



# Engaging Stakeholders - Schools

## Why and How to Talk to Schools as SEL Stakeholders

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Schools are key stakeholders for many Residential Environmental Learning Centers (RELCs). Here are some ideas and resources you can use as you work to deepen your relationships with schools, school districts, and associated communities to make the case for social and emotional learning (SEL) as foundational for success in school and in life. You should highlight the unique capacity of RELCs to provide such SEL experiences for students and model SEL pedagogy for teachers, all while providing stimulating academic content in the natural world. These components can be a part of your 'elevator speech' and marketing pieces to help share your program with schools and other stakeholders. We recommend that you tailor these to match your strengths and the language and stated needs of your local stakeholders. While you can do this internally in isolation, we strongly recommend that you engage directly with your stakeholders in this process. This represents a modeling of your organizational SEL competency as you demonstrate the value of doing this in relationship.

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### SEL provides a foundation for all learning

- SEL competency is foundational to success in personal governance and responsibility, social relationships, and life in general. In addition to these inherent benefits, a meta-analysis of SEL interventions conducted by Joseph A. Durlak, Roger P. Weissberg, Allison B. Dymnicki, Rebecca D. Taylor, & Kriston B. Schellinger (2011) showed them to have positive effects on academic performance, as well.
- In one form or another, SEL is becoming more of a priority for schools as they grapple with ways to improve student outcomes.

**For schools aiming to increase and deepen their SEL proficiency, a RELC experience can be a critical part of the solution. *Here's why...***

- Residential settings provide unique opportunities for SEL advancement that the school day and after-school programs can't replicate. Briefly, these opportunities include:
  - ◊ Students and teachers immersed in community living
  - ◊ Sharing communal meals
  - ◊ Taking responsibility for personal belongings in residential housing
  - ◊ Shared outdoor experiences of exploration, adventure, and problem-solving
- Conflict resolution as immersive experience exposes underlying tensions
- RELCs provide a powerful immersive SEL experience for students as well as teachers.
- In addition to providing academic content tailored to teacher needs, there are a host of collateral reasons—immersion in nature, periods of reflection, physical activity, unstructured discovery time—all known to have positive effects on student mental and physical well-being. (Kuo, M., Barnes, M. & Jordan C., 2019).

# Outcomes reported from participants and/or published in literature:

## Students:

- Increased self-confidence
- Deeper relationships with classmates and teachers, [which has been linked to increased academic success](#)
- Increased ownership of behaviors
- Increased awareness of how student behaviors affect other students
- Increased camaraderie with teachers as they tackle challenging situations and environments together

## Teachers:

- New appreciation of student abilities
- Decrease in student behavior issues in class
- Increased empathy for students after viewing them in new and challenging settings.

## Potential collateral impacts:

- Reduced bullying in class
- Increased teacher morale and retention
- Decreased truancy when class attendance is tied to outdoor learning
- Improved classroom and school culture

## REFERENCES

Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432. <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ927868>

Kuo, M., Barnes, M. & Jordan C. (2019). Do experiences with nature promote learning? Converging evidence of a cause-and-effect relationship. *Frontiers in Psychology* (10), 305. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00305

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## Resources

### Related terms:

Are you aware of your local school district's framing and language for SEL? Here are some of the common terms used.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):** Some school districts seem to be aware of this and the very negative impact it can have on student success in school and life.

**Trauma-sensitive schools** or **Trauma-impacted schools:** This takes into account that some schools have a high percentage of students that have suffered significant trauma, making success in school—academically, behaviorally, and socially—challenging, and that adult support measures are necessary for student success.

**School Climate:** This term refers to the quality and character of a school, including disciplinary policies, relationships with guardians, hallway signage reflecting students' backgrounds and languages spoken at home, and so on, all of which can positively support student SEL. See <https://www.schoolclimate.org/school-climate> for more information.

