

# A Brief Overview of Colorado's Emotional and Social Wellness Standards

## Colorado's Emotional and Social Wellness Standard

**Emotional and Social Wellness (ESW)** is one of the Colorado Department of Education's Academic Standards and is located within the Comprehensive Health & Physical Education content area. The ESW standard provides a developmental framework regarding social-emotional skills that are expected at each grade level. The Emotional and Social Wellness Standard includes mental, emotional, and social health skills that enable a student to:

- recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, handle challenging situations constructively, resolve conflicts respectfully, manage stress, and make ethical and safe choices;
- examine internal and external influences on mental and social health; and
- identify common mental and emotional health problems and their effect on physical health.

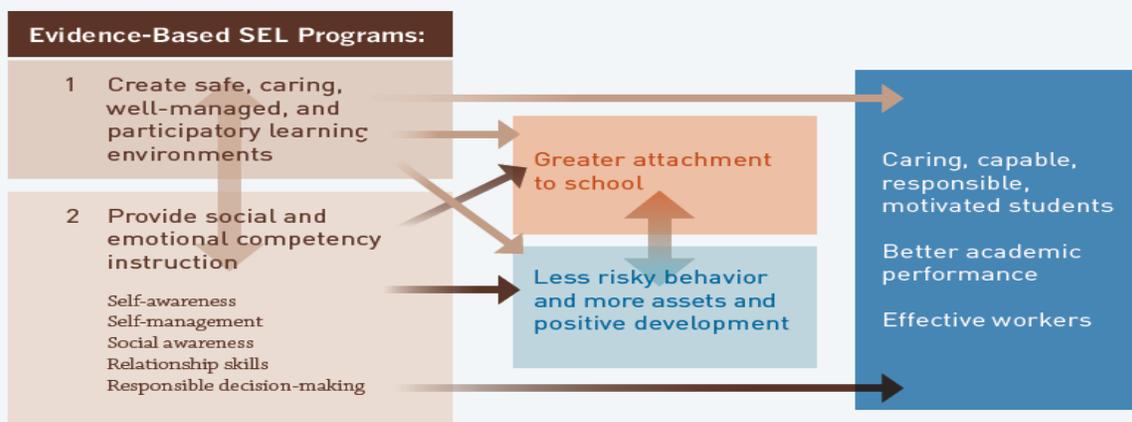
**Prevention and Risk Management**, as well as the two other standards under Comprehensive Health & PE, is also highly connected to ESW, articulating healthy relationships and violence and bullying prevention.

Successful post-secondary workforce readiness depends on an array of social and emotional competencies. Furthermore, social skills are critical for negotiating life's challenges and developing satisfying relationships. By providing a progression of grade level expectations of the skills necessary for students to engage in healthy and productive relationships, the ESW Standard promotes 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and workforce readiness.

## Research on Social-Emotional Learning

The ESW Standard is grounded in the research on Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), a growing body of research that demonstrates the importance of recognizing this area as a significant part of students' overall skill development. The term "Social-Emotional Learning" conveys the idea that Emotional and Social Wellness consists of skills that can be learned. Optimal development will occur when these skills are taught, modeled, practiced and reinforced. Ideally, SEL will be imbedded within many content areas and will occur throughout the day. This holds true for Colorado's ESW standard as well.

### How Evidence-Based SEL Programs Work to Produce Greater Student Success in School and Life (CASEL)



Emotional and Social Wellness will be even more successful if it occurs in the home and community. The Colorado Behavioral Health Transformation Council, a group representing state agencies and community stakeholders concerned with behavioral health, proposes expanding the use of CDE's Emotional and Social Wellness Standard to other state agencies. Through this process, representatives from agencies, such as the Division of Behavioral Health, Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, etc., would share a common language and be able to work with students and their families on the same goals.

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### *Current research regarding the benefits of Social-Emotional Learning that can be accomplished through Colorado's Emotional and Social Wellness Standard*

The positive outcomes and benefits of SEL are clearly established in the research. Over the past three decades, this research has indicated the need for educators to take on this responsibility. When educators include SEL in their daily practices, they are promoting skills necessary to increase student academic achievement, as well as those skills necessary for lifelong personal and professional success<sup>4</sup>.

A recent meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students found that these students demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and **an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement**<sup>2</sup>.

This research overwhelmingly demonstrates the effectiveness and positive outcomes for all school-age students. It proves that classroom teachers and other school staff have the ability to implement SEL programs effectively and with fidelity<sup>1</sup>.

#### **How SEL helps students and schools: What the research says**

SEL improves academic performance and academic achievement by increasing students' capacity for learning.

