



READY TO ENGAGE

Perspectives of Teachers
and Parents on Social and Emotional
Learning and Service-Learning
in America's Public Schools

A Report by Civic with Hart Research Associates
Matthew N. Atwell, John M. Bridgeland, & Eleanor P. Manspile

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Executive Summary

Through SEL, students cultivate the skills needed to form productive relationships, make responsible decisions, and communicate effectively.

When this project began before the COVID-19 pandemic, we set out to learn about the perspectives of parents and teachers on the value of social and emotional learning (SEL) and service-learning (SL), and the extent to which each are integrated into classrooms across the United States. Results from two nationally representative surveys of parents and teachers conducted by Hart Research Associates for this report provided encouraging results: both parents and teachers endorse a holistic view of education and student success that includes SEL and SL. They believe SEL and SL have a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship, but they report implementation of SEL and SL opportunities in school lags behind demand, with more troubling opportunity gaps for rural and low-income students. The pandemic has made the need for SEL and SL even more urgent.

These results echo emergent research from the past two decades that asserts that schools must engage the whole child by integrating social, emotional, and academic development with relevant instruction and programming. Through SEL, students cultivate the skills needed to form productive relationships, make responsible decisions, and communicate effectively. Service-learning offers students real-world experiences that connect classroom learning to life; reinforce social, emotional, and academic development; broaden perspectives; deepen social awareness; and connect decisions and actions to the needs of communities.

*"I think [social and emotional skills are] more important this year because of the general chaos caused by COVID and even more recently, the unrest due to the elections. I think the ability to empathize is an important step for a well-rounded student. There is **so much division right now with so much of our lives and being able to understand another person's point of view can help with that.**"*

—Middle School Teacher

*"I feel [service-learning] is important because **it is a good way to reinforce what has been learned, and cements or better ensures that the concepts are retained.** It also provides students pride in their learning and seeing it used in real life situations."*

—High School Teacher

Since the original surveys of parents and teachers were conducted in early 2020, the relevance of SEL and SL has only increased. The world has undergone seismic shifts that forced educators and policymakers to reimagine education and everyday life. Protests around the country have called for dismantling systemic racism and re-envisioning public safety. Threats to our democracy have deepened our value of it and the need to give students experiences that connect to civic engagement.

Schools, workplaces, and other areas where Americans gather are being reshaped by a pandemic that requires us to be distant

from one another. Technology plays an increasingly important role in enabling schoolchildren to continue to learn and in connecting Americans to opportunities to serve their country in a time of crisis. Americans have expressed some of the lowest levels of trust in one another and institutions ever recorded. To understand how educators, parents, and their students navigated these unprecedented challenges and the relevance of SEL and SL in this new context, Civic and Hart Research Associates partnered to hold online discussions in November 2020 with parents and teachers.

Unsurprisingly, parents and teachers expressed concerns about today's youth, especially the impact social isolation is having on students' mental health, as well as dwindling student engagement due to increased reliance on distance learning. Both groups observe and worry about how this will affect academic progress and social and emotional development.

Encouragingly, findings also affirm the resilience of parents, teachers, and, most importantly, young people. Both parents and teachers emphasized the heightened importance of SEL to equip students to succeed academically despite pandemic-induced trauma. Furthermore, parents and teachers see SL as a way to heal divisions in the country and enhance understanding and empathy across social, economic, and racial differences.

*"[My son] watches a lot of news so he's well aware of the division being sowed in our country, the inequality, racism, political divide, and the coronavirus. Our kids do not tell us all that goes on in their minds, only the things that they choose to share. **Having better social and emotional skills could help him to better put things into perspective, and also help him to learn how to express whatever emotions that he may feel about certain things without doing it in a negative way.** There's so much more going on now than a year ago, so*

it's vitally important that our children have the social and emotional skills to properly deal with the feelings that they may have about those things."
—Mother of Two Children

The cascading challenges of the current moment will require a generation of leaders with the knowledge, skills, resilience, and civic dispositions to innovate through times of crisis. SEL and SL are two practices with clear results in boosting outcomes for students in classrooms, workplaces, and civic life. Through surveys and discussions, this report demonstrates that parents and teachers unequivocally endorse social and emotional learning and service-learning as powerful tools to prepare today's students to rise up and meet the moment as tomorrow's leaders.

*"Students gain a **sense of agency and confidence in themselves when they can participate in the real world and do something to benefit others.** Students also will get the practice they need in learning skills they need to be employable when they graduate. It also gets them more engaged and hopefully will foster empathy for others."*
—Teacher

SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey findings are organized throughout the report into three categories: 1) 2020: Schools Transformed; 2) Perspectives on Student Development and Classroom Learning; and 3) Attitudes on and Access to Social and Emotional Learning and Service-Learning. Five main findings emerged.

KEY FINDING 1:
Parents and teachers endorse a holistic view of education and success.

"[SEL] develops the whole person—not just the academic part of life. While

*I love the academics and see them as necessary, I find that our school system only develops the ability to pass state and local tests. Bullying is a huge issue in our schools, and it comes from a variety of social issues. **Helping students develop better social skills would enhance our communities overall.**"*
—Parent

To both parents and teachers, education should be about more than learning academic material—they want schools that prepare students to be successful members of their communities as adults.

- When asked about goals for their child, **99 percent of parents say developing good character and integrity, and finding happiness** are "very" or "fairly" important, prioritizing both over getting a good job and being prepared for college.
- Meanwhile, **teachers see it as their duty to prepare students for all facets of their future**, especially applying classroom learning to situations outside of school.
- Similarly, majorities of parents (60 percent) and teachers (56 percent) endorsed an education that **develops students' social and emotional competencies just as much as their academic ones**, reporting both as equally important.
- Moreover, **more than seven in ten teachers and parents believe social and emotional skills**—self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, social awareness, and self-awareness—are **foundational to a student's success later in life**.

"Social and emotional learning is a booster rocket to everything we already measure in schools. Such learning should be at the core of the educational enterprise."
—Commissioner, National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development



But, troublingly, teachers see schools as falling short in preparing students for life outside the classroom. There is an implementation gap: **just one in ten teachers believe their schools are very successful at developing students' abilities to apply knowledge to real-world situations, making courses relevant to students' futures, and developing students' social and emotional skills.**

These findings make it clear that it is time to envision a new definition for student success, one that is better aligned with the aspirations parents have for their children and teachers have for their students. This is consistent with recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development, which advocated for engaging parents, teachers, and community stakeholders in charting a new vision for K-12 education and articulating it across state standards and school curricula.

KEY FINDING 2:
Parents and teachers view SEL and SL as having a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship.

Parents and teachers see SEL and SL as two approaches to developing students holistically, with major benefits to preparing students for the real world. These include giving them the social and emotional skills needed for success in life and preparing students to contribute as adult members of their communities.

- **Eighty-five percent of parents believe a focus on SEL would help their children "a lot" or a "fair" amount in developing into good citizens** that are prepared to make a positive impact in their communities **and 95 percent of teachers say it will have a "very" or "somewhat" major benefit on this.**
- **Both groups believe SL programs would help improve students' social and emotional skills, particularly their ability to get along with and understand people who are different from them—with 63**

percent of parents and 70 percent of teachers believing SL would benefit this "a lot." This mutually reinforcing relationship offers educators and policymakers a powerful opportunity to simultaneously cultivate students' social and emotional competencies, while preparing students to engage and give back to the community through SEL and SL.

In a time of national crisis and some of the lowest levels of social and institutional trust in a generation, these skills and behaviors are absolutely essential. As strategies backed by research, as well as the opinions of parents and teachers, SEL and SL are highly popular, evidence-based programs policymakers must work to expand in schools.

KEY FINDING 3:
Implementation of SEL and SL opportunities in schools continues to lag behind demand from parents and teachers.

Throughout the survey, parents and teachers repeatedly pointed to the benefits that SEL and SL have for children and students, while simultaneously calling on schools to expand implementation and opportunities for both.

- **Sixty-three percent of parents and 70 percent of teachers believe schools should place more emphasis on developing social and emotional skills.** Moreover, both groups see that SEL and SL have far reaching benefits for students academically, socially, emotionally, and civically.
- **Seventy-nine percent of parents believe their schools should offer more SL opportunities, and 86 percent of teachers agree.** These results were consistent for parents and teachers in all areas of the country.

Yet, when asked about the prevalence of SEL and SL in schools, the results were less encouraging. Despite parents' and teachers' endorsement of SEL and SL, **less than one in four teachers say SEL is implemented in their school on a programmatic, schoolwide**

basis and less than one in four parents (23 percent) and teachers (16 percent) say their students have SL opportunities in their schools. While the national landscape shows an increase in SEL as a priority in a growing number of schools, districts, and states in recent years, service-learning lost an important ally with the elimination of the Learn and Serve America program at the Corporation for National and Community Service, which provided national energy and support to schools for SL over more than two decades. Programs like these and the recommended Service-Learning Fund are critical to developing the youth of today into the leaders of tomorrow.

KEY FINDING 4:
Schooling has undergone a transformational shift since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, making the need for SEL and SL even more essential educational pillars.

*"It's been so hit and miss with COVID. We have 30 percent of families that are just AWOL and the rest are still online only. The progress is slow to none despite many hours and hours of teacher effort."
—Middle School Teacher*

The educational experience throughout the country has been fundamentally altered by a historic year, primarily due to the coronavirus and subsequent shift to online learning. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that **65 percent of households with school-age children report their school has shifted to online distance learning** (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). In online discussion boards, parents and teachers described how the changes are negatively affecting students.

*"Students won't be able to do the academic part if they're not emotionally safe."
—High School Teacher*

SEL and SL are two ways to strengthen the educational system to meet the needs of our young people and to build a generation of leaders prepared for the challenges of our time.

"It's a global pandemic. No question academics will suffer. However, that can be made up. There's no way to 'make up' social and emotional damage."

—Middle School Teacher

Parents and teachers worry about the effects of social isolation on students' social development and mental health. Increased reliance on online learning, less opportunities for in-person activities and social interaction with peers and supportive adults, and technology challenges all contribute to lower levels of student engagement. This has forced teachers to move at a "glacial pace," causing lower levels of academic progress. Other key findings include:

- Educating during the pandemic weighs on teachers, as well. Some teachers report being "burned out" due to the added pressures of teaching through a pandemic. Moreover, they describe the challenges of building positive relationships with their students due to online learning and social distancing measures. These findings are reinforced by a nationally representative survey conducted by EdWeek Research Center in November 2020 that **found nearly three quarters**

of teachers say their morale is lower now than before the pandemic, and 85 percent say overall teacher morale has waned (Will, 2021).

- Already embracing the value and relevance of SEL in the classroom, **parents and teachers believe the need for SEL is even more pronounced now.** Many teachers—and some parents—feel that it is **more important to prioritize SEL over academic skills during this school year**, believing SEL can provide students the skills to cope with unprecedented challenges. Not doing so will have ripple effects for years to come.
- Parents and teachers remain enthusiastic about the value of service-learning. Both groups agree that **SL can promote racial understanding and reduce divisions** by building empathy for and gaining perspective on diverse points of view.

"Service-learning is the groundwork that begins to allow this country to heal. There is also an incredible need right now."

—High School Teacher

KEY FINDING 5:
Troubling opportunity gaps for rural and low-income students exist, and the pandemic has had a disparate impact.

Teachers report that schools in rural areas or with higher proportions of low-income students are least likely to have programmatic, schoolwide SEL and formalized SL programs. Parents in rural areas and those who report lower family income levels confirmed these findings.

- **Twenty percent of teachers in urban schools reported a formalized SL program, compared to just 11 percent of teachers in rural or small-town areas.** Meanwhile, 38 percent of parents that reported above average incomes stated their child's school has a SL program, compared to 19 percent of parents with below average income.

