

EDUCATORS SPEAK UP: Social and Emotional Learning in Delaware

A survey of
pre-k through 12th grade
Delaware educators

Conducted by members of the Rodel Teacher Council

May 2017

A letter from the Rodel Teacher Council

Dear fellow Delawareans,

Do these sound like young people you know?

- Early learners who require healthy relationships and brain development to lay the foundation for school and life?
- Middle and high school students who need to learn the non-academic skills necessary to succeed in college and employment?
- Students who have experienced trauma and are dealing with the effects of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences?
- Students who struggle to maintain friendships with their peers, persist when they get stumped with a homework problem, or calm their mind on a particularly stressful day?

We see them in our classrooms every day. Just as we know that every student has a unique academic learning style, **we know that every student has unique social and emotional needs.** We see firsthand what the research attests—that social and emotional development is critical to students' academic and occupational success.

Students who participated in **evidence-based social and emotional skill-building programs** showed an **11-percent gain** in academic achievement.*

As educators, we recognize the importance of developing the whole child—not just their English and math skills, but their ability to communicate, collaborate, and empathize. We know this must start while children are young and continue through 12th grade. More importantly we know that social and emotional learning (SEL) must be embedded into the class curriculum alongside academics. In order to help us better understand the beliefs and perceptions of our fellow educators on SEL, **we surveyed more than 220 educators from pre-k through 12th grade and from every school district in Delaware, including vo-tech and charter schools, who shared their experiences and perspectives.**

We hope our findings contribute to the conversations underway so educators can work alongside families, policymakers, community members, and all education partners to address the social and emotional needs of every student in our state. **It will take all of us to develop a positive climate for SEL in our schools and communities.**

Thank You,
Rodel Teacher Council SEL Working Group Members

*Source: CASEL, 2017.

Rodel
Teacher Council
SEL Working
Group Members

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*Millsboro Middle School,
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Sherlynn Aurelio

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Community School,
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Karen Eller

*Stubbs Elementary School,
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Robyn Howton

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Brandywine School District*

Joyce Lester

*Bayard Middle School,
Christina School District*

Lori Nichols

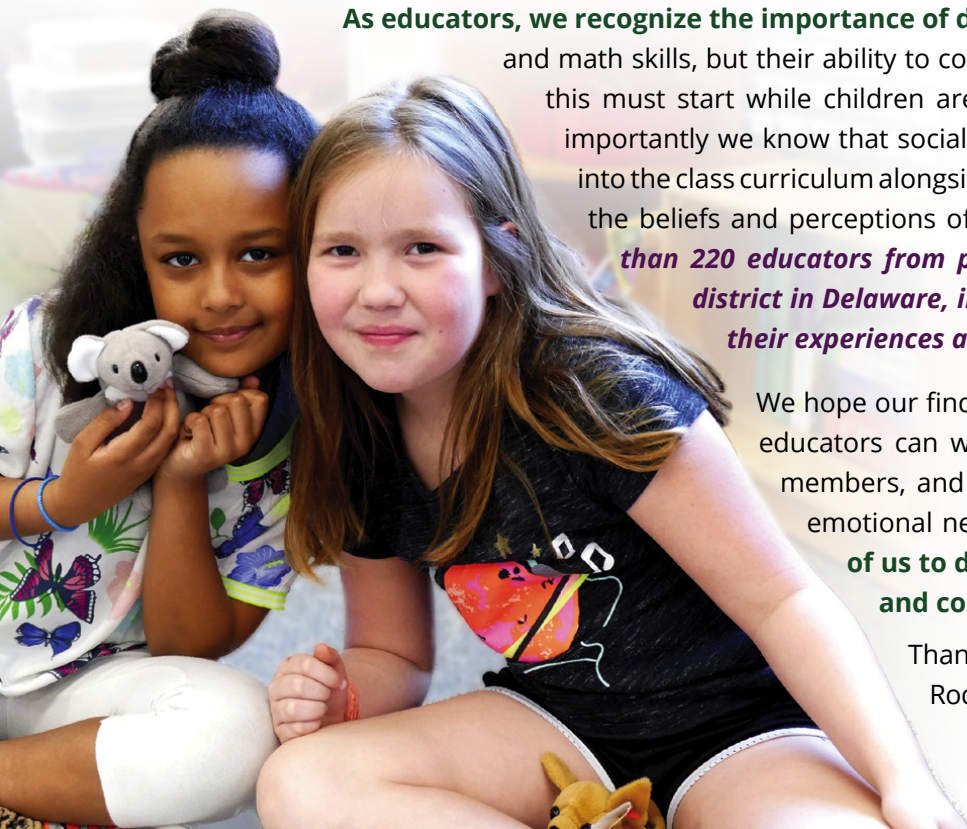
*Brandywine Springs School,
Red Clay Consolidated
School District*

