning
SEL in Catholic School Communities: Guidelines for a Sustainable Whole-school Approach to Social and Emotional Learning

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Acknowledgements

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Foreword

This resource, SEL in Catholic School Communities: Guidelines for a Sustainable Whole-school Approach to Social and Emotional Learning, has been developed by the Catholic Education Office Melbourne. The values and beliefs of the Catholic Church and the mission of Catholic schools in their communities provide the context for the implementation of these Guidelines.

The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium (1997) emphasises that ‘The person of each individual human being, in his or her material and spiritual needs, is at the heart of Christ’s teaching: this is why the promotion of the human person is the goal of the Catholic school’ (n. 9). These Guidelines have been designed to support schools in strengthening their educational endeavour in the development of the ‘whole person’ and to contribute to ‘…the centrality of the human person in the educational project of the Catholic school’ (n. 9).

The resource emphasises the connection between SEL and academic learning and its purpose is to provide:

- a resource for schools to map their direction with SEL
- an approach to whole-school improvement
- a systematic and strategic approach to the implementation of SEL
- an integrated, sustainable approach to SEL
- a Professional Learning resource
- a user-friendly guidelines approach for choosing a SEL resource.

Schools are already engaged in promoting and implementing SEL initiatives. There is a need, however, to recognise and sustain those elements of the school environment that support SEL and to improve the aspects which do not. This is most effectively done when holistic and coordinated approaches are established that educate mind, body and soul.

The Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools Policy 2.26 (2009) confirms that ‘Pastoral care of students…refers to action taken within a school by its leaders and community members to promote and enhance student wellbeing of a personal, social, physical, emotional, mental or spiritual nature’.

The Guidelines reflect the vision of Catholic education across the Archdiocese of Melbourne to strengthen educational communities through ensuring that a strong professional culture is evident within Catholic schools. By emphasising the connections between SEL and improved learning outcomes these Guidelines aim to build the capacity of school communities, so that students are supported and optimal learning is achieved.

In this way the Vision and Mission of Catholic education are realised and the school’s main purpose and mission – ‘development of the whole person (spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically, socially and emotionally)’ – is fulfilled. I hope you will find these Guidelines useful in your ongoing pursuit of excellence in Catholic education.

I commend this publication to you.

Stephen Elder
Director of Catholic Education
Education equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence.

Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians ...

(MCEETYA 2008, p. 4)
SEL in Catholic School Communities: Guidelines for a Sustainable Whole School Approach to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) conforms to the Catholic Education Office Melbourne (CEOM) policy (2.26) on Pastoral Care of Students in Catholic Schools. Specifically this material reflects Catholic Education Office Melbourne Policy Guiding Principles on:

- Pastoral care for the whole school community – a principal’s responsibility.
- Student connectedness and engagement.
- Student relationships – a whole of school responsibility.
- Restorative practices.

While the Guidelines are founded on the evidence-based research underpinning social and emotional learning, they are not designed to provide readings on that research. For more information on SEL research see the websites listed in Section 7.

Research on health and wellbeing shows that schools are important environments for the promotion of wellbeing in children and young people. The connection between the promotion of wellbeing and positive learning outcomes is clear. Further, positive learning outcomes occur when delivered through a framework of social and emotional learning (SEL) approaches. Together they provide a sound basis for developing future healthy relationships and, ultimately, achieving success in life.

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne sees wellbeing at the core of learning and school improvement. Children and young people who are happy, confident, and able to establish meaningful relationships are better placed to achieve positive learning outcomes. The focus of these Guidelines, therefore, is on implementing a strategy to improve classroom and school climate in our schools; to improve pro-social outcomes; to maximise teaching and learning approaches for positive learning; to create safe and supportive environments in our schools; and to improve connections across the whole school community.

Improved connections can be achieved by reviewing school policies, resources and strategies, aligning them with social and emotional learning approaches, and embedding the latter in the curriculum and life of the school community.
Support for students will be manifested within school philosophies, beliefs, attitudes and school organisation, links with parents, the community and outside agencies, classroom practice, teacher-student relationships and curricula.

(CEOM Oct. 2008, p. 5.)
About the Guidelines

Aim

To provide a process to implement social and emotional learning as a part of whole school improvement.