- **Encouragingly, teachers at schools with more low-income students are especially likely to believe in the positive impacts of SL programs.** This is a significant finding, as it indicates **SL can be a lifeline to students in underserved schools** and help close equity gaps between students from different income levels. Regardless, policymakers must work to close opportunity gaps and ensure students from all backgrounds and geographic areas can access the benefits of SEL and SL.
- Teachers in online discussion boards reported that **low-income students particularly bear the burden of the pandemic.** Moreover, students who usually receive one-on-one attention, **especially English Learners and students with disabilities, face challenges with online learning.**

PATHS FORWARD

The promise of a nation rests in its youth, and America needs the talents of its young people now more than ever as it grapples with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and demands an end to systemic racism. Given the unified voices of parents and teachers in support of SEL and SL, policymakers and educators must equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and competencies needed to become leaders who can address the challenges of today and the future. SEL and SL are two ways to strengthen the educational system to meet the needs of our young people and to build a generation of leaders prepared for the challenges of our time. Parents and educators should continue advocating for the integration of SEL and SL in their schools and districts, and encourage policymakers to take the following specific actions to support greater access to both.

Create a new vision of student success that prioritizes the whole child

Repeatedly through survey results, parents and teachers advocated for a broader vision

of student success that equally emphasizes the academic, as well as the social and emotional aspects of learning. The vision must be developed for policymakers in partnership with students, teachers, parents, and youth-serving community organizations, especially after-school providers, to ensure buy-in and continuity across learning settings. Once a vision is developed, it is essential for policymakers and educators to consistently articulate that vision, as well as develop and use measures to track progress.

Expand access to SL opportunities

“The benefits far outweigh the costs . . . service-learning increases motivation and retention of academic skills because specific learning goals are tied to community needs.”

—High School Teacher

Research shows SL increases student engagement in school and coursework, one of the major challenges to student learning reported by teachers. In fact, a survey of students who dropped out of high school showed real-world learning opportunities like SL would have improved the students’ chances of graduating from high school (Bridgeland et al., 2006). Yet, both parents and teachers indicated that SL opportunities remain rare. There are a variety of ways district, state, and federal policymakers can support the expansion of SL programs. Districts and schools can hire SL coordinators or utilize VISTAs, Senior Corps, and AmeriCorps volunteers to support SL efforts in schools. States could allow schools and districts to offer SL as an elective or allow districts to require community service for graduation, so long as it is tied to classroom learning. The federal government can support states and schools in expanding SL opportunities by funding the Service-Learning Fund through the Corporation for National and Community Service, which would administer grants for higher education

SL programs, Summer of Service pilot programs for grade 6–12 students, and Semester of Service pilot programs for grade 9–12 students.

Promote the development of adult capacity and strengthen SEL and SL knowledge among educators

Teachers understand the benefits of SEL and SL to their classrooms and students, and they are calling for additional training in both. Policymakers should heed those calls. State leaders should ensure that educator preparation programs and licensure requirements reflect the knowledge and competencies necessary to successfully support students’ social and emotional development. SEL training should also be embedded in continuing education requirements for faculty and educators, and districts should hire and retain educators with proven backgrounds or training in SEL and SL. In addition, SL training should be included in teacher preparation and continuing education programs to build awareness of these types of programs and their benefits to student learning and classroom engagement. These efforts have become more urgent during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Support integrated SEL and SL state learning standards and competency benchmarks backed by funding and resources for full implementation

State SEL standards should include a vision for student success that emphasizes SEL and character development and informs best practices and continuous learning for integrating SEL into academic curricula. Similarly, states must do more to make SL an educational priority by embedding SL into state learning standards. Despite a majority of states requiring or encouraging SL, formal opportunities remain rare. Embedding SL into state learning standards would send a clear message that these programs are an educational priority.

Build integrated workforce preparation models that embed SEL and SL

“As an adult, I’ve found that emotional awareness and cultural sensitivities are pertinent to successful business and personal relationships.”

—Parent

Research shows that the skills most in-demand by employers are social and emotional skills, including self-management and relationship skills. Employers look for employees who have deep respect for people from different backgrounds, can think critically and strategically to make wise and ethical decisions, who can collaborate with others, and are able to effectively manage themselves, illustrating the need to integrate SEL into workforce preparation systems (Yoder et al., 2020). Moreover, research has shown that student participation in high-quality SL is positively correlated to the acquisition of 21st century skills (Baumann, 2012).

Recognizing this research, state education and labor departments should work together to build integrated workforce preparation models that embed both SEL and SL. States and districts should work to develop public-private partnerships with community partners and businesses to design opportunities for work-based learning and SL that are tied to the jobs of the future and in-demand fields. Integrated state workforce preparation models should collect and publish data on industry sectors where jobs are growing the fastest and workers are most in-demand. These models should strive to develop strong workforce pathways, with a focus on SEL and SL, that prepare youth to enter those fields.

“[SEL skills] are lifelong skills that students will always need to have in almost any situations they will encounter.

These skills help to make them good employees, students, friends, sons and daughters, members of a community, voters, etc.”

—Teacher

Introduction

Parents and teachers see SEL and SL as having a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship.

In 2006, *The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts* highlighted that almost one-third of all public high school students were failing to graduate with their class. Yet, academic failure was not the principal cause—70 percent of the students reported they did not see the real-world applications of their schoolwork and nearly half felt bored by their classes. More than 80 percent of students believed that if schools provided opportunities for real-world learning, their chances of graduating from high school would improve.

In the decade and a half that followed, research has emerged on how to make education more engaging and learning environments more inviting for the students they serve.

In 2008, Civic, Hart Research Associates, and the National Conference on Citizenship issued the report *Engaged for Success: Service-Learning as a Tool for High School Dropout Prevention*, sharing the perspectives of high school students on service-learning (SL). The report found that students hold highly positive views of SL, saying that it makes school more interesting and engaging, thus boosting attendance, reducing the incidence of dropping out of high school, and preparing students for the future. Research affirms that SL shows positive impacts on academic performance, civic engagement, and social skills (Baumann, 2012).

More recently, the movement to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) in classrooms has taken hold across the country. Young people who attend schools prioritizing SEL attest to the

benefits of social and emotional learning, reporting their schools do a better job helping them learn academically, engaging and motivating them, and preparing them for future success (DePaoli et al., 2018). Other surveys have shown that teachers and principals understand the value SEL has inside the classroom and are calling for systemic, school-wide implementation (Bridgeland et al., 2013; Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019).

In 2019, the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development at the Aspen Institute (National SEAD Commission), which convened cross-sector experts, produced the consensus report, *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope*. The report showed that SEL is a booster rocket to nearly everything schools already measure, from attendance, behavior, and academic achievement, to graduating from high school and college, entering the workforce, and engaging in civic life.

What was missing from this emergent understanding is the perspectives of parents and teachers on the integration of social and emotional learning and service-learning and the extent of parent and teacher engagement with each. Civic and Hart Research Associates partnered to survey over 1600 parents and teachers on their perspectives on SEL and their current engagement with SL (see Appendix I for Methodology). The key findings from these surveys are that both parents and teachers endorse a holistic view of education that prepares students to be successful members of their communities as adults and support providing students with



programmatically SEL, as well as formalized SL opportunities tied to classroom learning.

Parents and teachers see SEL and SL as having a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship. Teachers believe that one of the biggest benefits of SEL is preparing students to be good citizens in adulthood and that it will help prepare students to give back to their communities. Teachers also believe that SL programs would help improve students' social and emotional skills—most prominently their ability to get along with and understand people who are different from them. In an era of low levels of trust in one another, such skills are critical to functioning communities.

These results became even more important in light of the unprecedented

events of 2020. As a global pandemic reshaped how we work, communicate, and live, horrific scenes of violence against Black Americans forced a long overdue reckoning of the systemic racism that plagues the nation's institutions and civic life.

All of this has forced a fundamental change in education. To better understand how schools and families have been impacted, Civic and Hart held online discussions boards with parents and teachers. Both groups worry about the mental and emotional toll social distancing and online learning has had on students. Still, they categorically endorsed SEL's ability to prepare students to navigate the challenges of online or hybrid learning and eventually the return to "normal school,"

as well as encourage student resilience. Similarly, while parents and teachers expressed concerns about SL in the midst of the pandemic, they see it as a powerful tool to heal divisions in the nation.

At a moment where all individuals must be able to adapt to an everchanging educational and economic landscape of a post-pandemic world, empathetic leaders with appreciation for diverse perspectives are essential to confront the centuries of systemic racism returned to the forefront by the Black Lives Matter Movement. Now is the time to commit to deeply integrating social and emotional learning and service-learning into every student's education to prepare young people with the skills and passions needed to usher in a brighter future.

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

There is a mounting body of evidence that shows SEL's effectiveness on classroom learning, success in the workplace, and engagement in civic life.

For this report and the survey that informed it, social and emotional learning (SEL) is defined as the process through which people acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. SEL focuses on knowledge, attitudes, and skills in five competency areas:

1. **Self-awareness**, such as knowing your strengths and weaknesses;
2. **Self-management**, such as being able to stay in control and persevere through challenges;
3. **Social awareness**, such as understanding and empathizing with others;
4. **Relationship skills**, such as being able to work in teams and resolves conflicts; and
5. **Responsible decision-making**, such as making ethical and safe choices.

This definition is based on the framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). SEL enhances students' capacities to integrate the skills and behaviors described above to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges.

There is a mounting body of evidence that shows SEL's effectiveness on classroom learning, success in the workplace, and engagement in civic life. A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 studies involving school-

based, universal SEL programs, including over 270,000 K-12 students, revealed that SEL programming has powerful impacts on student gains. SEL programming fostered strong social-emotional skills; improved attitudes about the students' selves, others, and schools; strengthened positive classroom behavior; and boosted achievement scores on standardized tests (an average of 11 percentage points higher). In addition, SEL programming was found to reduce the risk of failure, negative behaviors (including bullying), and emotional distress (Durlak et al., 2011).

Recently, the National SEAD Commission assembled scientists, researchers, practitioners, policymakers, students, parents, and educators to strengthen our educational systems in accordance with how children learn and develop as whole human beings. The Commission discovered that high quality SEL is a booster rocket to what schools, districts, states, and the nation already measure to chart student success, such as attendance, grade performance, test scores, ability to get along with others, high school graduation, college enrollment and attainment, and success in work and civic life.

Furthermore, a series of surveys by Civic and Hart Research Associates have made clear that teachers, principals, and students all value SEL and desire for schools to implement SEL in the classroom (see Appendix II for a summary of findings from previous surveys). This report updates and supplements those findings with the perspectives of parents and teachers on the integration of SEL and SL.

What is Service-Learning?

There is no single definition of service-learning (SL). The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administered the national Learn and Serve America program for more than two decades, defines SL as “a form of experiential education in which people learn through service. In contrast to traditional service, service-learning is designed so that those who serve also benefit from the experience in a clear way.” Similarly, the National Youth Leadership Council defines it as “an approach to teaching and learning in which students use academic and civic knowledge and skills to address genuine community needs.” For the survey of which this report is based, SL was defined as programs where students use their classroom learning experiences and academic knowledge to engage in community service in order to address genuine community needs.

Research indicates SL is an effective tool at building classroom engagement, which creates a ripple effect that benefits student learning. A 2012 Education Commission of the States paper analyzed 19 SL programs implemented at different schools around the country, comparing students in the program to their peers at the same school. The paper found that a high-quality SL program is positively correlated to increases in academic engagement, educational aspirations, acquisition of 21st century skills, and community engagement (Baumann, 2012). Furthermore, a 2011 meta-analysis showed that SL increases academic performance with effect sizes that are even stronger than the significant gains

in attitudes toward self and learning, civic engagement, and social skills from SL (Celio et al., 2011).

