
Why and how should schools prioritize children's social and emotional competence?

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What is social and emotional competence?

Many different frameworks describe social and emotional competence (for instance CASEL, UNICEF, OECD, UK/ Young foundation, EU LifeComp). While the wording differs, the essence is similar. The overall goal of social and emotional learning is to build a set of social and emotional competencies to increase well-being and resilience in young people. The different frameworks can be summarised into three overall competencies:

1. Personal: Self-regulation, self-awareness and self-acceptance
2. Social: Communication, collaboration, empathy and social awareness
3. Learning to learn: Managing learning and critical thinking

Why should schools prioritize children's social and emotional competence?

Social and emotional competence is essential in the promotion of mental health and well-being in children and young people. The literature is clear in its conclusions and recommendations: All schools should and must work with social and emotional learning (SEL). Effective SEL strategies targeting children lead to increased wellbeing (short and long-term), increased academic achievement (short and long-term) and in the long-term increased success in the labour market and life in general (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).


How should schools work to effectively promote children's social and emotional competence?

First of all, there is a need to acknowledge these skills alongside the more academic skills children learn in school. EU has in its recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning (2018), acknowledged "Personal, social and learning to learn competence" (LifeComp) as being one of eight key competences. This is not the case in the BOOST partner countries. The results of the BOOST project and its recommendations has a clear message that the time for acknowledgment of social and emotional competence is now! The recognition of these competencies alongside other academic skills in school will require the separate systemic levels, school owners and schools to work systematically and deliver results with regards to SEL work. To ensure systematic work with SEL in schools the BOOST project has developed an approach to accommodate this work.

In the BOOST project we learnt a lot about what works and what does not work when schools work to promote social and emotional skills in children. We have seen that there is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to this



work. What works in one context does not necessarily work in another context. One thing that seems to be common across schools, contexts and countries is the importance of a whole-school, organizational approach to this work. As a result, the BOOST consortium has developed what we call the BOOST approach. The BOOST Approach consists of a 5-step guide to organise and promote social and emotional wellbeing in a school, along with two accompanying guides. One to facilitate shared social and emotional learning among all school staff, and one to help with creation and sharing of SEL tools. By following the BOOST approach and its principles, the aim is for school staff to achieve what we call “the BOOST mindset”. This means that all school staff, regardless of their role at the school, are both aware of and capable of positively influencing children’s well-being, resilience, and ability to learn.



**To read more about the BOOST approach,
and download the three guides, go to:**

www.boostapproach.com

To read more about the BOOST project, go to:

www.boostproject.eu

SEL frameworks:

- Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): <https://casel.org/>
- UNICEF: https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AR3_Full-Report_2018.pdf
- OECD: https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AR3_Full-Report_2018.pdf
- UK/ Young Foundation: https://nesetweb.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/AR3_Full-Report_2018.pdf
- The European framework for the personal, social and learning to learn key competence (EU LifeComp): <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/lifecomp>

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