

### Welcome!

Welcome to another newsletter from the SEAL Community. We've lots of new resources, some great case studies from schools, plus the usual news and research round-ups.

#### News update

##### SEAL and 50 million children



Back in 2015 the primary SEAL resources were chosen by the Chinese Ministry of Education as the basis for a pilot social and emotional learning curriculum in five provinces in China. Julie Casey and other members of the SEAL Community visited China regularly to provide support. We've just heard that the programme is now very much alive and running in eight provinces, and that there are plans to develop a national secondary SEL curriculum to follow on. So SEAL is the foundation for a programme that could ultimately reach 50

million children. We at the SEAL Community are feeling just a bit pleased...

##### Less than a third of schools in England can access Mental Health Support Teams

Five years after the launch of the English government's Mental Health Support Team (MHST) initiative, 28% of schools and colleges (about 6,800) are covered by a MHST, and 35% of pupils. This is projected to rise to 35% of schools and colleges and 44% of learners by April 2024. Secondary schools enjoy the best coverage from MHSTs (46%) while only 28% of primaries are covered.

The vast majority of primary (89%) and secondary (87%) schools have a designated lead for students' mental health and the DfE currently calculates that 57% of schools and colleges have undertaken the funded [senior mental health lead training](#). The data shows that the most common staff members to take on the training include safeguarding leads and the SENCO followed by headteachers and assistant heads. Half of those working in the role said they were now dedicating half to one day a week to these new duties.

Read more in the DfE's *Transforming children and young people's mental health implementation programme: Data release, May 2023*: <https://bit.ly/3Ozrz3l>

## Sharing practice

### Solving playground problems at Cubitt Town Primary



Last year a group of London schools worked together on a project to tackle social, emotional and mental health needs. Each school gathered data, read up on research and developed a plan of action.

Emma Whitwam and Jessica Robinson at Cubitt Town Primary chose to focus on two classes, Year 3 and Year 6, where playground conflict was making children unhappy and affecting their learning.

Observations showed that children had very few conflict resolution strategies. In the Year 3 class, children's only strategy was to tell an adult. In contrast, in the Year 6 class, children would just tend to ignore the problem and the person

involved. Children showed little empathy or understanding of others' point of view. They were able to identify their emotions, but were not confident in strategies to regulate and manage them.

'Our literature review highlighted that we needed to explicitly teach children how to manage and regulate their emotions and teach them empathy, through role-play', says Emma. 'Other research highlighted that children who had a 'buddy' in school were able to co-regulate with someone they trust in a safe environment. This helped us decide to create a Year 3 and 6 'buddy system' for children.'

### An oracy approach

Oracy is a key feature of teaching and learning at Cubitt Town. Children take part in a variety of scaffolded activities to improve their spoken language skills. Staff measure the impact of this work on the four strands of oracy: physical, linguistic, cognitive and social/emotional. Emma and Jessica anticipated that if they provided scaffolds to help children talk through playground problems, this would contribute to progress in the social/emotional oracy strand.

### Two stages

'We realised,' Emma says, 'that we needed to split our project into two parts. Firstly, we needed to teach emotional regulation and secondly we needed to teach social communication on the playground'.

Initially, we taught a series of discrete 20-minute oracy sessions around emotional regulation. We explicitly modelled how to use the [Zones of Regulation](#) and emphasised that no Zone is 'bad'. Zones

of Regulation were used throughout the day and children have created and tailored their own Zones charts with specific strategies that help them to self-regulate.



In Year 6, we created a 'Zen Zone' with bean bags, cushions and blankets, where children proactively take themselves to calm down before returning to class.'

### Playground supervisors

'After we had embedded Zones of Regulation within our classrooms, ', says Emma, 'we held a training session for our Play Leaders, in which we taught them about the Zones and how our children were using them. We also introduced the supervisors to the 'Cubitt Town Peace Path' which we were about to introduce to the children, to give them a way of solving playground conflicts in a safe, non-blaming way. We gave the Play Leaders the opportunity to read through the strategies, ask questions and practise the strategies. They were given copies to have with them in the playground, so as to coach children to use the sequence of steps.'

### Working with buddies

In class the teachers introduced the 'Peace Path' to provide children with a systematic, oracy-based sequence to follow when issues came up. There was then an oracy assembly with Year 3 and Year 6 and the Play Leaders, where drama was used to practise the Peace Path techniques. Older children practised the sequence with their Year 3 buddies. This part of the intervention was highly successful. The older buddies loved helping their younger buddies and they had a shared topic of interest.

