

Welcome!

Welcome to another newsletter from the SEAL Community. We've lots of new resources, an amazing case study from a cluster of schools, plus the usual news and research round-ups.

News update

Empathy day is coming!

Empathy Day is on June 8th this year,. Don't forget to sign up [for information and free resources](#). And



make a note that on May 18 EmpathyLab will publish an exciting new book about empathy, written for children. *We've Got This!* is aimed at 7-12 year olds, and contains six practical steps to help children develop their human superpower – it blends fascinating explanations about how empathy works in humans with fun, creative activities to build empathy skills like perspective-taking.

Rise in loneliness



Calls to Childline from children under 11 struggling with loneliness have risen by 71 per cent in just five years, latest data shows.

Children told counsellors they felt lonely for a wide range of reasons, including being left out of friendship groups and social media chats, feeling negatively about themselves, and feeling misunderstood by loved ones.

One 10-year-old girl told a counsellor: "I am so lonely as I have no friends at school anymore. I often cry myself to sleep at night... I have not told my parents how I am feeling because I don't think they will take it seriously."

Childline has launched a new campaign to raise awareness and encourage children to seek mental health support early, to prevent it from escalating to a crisis point

The campaign resources include 'Day in the Lonely', a film about young people's experiences of loneliness.

Find out more [here](#)

State of the nation- latest data on children and young people's wellbeing

Children and young people who feel safe in school, enjoy coming to school, and feel that they belong in school were less likely to have a mental disorder and more likely to report greater subjective wellbeing. Regular physical activity and nature experiences were also associated with greater wellbeing .

These are a couple of findings amongst many from a new [report](#) from the DfE in England. The report says 'While with these correlational data we are unable to establish the causal relationships between these feelings and experiences, and mental health and wellbeing, the data highlight the importance of a supportive school environment, strong social relationships, an active lifestyle, and nature experiences in the daily lives of children and young people.'

Sharing practice

Working on empathy

Eight schools in the Pentrehafod cluster in Swansea (seven primary, one secondary) did some great work with the organisation EmpathyLab. Children developed empathy skills through



- ❖ whole-school/year-group sessions about the meaning and science of empathy
- ❖ reading and talking about books, with a focus on exploring characters and feelings, and learning to see others' perspectives
- ❖ engaging with empathy themes – like refugees – through reading, research, visits and pupil-planned social action

The schools wanted to take part because this work was so relevant to the new Curriculum for Wales, and because of concerns about pupils' attitudes and behaviour. 'The internet and social media are causing a lack of understanding and consideration for others' feelings', said an Assistant Head at the secondary school. 'Many pupils are struggling to take responsibility for their actions. There are often conflicts between pupils which impact on readiness to learn', said a teacher at one of the primary schools.

Three phases

In Phase 1 of the programme, schools carried out audits (for example, of staff listening skills), appointed an Empathy Lead each (in the primaries, this was the school's literacy lead) and built the work into their school development plans.

In Phase 2 there was training for school staff and the schools developed tools like a staffroom borrowing library of empathy books, and an 'Empathy Spots' log of useful teaching ideas. Some schools created high-status new spaces dedicated to empathy, such as School Empathy Libraries.

The secondary school formed a cross-curricular working party to increase whole-school engagement in implementing the programme, encouraging every member of staff to see it as their responsibility to model and support the development of empathy skills. A whole-staff mind-map was created,

identifying issues for staff to work on, including a common language around empathy, and lanyards to prompt staff. It was decided that listening would be a priority, and each teacher could track active listening skills through the school's tracking system. Empathy was added to the school's rewards system.

Next, in Phase 3, teaching about empathy began. There were assemblies to help children learn what empathy means, how it works in humans, why it is so important and how it differs from sympathy or kindness. Then empathy-rich books and poetry were used in classes .

The worksheet is titled "Character Layers" in blue text. On the left, there is a logo for "Empathy Activists" featuring a magnifying glass with a colorful fan of rays. Below the logo are three nesting dolls of different sizes, each with a floral pattern. Underneath the dolls are three empty rectangular boxes labeled "Beginning", "Middle", and "End". To the right of the dolls, there is a text box for "Name of character". Above the text box, there are two lines of instructions: "Choose one character from your story and write a quick note under each about how you would describe that character at the beginning, middle and end of the story." and "Try not to focus on the events that happen to the characters. Instead try to describe how the character's feelings develop during the story."