How are the Guidelines organised?

The Guidelines are organised in seven sections:

Section 1 provides an overview of social and emotional learning, and shows how SEL is linked to whole school improvement.

Section 2 highlights the importance of the school leader in SEL implementation, and summarises the phases and sustainability process.

Section 3 provides sample audit tools for use across the phases of implementation. The tools support existing resources or provide a starting point to develop school-specific resources.

Section 4 provides a range of charts for reviewing progress across the phases of implementation and the components of sustainability.

Section 5 provides a scope and sequence chart for linking the domain of Interpersonal Development in the Victorian Essential Learning Standards to the five core competencies of Social and Emotional Learning.

Section 6 provides four sets of sample activities for VELS Levels 1–4 in the domain of Interpersonal Development, linked to the SEL core competency of Self-awareness.

Section 7 provides a list of key websites, and includes references for the Guidelines.
Who will use these *Guidelines*?

- School Principals
- Student Wellbeing Coordinators
- Classroom Teachers
- Curriculum Coordinators
- Year Level Coordinators
- Core Leadership Team

**NOTE:** Within this resource, the term *parents* is applied to parents, guardians and caregivers.

The *Guidelines* sit within the CEOM School Improvement Framework and are consistent with the:

- Health Promoting Schools Framework
- National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools
- National Safe Schools Framework
- National Schools Drug Education Strategy (NSDES)
- Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) Levels 1, 2, 3 & 4
- Coming to Know Worship and Love: A Religious Education Curriculum Framework for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Melbourne
- Leadership in Catholic Schools: Development Framework and Standards of Practice
About Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process through which we learn to recognise and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviours (Elias et al. 1997).

In the school learning context, SEL is the process for integrating thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve important social/life tasks, meet personal and social needs, learn to problem-solve, and to develop the skills necessary to become responsible global citizens.

SEL is a school-based organisational framework for promoting the development of effective, learning environments (school and classroom) in which children and young people experience positive learning outcomes.

Characteristics of effective SEL

1. Evidence-based
   Research indicates that an integrated, rather than incidental approach to social and emotional (interpersonal) skills, enhances academic learning, and has long-term positive effects on attitudes and behaviour.

2. Promotes daily application of SEL skills and ethical values
   Direct teaching and consistent application of social, emotional and ethical approaches within the curriculum and everyday life of a school promotes a positive school climate, and fosters responsible and respectful attitudes in students. Explicit and implicit teaching of ethical values helps students to recognise and manage their emotions; appreciate others’ perspectives; establish positive goals; make responsible decisions about themselves and others; and handle interpersonal situations effectively. Students’ thinking, feeling and acting are positively influenced, and they learn to differentiate between pro-social and anti-social behaviour.

3. Builds connection at the classroom and school levels
   Using a diverse range of teaching methods that promote positive relationships in the classroom and across the school community, creates an atmosphere where caring, responsibility and commitment to learning thrive. This promotes emotional security and safety, and strengthens positive relationships among students, staff and families.
4. **Is developmentally and culturally appropriate**
   Approaches that are developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and respectful of
diversity promote a positive learning environment.

5. **Coordinates programs within a school**
   Implementing a framework to coordinate resources and strategies promotes social and
emotional learning and academic achievement.

6. **Enhances student academic achievement affectively and socially**
   Teaching and learning social and emotional skills fosters classroom participation,
effective interactions with staff, and introduces approaches for positive learning
outcomes.

7. **Promotes a whole school approach between schools, families and communities**
   Establishing partnerships between schools, families and communities supports the
consistent application and modelling of SEL skills across student environments.

8. **Establishes organisational supports and policies that foster success**
   Implementing organisational and sustainable policies and supports fosters long-
term success. Strategies include, for example, allocating time and resources; active
participation of leaders and staff in planning; and embedding SEL in school policies,
resources and strategies.

9. **Incorporates professional learning**
   Strategically planned professional learning is intrinsic to implementation.

10. **Includes continuing evaluation and improvement**
    Linking SEL planning to needs and resources evaluation, and to school data gathering,
is as important as ongoing review in shaping improvement strategies.

