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Client: Herok12

Project: Blog Post

Objective: Improve search engine rankings and keep website fresh with new content

Project URL: <https://herok12.com/blog/social-emotional-learning-bringing-kindness-back-school>

Social and Emotional Learning: Bringing Kindness Back to School

Many are concerned that the world is an unkind place for their children. So what are we doing about it? Social and Emotional Learning may be the answer.

The mounting concern about the state of kindness in the world culminates in [a national survey](#) created by the Sesame Workshop. The survey consists of several questions from both the parents and teachers point of view, and seeks to both validate and promote the need for strong social and emotional learning programs in schools today.

[NPR covered the story](#) around Sesame Street's survey and the implications for teachers and parent's alike.

Concerning the problem, some 2,000 parents and 500 teachers who've taken the survey so far are agreed: "today's kids are growing up in an unkind world." They also agree "that learning to be kind is even more important than getting good grades."

"We ... were concerned what the long-term impact of that would be on children and society as children grow older," said Jeffrey D. Dunn, CEO of Sesame Workshop. "This survey confirms our concerns. It is time to have a national conversation about kindness."

This recognition of the unkind state of the world goes beyond a statement of fact. Eighty-six percent of teachers and seventy percent of parents in the survey "admitted to worrying often that the world is an unkind place for children."

For educators and parents alike, raising kids to be kind is of paramount importance—even more important than good grades.

Research backs up the sentiment that focusing on the emotional well-being of a child is just as important as their academic advancement. [As reported here on the Hero blog](#) previously, "numerous studies show that the development of life skills lead to a

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– Mayra Walters

CMO, TechSano

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student's long-term success academically and otherwise.”

One way to focus holistically on the whole child is to incorporate [Social and Emotional Learning programs](#), which helps teach life skills while yielding other favorable results, such as:

11% Academic Gains

A meta-analysis concluded that Social and Emotional Learning leads to an 11% point gain in academic achievement compared to students not involved with any SEL programs.

Favorable results on poverty

A 2015 report by the American Enterprise Institute and the Brookings Institution found that SEL competencies are “critically important for the long-term success of all students in today’s economy”

Improved Lifetime Outcomes

According to CASEL, a 2015 national study published in the American Journal of Public Health “found statistically significant associations between SEL skills in kindergarten and key outcomes for young adults years later in education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health.”

An 11:1 ROI

A 2015 study by researchers at Columbia found that “for every \$1 invested in SEL programming, there is a return of \$11.” That is an 11:1 return on investment, which is an incredibly powerful metric.

Schools must incorporate SEL into their curriculum to bring about the tangible results shown in the studies above.

[In a previous Hero post](#), we laid out the four steps to lay the groundwork for a successful SEL curriculum.

1. Change in climate and culture

“In order for social-emotional learning to happen, you have to change everybody’s mindset. My first year here in the district, I modeled growth mindset and positive thinking.’ The next year, the district began embedding social-emotional learning into the curriculum.” – John Carver, superintendent of Howard-Winnishiek Community School District in Iowa

2. Explicit Instruction

“It’s not enough to simply talk about social-emotional learning or role-model respectful communication and teamwork. Direct instruction helps students understand how their

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– Edward Phillips

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– Jan Murfield

President & CEO,
Junior Achievement
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bodies and brains respond to stress, and helps them learn other modes of acting and reacting.”

3. Academic Integration

“Well-prepared teachers can begin to weave lessons of persistency, grit, collaboration and resilience into academic instruction—and when that happens, students get the message that social-emotional learning is more than something to discuss once a week with a counselor.”

4. Reflection and Refinement

Assessing social-emotional skills is still debated among educators. The difficulty lies in the question, How does a district measure social growth objectively? Some districts ask students to gauge their skill level through a series of questions. Others assess social-emotional growth by analyzing attendance, discipline referrals, and GPA.

[Tools like Hero](#) can help districts measure social growth by capturing data on the core competencies of SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

When an SEL program is implemented, the results begin to shift the collective mindset of the student population. Having curriculums that focus specifically on the emotional growth of the child cultivates empathy and kindness, benefitting that student academically and socially, both short- and long-term.

Joseph was invaluable in the editing process and brought a fresh eye to the topic at hand. He had excellent follow through and was wonderful to work with. He is an excellent writer and we would be delighted to work with him again.

– Jody Demo-Hodgins

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