In the secondary school, tutor group arrangements for Years 7 and 8 were changed , and English teachers became tutor time leaders , bringing shared reading into tutor times. Two texts were used – Nicola Davies's *The Day War Came* (a powerful picture book about the refugee experience) and Steven Camden's *Everything All at Once* , a poetry book that includes a wonderful poem about starting secondary school (called 'First Day'). The school planned ten weekly interventions for the Years 7 and 8. These included the tutor time lessons, library sessions and subject lessons – not just English lessons, but also expressive arts, and health and well-being. Art teachers used *The Day War Came* to inspire self-portraits based on putting oneself in a refugee's shoes. Teachers from different subjects were given shared planning time for empathy-focused work; this resulted in a Year 7 cross-curricular Holocaust project, covering expressive arts, drama and humanities. Having been approached by the local authority to lead Holocaust Memorial Day, the school presented an emotional and empathetic service, involving 100 pupils.

The final phase was about putting empathy into action. Several primaries had used *The Last Chip* to explore homelessness, and at the secondary school students had linked sections of *A Christmas Carol* with Robert Swindell's *Stone Cold*, helping them see that society is guilty of stereotyping the

homeless. A cluster-wide sleep-out was being planned, with the aim of promoting understanding of the experience of being homeless, before it was interrupted by COVID.

Pupil voice

Much of the work was pupil-led. Children at one primary school made videos for empathy assemblies; another set up a group of Empathy Spotters who located empathy-rich books around the school, and created a new section in the school library. They also led whole school assemblies, celebrating empathetic behaviour from staff or pupils, and led sessions for parents explaining the school’s empathy focus. Children could also be Empathy Bookspotters (recommending empathy-boosting books to their peers). In one primary school a group of Year 6 pupils decided to lead an Empathy Club during lunchtimes for the younger year groups. They planned to share empathy-boosting stories with children from Years 2–5 and lead activities related to them.

The secondary school created a Year 11 group of advisors who presented at an all-staff INSET day and described their vision. They felt the student parliament should focus on changes that could build a more caring and empathetic community. The group provided practical consultancy on the programme’s look and feel.

‘We got involved in the EmpathyLab work in an advisory capacity. We could see that the resources would be brilliant for younger children but that in a comp they would not go down well! Imagine telling a stroppy Year 9 boy to put his Empathy Explorers glasses on and walk round the school . . . We decided the term Empathy Explorers was too young, too much like Dora the Explorer! We decided to use the social-action-and-change aspect of EmpathyLab as our focus and so turned this into Empathy Activists, giving the power and skills to make change in our society.’

Year 11 advisory team



The advisors also suggested changing the name of a key programme element. In primary schools there was an Empathy Awards scheme, with children voting to present awards to book characters showing exceptional empathy. Winners are announced on Empathy Day. At secondary level these awards were renamed *The Empathys*, to be more like the Oscars, glamorously celebratory

Developing vocabulary

CASE STUDY

Developing vocabulary to describe emotions at Brynhyfryd School

Most classes had a class novel, carefully, selected so that they are age-appropriate, but also so that they challenged the children's vocabulary. Teachers took time to highlight interesting vocabulary and discuss the meaning and strength of different words. When discussing the books, they would sometimes ask, 'How was the character feeling?' but at other times, 'Which word in the text told you the character was feeling upset?'

Some books (like Ravi's Roar, and Ruby's Worry) were chosen to allow the children to focus on one emotion and discuss strategies for dealing with strong feelings.

The school used [Plutchik's wheel of emotions](#) to explore shades of emotions, like content vs.



overjoyed, disappointed vs. sorrowful, annoyed vs. furious, and looked at antonyms and synonyms of feeling words.

Before this work, children lacked the ability to recognise how they were feeling, and they tended to release their emotions through anger, frustration, disengagement in the classroom and conflict with their peers. 'Now that they are starting to identify their own feelings,' says one teacher, 'they are better prepared to acknowledge the emotions felt by others. They are more able to put themselves in their shoes.'

Evaluating impact

Impact was evaluated using a tool called [EmQue-CA](#), with surveys taken across Year 4 – Year 8 over several time points. Data collected from pupils in September and again in February showed statistically significant improvements in self-reported empathy, in both primary and secondary schools.

There was some evidence that the increases in measured empathy were a result of the work in the schools, rather than just a natural increase over time. Data collected in the February to July period, when there were COVID lockdowns and when opportunities for teaching empathy skills were much reduced, showed either a stagnation or a slight drop in scores.

An effect on children's reading was also observed. Pupils completed the Open University's Reading for Pleasure survey at the end of September and again in February. After just four months of reading with an empathy focus, there was a notable improvement in pupils' confidence as readers at the primary level and a slight improvement at the secondary level.