### The impact

'There have been some notable changes in our cohorts,' says Emma. 'Children in Years 3 and 6 are calmer and more often feel 'in the green Zone'. They are now using language such as envious, frustrated, irritated, as well as angry and can associate them with the correct Zone. They are also

able to understand that some emotions might co-occur across two Zones, or that one feeling (for example anger) might be the result of another feeling (for example, embarrassment).’

The buddy system has been particularly effective in the Year 3 cohort, as children are proactively seeking out their Year 6 buddy to talk to them about how they are feeling. In turn, this has created greater social awareness amongst Year 6s, as they are listening to and supporting Year 3. The Year 6 children are now more nurturing towards the younger children at playtimes, as before they used to become irritated by having to share playtimes with them (after a year of segregated playtimes due to Covid restrictions).

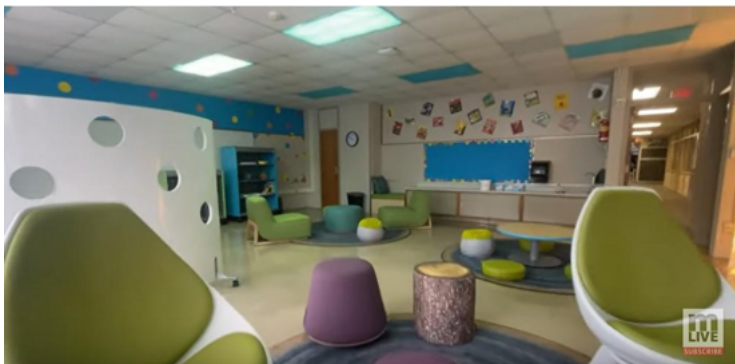
Playground issues are not taking up as much time in class. Children are using the conflict resolution strategies they have been taught; for example, in Year 6, children are using the ‘Zen Zone’ after lunch with the person they have had an issue with and once calm, both children have talked through the issue and made up their quarrel.

The training for Play Leaders has led to observable changes in their behaviours. Before the training, they would often try to ‘solve’ children’s problems. Now they understand the importance of children developing social and communication skills to manage emotions and conflict independently.

### **Wider school impact**

In the academic year following their project, Emma and Jessica introduced Zones of Regulation across the school. The Peace Path on the playground is starting to be used in all of KS2 with the aim to introduce it in KS1 next.

### **The Zen Garden**



One school in the US has turned a room into a brilliant social and emotional learning centre. As well as a miniature Zen Garden, there is a library filled with books that deal with emotions, sensory equipment and fidget toys, comfortable seating and a food bank for the community. Watch a video about the centre

here <https://youtu.be/CXEPPH5RfxM>

### **Practical tools and tips**

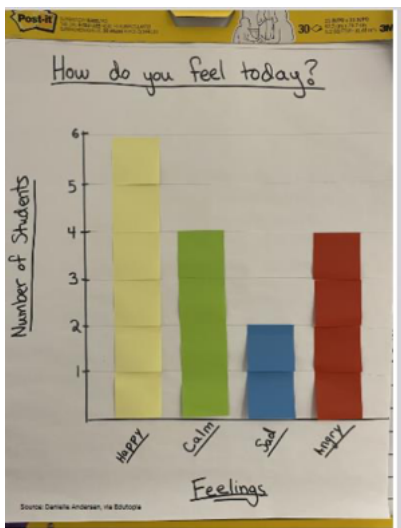
#### **Tell them about security guards**

We came across a new metaphor for explaining to children how the brain works and really liked it. It goes like this.

Fear and anxiety are part of our survival mechanisms. They have the job of keeping us safe and alerting us to possible threats. In your brain you have two almond-sized organs called the amygdalas. They are the security guards of the head office, if you like. They can detect potential threats, physical, emotional, or social, in the environment immediately and act on them automatically. It's this that starts a process called the fight-flight-freeze response before the higher thinking areas of the brain knows anything about it. Adrenaline rushes through your body causing your heart rate to increase. Your breathing also becomes faster to help you fight, flee, or freeze and the reasoning part of your brain shuts off. It really is an excellent system for keeping you safe.

But then, of course, we tell them that while the security guards do a great job for serious dangers, they do tend to overdo it when it comes to things like exams ....

