



WHITE PAPER

Investing in Educators' Social Emotional Wellness Fosters Student Success and Improves School Culture

As challenging as COVID-19 has been for educators, students, and schools, there is also positive news. Emerging evidence indicates that promoting teacher well-being and mental health reduces stress and anxiety. By addressing their own social emotional wellness first, teachers are more successful in impacting the social emotional wellness of their students and changing school cultures for the better.





Table Of Contents

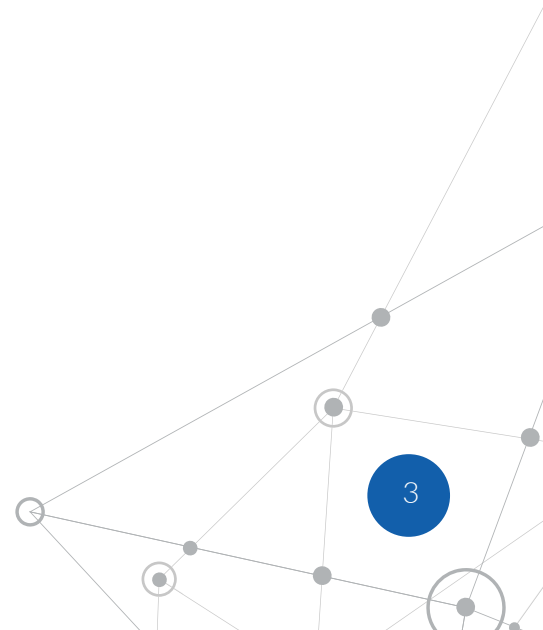
Introduction	3
The Importance of Social Emotional Learning	4
Insights and Lessons—Theory into Practice	6
Same Challenges, Different District	7
A Wider View	9
The 7 Mindsets Difference	10
Conclusion	13

Introduction

As challenging as COVID-19 has been for educators, students, and schools, there is also positive news. Emerging evidence indicates that promoting teacher well-being and mental health reduces stress and anxiety. By addressing their own social emotional wellness first, teachers are more successful in impacting the social emotional wellness of their students and changing school cultures for the better.



“Teachers tell us things like they’re worried and anxious, and they don’t know what’s going to happen, which are the exact same emotions their students are feeling.”



The Importance of Social Emotional Learning

Decades of research confirm that social and emotional learning (SEL) can be taught, modeled, and practiced and will lead to positive outcomes that are important for success in school and life. Social emotional learning helps students develop the self-awareness, self-control, and interpersonal skills that are vital for school, work, and life success. The value of SEL is that people with strong social-emotional skills are better able to cope with life's daily challenges by using skills such as problem solving, self-discipline, impulse control, and emotion management.

A recent article in [Psychology Today](#) noted that teachers also need social emotional learning. "If you want a better education system, the best way to take care of kids is to make sure that the people who interact most with the kids are taking care of themselves."

Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone in their classrooms by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students. Many school districts assume that teachers already have these competencies. "Although adults can develop these competencies (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013), they need to be built intentionally, assessed regularly, and continuously improved (Bouffard, 2018)." ¹

Teachers need to know how to explicitly teach SEL competencies as well as how to create a nurturing learning environment. This requires them to have SEL competencies of their own.² Researchers who looked

at this specifically suggest that the most important SEL competencies for teachers to have include self-awareness, social-awareness, cultural awareness, prosocial values, and self-management.³

Positive outcomes of SEL programs that support educators include reducing stress and job-related anxieties, and depression while increasing teachers' feelings of job control, warmth and high-quality interactions with students (Greenberg et al., 2016). These changes are linked to students' feelings of being connected to school and successful positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes.

At the school level, successful SEL programs depend on good leadership, staff working well together with shared goals that facilitate SEL instruction, and fostering a positive school culture that models social, emotional, and cultural competence.

¹ Retrieved from https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/11_CASEL-Program-Criteria-Rationale.pdf

² Retrieved from <https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/social-and-emotional-learning-is-for-teachers-too-55aaf1556c57>

³ Ibid.



“If you want a better education system, the best way to take care of kids is to make sure that the people who interact most with the kids are taking care of themselves.”