Adapted from CASEL March 2003, 'CASEL Guidelines for Effective SEL Practice', Safe and Sound: An
Educational Leader’s Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs, Chicago,
Domain, p.1–3.
The SEL / Learning outcomes connection

Research says that the development of effective personal and social skills does not simply occur through immersion in scenarios where the skills would be helpful. Interpersonal skills develop with a direct teaching model, incorporating planned naturalistic opportunities for student reflection and practice (McGrath 2008).

Strategic inclusion of SEL in a school’s policies, resources and strategies ensures that ‘the school’s main purpose and mission – “development of the whole person (spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically, socially and emotionally)” is fulfilled’ (CEOM 2007, p.1).

Research indicates that students with social and emotional skills experience:

- improved quality of learning
- improved sense of belonging
- improved study skills
- improved school attendance
- improved attention
- increased academic competence
- increased motivation to learn
- increased commitment to school and the time devoted to school work, including valuing learning
- reduced anxiety
- reduced suspensions and expulsions (CASEL 2006 & CEOM 2007).

The SEL / Learning outcomes connection

Research shows that SEL has positive benefits for all students.

Non-cognitive factors - motivation, perseverance and emotional self-regulation - have been shown to be more important for long-term academic achievement than ability.

(Moore 2006)
Values Education as good practice

The explicit teaching of values in Catholic schools is consistent with the Gospel teachings of Jesus and as such is at the heart of the central mission of all schools. The policies and curriculum developed in each school should reflect the understanding of good practice that implicitly reinforces and underpins values learning. The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools promotes nine values for Australian schooling. These values sit within a whole school approach to teaching and learning, and are appropriate for use by all members of the school community. Schools can develop their own approaches suitable to their environments. The nine values are:

1. **Care and Compassion:**
   Care for self and others

2. **Doing Your Best:**
   Seek to accomplish something worthy and admirable

3. **Fair Go:**
   Pursue and protect the common good where all people are treated fairly for a just society

4. **Freedom:**
   Enjoy all the rights and privileges of Australian citizenship free from unnecessary interference or control, and stand up for the rights of others

5. **Honesty and Trustworthiness:**
   Be honest, sincere and seek the truth

6. **Integrity:**
   Act in accordance with principles of moral and ethical conduct; ensure consistency between words and deeds

7. **Respect:**
   Treat others with consideration and regard, respect another person’s point of view

8. **Responsibility:**
   Be accountable for one’s own actions, resolve differences in constructive, non-violent and peaceful ways, contribute to society and to civic life, take care of the environment

9. **Understanding, Tolerance and Inclusion:**
   Be aware of others and their cultures, accept diversity within a democratic society, being included and including others

What skills are SEL skills?

These nine values align with the five core competencies of SEL:

1. Self-awareness
2. Social awareness
3. Self-management
4. Responsible decision-making
5. Relationship skills

Based on the work of Daniel Goleman on emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995), the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has identified these five core social and emotional learning competencies as, when applied across a school community, having benefits for behaviour, learning environments, academic achievement, social competency, and emotional wellbeing.

What does SEL address?

Recognising one’s emotions and values as well as one’s strengths and limitations
Managing emotions and behaviours to achieve one’s goals
Showing understanding and empathy for others
Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behaviour
Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict

How long could it take to fully implement SEL?

SEL can take three to five years to fully implement.
About Whole-school improvement

Purpose of the whole-school strategy

The Whole School Strategy provides schools with an integrated and strategic approach to:

- evaluate policies, resources and strategies in context of student social and emotional learning
- engage staff at all levels of the school strategy
- develop partnerships with families and communities.

A SEL Framework for Whole School Improvement: Creating connections

The Catholic Education Office Melbourne Student Wellbeing Strategy 2006–2010, contextualised within the CEOM School Improvement Framework, is designed to support ‘school leadership to build sustainable models with a focus on prevention and early intervention’ (CEOM 2008, p. 3).

Fostering strong partnerships between schools, families and the community is a function of the CEOM School Improvement Framework. The resources and strategies herein are designed to provide schools with a process to work towards whole school improvement. This is achieved through the implementation of a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) strategy linked to the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and to National Frameworks.

How will SEL work in my school?

Approaches to SEL are flexible and are adaptable to individual school environments.