### Maths and the mood meter



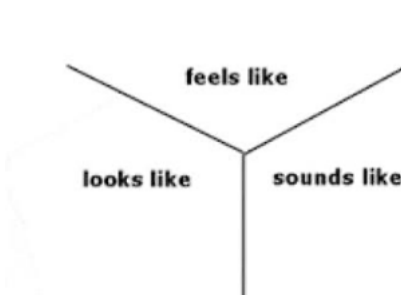
Combine primary maths work on graphing and coordinates with social and emotional learning using RULER's [mood meter](#).

Children can create class bar charts using [sticky notes in four colours](#) to represent which of four core emotions each is feeling.

They can use individual bar charts over a period of time to see which emotions they felt most often or least often, and create class line plots at different times of the day, leading to discussions about trends in emotions over time.

They can represent degrees of 'pleasant' emotions as fractions on a number line and plot intensity and pleasantness of emotions they are feeling on a coordinate grid. Click [here](#) for templates and more ideas.

### Looks like, sounds like, feels like



If your school isn't ready for a full, taught social and emotional curriculum then try this approach from Nicole Green.

Step 1 Identify a SEL 'Skill of the Week' based on what challenges you are observing within the classroom. Might be persistence, seeing others' point of view, self-advocacy (asking for help), working well in a group with others.

*"When you see the class continuing to struggle with something you've thoroughly covered a number of times—for example, responsible decision-making—instead of giving your students a stern talking*

*to, write down what you're feeling. Reflect on the root of it... that's your skill of the week. That thing you've said to your kids a million times could be exactly what they need explicit instruction on."*

### Step 2 Teach the skill

Take five to 10 minutes each Monday to teach the chosen skill. Have the students cocreate a definition; then make a Y-chart (with one section labelled 'looks like', the next labelled 'sounds like, and the last 'feels like'). Make sure students are extremely clear on what the skill means by providing examples and non-examples. Make the skill part of the exit ticket or ending activity, so you have formative feedback on what the students took in.

### Step 3: Revisit it daily

Display the cocreated Y-chart and reference it regularly. When you see a student demonstrating the skill, acknowledge it. Reflect privately with struggling students, working out with them what's getting in the way of their success and then reteaching the skill..

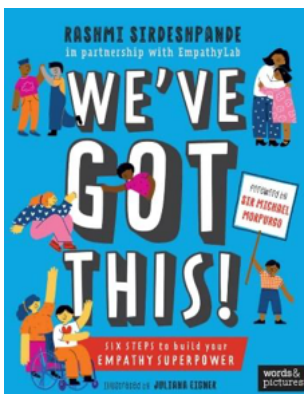
*"Last week we focused on resiliency, and I had a student shutting down over the content. I pulled him aside and said, "I know this work feels hard and frustrating. Here's a great chance to be resilient. Can you identify something you can do to be resilient, or would you like me to tell you one idea?"*

### Step 4: Reflect and recognise

This will look different for everyone but might be celebrating students who have made the most progress or consistently demonstrated the skill with a certificate , or having their picture taken and displayed. Share the picture with their parents/carers.

## Top resource

### We've Got This! Six steps to build your empathy superpower



We love this new book for children from EmpathyLab.

Written by Rashmi Sirdeshpande, with stunning illustrations from Juliana Eigner, it gives young people concrete, fun, accessible ways to practice and build their empathy skills.

Get your copy on Amazon, or from Waterstones or Bookshop.org.

## Resource Round Up

### All-new collection of brilliant back-to-school resources for September



This is a nice getting-to-know-you idea from @MissFMackenzie on Twitter. Her class loved completing an “All About Me Island” activity. Pupils created their island shaped in the initial of their name. They included a key for things that you would find on their island that are important to them.

<https://sealcommunity.org/node/1897>

Or try this for back to school bonding in your new primary class. One teacher started her own ‘Me too’ movement. On the first day of school she had her class of six year olds all stand and say what their favourite food, game etc was. She told the children ‘If you also like it you have to say ‘Me too’ and then go and stand with that group’. The children had so many things in common they were continuously shouting ‘Me too’ and moving from group to group. The activity helped to build a sense of community and belonging in the class.

We’ve uploaded a fantastic primary lesson from The Linking Network, about similarities and differences and celebrating who we are as a class community. There’s a detailed lesson plan and a PowerPoint .... plus some ‘Let’s Connect’ class connectedness lessons from Place2Be. All at <https://sealcommunity.org/node/1899>

And for secondary tutor groups try Dicebreakers – students work in groups and take turns to roll a dice and answer a question from these templates from TCEA. <https://sealcommunity.org/node/1895>

For primary or secondary try this balloon toss as a way of children in a new class getting to know each other. In groups of three to four, students keep the balloon in the air for one minute without holding it.