The overwhelming majority of teachers (96% at the primary schools and 86% at the secondary school) reported that pupils now have a far better understanding of what empathy is, how it works and why it matters.

Views from teachers

'We've learned about switching from focusing on plot to focusing on character and feelings. It's a massive shift from the understanding of a story to the understanding of people. It makes a huge difference, a culture difference, in our school.' **Teacher, Hafod Primary School**

'Younger children are able to select various words to describe their feelings. One child described how confused they were and anxious. Using vocabulary has really improved.' **Headteacher, Waun Wen Primary School**

'By March, we had begun to hear empathy language around the school. Teachers are using empathetic language when dealing with behaviour incidents. Most staff are confident to choose appropriate texts to build empathy skills and to integrate more of these into their lesson planning. Teachers are motivated to change their teaching styles as they have seen the real benefit to learning from using the empathy building activities. In the beginning I thought the English department would have the best ideas for our empathy work, but actually it's been expressive arts and other subjects who have come up with some really good ways of making their subjects more human. They've then found children have shown more interest in the subjects because they've made it more real.' **Assistant Head, secondary school**

'We looked at Alan Turing, but instead of studying his work from just a technological point of view, we considered things from a human aspect – we used empathy and emotional language to discuss the impact on his personal as well as his professional life. Both of those had an effect on the future that we know today. It was really great to add more depth and richness to the task, and to talk more about the feelings and emotions to understand the person behind the story.'

Computer science teacher

Views from students

'Before we learned about empathy, I would just play with my friends on the yard. Now I talk to lots of children and ask if they want to play.'

'Because of empathy, sometimes I feel sad when people say that other children can't play. I like to tell those children that anyone can play, and I like to make sure no one gets left out.'

'In Daft Bat [key text in initial teaching about empathy] I learned that even if you look at things differently, you can still learn about what other people mean. You won't understand them unless you try to see their point of view.'

Practical tools and tips

How are we doing?

Why not try out a teacher self-assessment, to help teachers evaluate how well they are doing in incorporating social and emotional learning into their everyday subject curriculum and classroom environment? Find it [here](#)

Top resource

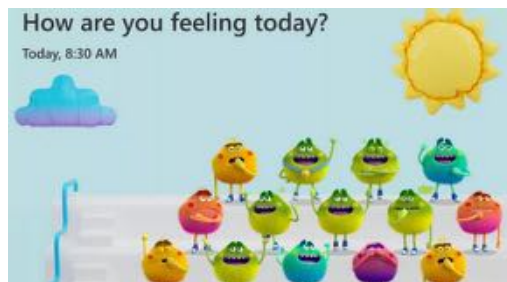
We've created three new resources, to support work on self-awareness/self-regulation



- [A progression in vocabulary for describing emotions](#) – words to teach from EYFS through to Year 7
- [Twenty simple exercises to help children stay calm](#) – a collection of breathing and relaxation exercises, with instructions and video links
- [Top emotion check-ins](#) – thirteen different ways for children to show how they are feeling at points during the day

Resource Round Up

Microsoft gets into social and emotional learning



We're amazed – tech is not normally associated with all things social and emotional, but even Microsoft is now into social and emotional learning. Check out this site [The hidden power of feelings | Microsoft Unlocked](#) for a Feelings Monster check-in, short 'All the Feels' films like Naming Disappointment and Feeling Overwhelmed, a sticker pack and more. For primary and secondary.

Exam stress resources

We've pulled together this collection of resources to help students cope with exam stress

- ❖ For SATs pressure ... Young Minds have partnered with the Beano comic team to create this fun animation about how to cope <https://youngminds.org.uk/get-involved/campaign-with-us/beano-and-youngminds/#mandi-sits-her-sats>
- ❖ A 20 minute lesson from the Samaritan's DEAL resources : it includes scenario activities, slides and a Coping Planner for students, https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/schools/deal/deal-resources/coping-strategies/exam-stress-coping-strategies/?mc_cid=4c88803a07mc_eid=7e5bf212ad
- ❖ How I cope: a young person's guide. Developed by the Children and Families Policy Research Unit at University College London, this is a [young person's guide](#) to coping with exam stress, created by over 70 young people as part of the HeadStart research project. The guide is available as a downloadable PDF, and presented in 9 short, animated films.
- ❖ A simple [10-minute writing exercise](#) given just before a test, to help students see stress as "a beneficial and energising force". The resource includes a reading for students and prompts for their writing. It is based on [research](#) showing this really works
- ❖ [An exam stress workshop](#) - a 45 minute to 1 hour workshop on managing stress and anxiety, both in terms of preparation or in the middle of a crisis. Aimed at older students who are capable of self-reflection. Some aspects could also be used in assemblies.



