

Welcome!

Welcome to another newsletter from the SEAL Community. This time we're talking about new beginnings, new classes... plus featuring the usual fascinating research and great tips from teachers.

News Update

World Economic Forum report says the jobs of the future need empathy

The World Economic Forum's *Future of Jobs Report 2025* brings together the perspective of over



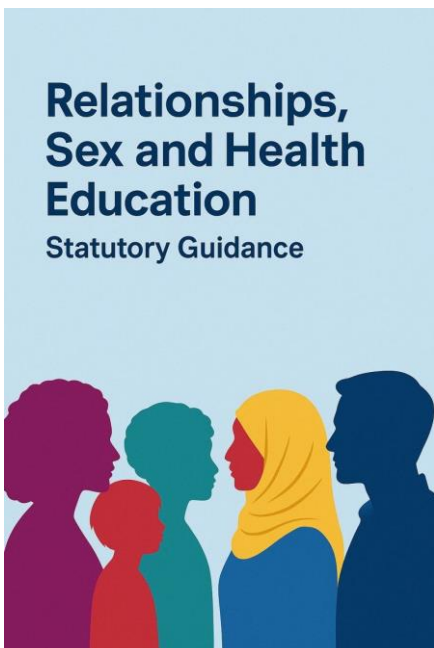
1,000 leading global employers—collectively representing more than 14 million workers across 22 industry clusters and 55 economies from around the world. It identifies critical skills for the workforce of tomorrow. While tech skills like AI and data analysis are high on the list, so was empathy. This isn't just a feel-good notion; the WEF backs it up with hard data, recognising empathy as essential for navigating the complex challenges and opportunities of our rapidly changing world.

Read the report [here](#).

New reports on whole-school approaches to wellbeing published in Wales and England

The Welsh government have published a new report, [Whole school approach to emotional and mental wellbeing: unmet evidence needs](#). The report highlights gaps where more evidence is required to effectively monitor and evaluate the delivery and impact of whole school approaches. In England the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition surveyed a range of schools and the mental health sector for its new report, ['From policy to practice'](#), to understand how government guidance works practically, and where it could be improved. Findings indicate that whilst good progress has been made in implementing whole school and college approaches, gaps remain. Particular principles of a whole school approach, such as working with parents and carers and providing targeted support to pupils, remain difficult to implement.

Revised relationships, sex and health education guidance in England has a new focus on self-regulation



In new proposals for changes to the RSHE curriculum, information has been added to the health and wellbeing section on building resilience, coping and emotional regulation: 'schools should support pupils to develop strategies for self-regulation, perseverance and determination, even in the face of setbacks.'

In other changes the guidance now says that as part of teaching on health and wellbeing, pupils should understand that "worrying and feeling down are normal, affect everyone at different times, and are not in themselves a sign of a mental

health condition". The DfE says it wants to clarify that these may not be signs of mental health problems if transient but they may be if persistent and severe.

The revised guidance also contains more content on online safety, including tackling online misogyny. Oak National Academy announced that it has released [80 free lessons](#) to support teaching on online safety and misogyny for pupils aged 5 to 16. Oak will also develop additional lesson materials, to be available this autumn, to help schools deliver other areas covered by the new RSHE guidance.

The changes will become statutory in September 2026. Read more [here](#)

Sharing practice



The importance of getting to know the students we teach

This is a brilliant story told by former science teacher (now local authority leader) Stephen Bush. Every year he received lots of data about his new students and their academic progress. But he didn't know them as individuals. Then he read about the impact of developing a warm 'socio-emotional climate' in the classroom that fosters engagement and effort.

Determined to act on this research, one September he started his first lesson differently with each new class. He explained how important it was that he spent time getting to know them as individuals. He told them about his own hobbies and interests and explained why he became a teacher.

