



## SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) Research Document 2

This research document has been developed by the Student Wellbeing Unit to support schools and in particular Student Wellbeing Coordinators in the development and implementation of a Social Emotional Learning (SEL) strategy at the school level. The context is School Improvement and the location of SEL within a whole school approach to student wellbeing.

### Themes

- *Towards a definition*
- *Rationale*
- *Benefits of SEL*
- *CEOM Student Wellbeing Strategy 2006–2010*
- *Implementing SEL*
- *A VELS imperative*
- *A working tool*
- *What does SEL address?*
- *What does the Research say?*
- *Key Terms*
- *References*
- *Resources*

Education has been defined as learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Until now, knowing and doing have dominated ... This is set to change (Roffey 2006).

### Towards a definition

**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** is the process through which we learn to recognise and manage emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave ethically and responsibly, develop positive relationships, and avoid negative behaviours (Elias et al. 1997).

In the school learning context, SEL is the process for integrating thinking, feeling and behaviour to achieve important social/life tasks, meet personal and social needs and develop the skills necessary to become a productive, contributing member of society.

### Rationale

Multiple, robust research studies in recent years demonstrate that strong social and emotional skills facilitate academic development, enhancing a student's success both at school and in the life pursuits that follow.

Educators, researchers and policy makers are increasingly aware of the importance of SEL as an integral part of education. This strategic inclusion will ensure that the school's main purpose and mission – 'development of the whole person (spiritually, intellectually, morally, physically, socially and emotionally)' is fulfilled (CEOM 2006).

### Benefits of SEL

#### SEL has been demonstrated to:

- increase academic competence
- increase motivation to learn
- reduce anxiety
- improve attention
- improve study skills
- increase commitment to school and the time devoted to school work
- improve school attendance
- reduce suspensions and expulsions (CASEL 2006)

## Research indicates gains for schools which include:

- an improved classroom climate
- more effective learning
- clear improvements in behaviour, which may lead to improved school attendance
- increased motivation
- improved morale of teachers and students
- improved learning outcomes for students

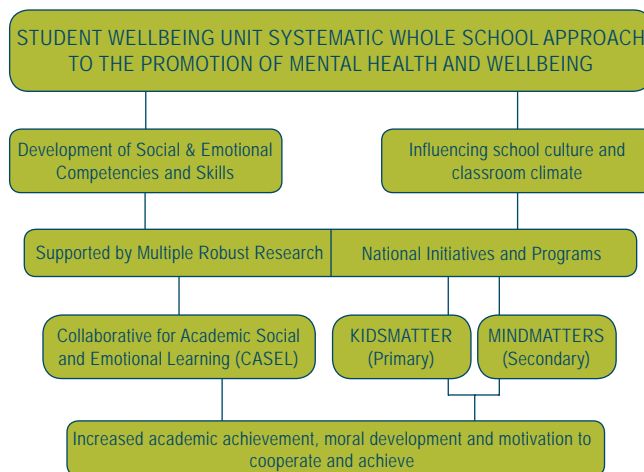
(Durlak 1995; Durlak & Wells 1997; Catalano et al. 2002; Wells, Barlow & Stewart-Brown 2003).

## CEOM Student Wellbeing Strategy 2006–2010

The CEOM Student Wellbeing Strategy is clear in its acknowledgment of the links between social and emotional competence and academic success. These links include:

- Students who are more able to apply effective levels of concentration in the academic and social domains
- Students who are socially competent and more likely to have productive relationships with teachers and peers
- Students whose effective social interaction enhances intellectual skills such as problem solving and tolerance of diverse opinions
- Students whose strong pro-social peer networks enable more conducive learning
- Students who have adequate levels of key social competencies that are required to form friendships or belong to relatively stable social groups, benefit academically. For example, they receive mutual assistance, model academic skills for each other, increase each other's classroom engagement and promote motivation for achievement
- Students who are experiencing a sense of acceptance create a high degree of connectedness and belonging, which also motivates greater interest in curriculum activities and increased participation in the broader life of the school.