Jermaine Williams

*St. Georges Technical
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New Castle County
Vo-Tech School District*

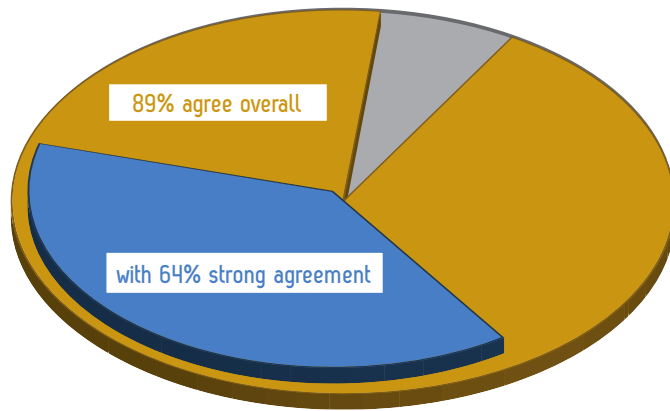
Michelle Wilson

*Booker T. Washington
Elementary School,
Capital School District*



Educators say SEL is critical for academic success

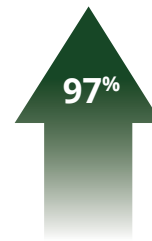
Nine out of 10 educators agree that schools should place more emphasis on SEL.



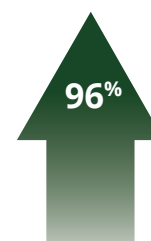
"Student behavior has a strong impact on student learning. Students need to learn how to work hard and persevere to accomplish their goals."

— Delaware Educator

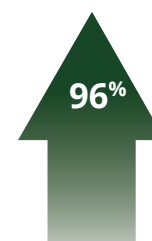
Nine out of 10 educators agree that supporting students in acquiring and applying social and emotional skills is an effective way to:



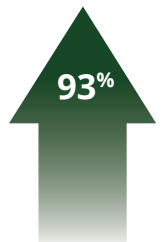
Improve student achievement and engagement



Improve student behavior



Improve school climate



Reduce school discipline

"Students that are not socially and emotionally prepared won't perform well in school academically."

— Delaware Educator

Here in Delaware, we have many terms to describe SEL

Managing emotions and behaviors

Health promotion

School culture

Self-regulation

SCHOOL CLIMATE

Adverse childhood experiences (ACES)

Healthy brain development

Soft

Skills

Quiet time

Emotional intelligence

Communication skills

Responsiveness

Resiliency

Whole child development

Noncognitive skills

GRIT

Character education

Mindsets

Deeper learning

Trauma-informed care

Positive youth development

Behavioral supports

Problem-solving

Brain development

Student engagement

21st century skills

Character education

Employability skills

Project-based learning

Empathy

What is SEL?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines social and emotional learning as the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

In surveying educators, we used the CASEL definition for SEL.

Although SEL is already in classrooms, schools, and districts across Delaware, it comes in many different shapes and sizes

Educators identified **40 SEL initiatives being implemented in their schools**. These include curricula, counseling supports, and programs such as:

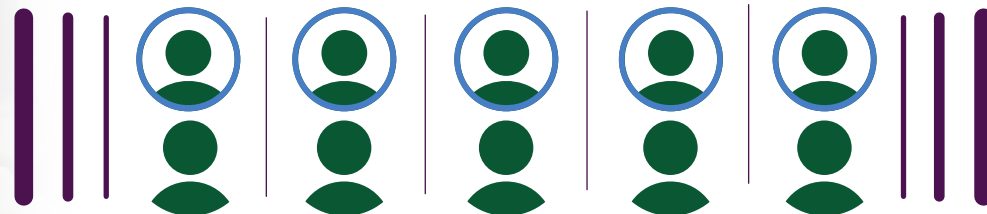
- Responsive Classroom
- Positive Behavior Supports
- Growth Mindset
- Positive Action
- Caring School Community
- Trauma-informed Practices
- Communities in Schools
- The Leader in Me
- Mindfulness
- Quiet Time
- Restorative Practices
- ...and many more



Responsive Classroom and Positive Behavior Supports were the most frequently reported initiatives. Morning Meetings, pictured here, are one component of Responsive Classroom.