Still, it is crucial to get service-learning programs right. Findings from the Education Commission of the States report found that poorly implemented SL programs have harmful effects on students—larger than the positive gains from a high-quality program (Baumann, 2012).

Previous surveys have also shown strong demand for SL from students, parents, and educators. A 2009 survey found that 70 percent of teachers and 68 percent of principals felt connecting learning to real-world experiences would greatly reduce the number of students who drop out (Bridgeland et al., 2009). Moreover, a separate survey showed that 82 percent of students who participated in service-learning and 80 percent of at-risk students not in service-learning programs said their feelings about attending high school became or would become more positive as a result of service-learning opportunities (Bridgeland et al., 2008).

Learn and Serve America (LSA) operated as the sole federal funding stream dedicated to service-learning in K-12 education until it was eliminated from the federal budget in 2011. LSA supported programs across the country that granted over 1 million students each year, including more than 375,000 disadvantaged youth, the opportunity to engage in SL. By engaging in SL these students learned how to address community challenges, motivating them to make a difference in the world (Learn and Serve, 2011).

Virtual Service-Learning

Educators and parents increasingly recognize the role and value of SL as an important part of students' education and development. SL allows students to exercise social and emotional learning skills, connect with their communities, and improve their ability to work with and understand people different from them.

The world looks very different today as the nation continues to endure the effects of COVID-19. Americans are asked to stay at home and maintain distance from others, dramatically changing the typical landscape for SL that students and educators are used to, as well as what it means to be civically engaged. With these changes, SL opportunities must be reimagined. To combat this, the instruction and service aspect of SL projects are now being organized and executed virtually.

The National Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) has developed a handbook outlining how SL can be continued online. The handbook provides recommendations for online SL in after-school programs and a meaningful pathway for students to learn about and carry out SL projects online. It is a guide for those committed to SL to encourage students to develop and organize online SL projects (Health & Well-Being, 2020). They recommend the use of many online platforms including Zoom, Google Classroom, and Skype. The handbook includes 13 sessions with

a number of activities in each. The early sessions serve as a space to get to know the other individuals in the group and develop relationships.

As the program continues, participants begin to learn the importance of effective communication and strong leadership, illustrating the interconnected role of SEL and SL. In Session 4 of the handbook, participants begin to understand how their local actions can make a significant impact in their communities and beyond. The handbook recommends using the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals for participants to understand the many ways one can act to effect change. In the following sessions, students learn how to contact primary sources and partners in a community, understand the needs of their community, and learn about the impact their service can make. The NYLC explains how SL projects can be indirect, meaning they can benefit a community or cause without involving any direct contact with the recipient.

While SL programs are traditionally thought of as in-person activities, projects could take the form of online mentorships or tutoring, organizing people to play music outside a senior living center, or drawing uplifting pictures outside a hospital to support frontline workers. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, resources have sprung up to

help schools and communities as they transition programs online.

In addition to NYLC, several other organizations have developed resources for virtual SL including Youth Service America and The Corporation for National and Community Service. Recommendations include supporting local non-profits, fostering shelter animals, helping prepare for upcoming local and national elections, or donating to local food banks and pantries. All For Good is another valuable online resource that serves as a database for volunteer opportunities. The website introduces individuals to numerous volunteer opportunities like designing cards for essential workers, teaching online STEM classes, and virtual food drives. Additional SL projects that these organizations have recommended to help amid the pandemic include supporting essential workers, making and donating face masks, encouraging healthy behaviors such as social distancing, supporting people out of work, and providing childcare.

As SL takes different forms while the nation navigates COVID-19, it has become undeniably clear just how important it is. Virtual SL, or E-service-learning, can play a role in individuals' everyday lives and prove to be an extremely helpful asset during these times. The impact of virtual SL demonstrates how online learning enables, rather than hinders, SL.



Survey Findings

The perspectives of parents and teachers on the integration of social and emotional learning and service-learning were still missing from the field.

Even with a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of social and emotional learning and service-learning at boosting academic outcomes and developing future-ready leaders, as well as the endorsement of educators and students themselves, the perspectives of parents and teachers on the integration of SEL and SL were still missing from the field. In order to capture these hidden voices, Hart Research Associates developed and fielded an online survey to 803 middle and high school teachers and 806 parents of middle and high school students in February 2020. Following the coronavirus outbreak and protests for racial justice, Hart Research held online discussion boards with 36 additional parents and teachers to better understand how these events have impacted schools and families. These qualitative discussion boards mostly confirmed findings from the quantitative surveys but also highlighted important changes. Five main findings emerged from the research.

KEY FINDING 1:

Parents and teachers endorse a holistic view of education and success

When asked about goals for their child, parents prioritized developing good character and integrity, and finding happiness over career success or college attendance. Similarly, parents and teachers endorsed an education that develops students' social and emotional competencies just as much as their academic ones.

KEY FINDING 2:

Parents and teachers view SEL and SL as having a reciprocal, mutually reinforcing relationship

Parents and teachers alike see SEL developing good citizens and preparing students to give back to their community. Meanwhile, they also believe service-learning programs would help improve students' social and emotional skills, particularly their ability to get along with and understand people who are different from them.

KEY FINDING 3:

Implementation of SEL and SL opportunities in schools continues to lag behind demand from parents and teachers

Throughout the survey, parents and teachers repeatedly pointed to the benefits that SEL and SL have on children and students, while simultaneously calling on schools to expand implementation and opportunities for both. Yet, when asked about the prevalence of SEL and SL in schools, the results were less encouraging.

KEY FINDING 4:

Schooling has undergone a transformational shift since the beginning of 2020, but SEL and SL remain essential pillars

The educational experience throughout the world has been fundamentally altered by a historic year, primarily due to the coronavirus and subsequent turn to online learning. Parents and teachers report that social isolation and trauma related

to the pandemic have adversely impacted students' mental health. Moreover, lack of peer and teacher connection, reliance on online learning, and subsequent technological challenges have caused dwindling student engagement and academic progress. In response, many teachers have prioritized SEL over academics this school year, while both parents and teachers believe SL can help heal divisions in the country.

KEY FINDING 5:
There are important opportunity and equity gaps for rural and low-income students and the pandemic has had a disparate impact

Teachers report that schools in rural areas or with higher proportions of low-income students are least likely to have programmatic, schoolwide SEL and formalized SL programs. Parents in rural areas and those who report lower family income levels confirmed these findings. Additionally, teachers observe that the consequences of the pandemic and online learning have been especially pronounced among lower-income students and those who need more one-on-one attention, like English Learners and students with disabilities.

The remainder of the report organizes survey results into three categories: 1) 2020: Schools Transformed, 2) Perspectives on Student Development and Classroom Learning, and 3) Attitudes and Access on Social and Emotional Learning and Service-Learning.

2020: SCHOOLS TRANSFORMED

The educational experience throughout the world has been fundamentally altered by a historic year, primarily due to the coronavirus and subsequent shift to online learning. Recent data from the U.S. Census Bureau shows that 65 percent of households with school-age children report their school has shifted to online distance

learning (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). To better understand these unprecedented shifts, Hart Research Associates held online discussion boards with parents and teachers in November 2020. Both groups described how these transformations are profoundly affecting students socially, emotionally, and academically.

"It's difficult to see my daughter being away from her friends for so long . . . Her life has been put on hold and it's at one of the worst times because she just became a teenager. So right now is really difficult for us."

—Father of a High School Freshman

*"Middle school students are very social, and not having interaction with their friends or just other people has **created some mental health challenges for some of my students.**"*

—Middle School Teacher

As the virus has forced schools and public places to shutter and put social distancing measures in place, social isolation has occurred. Parents described their child's development as "in reverse or stand-still mode" with their lives being put on hold due to the pandemic. Even in schools that are still operating in-person, due to social distancing and safety protocols, students are not able to interact with each other or collaborate in the classroom like they used to. The pandemic has also been traumatizing for students, as many families have been directly impacted by the coronavirus, whether through the loss of a loved one or the loss of work. Decreased wages and job losses for parents have created greater instability for students, some of whom are now dealing with housing or food insecurity.

"I have students whose parents have died of COVID-19 and others who have lost family members. Many have transferred

to different schools because of unstable housing situations. On top of that, my students are pretty engaged with the world around them, and they know that their school is not a safe place to be."

—High School Teacher

Teachers also say it is difficult to build positive relationships with students through screens and masks. They are not able to have the same rapport or read body language that would clue them in to how students are doing emotionally. Both parents and teachers worry about the lack of one-on-one interactions between teachers and students. Moreover, a survey of young people in April and May 2020 found that 29 percent of students do not feel connected at all to school adults (Margolius et al., 2020).

*"We are in a block hybrid schedule and I only see each student in-person once a week. This makes it **extremely hard to develop positive rapport**, which is just as important in education as curriculum is."*

—Middle & High School Teacher

*"We are virtual to start and will likely remain virtual for the year. Hardly any of the students turn on their cameras, so I have no idea what they look like. **I can't read off body language to see how they are emotionally.**"*

—High School Teacher

Beyond the diminished social aspects of learning, both groups detailed the logistic challenges of hybrid and online learning due to an increased reliance on broadband and technology. Some students struggle to engage or maintain attention to video lessons, while others continue to lack adequate internet access, according to parents and teachers in online discussion boards. Technological challenges interrupt and distract from learning, exacerbating student disengagement.

"The indirect impacts I am seeing are stressed out kids. They are overwhelmed with the task of essentially teaching themselves and managing their workloads."

—High School Teacher

"The stress and isolation have led to a high degree of depression among my teenage students. It is hard for them to focus on learning and schoolwork."

—Middle School Teacher

Parents and teachers worry about the effects these factors will have on children's development, mental health, and academic progress. Teachers see worrying signs of anxiety and depression on the rise in their students, and recent surveys show 30 percent of young people have been feeling unhappy or depressed more often (Margolius et al., 2020). Despite best efforts by parents and teachers, student engagement is on the decline and some students have totally "disappeared." One teacher described "30 percent of families that are just AWOL." Many teachers report that academic progress is slow as they are forced to move at "a glacial pace."

Teachers report the consequences of the pandemic and virtual learning have been especially pronounced among low-income students and those who need one-on-one attention. Low-income students are more likely to lack needed technology or adequate broadband and struggle with food or housing insecurity. English Learners and students with disabilities are struggling with less individualized attention than they typically receive and require.

"I worry about the drop in education when we went remote last spring. Our percentages for engagement were ridiculously low. I worry that my students don't have the internal drive to continue pushing in their classwork."

My "F" rate in classes is sitting at close to 26 percent across the board. The level of apathy is palpable.

I worry about what their households are like . . . aggravated parents, multiple siblings trying to remote learn, gaps in technology. We're two semesters into the pandemic, and while I feel a certain sense of settlement, I feel we are far, far away from truly teaching our students. Just this morning, I spoke to a parent for 20 minutes to get a better feel for her son, who is struggling to keep up. If I would have physically had this boy in class I might have picked up some tells weeks ago, but since I only see this child for three hours a week, I'm missing it.

—Middle School Teacher

It is not just students reeling from the effects of the coronavirus, either. Many teachers report struggling with the additional demands of online and hybrid learning. One teacher described being "completely burnt out," admitting that their instruction is probably suffering due to the added stress and challenges of the current schooling environment. This tracks with other emerging research—one nationally representative study from 2020 found that nearly three quarters of teachers say their morale is lower now than before the pandemic (Will, 2021). Research also indicates that teachers with high stress levels deploy less effective teaching strategies and can lead to worse student outcomes (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Harmsen et al., 2018; Tolan et al., 2020).