The conclusion that can be drawn from both earlier and more recent research studies is that early social competency and pro-social orientation and behaviour appear to pave the way for later social and academic success.



## Why Teach SEL?

- Emotions affect how and what we learn
- Schools are social places – relationships provide foundation for learning
- Effective as classroom management strategy
- Reduces barriers to learning
- SEL skills can be taught
- Aligns with the academic agenda of schools – has a positive impact on academic performance
- Provides acknowledgement and support for things teachers already do

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## Implementing SEL

Many schools are already engaged in promoting and implementing aspects of SEL. There is a need, however, to recognise and sustain those elements of the school environment that support SEL and to improve the aspects which do not. This is most effectively done when holistic and coordinated approaches are established that educate mind, body and soul.

The most effective approach to the development of social and emotional learning is one that has as its focus the total school environment. Learnings take place when they are embedded in the wide range of experiences and aspects of school life, they then promote emotional and social wellbeing for all who work and learn in schools.

SEL can significantly enhance the protective factors that encourage healthy behaviours. SEL can also increase the capacity of all students to become 'knowledgeable, responsible, caring, productive, non-violent and contributing members of society' (Zins et al. 2001).

## A VELs Imperative

The Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELs) have provided a guide to schools in the key areas of academic learning and have placed a particular emphasis on the physical, personal and social learning needs of students.

Research clearly shows that in schools where SEL is integrated as a part of the curriculum, there is an increase in the students' preparedness for and receptivity to learning. Student attachment to school is also fostered. These factors are strongly linked to academic success (Blum, McNeely & Rinehart 2002; Osterman 2002).

## Linking SEL with VELs

### VELs

- **Physical, personal & social learning strand**

Health and physical education

- Health knowledge and promotion

Interpersonal development

- Building social relationships
- Working in teams

Personal learning

- The individual learner
- Managing personal learning

Civics and citizenship

- Civics knowledge and understanding
- Community engagement

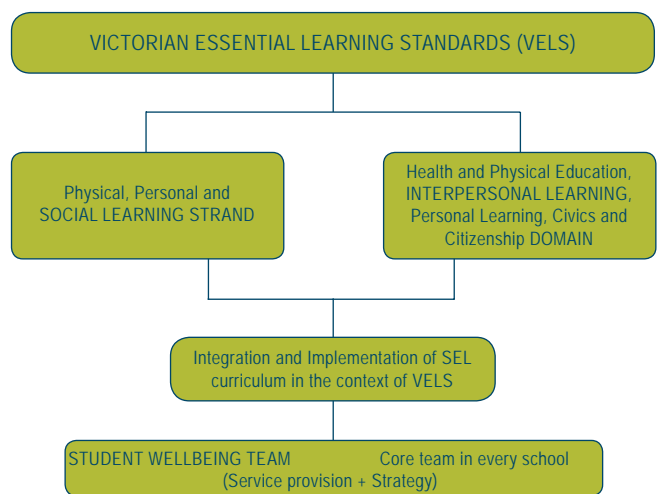
- **Interdisciplinary learning strand**

Communication

- Listening, viewing and responding
- Presenting

Thinking processes

- Reasoning, processing and inquiry



## Key Messages

- Wellbeing is at the core of learning and School Improvement.
- The focus of our work is related to school environment and classroom practice.
- Service delivery is related to empowering schools.

## Improving Learning Outcomes for All

- The focus is the development of an optimal learning environment to contribute to School Improvement and learning and teaching.
- The promotion of a school culture including structures, processes, programs and policies to create a safe, welcoming and inclusive school.