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- ❖ [A video with advice](#) for students on how to manage stress when waiting to hear from exam results, or applications for college, university or for a job.

Our new 2023 changes and transitions collection

[Here](#) on our website you will find

- ❖ A booklist from the National Literacy Trust of favourite books about big changes (fiction , graphic novels, non-fiction and poetry)
- ❖ Change tunnel from Young Minds. An exercise to help children become more aware of how they feel about changes happening during the transition to secondary school-
- ❖ Place2Be's primary and secondary assemblies and lessons about change and growth
- ❖ Barnardo's The Change Challenge workbook, which helps children from 5-11 to tackle times of change
- ❖ A primary transition assembly and transition passport activity from the Anna Freud Centre, covering transition to a new class as well as a new school. The passport has English and Welsh language versions
- ❖ From Young Minds, 'Find your feet', an activity pack that explores the way emotions can build up and become overwhelming during periods of change, with techniques for proactively managing the emotions.

Try these too:

A transition to secondary school lesson plan from Public Health England – PowerPoint and accompanying video to help pupils explore the challenges that can arise with the move from primary to secondary school, and help them identify strategies for managing the change. Find the resources at <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/transition-to-secondary-school-lesson-plan-pack-key-stage-2>

The Guide to Thrive resources by Life Ed – a comprehensive set of online resources to support Year 6 and 7 students as they prepare for secondary school and navigate a new environment. Find them at <https://guidetothrive.lifeed.org.au/teachers>

A Dealing with Change lesson plan pack for KS3 and 4 from Public Health England. Developed with teachers, this lesson plan, PowerPoint and accompanying videos help explore the expected and unexpected changes people may face in their lives, and identify strategies for managing change. Find them at https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/dealing-with-change-lesson-plan-pack?mc_cid=7f245c03d3&mc_eid=7e5bf212ad

Relationships

Showing these 'still face experiment' films <https://youtu.be/f1Jw0-LExyc> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BUwEwv3WI58>



then discussing then could be best way of helping students think about what makes good parenting. The first shows a mother and the second a father . Needs to be handled with care, of course, for those who did not themselves experience sensitive, attuned parenting. Finish off with this lovely film of how it looks when things go well :

<https://twitter.com/i/status/1642176266978701318>

For primary work on relationships we liked this [Place2Be lesson for 4-7 year olds](#), based on the lovely book 'The Invisible String'.

Can we talk about death and dying?



Project Eileen Programme (<https://www.projecteileen.co.uk/school-programme>) is an interesting multimedia programme to teach 13-15-year-olds about death and grief. This adaptable six-lesson programme and comprehensive resources provide everything teachers need to tackle this sensitive topic. The package includes:

- ❖ Eileen, a story presented in the first lesson to provide a springboard for the subsequent lessons, allowing for distance and objectivity. It's available in 3 versions – animated , creative or workshop
- ❖ Five detailed lesson plans which cover areas such as the language, the associated emotions, the history and culture of death and grief plus the practical necessities.

Additional resources include five ready to use PowerPoint presentations, further information, printable worksheets, advice for teachers and a letter template to send to parents in preparation for teaching the subject. Any school can freely access the programme by registering, but are asked to 'make a contribution' towards Project Eileen's charitable activities.

We've also uploaded to the SEAL website useful resources for primary schools, from Barnardo's. These are to use specifically with a child who has experienced loss. Find them [here](#)

And remember this really good [list of books](#) to help children understand and cope with loss - some old favourites and some we didn't know about. Ages 2-9.

New bite-sized self-care resources for tutor time



The PSHE Association and the NHS have produced [resources](#) on self-care for tutor time in secondary schools, in the shape of 10-minute activity sessions, with videos. There are five sessions in total, as well as an introductory activity and follow-up journal task. The self-care strategies include:

- connecting with others
- being physically active
- being mindful
- learning something new.

Try these new SEL/wellbeing assessment scales

We've uploaded two new validated assessment tools to the SEAL website, both suitable for primary and secondary. One ([EmQue-CA](#)) measures children's self-reported empathy. The tool gives separate scores for total empathy, as well as three distinct elements: affective empathy, cognitive empathy, and prosocial motivation (empathic concern):

The other is the [Children's Hope Scale](#), a quick, 6-item self-report assessment tool that measures children's belief they can reach their goals. The measure is based on the premise that children are goal directed and that their goal-related thoughts can be understood according to two components: agency and pathways. These two components, agency (ability to initiate and sustain action towards goals) and pathways (capacity to find a means to carry out goals), are assessed by the measure.

