



What is social-emotional learning (SEL)?

- Emotional management
- Empathy
- Teamwork
- Responsibility
- Initiative
- Problem-solving



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Social-Emotional Learning in Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers Afterschool Programs Linked to Improved School Behavior

Recent data from Michigan 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) show a significant link between social-emotional learning (SEL) experiences in afterschool programs and greater improvements in teacher ratings of school behavior. Michigan 21st CCLC programs provide afterschool learning and enrichment activities to students who often do not have easy access to these opportunities. More than 80% of the participants are low income and academically low performing.

Key Findings

- Students experiencing more social-emotional learning (SEL) in 21st CCLC afterschool programs showed greater improvement in teacher-rated school behavior.
- They performed better even after taking into account other factors related to improved school behavior, such as being female, academically not at-risk, having limited English proficiency, and participating more days in afterschool programs.
- Most programs did not offer a specific SEL curriculum; rather, students received SEL experiences informally through other aspects of high-quality afterschool programming.

Conclusion

- Afterschool programs that provide SEL experiences through high-quality programming can help students show greater improvement in school behavior.
- These findings suggest that all students, especially males, less frequent program participants, and those who are struggling academically, are likely to benefit from more SEL experiences to facilitate positive behaviors at school.

AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS CAN PROVIDE GREAT SEL EXPERIENCES

Afterschool programs have greater flexibility than schools in the design of the curriculum and the way activities are delivered. Thus, they have more opportunity for scaffolding experiences that support students' SEL. Growing evidence has suggested that the social and emotional competencies youth acquire in their afterschool program participation can contribute to their success in school and life.²

FINDINGS FROM THE MICHIGAN 21ST CCLC PROGRAMS SHOWED PROGRAM SEL EXPERIENCE IS LINKED WITH IMPROVED SCHOOL BEHAVIOR

Using data from the Michigan 21st CCLC State Evaluation project, our analysis includes 3,474 youth participants in 4th – 12th grades from 247 afterschool programs. They represent 60% of the total number of students surveyed across Michigan 21st CCLC grantees. Instead of participating in a formal SEL curriculum, the majority of students acquired SEL informally through high-quality programming. Teachers rated individual students' improvement in school behavior such as class participation, attentiveness, and motivation to learn. Students completed a survey on their SEL experiences in the programs in the areas of emotional management, empathy, prosocial attitudes, teamwork, responsibility, and leadership. Students experiencing more SEL in 21st CCLC afterschool programs showed greater improvement in school behavior.

The findings suggest that all students can benefit from more social-emotional learning. This benefit remained significant even when we accounted for other factors that are related to improvement in school behavior. While these findings are encouraging, we could learn from future studies that include more comprehensive measures around SEL and focus on identifying specific factors in high-quality programs that lead to more SEL experiences for students.

FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHER-RATED SCHOOL BEHAVIOR

According to teachers, students improve more on school behavior if they:

- Are female
- Are not academically at-risk
- Are non-native English speakers
- **Attend the afterschool program more**
- **Have more SEL experiences at the afterschool program**

What was *not* related to behavioral improvement at school?

- Student race/ethnicity
- Student qualifying for free/reduced-price lunch
- Student afterschool program satisfaction
- Whether the program is an elementary-, middle- or high-school site
- The percentage of students in the program who were academically at risk or who qualified for free/reduced-price lunch



¹ Smith, C., McGovern, G., Larson, R., Hillaker, B., & Peck, S. C. (2016). *Preparing youth to thrive: Promising practices for social and emotional learning*. Washington, DC: David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality. Available from <https://www.selpractices.org/about>

² Farrington, C. A., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T. S., Johnson, D. W., & Beechum, N. O. (2012). *Teaching adolescents to become learners: The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance—A critical literature review*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, Consortium on Chicago School Research. Retrieved from: <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/publications/Noncognitive%20Report.pdf>

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