# STUDENT WELLBEING STRATEGY SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) COMPONENT

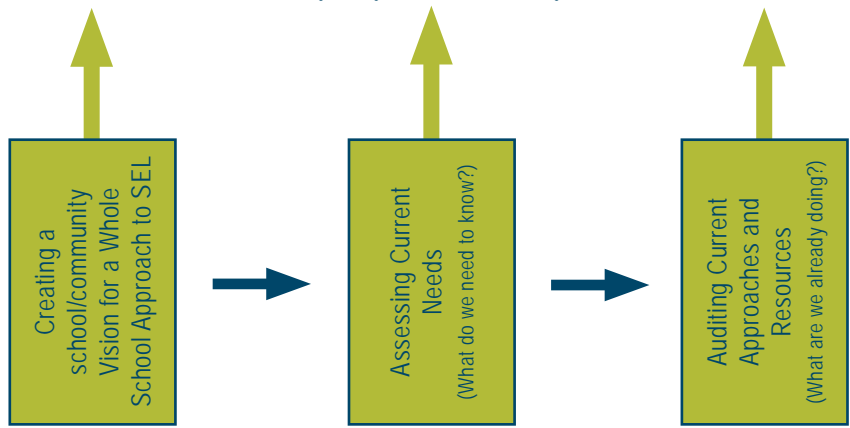
A Working Tool to support implementation of SEL at your school

Progress	Completed	Well established	Partly established	Not at all

- Utilise existing **core team** to establish the importance of and common vision for SEL
- **Raise awareness** of staff through provision of **Professional Learning**, e.g. briefings/staff meetings, etc.
- Develop a **SEL vision statement** which articulates the school community commitment


- Access and adapt tools to measure SEL needs – refer to **School Improvement Plan**
- Establish SEL needs of school community
  - staff
  - students
  - parents

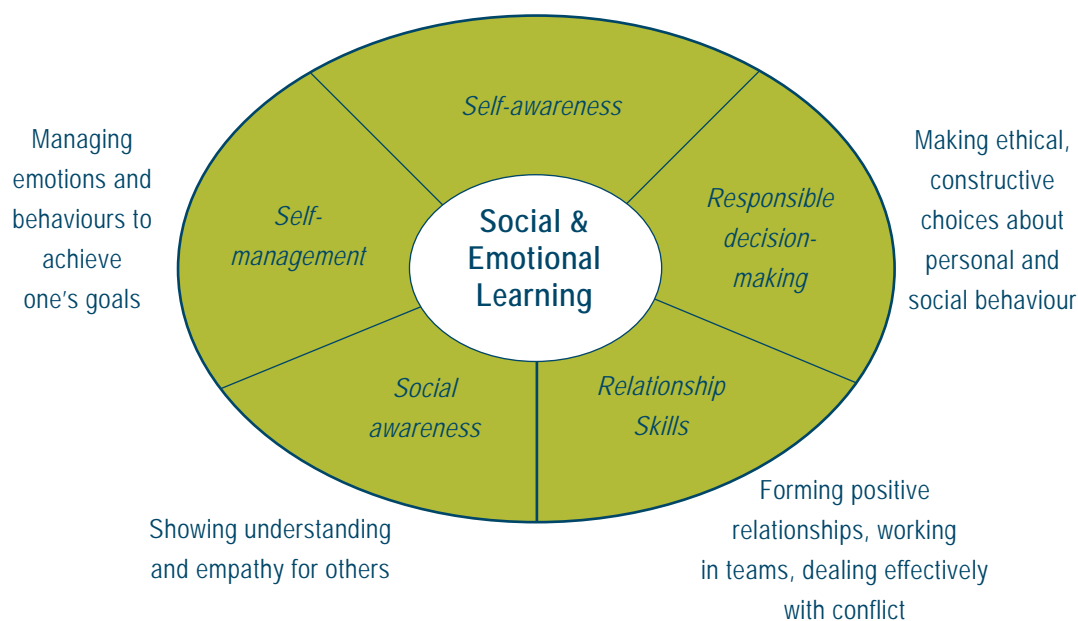

- Collect **baseline data** re SEL needs
- Audit current curriculum teaching & learning activities, approaches around SEL (implicit and explicit)
- Identify **priorities for action**