*Students who received SEL demonstrated:*

- ✓ Increased pro-social behavior
- ✓ Increased mastery of subject material
- ✓ Improved grades
- ✓ 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement<sup>2</sup>
- ✓ Increased motivation to learn
- ✓ Improved attendance
- ✓ Better attitude towards school
- ✓ Increased graduation rates
- ✓ More commitment and attachment to school
- ✓ Improved prospects for employment



*SEL also reduces behavior problems, leading to:*

- ✓ Fewer suspensions and expulsions
- ✓ Decreased violent delinquency
- ✓ Fewer disciplinary referrals
- ✓ Reduced substance abuse
- ✓ Decreased grade retention

### **Key steps of SEL programming that support implementation of the Emotional and Social Wellness Standards**

The research regarding SEL also demonstrates that, like the teaching of any subject, the selected instructional materials and level of teacher training affects the degree to which students can apply and transfer the material. The most effective approach is to teach these skills explicitly and to make connections across all content areas. Researchers found that student gains in all five of the outcome areas occurred when SEL programs were well-implemented in the school, classroom teachers trained in SEL were the primary implementers, and the programs met S.A.F.E. criteria<sup>3</sup>. The S.A.F.E. criteria are:

1. Use a **Sequenced** set of activities to develop SEL skills in a step-by-step fashion.
2. Use **Active** forms of learning, such as role-plays and behavioral rehearsal that provide students with opportunities to practice SEL skills.
3. **Focus** attention on SEL, with at least eight sessions devoted to SEL skill development.
4. **Explicitly** target particular SEL skills for development, with skills identified in learning objectives.

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## *Grade level expectations for students that are articulated in Colorado's Emotional and Social Wellness Standard*

The Emotional and Social Wellness Standard includes two prepared graduate competencies that contribute to postsecondary workforce readiness. Each prepared graduate competency provides grade level expectations for preschool through high school students. The grade level expectations are concepts and skills students should be able to apply and transfer across contexts to enhance their 21<sup>st</sup> century skills. Listed below are the prepared graduate competencies (highlighted in blue) and the progression of grade level expectations that lead to positive behavioral health.

### Emotional and Social Wellness

#### Utilize knowledge and skills to enhance mental, emotional, and social well-being.

<b>High School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze the interrelationship of physical, mental, emotional, and social health</li><li>• Set goals, and monitor progress on attaining goals for future success</li><li>• Advocate to improve or maintain positive mental and emotional health for self and others</li></ul>
<b>Eighth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Access valid school and community resources to help with mental and emotional health concerns</li><li>• Understand that internal and external factors influence mental and emotional health</li></ul>
<b>Seventh Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate effective communication skills to express feelings appropriately</li><li>• Develop self-management skills to prevent and manage stress</li></ul>
<b>Sixth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand how to be mentally and emotionally healthy</li></ul>
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze internal and external factors that influence mental and emotional health</li></ul>
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify positive behaviors that support healthy relationships</li><li>• Comprehend concepts related to stress and stress management</li></ul>
<b>Third Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Utilize knowledge and skills to treat self and others with care and respect</li><li>• Demonstrate interpersonal communication skills to support positive interactions with families, peers, and others</li></ul>
<b>First Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate how to express emotions in healthy ways</li><li>• Identify parents, guardians, and other trusted adults as resources for information about health</li></ul>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exhibit understanding that one's actions impact others</li></ul>

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## Exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings.

<b>High school</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate respect for individual differences in physical activity settings.</li><li>• Demonstrate collaboration, cooperation, and leadership skills</li><li>• Demonstrate responsible behavior in group settings</li></ul>
<b>Seventh Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop strategies to communicate ideas and feelings</li><li>• Demonstrate inclusiveness in and out of classroom settings</li></ul>
<b>Sixth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recognize diverse skill performance in others and how that diversity affects game, activity, and sport participation</li><li>• Work cooperatively and productively in a group</li></ul>
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assess and take responsibility for personal behavior and stress management</li><li>• Choose to participate cooperatively and productively in group and individual physical activities</li><li>• Identify personal activity interests and abilities</li></ul>
<b>Third Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate positive social behaviors during class</li></ul>
<b>Second Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate positive and helpful behavior and words toward other students</li></ul>
<b>First Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Work independently and with others to complete work</li><li>• Follow the rules of an activity</li></ul>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate respect for self, others, and equipment</li><li>• Demonstrate the ability to follow directions</li></ul>

### An Expanded Example of What Is In the Standards Document

**Content Area:** Comprehensive Health and Physical Education

**Standard 3:** Emotional and Social Wellness

**Prepared Graduates:** *Exhibit responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others in physical activity settings*

**Grade Level Expectation:** Sixth Grade

*Concepts and skills students master: Work cooperatively and productively in a group*

#### Evidence Outcomes

*Students can:*

- Establish and accomplish goals in both cooperative and competitive activities*
- Identify and define the role of each participant in a cooperative physical activity*
- Analyze possible solutions to a movement problem in a cooperative physical activity, and come to a consensus on the best solution*
- Demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts with peers.*

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## *Other standards within the Comprehensive Health & Physical Education content area that support SEL*

Because of the emphasis on interdisciplinary connections and holistic, healthy development, all standards in comprehensive health and physical education support SEL. However, the Prevention and Risk Management Standard (PRM) also specifically addresses skills that are related to behavioral health. For example, it includes the concepts and skills needed to “make health-enhancing decisions regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.”