*"This is what is mentally affecting me the most . . . **I miss just being able to be near my kids** . . . My relationships are so different. I still don't think I could recognize a third of my kids out of context . . . and I still have a few who I don't really know at all."*

—Middle School Teacher

In addition to the disruptions caused by the coronavirus, 2020 saw an eruption of protests for racial justice in the aftermath of horrific scenes of State violence against Black Americans, especially the killings of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. Many parents and teachers report that students are discussing racial justice issues more frequently. These conversations, however, are not new for students of color and the added attention on racial inequality has created stress for some.

Some teachers, especially those in subjects like English and Social Studies, report being more intentional about integrating diverse voices and racial justice themes in their curriculums. This was true for teachers of all backgrounds, including white educators, an encouraging finding in light of recent research from RAND's American Teacher Panel that found teachers of color are more likely to cover hot button issues in their social studies classes. Parents' perspectives, on the other hand, are much more varied, with their views reflecting some of the overarching divisions throughout the country.

*"We've always discussed these issues because **when you have black and brown kids, it's all about keeping them safe so those are normal conversations in our household** . . . I think his emotional needs have changed due to the things that are going on around us and especially due to the division and racism. The constant questions always occur in our household when there are racial inequalities and blatant racism against our people shown on the news or in the media. He always rhetorically asks out loud, 'How were we supposed to know that just being born would be breaking some unknown law?' **My heart aches for him during these times and we discuss things as I try to reassure him** that things will get better eventually, and I pray."*

—Mother of High School Students

PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND CLASSROOM LEARNING

*“My son believes there is social injustice and feels we must address racial inequality. It has made my son much more politically active. He watches the news more. **Both of my children have become much more aware of the racial injustice in this country** and feel we should make changes in this country, so all people are treated equally.”*

—Parent of a High School Senior

*“At teacher work week, as a staff we spent a lot of time discussing racial justice and what that looks like in our classrooms. I am realizing that I do a poor job of amplifying diverse voices and authors in my classroom. I have **revamped my syllabus to reflect a diverse list of authors to read and study.**”*

—High School Teacher

*“Our teaching has had to change. You cannot have students who have witnessed a man strangled to death by police officers and just teach subject-verb agreement like normal. **Time had to be given to students to feel, process, and release.** We have modified our lessons to include more opportunities for students to express themselves. We are providing writing prompts that are based on current events. We have **developed a monthly social justice forum where students can show up and have a space to talk freely, without judgement and traverse this space with support and love.**”*

—Middle School Teacher

Despite continued political divisiveness highlighted by the 2020 election cycle, parents and teachers do not believe it has affected children’s development, aside from an increased interest in politics. Most teachers say political divisions have not seeped into

classrooms, with some intentionally avoiding any political discussions, especially those that say it is not pertinent to their subject, like Math or Science teachers. Similarly, while some parents say their children expressed interest in the 2020 Election, political divisions do not seem to be affecting them directly.

Encouragingly, even with the challenges of the past year, parents and teachers applaud the incredible resilience of young people and recognize silver linings. Many parents say the pandemic has brought their family closer together by allowing them to spend more quality time with their children. Teachers are moved by the compassion and kindness students have shown to one another and report greater appreciation for the time students get to spend with each other.

*“The biggest silver lining so far would be that every student did pass Quarter 1! This is not something that I have had happen in my five years of teaching. I think this whole thing is **teaching students how to persevere and use their resources in a way that they have not previously learned to do** in the past until a much higher level of education.”*

—High School Teacher

*“I am enjoying spending time with my children and guiding them . . . With everything going on it has **brought my family a lot closer together.**”*

—Mother of a High School Senior

*“My **students have shown kindness and compassion for each other, supporting classmates via chat for technical issues, and listening to each other’s opinions, especially if they differ politically and situationally.**”*

—Middle School Teacher

*“Most of our adult lives have to do with reading people’s emotions and anticipating wants and needs. **This is a way to train the next generation how to be empathetic.**”*

—Teacher

“Students need to be able to work, interact, and regulate themselves in a variety of situations as they get older, both in the workplace and personal lives.”

—Teacher

Beyond Financial and Academic Success, Parents Want Their Children to Grow Up to be People of Good Character and Happy

When asked what is most important for their child to achieve when they grow up, parents prefer their child developing good character and living a happy life to work and school success. While more than 9 in 10 parents did agree the latter are “fairly” or “very important,” almost 90 percent of parents said their child being happy and a person of good character is “very important” to them.

Parents and Teachers Believe it is Important to Develop the Whole Child

Oftentimes, SEL is viewed as an add-on, or something that would detract from learning traditional academic subjects. Research, however, shows that this is not the case—SEL and academic success have a mutually beneficial relationship, and SEL actually boosts academic achievement.

Survey results indicate that parents and teachers recognize the importance of nourishing students’ social and emotional competencies, as well as their cognitive skills. A majority of parents (60 percent) and teachers (56 percent) responded that developing whole student

learners, including social and emotional development, is equally as important as developing students' academic skills when asked which is more important for schools to focus on. In fact, both groups were more likely to believe that developing the whole child is more important than prioritizing traditional academics.

Teachers See Schools as Falling Short in Developing Students' Social, Emotional, and Life Skills

Teachers place high importance on preparing students for all facets of their lives, especially in applying knowledge and skills to real-world situations. Sixty-seven percent of teachers say schools should place a great

deal of emphasis on developing students' critical thinking and reasoning skills, while 64 percent believe a great deal of emphasis should be placed on developing students' ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situations. Meanwhile, 87 percent of teachers believe schools should place a "great" or "fair" amount of emphasis on making courses relevant to students' futures and 84 percent think a "great" or "fair" amount of emphasis should be placed on developing students' social and emotional skills.

Teachers, however, see their schools as falling short in preparing students for life outside of school and developing their social and emotional skills. A little more than half of teachers say their school has been "fairly" or "very" successful at preparing students for a job or career after high school or developing students' critical thinking and reasoning abilities. In fact, just 13 percent and 11 percent of teachers say they have been "very successful" at preparing students and developing their SEL skills. More troubling, less than half of teachers believe they have been at least "fairly" successful at developing students' abilities to apply knowledge to real-world situations and students' social and emotional skills, as well as making courses relevant to students' futures.

Figure 1: What is more important for schools to focus on?

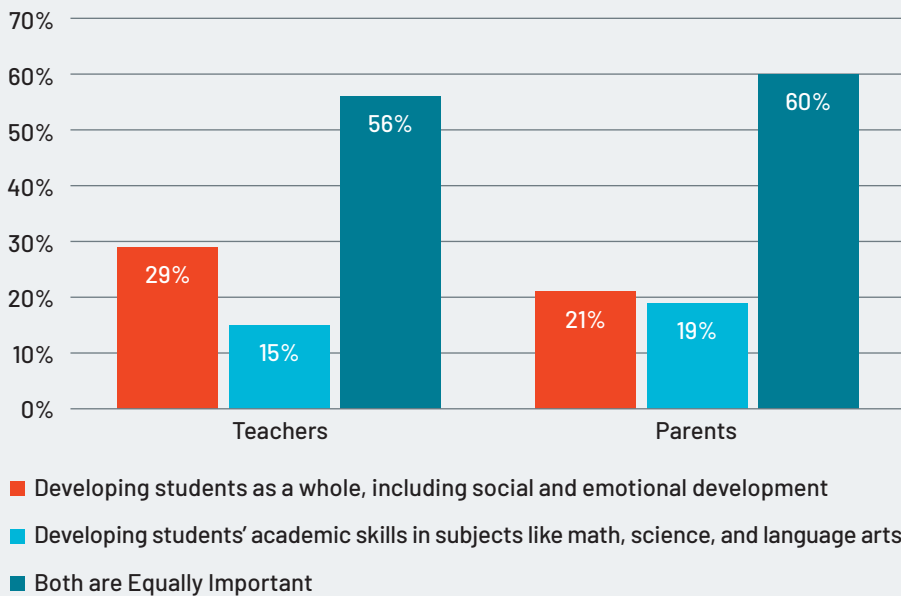
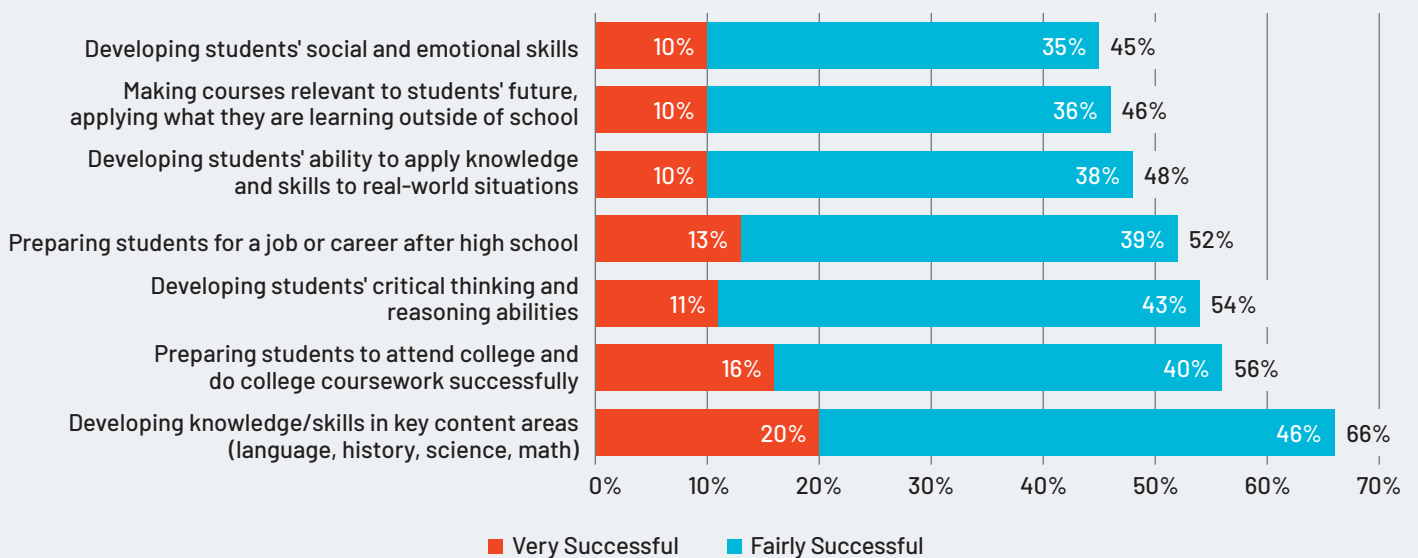


Figure 2: Teachers: My school has been "very" or "fairly" successful in the following areas.



This is especially true for teachers in low-income and low-performing schools. Teachers in lower-income schools see their schools as falling particularly short in helping students apply knowledge and developing social and emotional skills. Similarly, teachers in low-performing schools are even less likely to believe their school has been successful at developing students' abilities to apply knowledge and skills to real-world

situations, social and emotional skills, and their abilities to apply student learning outside of school.

Teachers See Students' Lack of Interest and Real-Life Skills as Major Problems in their School

When identifying challenges in their schools, teachers are most likely to point to students lacking real-life skills for life outside of high school and students' lack

of interest in learning. More than half of teachers view each as "very" or "fairly" big problems, while almost nine in ten see a lack of real-life skills and interest in learning as at least "somewhat" of a problem. In addition, teachers believe it is important to provide students with hands-on experiences that allow them to apply what they are learning through work in their community (84 percent say this is "very" or "fairly" important).