PSYCHOLOGY TODAY



Insights and Lessons —Theory into Practice

Chilton Independent School District (ISD) in central Texas is a small rural district with 540 low socioeconomic students. Superintendent Brandon Hubbard had been looking for an SEL program to help teachers, staff, and students develop the mental frameworks to push past economic and social barriers to higher levels of achievement. “I believe culture precedes achievement: we needed a culture of grit, resilience, and everything is possible to become and sustain a high-achieving school,” said Hubbard.

When Hubbard initially focused on getting buy-in from teachers, he understood that for the program to be successful, teachers had to invest in their own social-emotional health first. As teachers practiced the 7 Mindsets, they developed their own social emotional skills. The initial training was for all teachers and staff; even several board members attended. Hubbard wanted the new culture to start at the top before implementing the SEL curriculum with students.

“We launched Mindset Mondays in our district,” said Hubbard. “I purchased 7 Mindsets shirts for the team to wear each Monday just so we are all sending the same kind of message.” Before the beginning of the year, Hubbard met with teachers and staff to create a schedule of how to cover each mindset every Monday, and the implementation has been successful. “We still have Mindset Monday,” said Hubbard, “but teachers got so invested in the mindsets that pretty soon Monday wasn’t the only day they were talking about them and using them to address student behavior.”

“As a leadership team, we try new things to ensure our teachers are okay. In order to address the learning needs of our students, teachers need to be okay,” he said. We knew we would have to hit the ground running and knew once it started, it would be difficult and challenging.”

Lessons Learned in Chilton ISD

- Culture always precedes achievement.
- Staff and students need the mental framework of the belief system in order for sustained achievement to happen.
- If you want to produce good citizens and empathetic people, then you have to include SEL as part of what you do.
- Schools are the heartbeat of a community, especially in a rural district. If you want to change the community, you have to start with the school, and 7 Mindsets is a way to begin that transformation.
- Teachers’ confidence in their ability to be more effective increased with 7 Mindsets.
- Chilton also saw an increase in student performance and academic results.

Same Challenges, Different District

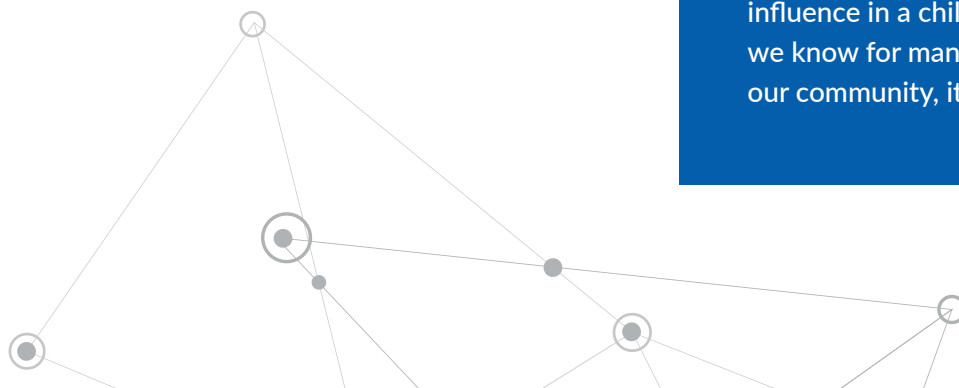
After a 2018 school shooting nearby at Santa Fe High School, administrators in New Caney ISD northeast of Houston decided it was time to do something intentional with social emotional learning. They believed with an SEL program for their 19 schools and 16,000 students, they could identify those in difficulty before they got to the point of violence. The district wanted a program that supported CASEL as an evidence-based program that addressed teachers' competency to teach SEL by developing a common language from K-12, increasing the depth of content and understanding at each grade level, and ensuring that it was developmentally appropriate.

"I felt that having a curriculum and having something that would give us common language across the district was really important," said Loree Munro, director of advanced academics and counseling. "The programs we were looking at didn't provide the teacher support that I felt was a critical element in implementation until we found 7 Mindsets."