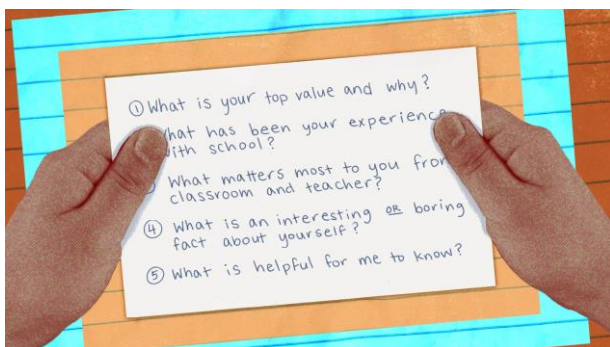
Then it was their turn. Each student was asked (but not told) to write a little about themselves. What are your interests? Which team do you support? Have I taught one of your family? And then the two crucial questions: What do your best teachers do to get the most out of you, and what should I never, ever do if I want to work well with you?

Stephen collected their papers and read them after each lesson. Whilst some were bland or even blank, others were 'like gold dust.' He was surprised by what pupils shared. Jake in Year 8 wanted Stephen to know that his mum had died within the last two years, and that he still got upset sometimes. Kiera in Year 9 said that he must never compare her with her brother or sister, both of whom he had taught.

Later that term, when he was finding Oscar in Year 11 unfocused and disruptive, he read his paper again. Whilst on duty the next morning, he asked Oscar how the boxing was coming on. He looked shocked. 'Not many people know about that, Sir,' he replied. Stephen said he'd remembered from the first lesson, and within three minutes of chatting about his next bout, the relationship was changed forever, and Oscar's work in class immediately improved.

Practical tools

Back to school – use a survey that fits on an index card to build relationships and belonging



Get to know the children you teach by asking them to answer five questions that fit on an index card. They come from teacher [Marcus Luther](#).

Question 1: what is your top value and why?



Give them a list to choose from – like honesty, respect, fairness or loyalty (there are ideas [here](#)). After they've recorded theirs, have them reflect and share their responses with small groups and then as a whole group.

Question 2: what has been your experience with school up to this point, 1–7?

Introduce this question by saying you know that students have each had their own journey with education before arriving in our classroom. Then ask them to choose a number between 1 (“Very negative and/or frustrating”) and 7 (“Incredibly positive and supportive”) and, *if they want*, to write a brief reason for their number.

When you've compiled all the index card survey results you can show the students the distribution of answers (still anonymous), and they will probably see that within the classroom *every single number is represented*. This is an important reminder that students with whom they may have been in the same classes for many years have had very different experiences from theirs.

Question 3: what matters most to you from a classroom and teacher?

If you like you can help with options such as creativity, challenge, kindness.

Question 4: what is an interesting or boring fact about yourself?

This one lends itself to students talking to others they don't know very well, to find out more about them.

Question 5: what is helpful for me to know to better support you right away in this classroom?

Probably the most important question of all!

It's not just a fight-or-flight response

We really liked this more complex model of human responses to perceived threat. One to share with colleagues to help them understand pupils' behaviour, perhaps – or with children, to help them understand and regulate their own responses to stress.

Fight	Flight	Freeze	Friend	Fawn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confrontational • aggressive • shouting • competitive • controlling • explosive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • running away • avoidance • mute(selective) • procrastination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ignoring • pretending haven't heard • self-medication(numbing) • not making decisions • daydreaming • procrastinating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • laughing • making inappropriate jokes • negotiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • people pleasing • excessively complimenting • always saying yes • always saying sorry • codependent • unable to set boundaries • perfectionism

Quick tips

Got a student who had a difficult time – and gave others a difficult time - in school last year?