In addition, teachers identified other social and emotional issues as at least "somewhat" of a problem in their classrooms. This includes students' lack of ability to understand others' feelings, feeling overwhelmed with stress, poor classroom behavior, and bullying.

Teachers at schools with more students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, a proxy measure for being low-income, reported a lack of real-life skills and behavioral issues at higher rates. Sixty-eight percent of teachers in schools where more than 60 percent of students are low-income reported students lacking real-life skills for life after high school as a "fairly" or "very" big problem, compared to 44 percent of teachers at schools with 40 percent or

Table 1: Teachers: My school has been "very/fairly" successful in this area

School Characteristic	Developing students' abilities to apply knowledge and skills to real-world situation	Making courses relevant to students' futures, applying what they are learning outside school	Developing students' social and emotional skills
Less than 40% Free/reduced lunch	58%	55%	54%
40%–59% Free/reduced lunch	46%	44%	46%
60% or more Free/reduced lunch	41%	38%	38%
Low-performing school	24%	27%	32%

Figure 3: Teachers: How much of a problem is the following with students in your school?

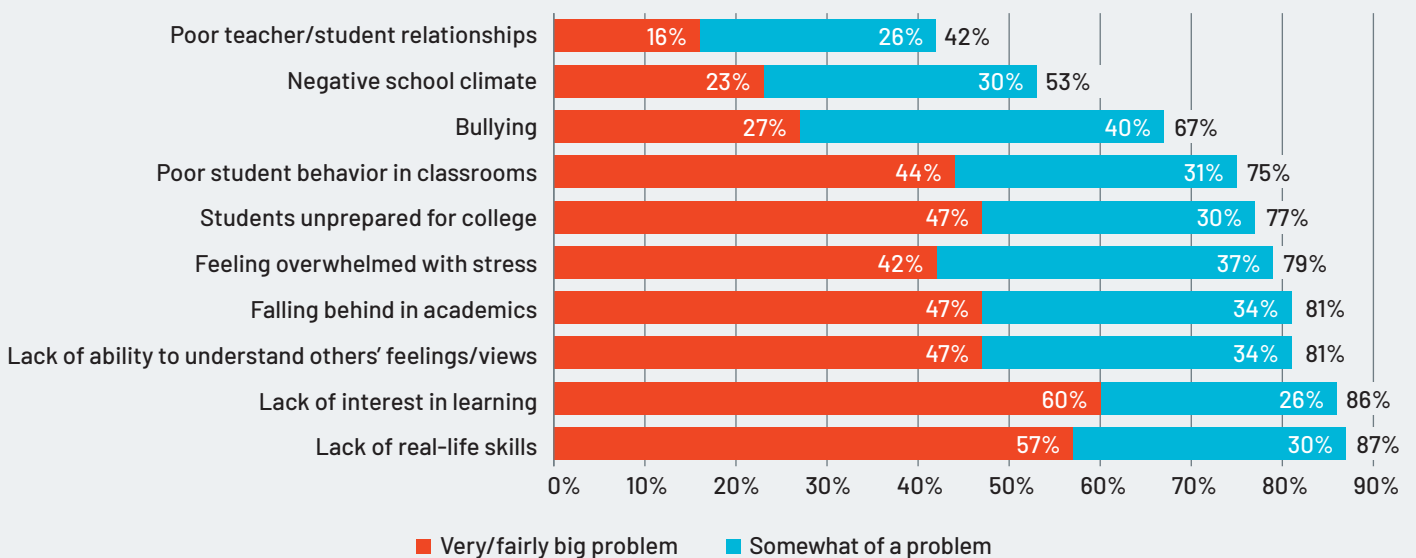
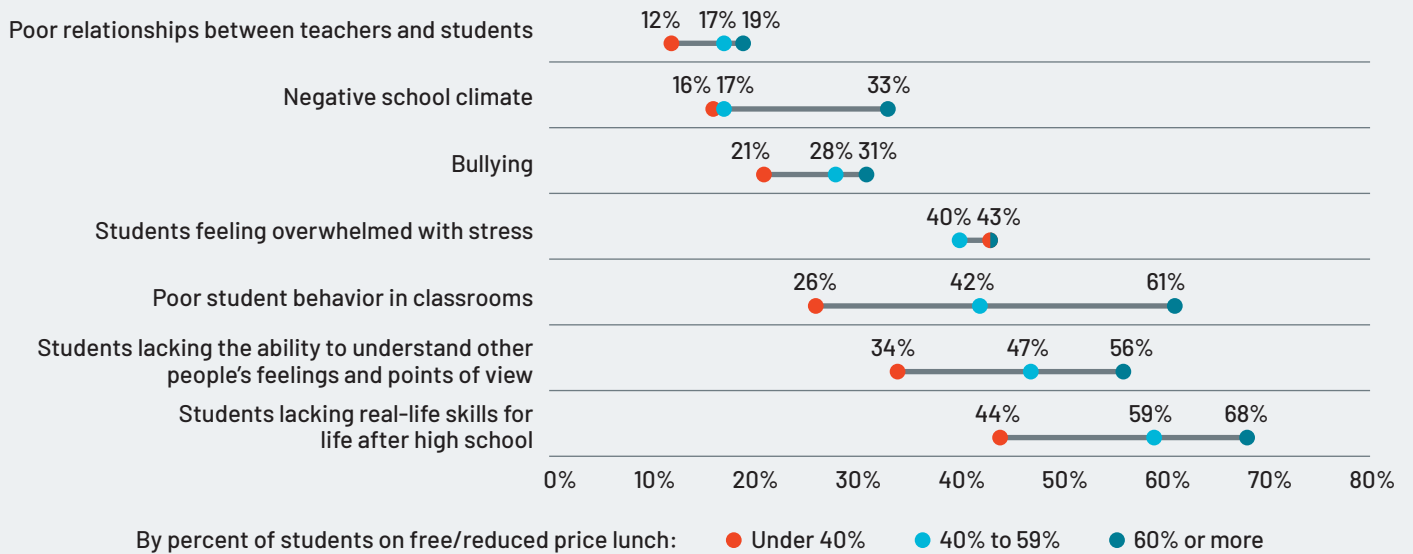


Figure 4: Percent of teachers who say each is a “very” or “fairly” big problem with students in their schools



less of low-income students. Similarly, teachers at high-poverty schools identified students lacking the ability to understand how others feel, poor student behavior in classrooms, and a negative school climate at much higher rates than their peers in low-poverty schools. This illustrates that the challenges of those in poverty are inseparable from the classroom.

ATTITUDES AND ACCESS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND SERVICE-LEARNING
SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

*“[SEL] develops the whole person—not just the academic part of life. While I love the academics and see them as necessary, I find that our school system only develops the ability to pass state and local tests. Bullying is a huge issue in our schools, and it comes from a variety of social issues. **Helping students develop better social skills would enhance our communities overall.**”*
 —Parent

Figure 5: Thinking about what students might need to be successful in life, it is “very important” for students to develop these skills

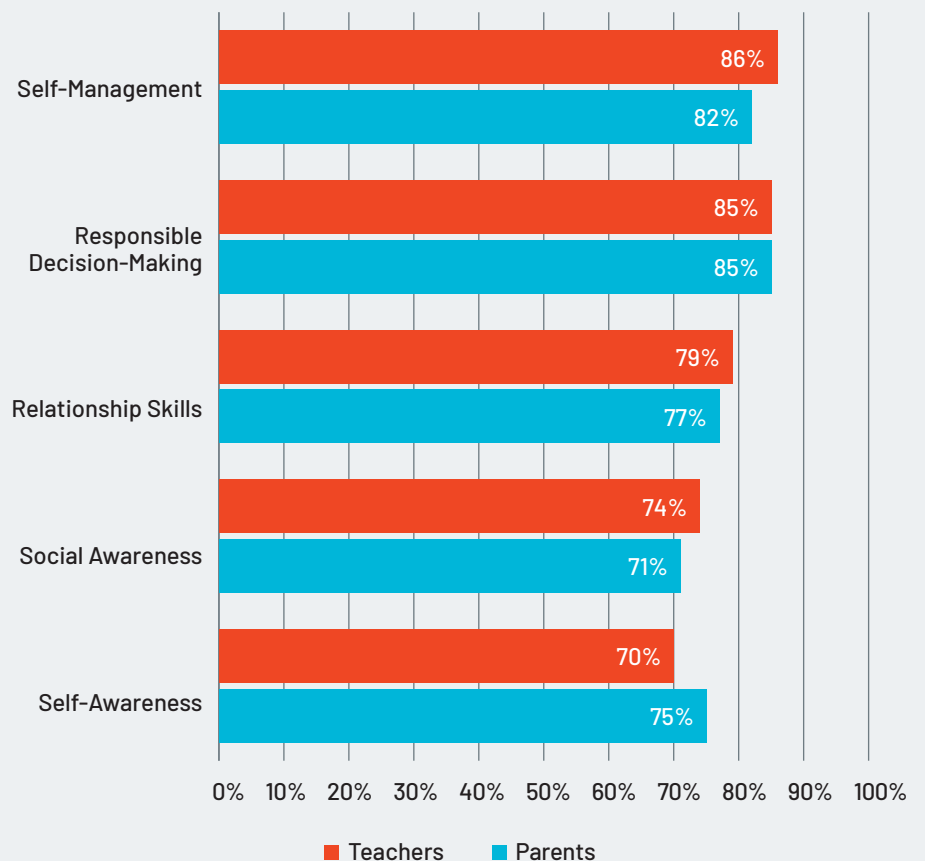
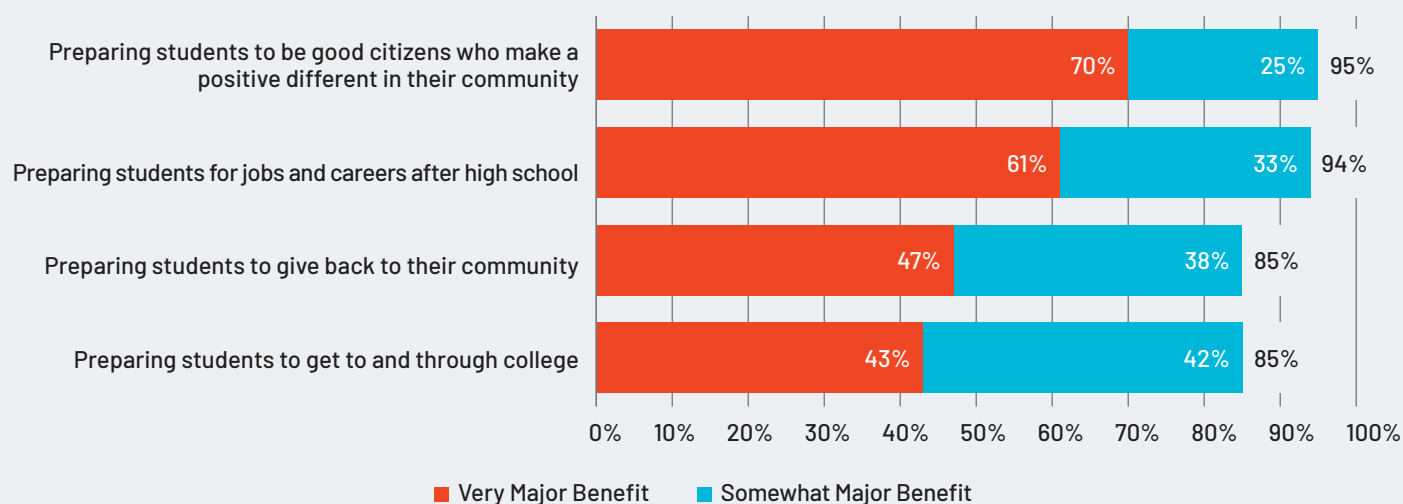


Figure 6: Percent of teachers who say a larger focus on social and emotional learning skills would have a “major benefit” on the following



Nearly All Parents and Teachers Believe CASEL’s Social and Emotional Competencies are Important for their Child to be Successful

When asked if CASEL’s SEL competencies are needed for students to be successful later in life, both parents and teachers overwhelmingly agreed that they are “fairly” or “very” important. At least 70 percent of parents and teachers believe these competencies to be “very” important for future success, while at least 96 percent view each of them as at least “fairly” important.