The district won two grants to pilot 7 Mindsets in five schools. "Professional development should come first for a successful implementation," said Munro. "SEL begins with addressing the needs of your teachers first and getting them in step to have the right mindset. Then you can engage students and push through the curriculum aspects of the program." The pilots were so successful that the district decided to expand to 18 schools for Fall 2020. Due to the onset of COVID-19, multiple leadership groups participated in the virtual summer institute offered by 7 Mindsets. They also conducted back-to-school training virtually in the fall.

Lessons Learned in New Caney ISD

- Quantify the deficits for stakeholders so they understand the need for support. Use the research that is available.
- The district specifically wanted a program that invested in professional development for teachers first so they could be successful with implementing SEL for students.
- Piloting the 7 Mindsets program allows time for everyone to buy in. For pilot locations, New Caney picked strong schools with strong leaders who wanted to implement the program.
- The ability to positively influence students helps with their internal dialog. If educators can help students build perspective and mold perception, they can help shape student reality.
- For many of the students, educators and schools are the most significant influence in their lives. "Many people have their own ideas about who should be the major influence in a child's life, but we know for many kids in our community, it's us."



“Last year during the pilots we were measuring teacher SEL growth through teacher surveys before and after the year,” said Munroe, “and our 7 Mindsets teacher group showed growth in their own SEL.” The entire district benefitted from what was happening at the pilot schools because there was so much conversation about SEL across the district.

The principals from the pilot schools saw changes in both their teachers and their students after the first year and they have been able to leverage that success through this past year. “With each year, we will close the gaps in deficiencies and help build a healthy, functional group of students that will go into their future colleges and careers well prepared,” said Munro.

“SEL is not another thing on the plate, it is the plate. It’s the foundation on which we build student experiences.”

LOREE MUNRO

DIRECTOR OF ADVANCED ACADEMICS AND COUNSELING



A Wider View

When working with schools and districts this year, the big takeaway is how fatigued teachers and staff are, says 7 Mindsets' Director of Education Chelsea Buchanan. "COVID has been the catalyst that allowed administrators to begin seeing how important teacher social emotional health is," said Buchanan. "Teachers are struggling, and districts are trying to be intentional about SEL to better support teacher wellness."

During the initial training in schools, 7 Mindsets coaches hear many of the same things from teachers. "They'll tell us things like they're worried and anxious, and they don't know what's going to happen," said Buchanan, "which are the exact same emotions their students are feeling." The interesting thing about this realization says Buchanan is how surprised teachers are to recognize their own vulnerabilities. "Their brains are so wired to think about their students and what their students need, that it's a little uncomfortable for them to talk about what they need," said Buchanan.

However, the research is clear in its recommendation that investing in teacher SEL is necessary in order to maximize effectiveness for teachers, students, and school culture. "We want teachers to be happy to come to school every day and feel like school is their safe place, and that they know their coworkers and can trust them no matter how hard the work is. The team can lean on each other," says Buchanan. "Then they can work together to change the school culture."



The 7 Mindsets Difference

Years of research show that happiness and success are not predicated on what individuals know or where they come from; it is predicated on how they think. Mindsets are ways of thinking that influence feelings, thoughts, and actions. They are rooted in emotion and affect relationships and quality of life.

What separates 7 Mindsets from other PK-12 SEL programs is that it nurtures the mindsets of both students and educators. Unlike programs that focus only on skill-building, the 7 Mindsets methodology is based on a multi-year research effort into the world's happiest and most successful people. Researchers discovered that what they have in common is how they think — their mindsets.

The 7 Mindsets are:

1. Everything is Possible.



This mindset helps us understand that we are all capable of creating extraordinary lives. Every dream and positive vision of the future your students have should be encouraged.

Help teachers and students dream bigger and increase expectations with a more optimistic view of the future.

2. Passion First



Our lives should be focused on finding our unique genius and sharing it with the world to the maximum extent possible. Learn to make your dreams authentic and validate yourself from within.

Teachers and students can discover their unique talents and passions and align them with personal goals.

3. We are Connected.



Everyone who comes into our lives can help us live our dreams. Instill values in our children, in addition to sense of self, that cultivate curiosity and open-mindedness to all people, regardless of their difference in beliefs.

