



Social and emotional competencies help promote student success in core academic areas, such as reading and mathematics. The same help build the foundation for healthy, competent adults and citizens. If we, as educators, want to meet state Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) goals in academic measures, it is imperative that we meet the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) needs of all of our students. Research shows that when students feel supported and encouraged in school, academics improve; behavior and attitudes toward school improve too.

What steps can you take to integrate SEL into ESSA goals? Here are some tips:

### **Train and Support Staff in SEL Strategies**

We can't implement what we don't know. Educators need training to implement SEL strategies consistently and intentionally at a universal level. Basic teacher preparation largely excludes training on how to manage behavior and build relationships with students. If we want to create structured, predictable environments, teachers need training and support. [The Boys Town Education Model®](#) provides many training options to support the implementation of SEL strategies within the school environment.

### **Teach Social Skills**

Developing SEL competencies occurs in the same way we develop academic competencies. Social skills provide a foundation for developing the five key competencies of SEL across all systems. Identify core social skills for all staff to teach universally. Once school-wide social skill needs are determined, offer specific lesson plans for teachers to use. Here are some [examples](#).

### **Practice and Reinforce**

Implementing SEL strategies is a new process for many educators and requires practice and reinforcement. Develop Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to provide adequate support for staff as they begin to implement new strategies. PLC's can lead coaching sessions and address specific areas of challenge with SEL, improving implementation. Create opportunities to reinforce and praise staff. Happy teachers lead to happy students! Look for creative ways to [reinforce staff](#) throughout the school year as they work to meet the SEL needs of students.

As we begin to understand new ESSA policy, we need to focus on the important part that SEL plays in academic achievement. Create plans and opportunities to blend academic goals with SEL goals to support the needs of staff and students. For more information, visit our [Training website](#). For more educational resources visit the [Boys Town Press](#).