

*Educating the mind without  
educating the heart is no education at all*

—Aristotle



# EMPOWERING EDUCATION

Mindfulness-Based Social & Emotional Learning

## A Practical Guide to School-Wide Social & Emotional Learning



### Curriculum Overview

*Empowering Minds* is a K-8 Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum based on the principles and best practices of The Collaborative for Academic & Social-Emotional Learning ([www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)). The curriculum blends the best of mindfulness, cognitive behavioral theory, and neuroscience in lessons that are experiential, fun, focused, and teacher friendly.

Each lesson features a Core Content lesson that can be taught in 30 - 40 minutes, an Academic Extension lesson that deepens and reinforces key themes through standards aligned literature and writing tasks, and a Video Walkthrough that allows teachers to see the lessons in action and train at their own pace. Click one of the links below to view a sample lesson:

- [K-2 Sample Lesson](#)
- [3-5 Sample Lesson](#)
- [6-8 Sample Lesson](#)
- [Video Testimonials](#)
- [Curriculum Scope & Sequence](#)

*Empowering Education* is a non-profit organization that partners with each school to design an implementation model that fits the unique needs of each school culture. Effective SEL is about much more than any curriculum, so we work together to create school-wide culture shifts and practices to support the healthy emotional development of students and staff.

Empowering Education delivers a comprehensive SEL curriculum that is fully aligned with CASEL's core competencies and recommended best practices, including: explicit skills instruction, school-wide implementation, integration into academic curriculum, teacher instructional practices (high-quality training and ongoing support), and organizational, climate, and cultural strategies. There are few other curricula that effectively combine SEL and mindfulness and fully align with CASEL's best practices.

Table of Contents	
SECTION	CONCEPTS
<a href="#"><u>What?</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of Social-Emotional Learning</li> <li>• CASEL 5 Core Competencies</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Why?</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence for SEL</li> <li>• Benefits of SEL</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>How?</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality implementation</li> <li>• SEL Approaches</li> <li>• Teacher Instructional Practices</li> <li>• School-Wide Implementation</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Theories</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mindfulness</li> <li>• Cognitive Behavioral Theory</li> <li>• Brain-Based Learning</li> </ul>
<a href="#"><u>Who We Are</u></a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mission &amp; Vision</li> <li>• Organizational History</li> <li>• Core Beliefs</li> </ul>



## WHAT? OVERVIEW OF SEL

According to CASEL, the leading organization for the research and advancement of social and emotional competencies, SEL can be defined 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.”* (<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning>)

Every lesson in the Empowering Mind’s curriculum supports at least one of CASEL’s Five Core Competencies. Taken as a whole our curriculum is a comprehensive foundation for all five competencies.

“CASEL has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies. The definitions of the five competency clusters for students are:

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.”

(<http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies>)

In simple terms: SEL educates the heart, while traditional academic learning educates the head. The 21st Century model of educating “the whole child” is the process of bringing these two together. Our mindfulness-based curriculum is designed to support both the social-emotional and academic growth of your students.



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## WHY? SEL BENEFITS & EVIDENCE

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated significant academic, behavior, social, emotional, and economic benefits to school-wide implementation of Social & Emotional Learning (SEL). These benefits include<sup>1</sup>:

- An **average 11-percentile gain on standardized achievement tests**
- Improved social & emotional skills; improved attitudes about self, others, and school; and increases in positive classroom behavior.
- Decreases in conduct problems, aggressive behavior, and emotional distress

Results of a 2015 study<sup>5</sup> show statistically significant associations between kindergartener's SEL skills and key young adult outcomes across multiple domains:

Kindergartners who were stronger in SEL competence were more likely to:

- graduate from high school
- complete a college degree
- obtain stable employment in young adulthood

And less likely to be:

- living in public housing
- receiving public assistance
- involved with police
- in a detention facility

Another 2015 study on the economic value of SEL, “shows considerable benefits relative to cost, with an **average cost-ratio of about 11 to 1**...this means that, on average, for every dollar invested equally across the six SEL interventions, there is a return of eleven dollars, a substantial economic return.”<sup>2</sup>

Further still, the American Enterprise Institute and The Brookings Institution convened a 14-month working group on poverty and opportunity. This bi-partisan consensus committee recommended whole child education and SEL as one of their top recommendations for “*(Improving) education in ways that will better help poor children avail themselves of opportunities for self advancement.*”<sup>3</sup>