About **one-quarter of educators (26%)** reported that students are being taught social and emotional skills through a **schoolwide program or curriculum**.



Five out of 10 educators (51%) reported that students are being taught social and emotional skills through **informal classroom practices**.

According to educators, some of the SEL approaches are evidence-based and others may not be. Programs or curricula may be developed at the classroom, school, or district level and levels of implementation support for educators vary.

There are challenges in how to measure SEL and know what's working

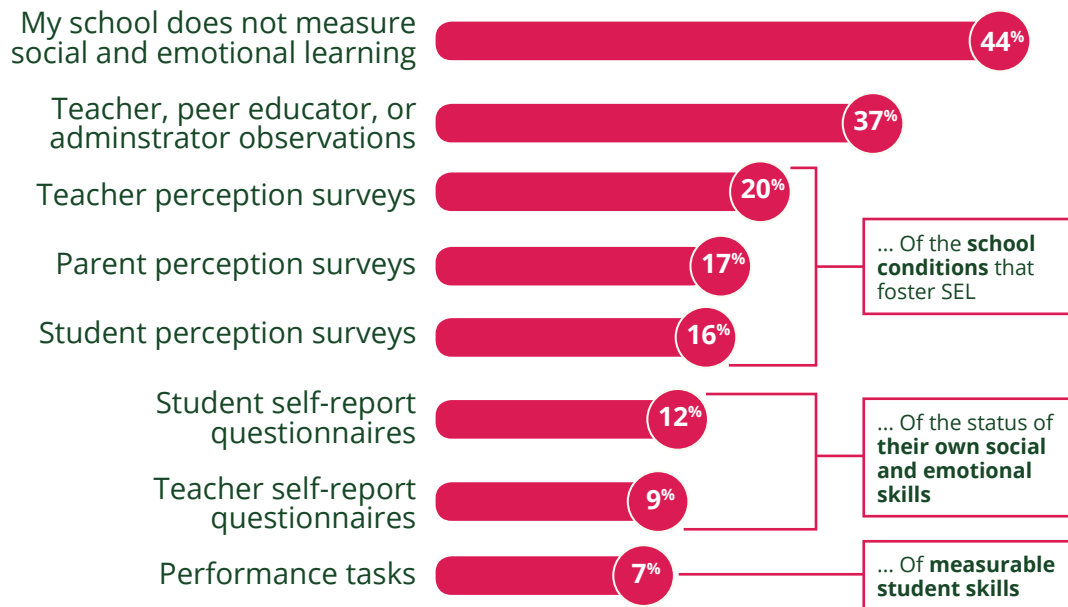
According to educators, the most effective strategies for developing social and emotional skills are:

- 1 **Integrate** social and emotional learning into curriculum and school activities
- 2 **Build a sense of community** and foster collaborative relationships with students and parents
- 3 **Model appropriate behaviors**

"This should be a set of skills to be adapted and used where needed rather than a one-size-fits-all program."

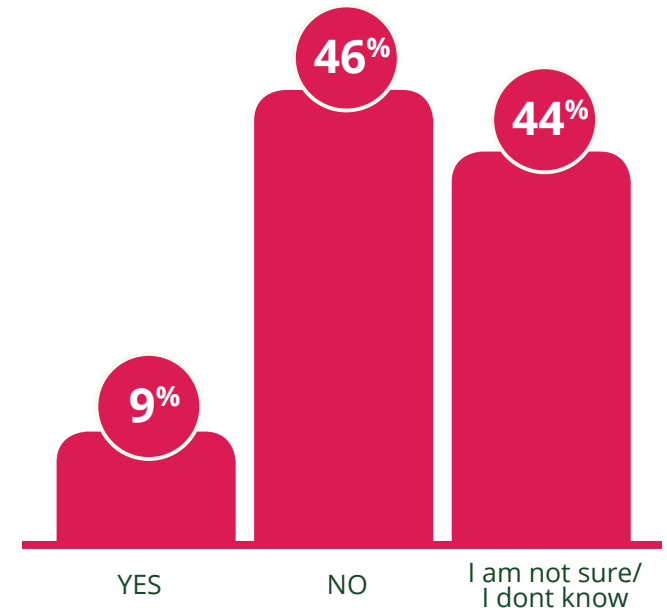
— Delaware Educator

Which, if any, do you or your school use to **measure students' social and emotional learning**?