If you are looking for a tool to assess pupils' overall wellbeing, try the [Cambridge Wellbeing Check](#) – a 20 minute online self-assessment for 7-18 year olds.

Bounce Forward

Bounce Forward Healthy Minds is a secondary social and emotional learning curriculum founded on positive psychology and grounded in evidence. Watch a short film about the weekly hour-long lessons at https://youtu.be/pL_sHiB9RdU and a BBC piece at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvZ3mvq9MCo&t=3s>. It's not free but [here](#) you'll find a sample of the materials – this one is about assertiveness. There are more samples on their website – do have a look.

Feel your best self

This is a new, free curriculum for early years and KS1



The SEAL Community Newsletter No. 34, April 2023

It uses puppets and films, and helps children develop awareness of how they are feeling, and self-regulation strategies

Watch a 5 minute video about it here https://www.edutopia.org/video/express-emotions-puppets-elementary-students?utm_content=linkpos3&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=weekly-2023-03-15&utm_source=edu-newsletter

Find out more at

<https://feelyourbestself.collaboration.uconn.edu/about/>

Face it

If you need a group programme for 11-18 year olds with SEMH you may be interested in the 'Face It' programme, run by the organisation Khulisa. 'Face It' is an intensive behavioural change programme targeting young people who have been excluded from school, are at risk of exclusion or are involved with the criminal justice system.

Each six-week programme is tailored to meet the needs of children in cohorts of no more than 12. The intervention is led by qualified art and drama therapists who use a mixture of group activities and individual reflection sessions. The content is delivered in an experiential way with interactive and creative techniques including storytelling, mask-making, debating, games and role-play. Each activity is based on evidence of what works to develop specific social and emotional skills, and is designed to take young people on a journey to understand and control their emotions and therefore behaviour.

More information on the Face It programme can be found at <https://www.khulisa.co.uk/what-we-do/in-schools/>.

An internal evaluation of the programme using pre- and post-tests and standardised tools was recently conducted with 118 young people across 14 schools in London and the North West. Participants were predominantly male (72%), predominantly of black ethnicity (32%) and on average, 13 years of age (62%). 68 percent of participants reported increases in wellbeing post programme, on the Shortened Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS). The change was statistically significant.

Read the full evaluation report at <https://www.khulisa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/images/NESTA-Evaluation-Report-2020.pdf>

New children's book about young people responding to large, complex issues

The University of West England have produced a [free book](#) called Learning to Live with Fog Monsters. The research-informed book is available as a learning resource for 7-11-year olds. It draws on children's experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and is designed to provide support to teachers who are trying to tackle complex issues due to social shocks like pandemics, the threat of war, and climate change. The importance of sharing worries, working together, and planning for hopeful futures at home, in school and in the wider community is introduced as a springboard for classroom discussion and further work across the curriculum, including in PSHE, English,

Geography, and Art lessons. The learning resource comes with accompanying online teacher's notes. Alongside the free digital copy of the book, there are also a limited number of free hardcopies. Please email vipclear@uwe.ac.uk if you would like one.

What's your weather?



We loved these **two activities** from Place2Be. They invite children to match their feelings with different types of weather, and explore ideas like having mixed feelings. This project includes two videos made in collaboration with artist Xavier Leopold – children can watch him make his own 'Window to My Weather' for inspiration. The resource includes links to poetry and story, and even a Weather-noticing feelings playlist on Spotify.

Research

The evidence for social and emotional learning goes up a level

We are used, now, to looking for 'hard' evidence of impact of what we do in schools – evidence generated by randomised controlled trials or studies with well-matched control groups. The next step up from such evidence is meta-analyses covering multiple single studies. But what about one level up from that – a meta-analysis of multiple meta-analyses?

This was the focus of a recently published study of the impact of social and emotional learning (SEL) programmes across the world. The review involved 12 meta-analyses initiated by 11 independent research groups evaluating the impact of universal, school-based interventions for children from early years through to secondary. The evidence, drawn from 524 unique reports of SEL programmatic interventions, showed that such interventions are consistently associated with positive student outcomes. These outcomes include improved personal and social skills, attitudes, positive social behaviour, and academic performance, and reductions in problematic behaviour, emotional distress, and drug use. Furthermore, positive follow-up effects were also observed; however, as expected, the magnitude of these improvements were less than what was observed at post-test. The researchers conclude 'The results of our review support the overwhelming and growing evidence base that SEL programs are highly promotive of young people's positive, healthy development.'