## What Does SEL Address?

Recognising one's emotions and values as well as one's strengths and limitations



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## The National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools

This Framework provides schools with a set of guiding principles to achieve the following:

- To improve outcomes for individuals, groups and society
- To improve relationships
- To know yourself and others
- To enable good decision-making
- To behave ethically
- To increase understanding and tolerance of other people

The promotion and modelling of relational values, such as care and compassion, respect, responsibility, understanding and inclusion, are central to achieving these aims. The development and implementation by schools of a SEL curriculum which enables the acquisition of social and emotional skills which reflect these core values will contribute to the connection and wellbeing of the school community.

## CEOM Student Wellbeing Unit SEL Strategy

### Components

- Professional Learning
- Liaison
- Data collection
- Audit Tools
- Documents
- VELS and SEL
- Resources
- Framework

### Professional Learning

- PL days x 3 – SWCs 2006/2007 & support to school clusters
- Student Wellbeing Unit ongoing PL in this area via seminars, conferences and support to schools
- Component of University of Melbourne Master of Education (Student Wellbeing)
- Component of ACU Postgraduate Certificate in Inclusive Schooling (Student Wellbeing)

### Liaison

The Student Wellbeing Unit is liaising with:

- Academic colleagues @ Uni of Melb & ACU
- School colleagues
- CEOM Regional School Advisers
- CEOM Student Services Staff Group
- CEOM School Services Staff Group

### Data Collection

Through the School Review process in the context of School Improvement

- Using SWCs and Core Teams Audit Tools provided by CEOM SW Unit
- Inform identification of current practice and areas for future implementation

### Audit Tools

SW Unit developing/adapting Audit Tools to support schools in the implementation of SEL:

- SW Strategy SEL Component handout

### Documents

CEOM Research Document 2 titled 'Social Emotional Learning' includes:

- Key definitions, rationale, evidence-based research
- Links with VELS and the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools

### SEL & VELS

- Evidence-based research (academic papers)
- School-based work of Sr Anne Porter (acting as a critical friend to the SW Unit)
- Ongoing discussions with CEOM School & Student Services Staff Group

### Resources

Variety of SEL resources to support implementation of a SEL Strategy at system and school level:

- Websites, e.g. CASEL
- Bookshops
- Academic Articles
- University, school, CEOM colleagues

### Framework

Framework to support phased strategic approach to implementation of SEL at school level:

- Phase one: Exploration (gathering information & raising awareness)
- Phase two: Implementation (PL & audits of current practice)
- Phase three: Sustaining the initiative (classroom & school-wide initiatives)

## Key Terms

**Emotional Literacy** – the ability to understand, express and manage our own emotions and respond to the emotions of others, in ways that are helpful to ourselves and others (Weare 2004).

**Emotional Intelligence** – the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and generate feelings which facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer and Salovey 1997).

**Social and Emotional Competence** – the ability to understand, manage and express the social and emotional aspects of one's life in ways that enable the successful management of life tasks such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Elias et al. 1997).

**Social Emotional Competency (SEC)** – skills, attitudes and behaviours that make up an emotionally literate person (Weare 2004).

**Social Emotional Learning (SEL)** – how competencies are learned through the taught curriculum and the entire school experience (Weare 2004).

**Student Wellbeing** – refers to student's physical, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and development (CEOM Student Wellbeing Strategy 2006-2010).

**Wellbeing** – a holistic, subjective state which is present when a range of feelings, among them energy, confidence, openness, enjoyment, happiness, calm and caring are combined and balanced (Stewart-Brown 2000).

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Zins, J, Weissberg, R, Wang, M & Walberg, H 2004, *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?* Teachers College Press, New York.

## Resources

Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning <[www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)>.

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People Making Mental Health + Life Issues – Books + Resources <[www.peoplemaking.com.au](http://www.peoplemaking.com.au)>  
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