Play three rounds, switching the rules (“use your nondominant arm,” “use only your head,” etc.) Between rounds, ask the groups to discuss what was and wasn’t working. How’s the team communication? What strategy would they like to try?

Afterward, have a debrief with students – discuss, for example, anything they learned about when to speak up, how to make sure they heard from everyone on the team, being aware of their surroundings, and taking responsibility for their own mistakes and emotions.

For secondary, we’ve uploaded a useful, fun collection of getting to know you/bonding activities for tutor or form groups. <https://sealcommunity.org/node/1898>

And finally... we just came across these fabulous free resources from Tower Hamlets Oracy Hub and Tower Hamlets Education Partnership. The pack of lesson plans was originally devised for primary

children coming back to school in a post-COVID September, but they'd be a great start to the year at any time. There are lesson plans and corresponding PowerPoint presentation including a range of stimuli, internet links and discussion stems.

The five Key Stage 1 Lesson Plans we've uploaded here cover worry, loneliness, friendships, anger and self-identity.

There are four Lower Key stage 2 lessons on emotions, how I'm Feeling, special belongings and problem-solving

For Upper Key Stage 2 there are lessons on empathy and difference, inequality and belonging, kindness, leading a 'Good' Life and problem-solving.

Click here for all the lesson plans and resources <https://sealcommunity.org/node/1896>

We've only uploaded the resources for the SEL lessons (there are others on healthy eating, for example) so if you want those go to <https://www.the-partnership.org.uk/school-improvement/oracy-primary#resources>

### Home



We love, love, LOVE this new four minute [film](#) from Save the Children and Aardmaan animations. There is a lot in the SEAL resources about welcoming newcomers and this would be a great addition.. and for any work on empathy, valuing differences and being kind.

### Relationships and sex education for autistic children and young people



Understanding feelings, ways of understanding relationships, strategies for communicating effectively – students with autism need specific support, particularly as they become teenagers. This suite of resources from Australia's Student Wellbeing Hub looks really useful. It covers upper primary to age 14.



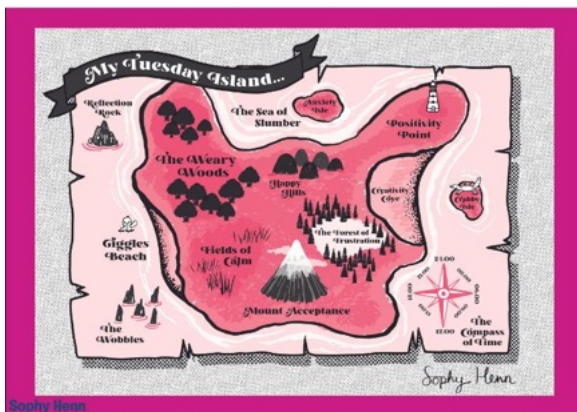
[https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/respect-matters/teaching-resources-students-with-autism/?utm\\_source=swift&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=SWH\\_newsletter\\_May\\_2023](https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/respect-matters/teaching-resources-students-with-autism/?utm_source=swift&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=SWH_newsletter_May_2023)

## A new find - great lesson about Identity



Do look at this **really** interesting [secondary lesson about identity](#) which gets pupils thinking about who they are and what factors influence their sense of identity – including social media. It comes from Australia; in case you are puzzled by the curriculum links.

## Emotion maps



Empathy Lab have worked with top illustrators to create Emotions Maps children can use to chart their feelings across a day. Explore the gallery at <https://www.empathylab.uk/RfE-illustrators-gallery>

## Empathy Week



We're always on about empathy here at the SEAL Community, because we think it often gets neglected in social and emotional learning, in favour of wellbeing/mental health work on recognising and managing one's own emotions. That work is also very important, but understanding and caring about how others

feel matters too.

You will know about EmpathyLab's brilliant Empathy Day, based on children's literature. **Empathy Week** is a global initiative that complements EmpathyLab's work.

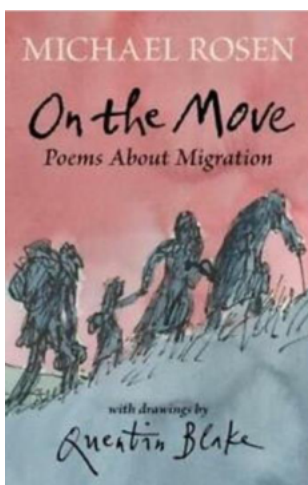
We became interested in Empathy Week after reading a small scale [positive evaluation](#) which found, amongst other things, that the percentage of children responding 'I don't care how other people feel' fell from 70% before taking part in the programme to 24% afterwards.