Teachers and students can learn how to develop empowering relationships and work with, for, and through others.

4. 100% Accountable.



Our lives are what we choose them to be in this and every moment. The greatest gift we can give our children is the confidence to fail, face adversity, and overcome challenges.

We take responsibility for our lives by becoming 100% accountable.



5. Attitude of Gratitude.



We build our lives on either positive or negative foundations. Practice gratitude regularly. Teach students how to focus their energy and attention on the good things in their lives.

Teacher and students can learn to appreciate what they have in life and bounce back more quickly from setbacks.



6. Live to Give.

To receive love, respect, and financial security, one must learn to give those things. Involving students in service projects allows them to help others while feeling the satisfaction of making a difference.

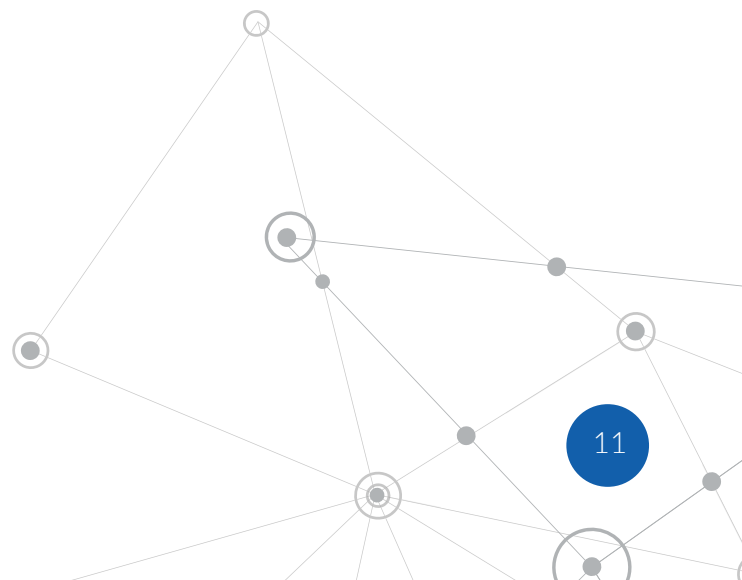
Help teachers and students embrace social responsibility and the importance of giving back.

7. The Time is Now.



All of our power exists in the moment. You cannot change the past and the future has not yet happened. Help students create an action plan to create the life they want.

Teachers and students can write a personalized life plan to take action toward realizing their goals and dreams.



The 7 Mindsets SEL program is anchored on a leadership development and coaching process to promote healthy school environments and meet the needs of all learners. Leadership teams work with 7 Mindsets SEL coaches to make data-informed plans for their districts or schools, address challenges, and recommend improvements throughout the implementation process. The process begins with a culture and climate needs analysis to inform professional development and instruction plans.

Mindsets-based SEL focuses on attitudes and perspectives rather than specific skills or habits to provide the foundation for better decision making. It creates meaningful conversations, connections, and relationships. It drives a positive self-concept and the ability to manage oneself effectively in a rapidly changing world. It has a positive impact on intrinsic motivation and on transforming lives in the classroom and beyond.

By positively changing the way individuals think about themselves and their future, the 7 Mindsets empower them to live lives of purpose, passion, and meaning. Students who have a firm belief in their potential, an optimistic vision for the future, and a strong sense of personal authenticity perform better academically and forge more substantial relationships in life.

By positively changing the way individuals think about themselves and their future, the 7 Mindsets empower them to live lives of purpose, passion, and meaning.

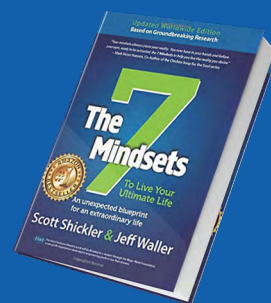


Conclusion

Decades of research have confirmed that social emotional competence can be taught and positively impact school cultures. To create a school culture with a growth mindset and a sense of possibility that prepares students with all the skills they need for academic and future success, it is imperative that schools begin with the social emotional competence of their teachers and staff. A positive school culture rooted in relationships models social, emotional, and cultural competence and offers long term improvements to students' skills, attitudes, social behavior, and academic performance.