In addition, parents and teachers agree that self-management and responsible decision-making are the two most important competencies for future success: more than eight in ten view these competencies as very important.

Teachers See SEL Skills as Important and Beneficial to Students and Learning Environments in all Settings, but Especially in Light of Recent Events

“These are lifelong skills that students will always need to have in almost any situations they will encounter.”

“[SEL] skills help to make them good employees, students, friends, sons and daughters, members of a community, voters, etc.”

—Teacher

It is clear teachers view SEL as essential because they understand it has widespread benefits for students. Nine in ten teachers believe developing SEL skills would benefit students at least a “fair” amount. Teachers also believe a larger focus on SEL skills would benefit students on a variety of fronts, both in and out of school, including preparing students to attend and graduate college, be good citizens, give back to their communities, and find work after high school.

Not only do teachers see SEL skills as beneficial to students individually, but also learning environments as a whole. More than nine in ten teachers believe SEL would be beneficial in promoting a positive school climate and improving students’ relationships with one another. Similarly, 90 percent of teachers believe a larger focus on SEL skills would have at least a “somewhat major” benefit on reducing bullying, while 88 percent believe it would improve teacher-student

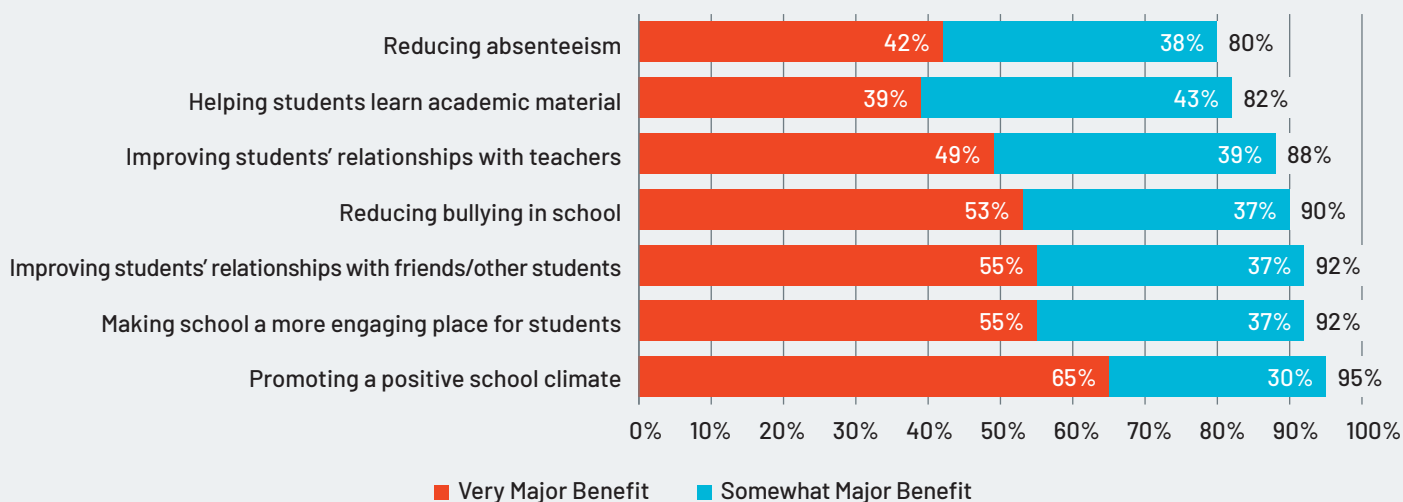
relationships. This has the added benefit of making schools more inviting to students. Recognizing the myriad benefits of SEL, 70 percent of teachers believe their schools should place more emphasis on developing social and emotional skills.

Already embracing the value and relevance of social and emotional learning in the classroom, parents and teachers regard the need for SEL to be even more pronounced now than prior to the pandemic. This has led many teachers, and even some parents, to prioritize SEL over academic skills this year. Both groups believe SEL is critical to help students cope with the trauma of the pandemic and enable academic success now, when they transition back to traditional schooling, and into the future. There is considerable concern that not doing so will have ripple effects for years to come. One teacher described a “social and emotional crisis on our hands that if not addressed will have fallout for generations.”

“Students won’t be able to do the academic part if they’re not emotionally safe.”

—High School Teacher

Figure 7: Percent of teachers who say a larger focus on social and emotional learning skills would have a “major benefit” on the following



*“It’s a global pandemic. No question academics will suffer. However, that can be made up. **There’s no way to ‘make up’ social and emotional damage.**”*
 –Middle School Teacher

*“I think [social and emotional skills are] more important this year because of the general chaos caused by COVID and even more recently, the unrest due to the elections. I think the ability to empathize is an important step for a well-rounded student. There is **so much division right now with so much of our lives and being able to understand another person’s point of view can help with that.**”*
 –Middle School Teacher

Teachers Affirm Social and Emotional Skills are Teachable, But Implementation Continues to Lag with Increased Challenges due to COVID-19

In total, 97 percent of teachers believe social and emotional skills are “probably” teachable. This includes half of teachers that say SEL skills are “definitely”

teachable, while another 47 percent believe they are “probably” teachable. This is consistent with past surveys that showed nearly all teachers believe SEL skills to be teachable (Bridgeland et al., 2013).

Yet, teachers still report that schoolwide SEL continues to lag behind demand. While 57 percent of teachers report that SEL skills are partially taught in some classrooms, just 23 percent see SEL happening on a programmatic, schoolwide basis. Even more troubling, one in five teachers report social and emotional skills are not really being taught in their school. Teachers in small town and rural schools (19 percent) indicated they are less likely to offer SEL on a programmatic, school-wide basis than those in cities (24 percent) or suburbs (30 percent).

Survey results offer some correlational evidence that schools programmaticly implementing SEL are better educating students as a whole. Eighty-six percent of teachers in schools with systemic, schoolwide SEL say their school is doing a “good” or “excellent” job, compared to 80 percent of those with some teachers providing SEL curriculum and 72 percent of teachers at schools with no SEL programming.

Despite both parents and teachers overwhelmingly endorsing SEL, just a few report teaching SEL as part of a schoolwide program like Second Step. Still, most teachers report incorporating SEL strategies into their teaching, including daily check-ins, mindfulness exercises, and discussion time for students to talk as a group about issues or concerns. Similarly, most parents do not believe their children’s schools do enough to prioritize SEL. Recognizing teachers have especially full plates this year, parents still want to see schools making more of an effort to incorporate SEL in curricula and classrooms.

*“The school district should put more effort into teaching our kids’ other skills beyond Math, Science, and English. **They should implement a social and emotional skills class and diversity/inclusion class.**”*
 –Mother of Two High School Students

Additionally, teachers cite heightened challenges to incorporating SEL amidst a pandemic that requires added resources and altered approaches. Online learning and lack of face-to-face interactions allow

for fewer opportunities for students to build connections with classmates and teachers. School and district mental health and trauma-informed care divisions have more difficulty following up with students when they cannot do so in-person, and some lack the necessary capacity to reach students in need of support.

Teachers have also faced roadblocks adapting in-person SEL lessons to online learning. Teachers indicate key elements that could help strengthen SEL this year include guidance on adapting SEL curricula for remote learning and how to effectively engage parents in supporting their children’s social and emotional development, as well as ensuring all students have adequate internet access and technology. Meanwhile, a small number of teachers describe being in survival mode, without the capacity to incorporate SEL this year.

Parents Believe Schools Prioritizing SEL are Appealing and Carry Benefits for Their Child

Survey results indicate parents find schools that prioritize SEL appealing

and believe they carry strong benefits for their children in school and the future. When reading the description of a school that prioritizes SEL, 88 percent of parents responded that it would be appealing for their child to attend such a school, including 57 percent who said it appeals to them “a lot.” These results held across the child’s grade level, locale, income level, and race.

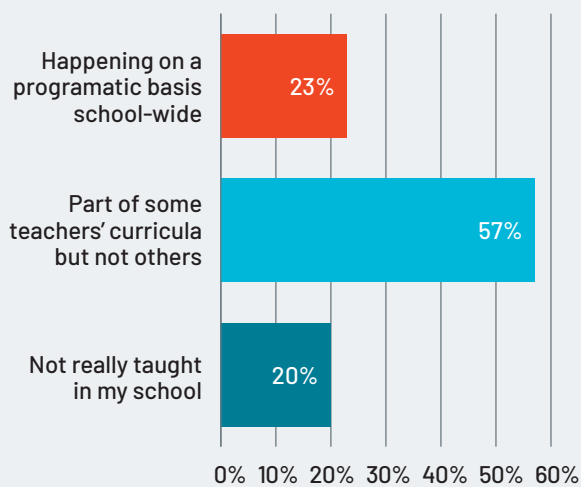
Parents, however, see a gap in how closely they believe their child’s school resembles the description of a SEL school. Most parents (62 percent) report that their students have learned about SEL at some point in their schooling, but just 55 percent of parents believe their child’s school is “similar” to the description, and only one in five believe their child’s school is “very similar.” Parents who report their student attending a school with above average income (65 percent) were more likely to believe their child’s school prioritizes SEL than those in below average (55 percent) or average (50 percent) income schools.

Parents believe schools that focus on developing students’ social and

emotional skills would have wide-ranging benefits for their children. Parents see schools prioritizing SEL as carrying academic benefits: 81 percent believe it will help their child attend and graduate college and 76 percent believe it will help their student learn academic material. In addition, parents believe it will help their child find future success, including 83 percent saying it helps prepare their child for jobs and careers after high school and 85 percent believing SEL schools would help prepare them to give back to their community.

During the online discussion boards, parents whose children participated in SEL, including formal and informal programs, appreciate it and see the benefits it brings. Most parents who report their child taking part in SEL activities mention morning meetings, mindfulness activities, and check-in questions, while a small number say their children’s school has SEL programs including Character Counts, 7 Mindsets, and Leader in Me.

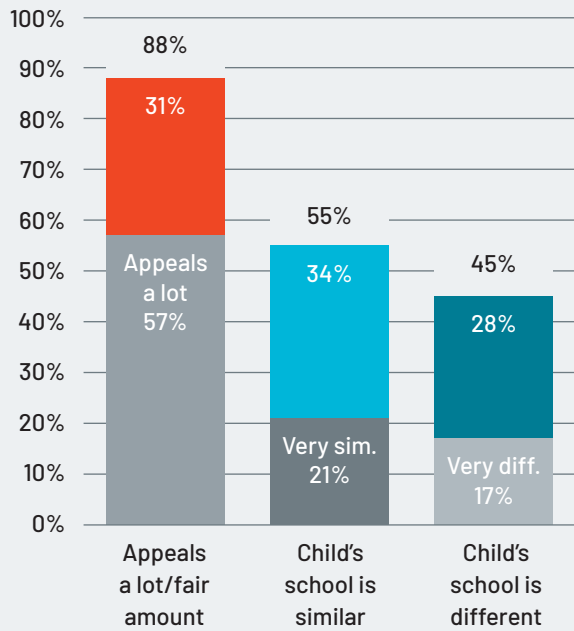
Figure 8: Teachers: To what extent is teaching students social and emotional skills happening in your school?