Mindfulness has also been shown to have significant positive impacts on students and teachers. Study after study reveals that mindfulness practices are effective methods for increasing positive emotions, focus, memory, attention, and compassion while decreasing stress and negative emotions. Many new studies have even demonstrated that mindfulness boosts the immune system, increases the density of gray matter in the brain, and is an effective treatment for depression, anxiety, PTSD and obesity. Mindfulness has also been linked to decreases in teacher stress and burnout<sup>6-10</sup>

Though the 'why' of SEL may seem intuitive to many, much of the current movement in education has directly opposed SEL. Schools and principals under pressure to perform have emphasized test scores over learning, academic achievement over student well-being, and 'instructional time' over peer-peer interaction. All of this has come together to create schools, teachers, and students who are remarkably underequipped to navigate the social and emotional terrain of life.

Ironically, schools that have effectively implemented school-wide SEL initiatives demonstrate significantly higher academic achievement than schools that are strictly focused on academics<sup>1</sup> It just makes sense. Imagine how you felt after a difficult emotional event in your life. How well did you perform at your job? Were you able to focus on your work? How did it influence your relationships with people around you? Similarly, we cannot ask students to behave, focus, and perform without giving them the necessary tools to cope with life's ups and downs.

Others argue that school is for "learning" and that social skills should be left to parents and families. The reality is that many families are not equipped to provide this type of education. If schools do not provide for students social and emotional growth, then many students will graduate without the necessary intelligences that are required in today's socially driven workplace. Well-rounded schools educate children about art, physical education, music, mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies. Thus, any school that claims to educate "the whole child," must also adopt a school-wide vision for SEL.

Beyond the direct emotional and academic benefits to your students, SEL is now accepted as a critical factor in economic outcomes on individual and societal levels. Traditionally, economic success and employability was strictly linked to increasing cognitive skills (intelligence) in education. Recent research in economics, psychology, neuroscience and education, however, all point to a more unified model of cognitive and non-cognitive skills. In other words, increasing social-emotional skills through effective SEL programming in schools will have a direct effect on graduates' employability and earnings, as well as the overall economic strength of countries embracing policies that support effective SEL programming and reform.<sup>12</sup>

### **Empowering Education Data:**

Initial evidence gathered from 2014 – 2016 teacher reports demonstrated **significant increases in students' Persistence, Self-Control, and Social-Competence**. An additional evaluation during the 2015-2016 school year revealed two important findings:

- "Statistically significant correlation between Teacher SEL Rating and prevalence of on-task behaviors ( $p < 0.001$  (0.000)), indicate that **teachers' level of classroom integration Empowering Education's Mindfulness-Based SEL curriculum has an impact on students' behavior, regardless of control or experimental group.**"
- "This program evaluation has identified a trend that **Tier 3 students' classroom behavior may improve alongside that of their Tier 1 and Tier 2 classmates when teachers integrate specific SEL lessons and attitudes into the classroom environment.** This represents a potentially significant and impressive step forward for SEL implementation in public schools."

To obtain more rigorous evaluations, we have partnered with the University of Colorado Denver to conduct a full-scale program evaluation. This evaluation is currently underway and will include the highest standard of measurement available in the field of SEL. Results are expected in the summer of 2017. [View full reports](#)



## HOW? IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

No curriculum is sufficient unto itself for effective SEL programming. *How* SEL is implemented far outweighs the importance of *what* is taught. Research supports this; the success of even the most evidence-based SEL program is dependent on high-quality implementation.<sup>1</sup>

High-quality implementation is a school-wide initiative that includes school policies, discipline procedures, and administrative support; however, quality implementation starts and ends with the teacher. If you are a teacher reading this and feeling the pressure, we have good news for you: “high-quality” implementation is not defined by a teacher’s expertise with social-emotional content, rather, it comes down to the teacher’s buy-in or openness to the program and the quality of delivery.<sup>13</sup> This is a critical distinction for two reasons:

1. Teachers do not need to be SEL experts to effectively teach SEL.
2. Poor-quality implementation of SEL programming (teachers who do not demonstrate buy-in) has actually been shown to have negative effects on students.

The teacher’s attitude in teaching SEL is perhaps the single most critical factor in the success of the programming.