## Academic standards connections and SEL:

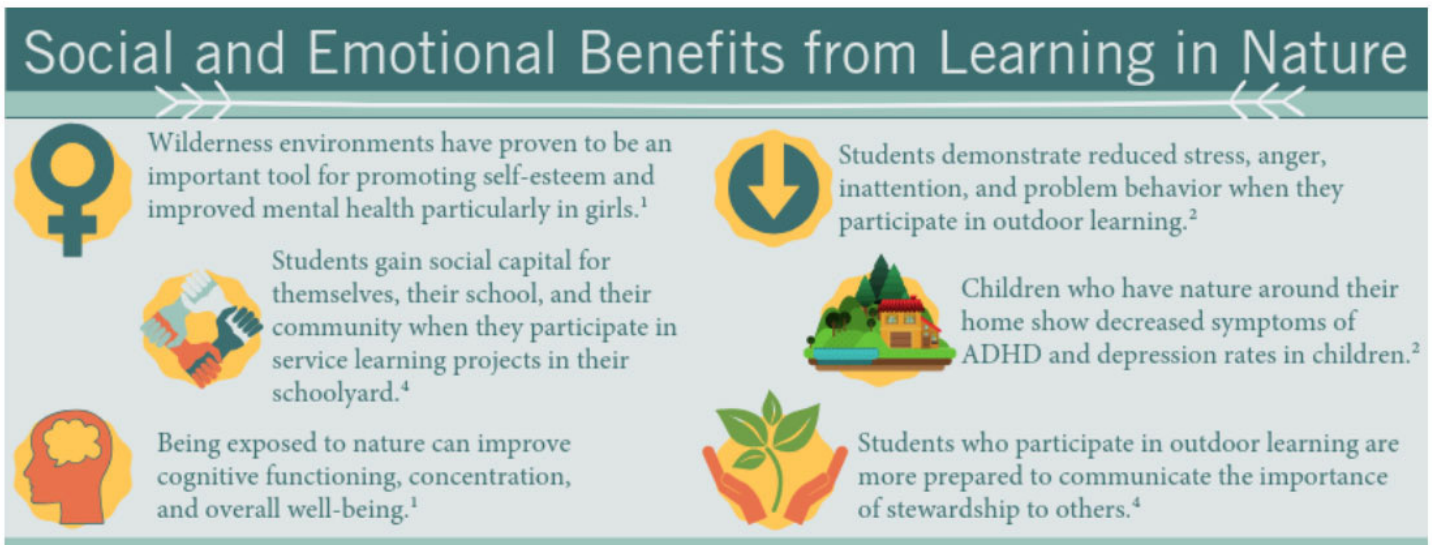
- [State standards on SEL National Conference of State Legislators - Social Emotional Learning](#)
- [K-12 Learning Goals for SEL in All 50 States \(Feb 2018\)](#)
- [The National Association of State Boards of Education NASBE Survey](#) Finds Support of Advancing Social, Emotional, and Academic Development in Schools (April 2019)

## Integrating Equity in SEL:

Here is a useful short PDF from the U.S. Department of Education: [Integrating a focus on Equity into Social and Emotional Learning](#)

## Useful related graphics:

From the Great Smoky Mountains Institute at Tremont website: <http://gsmit.org/educator-resources/>



## SUPPORTING RESEARCH

<sup>1</sup>Barton, J., Bragg, R., Pretty, J., Roberts, J., & Wood, C. (2016). The Wilderness Expedition: An Effective Life Course Intervention to Improve Young People's Well-Being and Connectedness to Nature. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 29(1). 59-72.

<sup>2</sup>Chawla, L., Keena, K., Pevec, I., & Stanley, E. (2014). Green Schoolyards as Havens from Stress and Resources for Resilience in Childhood and Adolescence. *Health & Place International Journal*, 28, 1-13.

<sup>3</sup>Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. (2015). *Incorporating Social and Personal Competencies into Classroom Instruction and Educator Effectiveness: A Toolkit for Tennessee Teachers and Administrators*. Chicago: Author.

<sup>4</sup>Fly, M. J. (n.d.) A Place-based Model for K-12 Education in Tennessee. Retrieved from [http://web.utk.edu/~markfly/documents/Place-Based%20K-12%20Education%20Proposal%205\\_10\\_10.pdf](http://web.utk.edu/~markfly/documents/Place-Based%20K-12%20Education%20Proposal%205_10_10.pdf).

North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) (n.d) [Promoting the Benefits of Environmental Education for K-12 Students—Messaging Guide](#)