97% of teachers say these social and emotional skills are definitely (50%) or probably (47%) teachable in a school setting.

	Programmatic, Schoolwide	Part of some curricula, not others	Not really taught in my school
Middle school teachers	29%	51%	20%
High school teachers	18%	62%	20%
City	24%	54%	22%
Suburbs	30%	54%	16%
Small town/rural	19%	61%	20%
Free/reduced lunch:			
Less than 40%	25%	57%	18%
40% to 59%	23%	59%	18%
60% or more	22%	56%	22%
Low-performing School	20%	54%	26%

Figure 9: Parents: Attitudes toward SEL schools



	Appeals a lot/fair amount	Child's school is similar to this
Child in middle school	92%	55%
Child in high school	86%	55%
City	91%	62%
Suburbs	87%	50%
Small town/rural	86%	52%
Below average income	89%	55%
Average income	87%	50%
Above average income	90%	65%
White	88%	53%
African American	90%	68%
Latinx	92%	55%

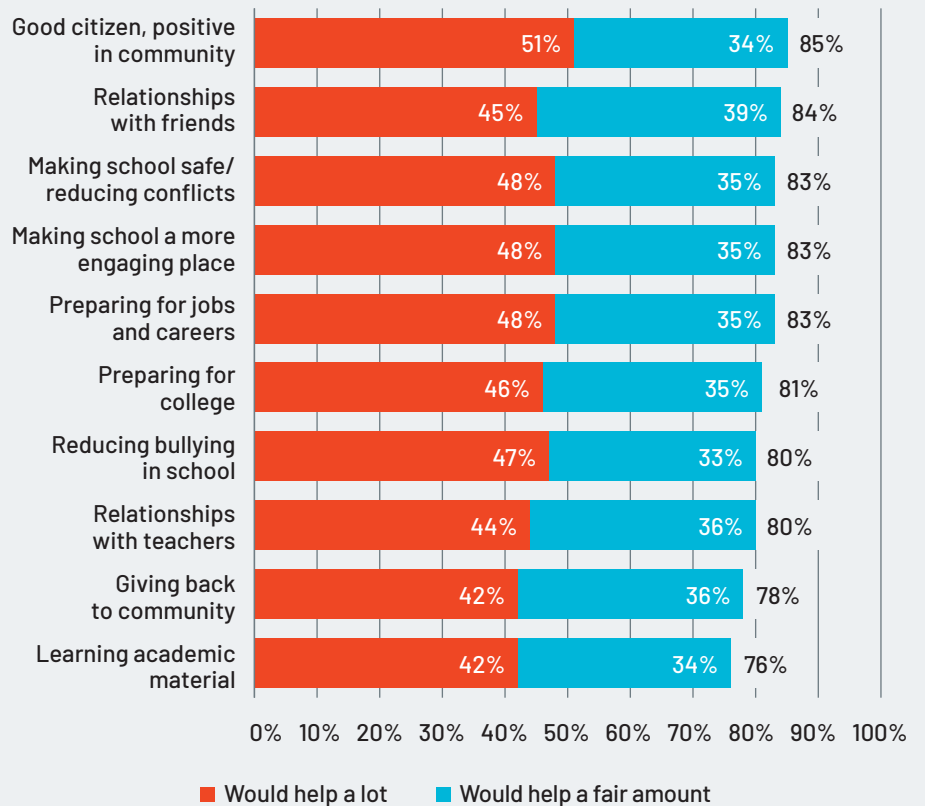
SERVICE-LEARNING

“Students gain a sense of agency and confidence in themselves when they can participate in the real world and do something to benefit others. Students also will get practice they need in learning the skills they need to be employable when they graduate. [Service-learning] also gets them more engaged and hopefully will foster empathy for others.”
 –Teacher

Both Parents and Teachers Have Some Familiarity with Service-Learning Programs, with Room to Grow

Survey results indicate that most teachers are familiar with SL programs, though terminology in the field appears fragmented. More than 6 in 10 teachers report being at least “very” or “fairly” familiar with a description of SL, while another 25 percent are “somewhat” familiar. Yet, just 15 percent refer to these programs as “service-learning,” while 26 percent of

Figure 10: Percent of parents who say that going to an SEL school would help their child “a lot/fair amount” with this



those surveyed refer to them as “community service” or “community engagement”—the most common responses—indicating terminology in the field may be fragmented.

Meanwhile, parents are “somewhat” less familiar with SL than teachers. Half of parents said they are at least “fairly” familiar

with SL programs, including just one in four that claim to be “very” familiar. Parents with children at a city school are the most familiar (61 percent), followed by suburban parents (56 percent), and parents in small town and rural areas (38 percent) are the least familiar. Moreover, parents who report higher levels

of family income and give their children’s schools better grades were more likely to be familiar with SL programs.

Formalized Service-Learning Programs are Rare According to Both Parents and Teachers

While awareness of SL programs appears common, program offerings are not. In fact, most teachers report that there is no formalized SL program at their school. Only 16 percent of teachers reported their school offering a program where student participation in community service activities are directly connected to their classroom learning.

Just 12 percent of teachers that work in low-performing schools offer SL courses connected to a class. In addition, 18 percent of teachers who reported their schools doing a “good” or “excellent” job of educating their students offer SL opportunities, compared to 8 percent of teachers who said their school does an “adequate” or “worse” job. Four in ten teachers who say their school is doing an “adequate” or “worse” job report that their school does not have any opportunities for students to engage in community service programs, compared to 22 percent of teachers who report their school is doing a “good” or “excellent” job.

Schools with lower proportions of low-income students were also slightly more likely to offer SL courses. Fourteen percent of teachers at schools where more than 60 percent of the student body is low-income report formal SL programs, compared to 18 percent at schools with less than 40 percent of low-income students.

Similarly, while six in ten parents say their children have participated in community service or volunteer opportunities, including SL, just one in four parents know of a formal service-learning program at their child’s school. Another 35 percent of parents say their child’s school encourages or offers opportunities to participate in community service, but do not tie those opportunities to classroom learning.

Figure 11: How familiar are you with the idea of students getting involved in community service activities as a part of their education and what they are learning in school?

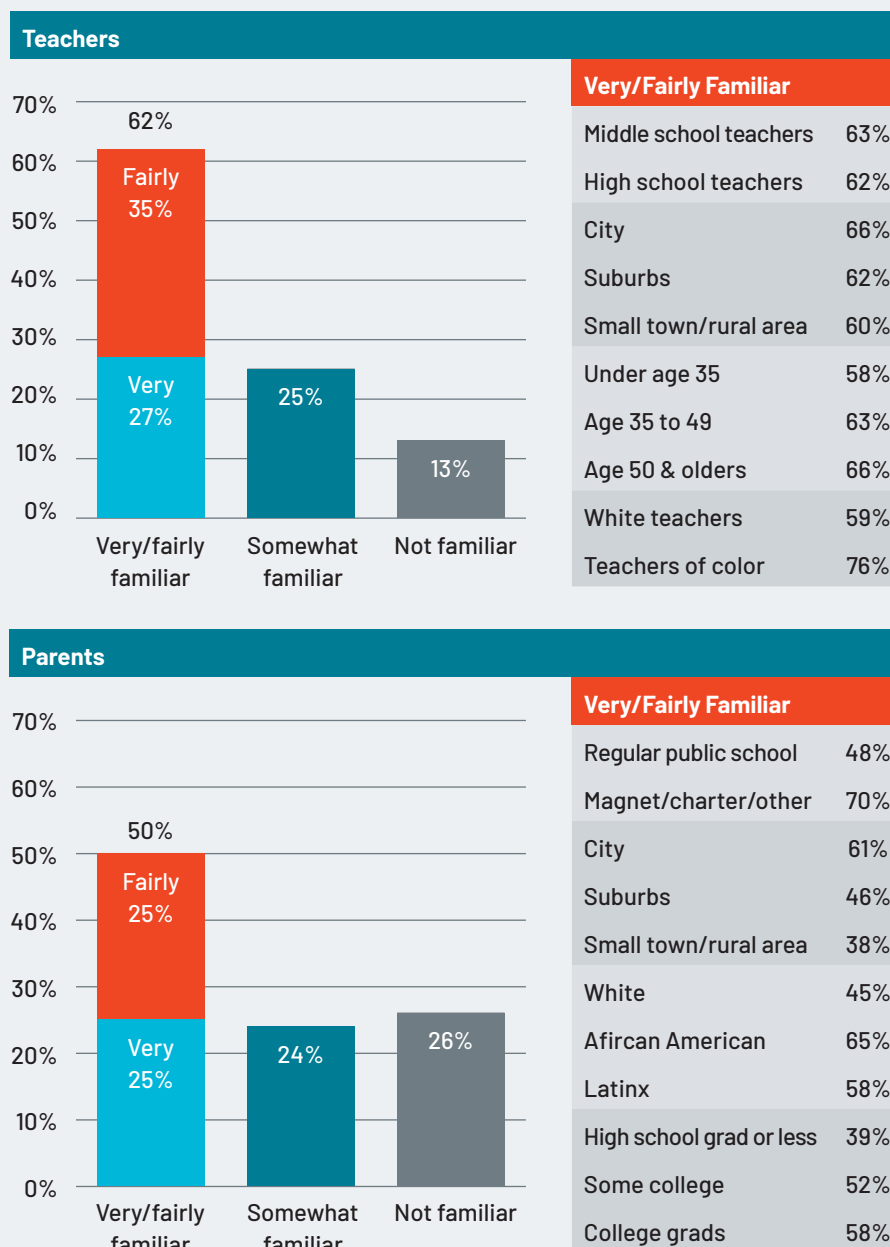


Figure 12: Percent of teachers and parents who report their school has community service programs connected to classes

- School/child's school has program where students participate in community service directly connected to their classes
- School/child's school encourages or offers opportunities to participate in community service but not directly tied to classroom learning
- School/child's school doesn't have community service programs or requirements
- N/A

Teachers			
	16%	56%	25% 3%
Middle school teachers	11%		
High school teachers	20%		
City	20%		
Suburbs	18%		
Small town/rural	11%		
White teachers	14%		
Teachers of color	22%		
		Free/reduced priced lunch:	
		60 to 100%	14%
		40 to 59%	16%
		Under 40%	18%
		Low-performing school	12%

Parents			
	23%	35%	28% 14%
Child in middle school	20%		
Child in high school	24%		
City	34%		
Suburbs	18%		
Small town/rural	12%		
		Below average income	19%
		Average income	16%
		Above average income	38%
		White	19%
		African American	32%
		Latinx	28%

Parents who reported above average incomes are significantly more likely to send their children to schools that offer formal SL programs than parents who reported average and below average incomes. Parents and teachers at city schools are more likely to report formal SL opportunities, compared to suburban and small town/rural schools.

In online discussion boards, teachers confirmed survey results showing that most schools do not have formalized SL programs connected to curricula. Unfortunately, those that do have formalized programs put SL on hold during the pandemic. Parents and teachers both describe multiple challenges to incorporating SL this year, including technology limitations, lack of resources

and funding, overwhelmed school staff, transportation barriers, and additional student responsibilities at home due to the pandemic.

Parents and Teachers See Benefits in Students Participating in Service-Learning

Both parents and teachers agree that student participation in community service is beneficial, with 84 percent of teachers saying it is at least fairly important and 86 percent of parents believing courses with a SL component would benefit their child.

Parents and teachers believe SL programs would carry a host of benefits. In fact, parents whose child's school offers SL opportunities believe the school is doing better across a variety of indicators.

Parents and teachers see a variety of other potential benefits associated with SL opportunities. Both groups are most likely to believe SL would help prepare students to become good citizens, give back to their community, and get along with and understand people different from them. About six in ten teachers and parents also believe that SL would benefit students for work and life after high school, as well as increase students' awareness of different career possibilities "a lot."