While many programs offer high quality training in mindfulness and SEL, these trainings can often be costly and time consuming. Our goal is to make SEL accessible to as many students and teachers as possible by bridging the training gap with highly structured core content lessons, academic extensions, and video walk throughs:

- **Core Content Lessons:** Every lesson is scripted using effective teacher language and includes notes on tone, body language, and other delivery factors. The hope is not that teachers rely on the script, but rather that it provides a solid foundation for even the most inexperienced teacher. We strongly recommend that teachers review the script before teaching, create their own teaching outline, and then make the lesson their own.
- **Academic Extensions:** Each lesson includes extension resources designed to enhance, deepen, and reinforce the core lesson concepts throughout the week and school year. We’ve done the work for you in locating and assembling complementary lesson resources. For more information on student and teacher resources found in the Academic Extensions please see the following page.
- **Video Tutorials:** Our video tutorials provide instant access to concise, high-quality coaching specifically tailored to each lesson, as well as the chance to see the lessons in action at our pilot schools. Teachers can use the tutorials to “train” at their own pace and even review moments before teaching.

All we ask is that you bring an open-mind and a sincere intention to deliver the content to the best of your ability. Your students will learn more from your presence than they will from your words.

**ACADEMIC EXTENSIONS:**

The *Empowering Minds: A Mindfulness-Based Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum* includes academic extension resources designed to enhance, deepen, and reinforce the core lesson concepts throughout the week and school year. We've done the work for you in locating and assembling complementary lesson resources. Extensions will be updated frequently as new resources are recommended by teachers implementing our program.

**Student Resources:** Making literacy connections with the core lesson concepts is a strong feature found in the student resource section.

- **Featured books** include a focus on both literature text and informational text to best align with the expectations found in the English/Language Arts Common Core State Standards (ELA-CCSS). Text-dependent, short-constructed response questions or graphic organizers provide opportunities for students to respond to text.
- **Extended-response writing tasks** can be used as additional evidence of lesson concept attainment, providing students with a choice of several writing prompts. The three text-types of writing found in the ELA – CCSS are also embedded throughout the 30 core lessons. Opinion/argument writing prompts are suggested for 10 core lessons, informative/explanatory writing prompts are suggested for 10 core lessons, and narrative writing prompts have been suggested for 10 core lessons. Student writing self-assessment checklists and writing rubrics accompany each of the three text-types of writing – differentiated by grade level.
- **Learning links** provide additional ready to use student activities focused on the core lesson concepts, as well as access to video links that further reinforce lesson concepts.

**Teacher Resources:** One of the cornerstone philosophies of the Empowering Minds curriculum is that lesson effectiveness is directly related to the comfort level of the teacher in delivering mindfulness-based social emotional learning lessons. This section has been designed to include quick access to resources for teacher professional development and to offer support in deepening one's own practice.

**Standards Alignment:** This section includes a complete alignment to the academic standards embedded in both Part I Lessons and Part II Extensions. Where appropriate, alignment includes the following standards:

- English/Language Arts Common Core State Standards
- Colorado Academic Standards for Science
- Colorado Academic Standards for Physical Education
- Colorado Academic Standards for Comprehensive Health
- 21st Century Learning Student Outcomes

**References:** Every attempt has been made throughout the Empowering Minds curriculum to cite the author of original source material. Empowering Education is committed to recognizing individuals and organizations in the field that are pioneering efforts to advance social and emotional learning in our schools. We regret any oversights that may have occurred and will be pleased to rectify omissions immediately.

**SCHOOL-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION:**

Beyond teacher buy-in and high-quality delivery of SEL, school-wide and district-wide support for SEL are critical factors linked to program success. Even the most highly qualified and emotionally competent teacher will lack efficacy without administrative and colleague support. This is because SEL cannot be restricted to specific times, lessons or programs – it is inherent in the culture of every classroom, playground and lunchroom interaction. Each time you interact with a student or another adult in the building, students are observing, imitating and learning social and emotional norms. Think of the lessons in this curriculum, the explicit instruction, as the necessary coursework for the practicum of daily interactions in a school setting.

A true school-wide approach requires a clear vision, commitment and honest re-evaluation of everything from school culture and discipline practices to details like daily schedules and effective transitions. These changes typically require time and dedicated leadership, and will be unique to your schools' needs. For this reason, we **strongly recommend that every school form a dedicated SEL Leadership team** to take ownership over the planning and implementation of SEL efforts, policies, and practices. Ideally, this team will include school administration, school mental health staff, and teacher representatives. You may also consider how student and parent voice are represented on this team.

Here are some critical factors and considerations to review with your planning team:

- **Teacher & Administration Buy-In:** Research shows that high-quality SEL implementation requires that teachers have personal buy-in. Consider how your team can build intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for teachers to engage in SEL.