The programme is free to state schools and costs between £600 and £850 for independent schools if you sign up in September. What you get is a series of custom-made films, lesson plans, ideas for an empathy action project in school and the chance to take part in a global award programme. All resources are differentiated for students aged 5-18 years.

Empathy Week 2024 will be **26th February to 1st March**.

Sign up for the newsletter to find out more <https://www.empathy-week.com>

## Working on empathy



Michael Rosen's collection 'Poems from On the Move : poems about migration' is great for helping children develop empathy. Michael reads them aloud here, some as rap versions

<https://audioboom.com/playlists/4613930-michael-rosen-poems-hmd>.

We've also uploaded several of the poems [here](#).

## Loneliness resources



Developed with teachers, this Year 6 'Building Connections' lesson supports pupils to understand that it's normal to feel lonely, but there are strategies they can use to safely build connections with family, friends and their community. Pupils also think about how they can look out for others who might be feeling lonely. There's an accompanying video and PowerPoint slides.

Find the resources at <https://campaignresources.phe.gov.uk/schools/resources/building-connections-year6-lesson-plan-pack>

For secondary students, this pack from the Mental Health Foundation explores what loneliness is, how it can affect our mental health, and the different ways we can connect with ourselves, others and the world around us. It includes a lesson plan with PowerPoint slides, worksheets, an assembly plan with slides and script, and posters to encourage pupils to reach out for support when they feel lonely. <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/programmes/families-children-and-young-people/resources/loneliness-school-pack>

## Mental health animations



If you didn't see it, we think this was the best of the many resources developed for this May's mental health week. It's a really nice animation for primary pupils from the Anna Freud Centre, useful for work on understanding and managing feelings at any time of year. . It was developed in collaboration with children

The animation aims to give children:

- An understanding of what mental health is and the difference between everyday small feelings and a big feeling
- Consistent and accessible language to talk about mental health
- An understanding of how to be a good listener

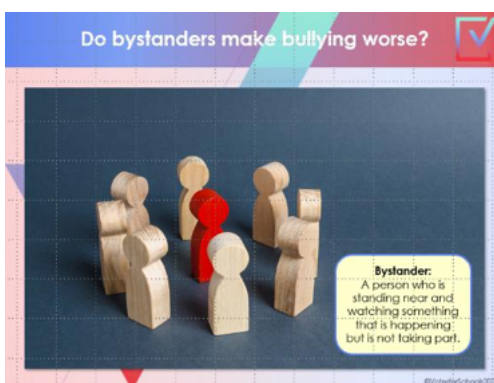
There's a Toolkit for school staff to use alongside the animation which includes:

- ❖ A lesson plan
- ❖ An Assembly PowerPoint
- ❖ An accompanying Assembly Plan
- ❖ Tips for talking for parents and carers booklet
- ❖ Various resources and classroom exercises

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/talking-mental-health-animation-teacher-toolkit/>

There's also a secondary package at <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/we-all-have-mental-health-animation-teacher-toolkit>. The lessons look good.

## Anti-bullying resources to stash away for Anti-Bullying Week



There are two lovely copiables in this primary resource- a 'hand' for children to record who they can reach out to when they need to talk, and a Reach Out Rainbow for them to colour in segments of, each time they do reach out for support. It was devised for work on bullying but actually works for any work where we are encouraging children to talk about their feelings.

<https://sealcommunity.org/node/1832>

These nice PowerPoint lessons from Votes for Schools get primary and secondary pupils debating the role of bystanders in bullying. Do bystanders make bullying worse? Does being a bystander count as bullying? <https://sealcommunity.org/node/1831>

## Research

### Can school mental health interventions be harmful?

[This article](#) from researchers at the University of Oxford suggest that a growing body of quantitative research indicates that some school-based mental health interventions can cause adverse effects – specifically, an increase in ‘internalising’ symptoms (anxiety and depression) relative to control groups. The authors speculate that interventions might inadvertently encourage adolescents to ruminate on their negative thoughts and emotions and lead to changes in self-concept (e.g. ‘I have anxiety’). They also note the possible effects of peer influence, in which adolescents can influence each other’s negative moods and can learn problematic behaviour from each other.

