

# Trauma-Informed Practices and Social-Emotional Learning

Necessary in the Face of the COVID-19 Pandemic

An emotionally regulated young person is a young person who's ready to learn.

## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Is an Integral Part of Creating a Trauma-Informed Learning Environment

As a part of a trauma-informed learning environment, SEL can:

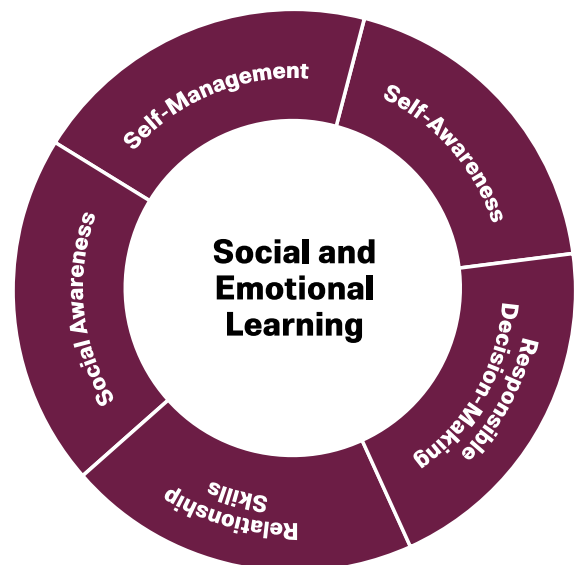
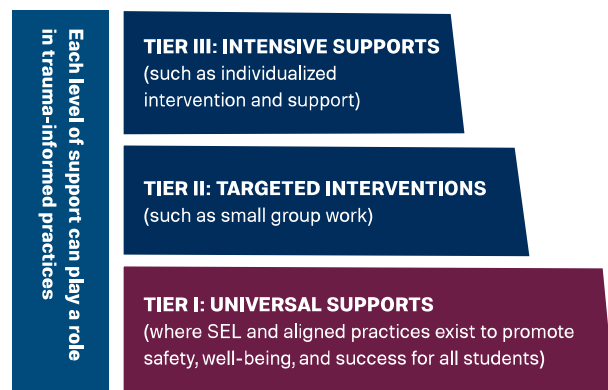
- Support self-regulation, coping skills, and other protective factors critical to mitigating the negative impacts of trauma<sup>1,2,3</sup>
- Promote resiliency<sup>4</sup>
- Improve positive social behaviors and academic performance<sup>5</sup>
- Reduce emotional distress and risky behaviors<sup>6</sup>
- Produce a lasting and positive effect<sup>7</sup>

## Trauma Is Common, but We Must Be Proactive in Addressing It, Especially Now

Most people have experienced at least one type of traumatic event as a young person.<sup>8</sup> In times of disaster, sources of trauma—such as abuse, violence, and other adversity—may increase.<sup>9</sup> There is reason to believe abuse is on the rise since the pandemic began.<sup>10</sup> And while schools and school systems expand their use of online technologies, there also may be greater exposure to internet safety risks, such as cyberbullying and online sexual exploitation.<sup>11</sup>

## Failure to Proactively Address Trauma Will Hinder Young People's Ability to Learn

- The effects of trauma and adverse experiences can lead to challenges in self-regulation, problem-solving, and communicating socially and emotionally, as well as other risky or challenging behaviors.<sup>12,13</sup>
- Trauma can hinder young people's academic success.<sup>14</sup>



## Trauma-Informed Practices That Include SEL Can Mitigate the Negative Effects of Trauma

- After times of disaster or mass trauma, self-regulation, self-efficacy, supportive relationships, and problem-solving skills are critical.<sup>15</sup>
- A trauma-informed learning environment can help mitigate the impact of trauma and promote protective factors for young people.<sup>16, 17, 18</sup>
- A trauma-informed learning environment helps students feel safe and supported—socially, emotionally, and academically—and these supports extend to students' relationships, self-regulation, and well-being.<sup>19</sup>

## Policy Recommendations During the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Increase access to trauma-informed supports that promote resilience and help mitigate the negative impacts of trauma.
- Make SEL universally accessible to young people in their learning environments.
- Prioritize and coordinate universal SEL as part of a comprehensive approach to supporting students' learning in the wake of the pandemic.
- Increase funding available for universal SEL across all learning settings, whether in school, after school, or during remote learning.

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