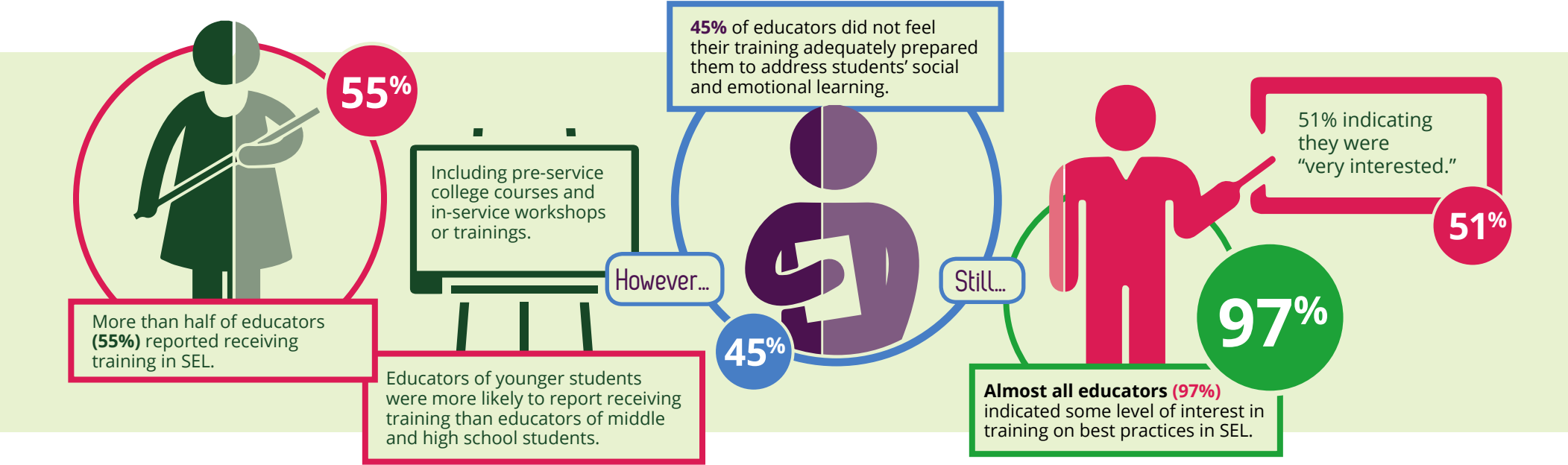
Educators conveyed that they don't have one consistent way to measure students' social and emotional learning and know what's working. **About four in 10 educators (44%) said their school does not measure social and emotional learning. Educators reported being more likely to measure perceptions of school conditions than measure student development of SEL skills.**

Does your school have **standards for the development of social and emotional skills**?



Only about one in 10 educators (9%) reported that their school had standards for social and emotional learning—that is, common expectations for what students should know and be able to do at different stages of development.

Educators overwhelmingly want more training, supports, and standards to better address SEL



More than nine out of 10 educators say explicitly adopting state standards for social and emotional skills—combined with training—would help to:

- 1 Provide guidance on how adults can support students through teaching practices (97%, with 59% strong agreement)
- 2 Increase awareness of and legitimacy to social and emotional skill development (97%, with 58% strong agreement)
- 3 Provide guidance on how to create a positive learning environment and school climate essential for SEL (97%, with 61% strong agreement)

