

# New Poll Shows Overwhelming Support Among Parents for Teaching Social and Emotional Skills in Schools

Parents who say their child's school teaches social-emotional learning (SEL) overwhelmingly want them to continue to do so (with more than 1 in 4 wanting *more*) AND most parents whose kids don't get SEL today strongly want schools to do so

Just over half of parents say their child's school incorporates SEL into curricula and across party lines 8 in 10 want to maintain or increase SEL content. It's a similar story among the parents who don't believe their child is being taught social and emotional skills – they support bringing SEL to their classroom.

## Among the 54% who do

**29%** say their child's school should be doing more on SEL

37% of Democrats	23% of Independents	25% of Republicans
------------------	---------------------	--------------------

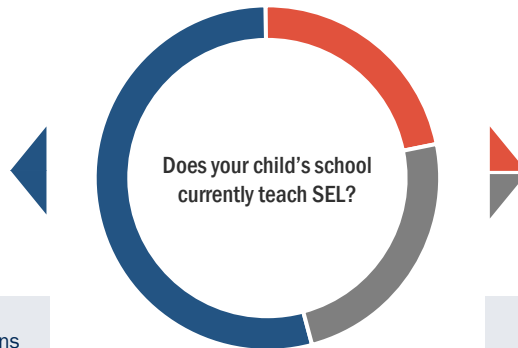
**52%** say their child's school is doing about the right amount

42% of Democrats	63% of Independents	56% of Republicans
------------------	---------------------	--------------------

**19%** say their child's school is already putting too much focus on this

21% of Democrats	14% of Independents	19% of Republicans
------------------	---------------------	--------------------

Does your child's school currently teach SEL?



## Among the 22% who don't + the 24% who are unsure

would **strongly support** their child's school teaching SEL **59%**

66% of Democrats	63% of Independents	48% of Republicans
------------------	---------------------	--------------------

would **somewhat support** their child's school teaching SEL **27%**

19% of Democrats	28% of Independents	33% of Republicans
------------------	---------------------	--------------------

would **oppose** their child's school teaching SEL **14%**

15% of Democrats	9% of Independents	19% of Republicans
------------------	--------------------	--------------------

Parents largely take the term "SEL" at face value – and there aren't significant negative top-of-mind associations with it

Despite some criticism of SEL by a few politicians, almost no parents associate the term "social-emotional learning" with anything negative. On the contrary, parents understand that SEL is about learning social skills, tools to understand and manage their emotions, and how to cope with challenges.

When you hear the term 'social-emotional learning' what comes to mind for you? What does this term mean, in your opinion?

Showing coded open-end responses



## Parents prioritize a range of skills that SEL helps students develop...

In particular, parents want schools to instill confidence in kids, and for their children to learn essential life skills like communication, decision-making, and self-discipline that are crucial for success in school and their futures.

Most important skills that students need to be successful throughout life  
% Most important skill | % Next 1-2 important skills | % NET Top 3



...and see how teaching SEL creates a positive classroom environment where kids learn the skills they need to succeed – in school and in the future.

Potential benefits of SEL: How important is this?  
% Important (NET 6-7 of 7)

Creating <b>positive learning environments</b> at school	78
Preparing students with the <b>skills they need for their future</b>	77
Preparing students with the <b>skills they need for the workplace and careers</b>	76
<b>Increasing academic achievement</b> by helping students learn how to focus and be productive	75
Teaching students <b>how to cope with stress, hard times, and challenging experiences</b>	73

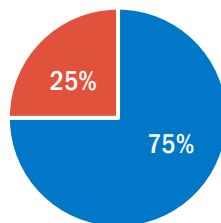
When presented with arguments for and against teaching SEL in the classroom, parents overwhelmingly agree that schools can and should be teaching students the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in school and life.

When parents are shown both the case for teaching life skills at school and criticisms that are being mounted against SEL, 3 in 4 agree with the rationale for SEL. For parents, this isn't a political issue: it's about their kids learning skills they need to thrive.

Which of the following statements do you agree with more?

**Parents should be the ones teaching their kids about social and emotional skills – not teachers.**

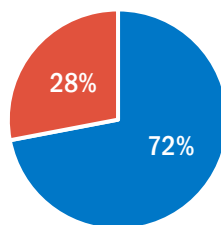
Classroom time should be spent on academic subjects, not leaving parents out of the loop or overstepping their role by telling kids how to act or what values to have.



**Students' social-emotional development starts at home – but it continues in the classroom and in afterschool programs,** where students spend substantial time with their teachers, coaches, or mentors. **Parents and schools should stay connected and work together to teach the social and emotional skills kids need to thrive,** and ensure all students feel valued and accepted.

**Students' mental health issues should be dealt with by trained professionals** like therapists and social workers – it is unfair and irresponsible to expect teachers to fill a role that they aren't trained or qualified for.

Classroom time should be spent on academic subjects, not leaving parents out of the loop or overstepping their role by telling kids how to act or what values to have.



**Doctors and mental health professionals agree: students who learn social and emotional skills at school are more likely to succeed** in college, in their careers, and in life in the long run. This isn't about therapy, it's about preparing kids to thrive.

### Methodology

Benenson Strategy Group conducted online interviews with n=1200 parents of school-aged children from April 15-23, 2022. Using census data and other demographic targets, the sample was weighted by geography, gender, race, age, education, and 2020 vote to ensure it was proportionally representative of K-12 parents nationwide.

The overall margin of sampling error is ±2.8. It is higher among subgroups. Due to rounding, displayed answer choices may not always add up to 100.