In our experience, it is critical that this buy in begins with administration. Success in school-wide SEL is much more likely when administration sends a clear message of support and sets clear expectations for when and how SEL should be taught. There should be no ambiguity here, and SEL should be emphasized as much as academic performance.

- **Scheduling:** When are teachers going to teach the lessons? We have found it is necessary for teachers to have a designated time on their schedule to teach the SEL lesson, otherwise it becomes another thing they 'just don't get to.' These times can be at the discretion of the teacher, or you can designate a universal time as a team.

It is helpful to make the schedule a publicly accessible document so that specials teachers, admin, etc can be informed of when SEL lessons are happening and given the chance to participate in lessons.

Take into consideration student behavior when scheduling lessons (e.g. end of day and after lunch tend not to work as well as early morning). It can be beneficial to schedule the lessons early in the week so that the skills can be practiced and reinforced throughout the week. Advisory periods, morning meetings, and homerooms are frequently leveraged for SEL time.

- **Sequence:** Our lessons are arranged in a logical and sequential order that, when followed, will progressively build SEL skills from basic to more advanced. However, some schools may choose to modify the sequence according to your schools' specific needs. For instance, you may modify the sequence to align more directly with your character trait themes for each month. Choose a sequence that fits your needs.
- **Weekly Reminders:** To keep momentum going and make sure everyone is on the same page, designate a person(s) to take responsibility for sending out a weekly reminder including, at minimum, 1) which lesson you are teaching that week 2) The link to that lesson. If you have a weekly staff newsletter this is the perfect place for it
- **Accountability:** Discuss as a team how you plan to hold teachers accountable for teaching SEL lessons. Can this come from a place of "how can we support you in being successful" vs "gotcha?" Can you reward teachers who are doing an exceptional job integrating SEL?

One consideration is to plan observations. If there are lead teachers who feel confident in teaching the SEL skills, can they make time to observe the SEL lessons and provide coaching/feedback?

To begin with, looks-fors can be quite simple (Are they teaching the lesson? Is there evidence that they are prepared for the lesson? Are students actively engaged in the lesson? What are next steps for this teacher?).

- **Reinforcing SEL Skills School-Wide:**-Begin to have conversations about how you will reinforce SEL concepts outside of the classroom. You can reference the "Classroom" and "School Wide" sections at the end of each lesson for ideas.

Public displays and posters can be changed and added each week to reinforce the "SEL Skill of the Week." In fact, we strongly recommend that you do post visual reminders of the weekly skills throughout the building. Consider designating a person or team to be in charge of displays.

Can you incorporate concepts into weekly assemblies? Can you reward students publicly who have demonstrated SEL competencies? Can SEL skills be built into transitions, specials, lunches, etc?

Our video walk-throughs provide an easy way for non-classroom staff to become familiar with the SEL concept each week.

- **Teacher ownership of lessons:** SEL services are frequently facilitated and taught by support staff and outside providers. This can provide a great starting point, however, the ultimate goal is for SEL to be integrated into all parts of the school day and academics. There is no better way to gain expertise in an area than to teach it, so by having classroom teachers take ownership of SEL lessons we create deeper opportunities for teacher and student mastery of SEL skills throughout the school week. This time also tends to enhance teacher-student relationships.

- **Assemblies and events:** Schools with a cohesive school culture typically have frequent assemblies and all school events built into their schedule. Introducing and reinforcing lesson concepts at school assemblies will deepen opportunities for integration and are also ideal times to recognize and celebrate students and teachers who embody specific SEL skills.

A little creativity will go a long way in creating opportunities for SEL centered events. For instance, the gratitude lesson suggests that you create a large “Gratitude Wall,” that serves as an interactive display for students to share what they are grateful for.

- **Peer mentoring:** Students learn social skills most effectively through peers that are slightly older than them. Consider building mentoring opportunities into your programming, or even having older students teach SEL lessons to younger students. For this reason, the K-2 sequence begins one lesson behind the 3-5 and 6-8 sequence in our curriculum.
- **Family-School Partnering:** How can you keep parents informed and involved in the SEL initiative?. A simple starting point would be including a brief blurb on the “SEL Skill of the Week” in your family newsletter. Hosting workshops for parents is another option.
- **School Discipline Practices:** Discipline proceedings are a crucial opportunity to facilitate SEL. School policies on discipline typically lean towards one of two categories: punitive or restorative. Punitive practices focus on correcting “wrong” behavior through punishment in order to promote adherence to a fixed set of rules. Restorative practices, on the other hand, emphasize developing an understanding of how one’s actions affect others, taking responsibility for your actions and eliciting student-generated ideas on how to repair any harm that occurred.