Research shows that SEL reduces behavior problems, including substance abuse, in part because SEL empowers students with the skills needed to make responsible decisions and to handle difficult situations<sup>1</sup>. The Prevention and Risk Management Standard ensures that students can utilize these skills to make “health enhancing decisions,” particularly in risky situations regarding alcohol, drugs, and violence, including bullying. The ESW and PRM standards work together to support holistic, healthy development by building skills and competencies in students to handle a variety of risky situations. These skills are critical to students’ postsecondary and workforce readiness and success.

Listed below are two of the prepared graduate competencies for the Prevention and Risk Management Standard (highlighted in blue) and the progression of grade level expectations.

### Prevention and Risk Management

#### Apply knowledge and skills that promote healthy, violence-free relationships.

<b>High School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the factors that influence community and societal beliefs that underlie violence, and describe relationships, attitudes, behavior, and vulnerability to violence</li> <li>Analyze the underlying causes of self-harming behavior and harming others, and identify steps involved in seeking help</li> <li>Identify the emotional and physical consequences of violence, and find strategies to deal with, prevent, and report them</li> <li>Access valid information and resources that provide information about sexual assault and violence</li> <li>Demonstrate verbal and nonverbal communication skills and strategies to prevent violence</li> </ul>
<b>Eighth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Analyze the factors that influence violent and nonviolent behavior</li> <li>Demonstrate ways to advocate for a positive, respectful school and community environment that supports pro-social behavior</li> </ul>
<b>Sixth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate self-management skills to reduce violence and actively participate in violence prevention</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate pro-social behaviors that reduce the likelihood of physical fighting, violence, and bullying</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Demonstrate skills necessary to prevent a conflict from escalating to violence</li> </ul>
<b>Third Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe pro-social behaviors that enhance healthy interactions with others</li> </ul>
<b>Second Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explain why bullying is harmful and how to respond appropriately</li> </ul>
<b>Kindergarten</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the importance of respecting the personal space and boundaries of self and others</li> </ul>

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## Apply knowledge and skills to make health-enhancing decisions regarding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

<b>High School</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The impact of individuals' use or nonuse of alcohol or other drugs</li> <li>• Analyze the factors that influence a person's decision to use or not to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs</li> <li>• Develop interpersonal communication skills to refuse or avoid alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs</li> </ul>
<b>Eighth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop self-management skills to improving health by staying tobacco, alcohol, and drug-free</li> </ul>
<b>Seventh Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze influences that impact individuals' use or nonuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs</li> </ul>
<b>Sixth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access valid sources of information about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs</li> <li>• Demonstrate decision-making skills to be alcohol, tobacco and drug-free</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the consequences of using alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analyze the factors that influence a person's decision to use or not to use alcohol and tobacco</li> </ul>
<b>Third Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to avoid alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs</li> </ul>
<b>Second Grade</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access valid information about the effects of tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke, prescription, and over-the-counter drugs</li> <li>• Identify positive and negative uses for medicines</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to avoid using tobacco</li> <li>• Examine the dangers of using tobacco products or being exposed to second-hand smoke</li> <li>• Identify the dangers of using tobacco products and being exposed to second-hand smoke</li> <li>• Identify safe and proper use of household products</li> </ul>

## References

- <sup>1</sup>Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (n.d.). *Social and emotional learning (SEL) and student benefits: Implications for safe schools/healthy students core elements*. Chicago, IL: Author.
- <sup>2</sup>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.
- <sup>3</sup>Elias, M. J. (1997). *Promoting social and emotional learning: Guidelines for educators*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- <sup>4</sup>Weissberg, R. P., & O'Brien, M. U. (2004). What works in school-based social and emotional learning programs for positive youth development. *The Annals of the American Academy, 591*(1), 86-96.

## Further Reading and Resources

Colorado Comprehensive Health Emotional and Social Wellness Standard:

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/scripts/allstandards/COSTstandards.asp?stid=3&glid=0&pgcid=37>

- Elias, M. J. (2004). Strategies to infuse social and emotional learning into academics. In J. E. Zins, R. P. Weissberg, M. C. Wang, & H. J. Walberg (Eds.). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* (pp.113-134). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., & Elias, M. J. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist, 58*(6/7), 466-474.
- Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.). (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* New York, NY: Teachers College Press.