Pooky Knightsmith has some great advice on how to reset and rebuild relationships and engagement at the start of the new school year at <https://www.headteacher-update.com/content/best-practice/supporting-pupils-who-struggled>. One to share with colleagues, for sure. We loved her fresh start language guide:

- **Instead of saying:** "Given your behaviour last year..." **Try:** "This year, we're focusing on..."
- **Instead of saying:** "You need to catch up..." **Try:** "Let's build your confidence in..."
- **Instead of saying:** "Don't repeat last year's mistakes..." **Try:** "What would success look like for you this term?"
- **Instead of saying:** "Your reputation precedes you..." **Try:** Nothing. Let them show you who they are now.

Share this with your Reception colleagues



Does every early years teacher know what works best in helping children learn to behave well?

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/restorative-practices-preschool/>

Top Resource

Literacy, oracy and New Beginnings

SEAL was always designed so that learning could be across the curriculum, not just in PSHE lessons. And lo and behold, the wonderful National Literacy Trust have put together a brilliant [new resource](#)



[for reading, writing and oracy activities on the theme of New Beginnings](#). It has ideas for primary and KS3 including age-themed good reads and using video clips to stimulate writing . We absolutely love it. Thank you, NLT. Also on the literacy theme , Book Trust have put together a great list of books that are good reads for new Y7s. Find it [here](#)

Resource Round Up

New beginnings : LYFTA



We are big fans of LYFTA, a subscription service that provides immersive audio story content. It has lots of resources relevant to SEAL themes. For example, there are Lyfta storyworlds that follow young people navigating school transitions to help deepen classroom discussion and understanding around themes of change,

identity and new beginnings.

You can see a sample of lessons [here](#). All resources are available with a Lyfta subscription or through a free trial account.

Getting on and falling out/Learning to be together



Try these activities to help children bond as a group and get on well together. The first is called We Stick Together and is very simple: have children sit back-to-back with a partner, with their arms entwined, and try to stand up together without dropping their arms. After they complete this task, ask them what it took to accomplish the goal of standing up together. The second has pairs of children find out what makes

them the same and what makes them different. Find the instructions and a Venn diagram worksheet [here](#).

The resources for last year's Anti-Bullying week focused on respect. They are useful any time for work on kindness, friendship, handling disagreement and conflict. The primary and secondary toolkits include film, PowerPoint and lesson ideas. Find them [here](#) on the SEAL site, in English and in Welsh.

[This](#) upper KS2 and KS3 activity from 6 Seconds links work on bullying with work on feelings. Children choose a Situation card from a pack, or make up their own, and post it on the wall. They then post feeling cards based on how they would feel if they were in that situation and add one or more of a set of 'Wants cards' to show what would help them. The activity ends with children choosing an Action card to show what they will do to help one of these situations, next time it happens, or right now.

['Loop'](#) is a lovely short, animated film from Pixar that is good for work on empathy and friendship. It's about a non-verbal autistic girl and the boy she meets on a canoe trip. Their journey from confusion to friendship shows what having empathy for others really looks like. It is not as simple as just talking. It is trying to understand someone else's world. Watch with your class and ask, "Which moments really stood out to you as moments of empathy and understanding?" (Suitable for ages 7+).

We've featured girls' never-ending friendship problems before. Now we've come across a paid-for programme called [Girls on Board](#), for girls between the ages of 7 and 18. The approach empowers girls to solve their own friendship problems and recognises that they are usually the only ones who



can. *Girls on Board* sessions are non-judgmental and reflective, designed to increase empathy amongst the girls and based on the principle that it is that empathy that fuels the search for harmony and resolution. If you would like to introduce *Girls on Board* at your school then one or more teachers need to be trained, either at [face-to-face events](#), [INSET](#) or [online](#). Training takes around 4 to 5 hours. Over 1,000 schools across the world have adopted this award-winning approach, which has featured on BBC Radio Five Live and in the TES.

We liked the programme's insights, gained from talking to thousands of girls:

- Having at least one friend in your year group in your school is of critical importance.
- If you ask the girls in school, they will tell you that adult involvement in friendship turbulence nearly always makes things WORSE.
- Trying to find the absolute truth behind the causes of girls' friendship turbulence is nearly always fruitless.