We believe that restorative practices are a much more effective method for fostering social-emotional competence and strongly recommend that your school begin discussions and evaluations of your current discipline practices.

Practicing SEL skills can support equity in school discipline. For instance:

- Do students have the opportunity to use coping skills, write a feeling statement, use restorative practices to repair harm, do mindful coloring, mindful breathing, etc. when involved in a discipline situation?
- Can these coping and calming strategies be considered as an alternative to punitive measures? For instance, if a student successfully uses a calming strategy and then writes a feeling statement to deliver to their teachers/peers, could this be considered a logical consequence?
- Is there an appropriate “take a break space” where students can utilize their mindfulness skills?.
- Is your staff properly trained in restorative practices?

- **School Values & Mission:** There is a reason that successful businesses and organizations spend a significant amount of time combing over the fine details, words and phrases of their mission and values statements. Words shape reality, so an intentional mission statement can be the rudder that steers the entire ship. If your school has not already done so, we encourage you to create a team to review and update your mission and values statements to reflect the social and emotional climate you desire. Post this publicly, and then, of course, the real work comes in putting words into action.
- **Academic Integration:** How can SEL skills be integrated into academic curriculum and instruction? Our academic extension lessons provide a thorough list of resources and writing prompts to support integration with literacy and writing.

Use of active engagement strategies (cooperative learning structures) is another excellent way to incorporate SEL skills into academic instruction.

- **Timing:** While a block of about 40 minutes is ideal for our lessons, teachers may or may not get through the core content lessons in the allotted time. Our main priority is the quality of delivery, so if this means teachers need to slow things down and are not able to teach all of the content – by all means do so.

Lessons can be broken up over several class periods, days or even weeks. In fact, the lessons are organized in sequence from basic to advanced skills, so if you do not teach all of the lessons in the first year students will still receive a complete foundation. Find a pace that works for you and stick with it. Over time, you will gain experience and proficiency in teaching these lessons in shorter time periods.

- **Materials and Books-** Does the SEL team want to purchase supplies and/or anchor texts for teachers to use? You can reference the lessons for supply needs and the academic extensions for text ideas..



## THEORIES:

Theory, as we use the term here, refers to a lens through which one can view the world. The three theories we have chosen to inform our curriculum are currently considered the most “evidence-based” lenses for understanding and teaching SEL. Each theory serves a unique purpose and when taken together can offer students a well-rounded understanding and experience of SEL topics.

**Mindfulness:** Mindfulness can be summed up in two words: paying attention. More completely, mindfulness means paying attention to what is happening from moment-moment without judgment. This practice of non-judgmental awareness (mindfulness) has been strongly linked to increases in positive benefits in schools, e.g., attention, self-control, participation, focus, enhanced school culture, and improvements in teacher mood. Mindfulness has also been linked to significant decreases in stress, distractibility, and depressive symptoms.<sup>14</sup>

We use mindfulness as a foundational theory in our curriculum. As a theory, mindfulness is one of the fastest growing and most evidence-based practices to foster social-emotional and academic growth.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT):** While CBT is a form of psychotherapy it is also widely used as a preventative teaching strategy. The use of CBT as a preventative teaching strategy to reduce childhood anxiety has been well documented.<sup>15</sup> We will be using CBT as an educational strategy, not conducting therapy, and feel that CBT offers students insight into challenging limiting beliefs like, ‘I’m not good enough at math,’ and ‘No one really likes me.’ CBT also offers invaluable insights into how our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors interplay with one another.

**Brain-Based Learning:** Words like “neuroscience,” and “brain-based learning,” are gaining a lot of buzz in the current educational climate – and for good reason. It simply makes sense to understand the hardware you are working with before trying to install the software. Teaching children about the form and function of their brain is akin to giving them an “owner’s manual,” of their brain and thereby empowers them to make positive choices regarding their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to support healthier brains.<sup>16</sup>

The combination of **mindfulness, brain-based learning, and CBT** provides students with the necessary knowledge and tools to:

- increase self-awareness and self-regulation on a moment to moment basis.
- modulate behavior based on an understanding of the biological underpinnings of human behavior and emotions.
- make responsible decisions based on an understanding of the dynamic interplay between thoughts, emotions and behavior.



## WHO WE ARE

### *Mission*

Empowering Education enables learning by contributing to the social and emotional wellness of students, families, and educators.