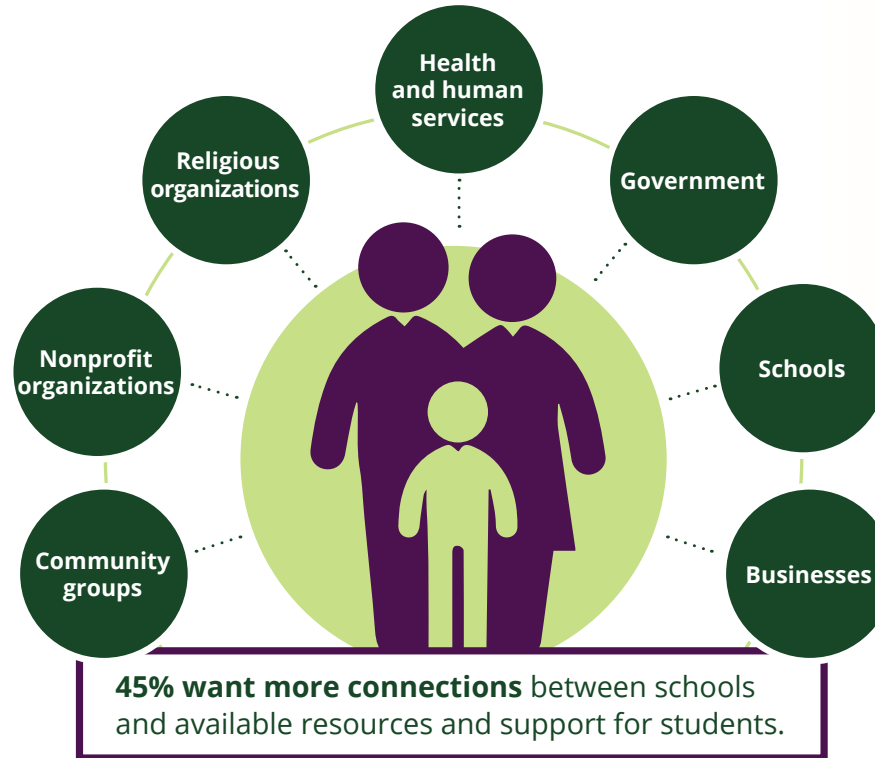
Educators want to learn best practices so they can:	% Response
Engage students in their own social and emotional development	64%
Incorporate social and emotional skill development into classroom curriculum	58%
Foster an environment to develop students' social and emotional skills	56%
Deliver multi-tiered support for different types of students' social and emotional needs	56%

Educators know they can't do it alone

While they see a role for themselves in implementing SEL, **nearly six in 10 educators (57%) want more engagement from parents and families.**

"Teachers find themselves taking care of their communities—academically, emotionally and financially. This adds to retention issues."

— Delaware Educator



"While schools can certainly help to improve a student's social and emotional skills, it will never be adequate without support from parents and families."

— Delaware Educator

"It is critical to align this work with others....integrate and collaborate with already existing efforts."

— Delaware Educator

How can you get involved?

Educators and all,

- Share your learnings and efforts with us and with other Delawareans by tweeting using #SELinDE.
- Learn more about the research behind SEL and work underway in our state and nationally at bit.ly/RodelSEL.
- Keep up with the latest developments in SEL by signing up for the Rodel newsletter at bit.ly/RodelSignUp.

Parents and families,

- Ask your child's teachers and school or district administrators how they support whole child development in your school, and find out how you can get involved.
- Check out the social and emotional development tips at www.parenttoolkit.com for every grade level.

Policymakers and district leaders,

- Explore with educators the recommendations they believe will be effective, such as additional training, classroom strategies, and community supports. Learn more about these topics at bit.ly/RodelSEL.
- Study the SEL initiatives and practices across the state what's working to better understand what's working for students.

Thanks for sharing your perspectives!

More than 220 educators shared their experiences and perspectives, representing pre-k through 12th grade, novice and veteran educators, from every school district in Delaware, including vo-tech and charter schools. Educators who participated were mostly classroom teachers (67%) included specialists, counselors, and others. All quotations are from responding educators. While the perspectives are representative of Delaware educators, this was not a scientific survey, and there may have been selection bias. All figures are rounded.

What is the Rodel Teacher Council?

The first Rodel Teacher Council was convened by the Rodel Foundation of Delaware in 2013 to elevate the voices of public school teachers, represent the diversity of the teaching force in Delaware schools, provide a venue for teachers to weigh in on important issues affecting their work, and help set the course for the next generation of teaching and learning in Delaware. The council is a group of teacher leaders dedicated to finding solutions, improving their craft, and leveraging their voices for the benefit of their students. Members represent all three counties, a variety of grade levels and subject areas, and bring a broad cross-section of leadership perspectives. In all, council members boast over 369 years of combined teaching experience. To access other resources published by the Rodel Teacher Council, including their *Blueprint for Personalized Learning* and accompanying policy briefs, visit bit.ly/RTCInfo

What is the Rodel Foundation of Delaware?

The Rodel Foundation of Delaware is dedicated to helping Delaware build one of the finest systems of public education in the world. We work in partnership with policymakers, researchers, educators, and business and community members to catalyze new ideas and drive impactful student outcomes. The Rodel Foundation of Delaware was established in 1999 as an endowment from the family of Bill Budinger.

www.rodelfoundationde.org



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