So, as teachers and/or parents we need to STOP:

- Thinking we can 'fix' girls' friendship turbulence.
- Searching for the absolute truth when we know there are multiple versions and perceptions.
- Assuming that, because a girl is upset, someone else must have done something wrong.
- Trying to investigate and apportion blame.

Instead, *Girls on Board* works by taking a non-judgmental approach in supporting girls through guided-reflection sessions, evoking girls' empathy so that they feel empowered, licensed and enabled to resolve their friendship issues for themselves, and acknowledging that girls are the world experts on their own friendship dynamics.

Finally, the Getting on/Learning to be together SEAL themes include work on the powerful emotion of anger. Try this [Go noodle video](#) to help your primary class recognise anger in their bodies and find positive ways to express it. It will help students understand that that anger isn't bad; it's how we handle it that matters. Through movement, we can transform that energy into something positive - because every emotion deserves healthy expression.

[Stepping into someone else's shoes: resources to inspire empathy and compassion](#)

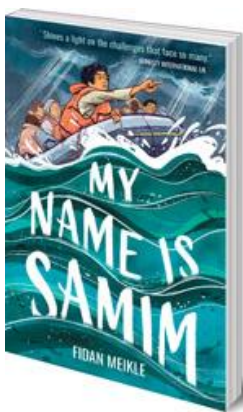
Films are a great resource for teaching about perspective-taking, empathy and compassion. A good one from BBC Bitesize, suggested by Empathy Studios, is ['Ali's Journey from Afghanistan: Seeking Refuge'](#). Told in his own words, it follows a young boy's experience of seeking refuge in the UK. You could play Ali's story to your class and ask, "What would you ask Ali if you got the chance to ask him a question?" (Suitable for ages 7-16).

For early years, have a look at ['Help them feel at home'](#), a short animated story that is good for work on welcoming newcomers. It tells the story of a young refugee called Sana and her toy dinosaur, and how they were welcomed at their new school.

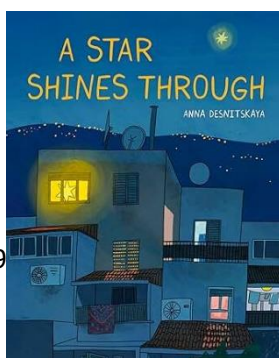
Here's a podcast on a similar theme. In Episode 5 of 'We Are Voices' by the British Red Cross, listeners are dropped into an interactive journey to get a glimpse of what life is like as an asylum seeker in the UK. Each decision they make affects how the story unfolds. It's emotional, immersive, and a brilliant example of empathy in action. Suitable for ages 11-18. You can find it and the other episodes in the series on Spotify [here](#).

When it comes to books, head [here](#) for National Literacy Trust literacy lesson plans for 5-8 year olds, based on the brilliant book *The Bicycle*, by Patricia McCormick and Mevan Babakar, developed for Refugee Week 2025 but useful any time of year. On the same link there are really good critical literacy and oracy activities for secondary students, based around texts on kindness and community.

[Here](#) is Book Trust's list of stories for all ages that help children get into others' shoes.



The list includes books on the experience of refugees and migrants, including the excellent 'My name is Samim', in which thirteen-year-old Afghan refugee Samim has fled to the UK. To gain asylum he must tell his story. This moving, wry novel about courage, resilience and friendship shines a light on the difficulties facing young asylum seekers in the UK, including racism, cultural barriers and a challenging immigration system. Suitable for 10-14 year olds.



We also love *A Star Shines Through*, by [Anna Desnitskaya](#). Narrated by a young refugee, it is based on the experiences of the author-illustrator, who left Russia with her family after the start of the Ukraine War. With an

evocative palette of blues and yellows, it shows how making art can create a sense of hope, even amidst emigration and resettling. Suitable for primary age range.