### *Vision*

Foster a sense of empowerment in the 21st Century student that drives them to seek healthy, positive relationships with their friends, family, and in their community, ultimately resulting in positive contributions to society as a whole.

### *Objective*

*To provide Social and Emotional Learning services to schools in order to help create a well-rounded, emotionally confident student.*

### **Core Beliefs:**

- Social-emotional learning is as critical to a child's education as reading, writing, mathematics, science and the arts.
- Every child deserves a high-quality social-emotional education.
- Every teacher with a sincere, positive intention is capable of teaching and modeling SEL.
- Classroom teachers are the most effective source for teaching SEL.
- Effective SEL is a school-wide effort and is inherent in every personal interaction in the building.
- SEL curriculums and trainings should be affordable and accessible to all.
- Success is achieved through effective partnerships between schools, families and community partners.

### **Visions:**

We believe there is a lot of power in sharing our goals and visions. This enables transparency, accountability, and motivation. We want you to know who you are working with. Here are our long term goals written in present tense to reflect where we hope to be as an organization and as an educational community:

- Social-Emotional Learning has been adopted nationwide and is a requirement for all students.
- Empowering Education is an active leader in the SEL community and has made significant contributions to the policy, advocacy, and science of SEL.
- Empowering Education's curriculum has been approved by CASEL as an evidence-based curriculum.
- Empowering Education provides high quality online training and support to any school implementing our curriculum.
- Teachers completing our online course receive continuing education credits and access to an online community of educators dedicated to SEL.
- Empowering Education provides a full library of videos and resources for teachers, students and parents.
- We feel proud, stable, and sustainable as an organization and our work continues to align with our core values.
- Our services and products continue to be distributed in equitable ways that align with our mission to provide all students with access to high-quality SEL.

**History:**

Empowering Education (EE) was founded in 2009 by Mr. Andreas Wilfong, a 17-year business owner. Mr. Wilfong was inspired to found EE after witnessing firsthand his own son struggle with the social-emotional challenges that face so many adolescents today. As Mr. Wilfong became actively involved in helping his son, he realized most other students were struggling with similar issues. There was a pattern of inadequate social and emotional skills that was not being addressed by schools. When he saw the improvements in his son's ability to function in a social context after being exposed to a formal SEL program, he felt a personal responsibility to bring these proven and highly successful concepts to the mainstream classroom, making the life-changing benefits available to all students.

As Mr. Wilfong has said frequently, "our goal is to have a positive impact on the lives of as many students as possible." This goal is based on the belief that SEL must be an integral part of education from preschool through high school, considered as essential to education as reading, writing, and arithmetic.

During the past six years, EE has successfully engaged in collaborative partnerships with ten public schools and two charter schools to reach over 8,000 students at all levels of learning. Our own experience and current research overwhelmingly shows the linkages among SEL, student outcomes, and school performance.

Cody Wiggs, the author of the curriculum, is a Master's level counselor who brings his clinical expertise to the educational world. He has spent the last 6 years on the ground in public schools training teachers, teaching students, and working with administrators and families to find the most effective ways to deliver quality SEL. We have learned a lot from these lessons and our work has evolved from our original elective course to what we believe is a streamlined and effective method for implementing quality SEL school-wide.

Through our partnerships over the years we have learned a simple, but important lesson: every school has unique needs and challenges, thus, any successful SEL program must be tailored to the specific culture and community of each individual school. There is no panacea or silver bullet for SEL; it must start with a sincere commitment from every teacher and administrator and requires ongoing effort and learning from all involved.

Our curriculum provides a starting point, but the real magic happens when we put the lessons in the hands of classroom teachers. By providing a foundation for teachers to build on, they have brought the lessons to life in ways that surpassed our expectations and intuitively link the content back to their academic curriculum and daily routines. It is the responsibility of every educator in the building to facilitate SEL at all times and in every interaction. SEL must be taught, modeled, and built into the school culture. This is hard work. After witnessing the transformations in our partner schools, we assure you it is well worth the effort.

We are here to support you in this work. As your school examines and changes its culture around SEL we will make every effort to be available for the questions and challenges that will inevitably arise. We are dedicated to high-quality SEL implementation to support the social, emotional, and academic growth of every student, teacher, and parent that encounters our curriculum.

Please contact us with any questions, comments, feedback or requests for support:

[info@empoweringeducation.org](mailto:info@empoweringeducation.org)

[www.empoweringeducation.org](http://www.empoweringeducation.org)



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