Request a demo get free books

Request a demo of the 7 Mindsets Curriculum and Educator Resources and we will send you five free copies of the 7 Mindsets To Live Your Ultimate Life book so your team can dive into the origins and development of the 7 Mindsets.



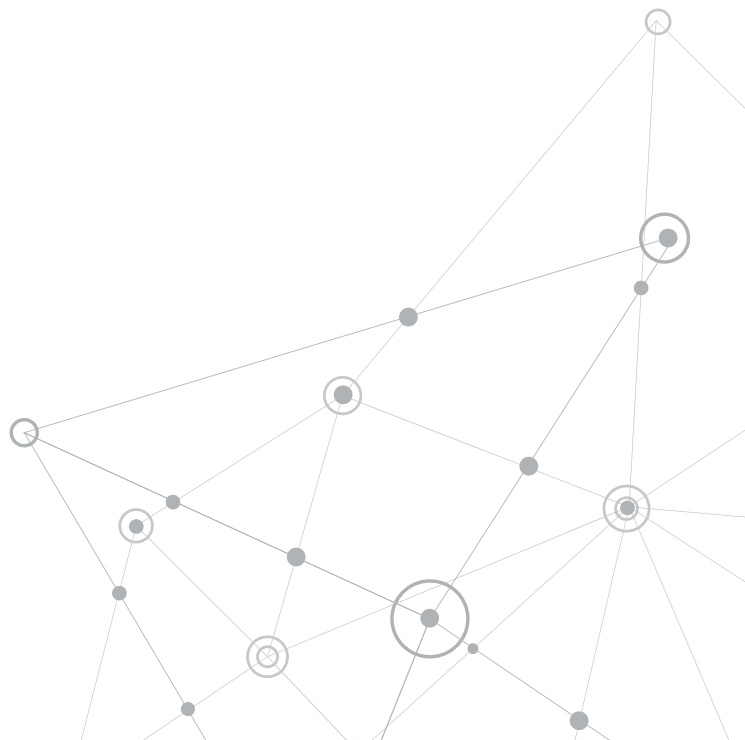
References

CASEL, "Evidence-Based Social Emotional Learning Programs: CASEL Criteria Updates and Rationale" (2020). Retrieved from https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/11_CASEL-Program-Criteria-Rationale.pdf

Gamel, Mimi, "Impact of Character Development and Empowerment Program on Grit and Resilience Growth in Early and Middle Adolescents" (2014). Dissertations, Theses and Capstone Projects. Paper 646.

Humphries, Marisha & Rivera, Roberto, "7 Mindsets Independent Research, Franklin Middle School, Minneapolis, MN" (2018). University of IL at Chicago for CASEL.

McGraw Hill. (2019). "Social and Emotional Learning is for Teachers, Too." Retrieved from <https://medium.com/inspired-ideas-prek-12/social-and-emotional-learning-is-for-teachers-too-55aaf1556c57>



7 MINDSETS

7 Mindsets offers a proven, research-based social emotional learning (SEL) solution that helps PK-12 districts and schools create and sustain positive school cultures rooted in healthy relationships. The 7 Mindsets SEL program has been implemented with more than 1 million students across the United States and internationally. Studies have shown that the program improves academic performance and student behavior, lowers suspension rates, and increases student resilience and grit. Evaluations also show that students who participate in the 7 Mindsets program demonstrate higher levels of hope, improved mental health, positive ethnic identity, and adaptability.

The 7 Mindsets program nurtures the mindsets of both students and educators. The complete web-based PK-12 curriculum has ready-to-teach courses that work with both in-person and virtual learning schedules. The courses include video, discussion prompts, activities, projects, and reflective journaling activities for students. Additionally, expert coaching, leadership training, and professional development help educators teach the 7 Mindsets and apply them to their own lives.

By providing a common language of SEL beliefs, the program provides the consistency and structure to unite and inspire the entire school community.

7MINDSETS.COM