Perhaps the lesson is to make sure we build positive psychology (challenging negative thoughts) into all our school based mental health work. We can also help students understand that some degree of stress/anxiety is normal and even helpful.



We’ve written more about this in the Anna Freud/Early Intervention Foundation *Classroom Wellbeing Toolkit*

<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/classroom-wellbeing-toolkit/>

### Bringing restorative practices and social and emotional learning together raises attainment

A whole-school UK programme Learning Together (also called INCLUSIVE) has been found by the Education Endowment Foundation to improve academic attainment. This new research builds on an earlier study by the National Institute for Health Research that found the programme reduced bullying and improved pupil wellbeing.

The programme includes 2.5 hours of restorative practice training for all school staff, an additional three days of training for five to ten members of staff, and socioemotional skills curriculum materials (five to ten hours per year of lessons for pupils in Years 8 to 10). Schools must also coordinate two action group meetings per term, where a small group of staff and pupils meets to discuss action plans for improving the school climate and practices related to inclusivity informed by the results of needs assessment surveys completed by pupils.

The average cost of INCLUSIVE for a school was around £50,244, or £58 per pupil per year when averaged over three years.

The independent EEF evaluation by Manchester University found that pupils in INCLUSIVE schools achieved higher GCSE Attainment 8 scores than pupils in other schools, on average, making the

equivalent of 2 months' additional progress. Pupils in INCLUSIVE schools also achieved higher Maths and English GCSE scores than children in other schools, on average, making the equivalent of an additional 1 month's progress in Maths and an additional 2 months' progress in English.

40 schools took part in this trial. You can find out more about the findings [here](#).

Programme materials are available for free from the project development team led by Chris Bonnell at University College London and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine ([Chris.Bonell@lshtm.ac.uk](mailto:Chris.Bonell@lshtm.ac.uk)). The restorative practice training component of the programme is available commercially from L30 Relational Systems.

### Adventure Learning

[Research](#) for the Education Endowment Foundation aimed to find out if adventure learning – both in outdoor settings and at school – could improve self-regulation, school engagement and behaviour in hard-to-reach students.

Students in Year 9 took part in one of two different programmes:



- In the Outward Bound group, students attended a five-day residential that included activities like kayaking, mountaineering, and wild camping delivered by trained instructors.
- Students in the Commando Joe's group participated in scenario-based missions where the level of physical challenge was less and was delivered on-site at school by a trained instructor.

Both interventions were based around the need for the students to employ teamwork, resilience, communication and listening skills and were supported by school staff.

The independent evaluators from Sheffield Hallam University found that students made no overall improvements in their self-regulation skills over a year after the intervention, but that students in both groups showed improvements in their behaviour over a year after the intervention, compared to a similar group of students who didn't take part in one of the programmes. The effects were slightly larger for the group that took part in the Commando Joe's programme. In addition, students showed improvements in school engagement and self-regulation immediately after the programme had ended.

Longitudinal work is underway to find out whether the programmes will have an effect on Key Stage 4 attainment.

### What makes an effective school?

A recent report brings together the findings from three studies that looked at school factors which had the most impact on secondary students' short and long term success. In the short-run, one of



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the most remarkable findings was that fostering socioemotional development and fostering test score growth had **nearly identical impacts** on ninth-grade test scores.

Students' long-term trajectories (high school graduation and post-secondary enrolment/attendance) were most strongly influenced by fostering socioemotional development.

The authors conclude that many 'school quality' measures miss the important ways in which high schools foster student thriving.

Read more at <https://consortium.uchicago.edu/publications/investing-in-adolescents>

### Reducing sexual violence among young people

A meta-analysis of 20 programmes to prevent sexual violence have found them to be successful in reducing both perpetration and experience of sexual violence. Programmes that were delivered in school settings and targeted at adolescents aged 15 to 19 years yielded significantly larger effect sizes than programmes that were either delivered outside of a school setting or targeted younger adolescents. Read the research here <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36346627/>

### New study shows that increased empathy reduces bias-based cyberbullying

A new study has shown that within a sample of 1,644 12 to 15 year olds from across the United States, "those higher in empathy were significantly less likely to cyberbully others in general, and cyberbully others based on their race or religion. The higher a youth scored on empathy, the lower the likelihood that the youth cyberbullied others."

Based on the results of the study, the authors think that "schools need more focused efforts to improve empathy as a means to reduce these forms of harm and better protect those in vulnerable and marginalized communities."

Read more at

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/02724316221088757?journalCode=jeaa>