Research

Which social and emotional skills are most teachable?

The OECD report addresses the questions of whether social and emotional skills (SES) are generally teachable and how SES compare to each other in terms of teachability. Based on the number of intervention studies that demonstrated significant positive outcomes, out of 74 school-based programmes assessed, it finds that

- Assertiveness is very highly teachable
- Self-control/emotional control are very highly teachable, as are stress resistance, cooperation and self-efficacy
- Empathy is also highly teachable
- Conflict resolution is very highly teachable
- Persistence is borderline highly teachable – depending on the definition used. Academic persistence is teachable but this may not be transferred to other contexts like hobbies or sports

There is less evidence for the teachability of curiosity, creativity, sociability, and optimism, but this may be because the concepts are poorly defined in research.

The report also examines which skills are both teachable and most strongly related to key life outcomes such as academic attainment, employment, earnings, life satisfaction, health, antisocial behaviour and civic engagement. 'Best bets' from this analysis emerge as self-control, self-efficacy/internal locus of control, and emotional intelligence in general. Social problem-solving is another teachable skill that shows strong association with health and anti-social behaviour; empathy shows a strong association with civic engagement. Assertiveness is particularly predictive of job performance.

Read more [here](#)

Grow social and emotional skills – and improve academic attainment and attendance



This study used data on SEL in 10 to 14 year olds in California to explore whether changes in individual students' reports of their social-emotional skills from one school year to the next predict changes in attainment and behaviour. SEL was measured using California's CORE Student Survey, which assesses growth mindset, social awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation.

Findings showed that improving SEL was associated with improvement in maths and English scores on state tests, and students' attendance. The improvements went above and beyond normal cohort trends. The associations between SEL improvement and outcome improvement were largest for students who usually have the lowest levels of SEL. Read the research [here](#).

School mental health sessions 'help reduce depression and anxiety', study finds

Whole-class mental health sessions in schools have a small but significant effect in reducing depression and anxiety symptoms, according to analysis led by researchers at UCL and Anna Freud.

The Department for Education funded study, combined results from 71 existing studies in 22 countries involving 63,041 young people aged eight to 18. Interventions were mostly delivered by teachers and psychologists and ranged from a single 30-minute session to more than two hours a week over four school years.

Researchers found that sessions based on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), where young people learn to understand their thoughts and behaviours, as well as how to manage them, were more effective at reducing *anxiety* symptoms than mindfulness-based sessions or sessions drawing from other theories (such as yoga, physical education and self-determination theory). *Depression* symptoms did not vary according to the underlying approach informing the intervention. The outcomes for depression and anxiety did not vary according to the length of session or who delivered it.

Lead author Dr Daniel Hayes, based at UCL's Department of Behavioural Science & Health and Anna Freud, said: "The value of whole-class mental health interventions has been contested. Past evidence has been mixed and some experts have argued that, given a lack of obvious benefit, schools should reconsider their use."

“Our findings, based on the most up-to-date evidence, show that whole-class sessions can work in reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Although the effect is small on average for individuals, such small effects can be impactful once scaled up at a population level.”

What does research tell us about improving teacher wellbeing?



A recent meta-analysis has investigated the effects of short intervention programs to boost teacher well-being.

Mindfulness-based and positive psychology-based interventions had significantly larger effects than those focused on dealing

with negative emotions. Interventions had a greater impact on personal well-being (e.g. life satisfaction, reducing stress) than occupational well-being (e.g. job satisfaction, occupational burnout). Read more [here](#)

Childhood experiences and adult social and emotional skills

A [large-scale review](#) of studies looking at the association between emotional awareness and regulation in adults and events earlier in their lives has found that those who have difficulty with emotion recognition, expression and understanding are more likely to have been abused or neglected in childhood or adolescence than those with good emotional literacy. These difficulties were more associated with childhood neglect than with physical or sexual abuse.