"Service-learning is the groundwork that begins to allow this country to heal. There is also an incredible need right now."
 —High School Teacher

Figure 13: Percent of parents who say their child’s school is doing a “great job” on each goal, by whether the school has an SL program

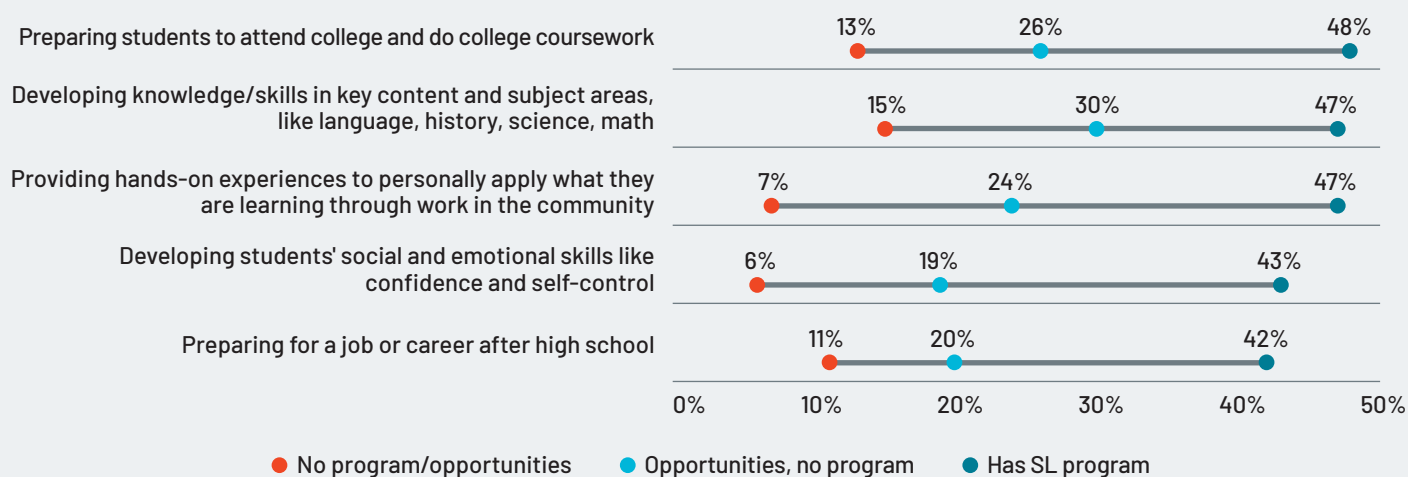


Table 2: Opportunities at [child’s] school for students to participate in community service as part of classes would benefit this a lot

	Teachers	Parents
Students becoming good citizens, working w/ others to make a positive difference in community	75%	69%
Students understanding the value of giving back to their community	74%	67%
Students feeling like members of the community	73%	67%
Students’ ability to get along with and understand people different from them	70%	63%
Students’ preparedness for jobs, careers, and life after high school	63%	63%
Students’ awareness of different career possibilities	61%	59%
The community at my/child’s school	60%	61%
Students’ engagement and interest in school	56%	55%
Help students learn to solve disagreements in a positive way	52%	57%
Students’ ability to manage stress and deal with difficult situations in their life	51%	56%
Students’ ability with academic material like language arts, math, science, and history	40%	48%

Parents and teachers in the online discussion boards remain enthusiastic about the value of SL. They believe it has important benefits, including building connections to community, greater

understanding and appreciation for the needs of others, fostering student engagement, developing social and emotional skills, and helping students learn academic material through real-

world application. Both groups agree that SL can promote racial understanding and reduce divisions by building empathy and gaining perspective on diverse points of view. This, however, is not something either group universally connects to the events of 2020.

While 87 percent of parents and 81 percent of teachers believe SL would benefit students’ ability to learn academic material at least a little, both groups were more skeptical of service-learning’s academic benefits, as it performed the worst of the 11 potential factors SL may benefit. In addition, parents expressed more skepticism of the academic benefits of SL in online discussion boards, seeing it as competing with academics rather than complementing them, with worries that the end result is extra work for their child.

Teachers at schools with more low-income students are especially likely to believe in the positive impacts of SL programs. Forty-eight percent of teachers in schools where more than 60 percent of students are low-income said service-learning would benefit students in their class “a lot,” compared to about 33 percent of more affluent schools. This was similarly true of teachers in low-performing schools.

Figure 14: Teachers: Opportunities at my school for students to participate in community service as part of classes would benefit this “a lot”

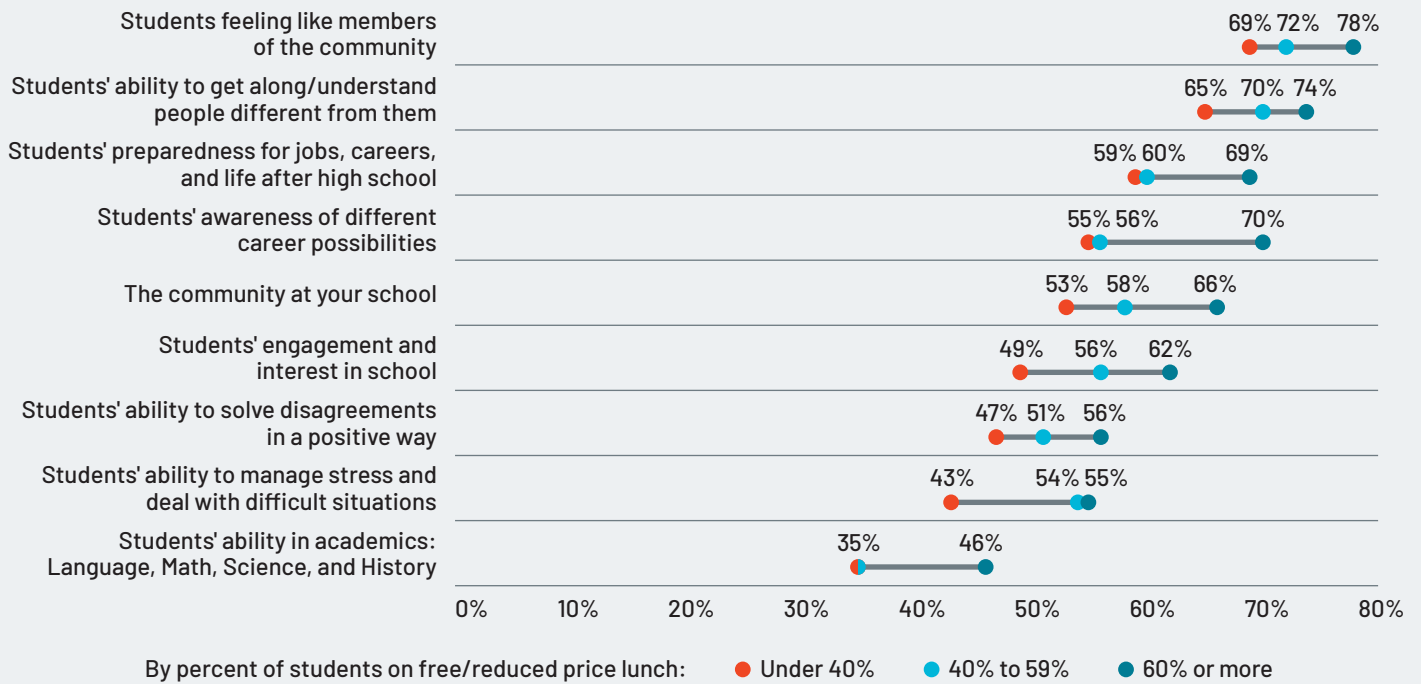
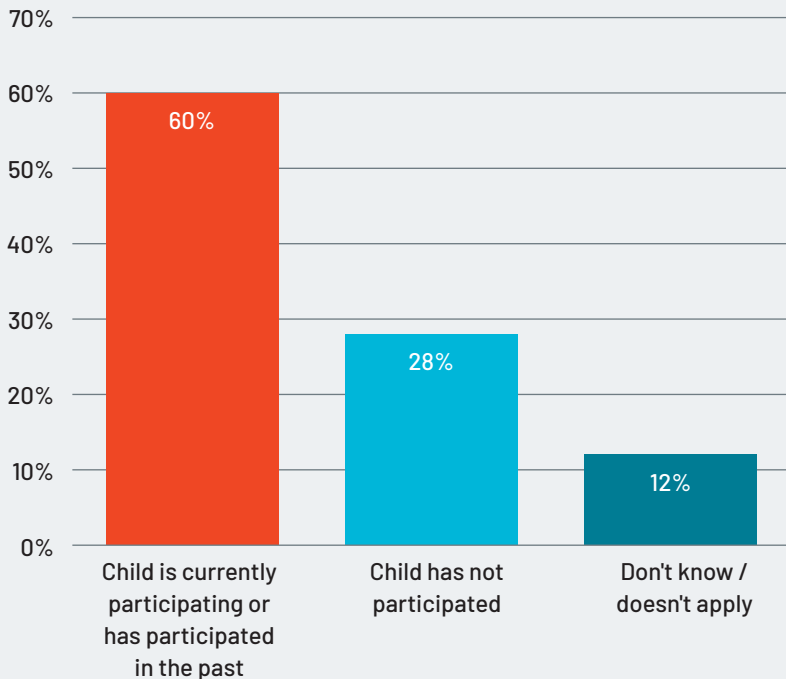


Figure 15: Parents: Child's participation in community service/volunteer opportunities

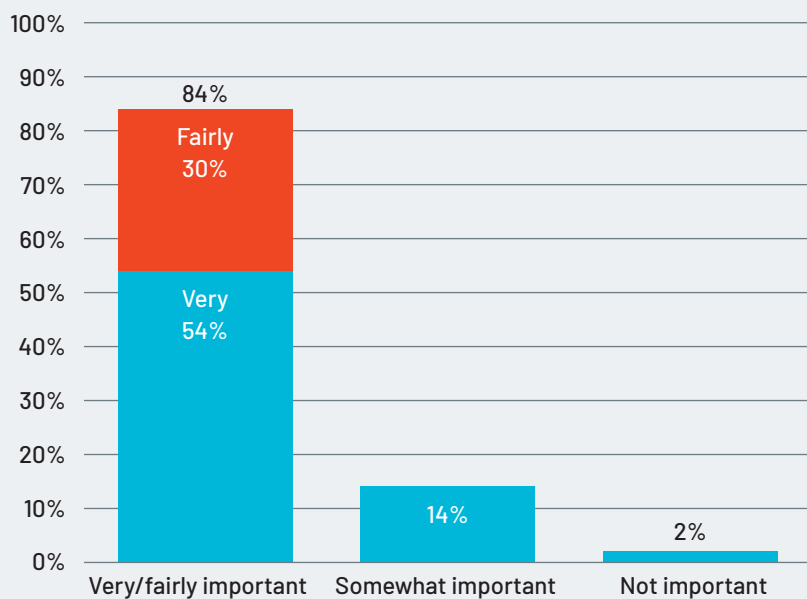


85% say their child benefited a lot or a fair amount from the experience.

Child is currently participating or has participated in the past

City	66%
Suburbs	60%
Small town/rural	49%
Attends regular public school	59%
Attends magnet/charter school	72%
Below average income	47%
Average income	58%
Above average income	77%
White	57%
African American	62%
Latinx	60%
Child's grades mostly A's	73%
Child's grades mostly A's or B's	62%
Child's grades B's or worse	43%

Figure 16: Teachers: How important is it for schools to provide students with hands-on experiences to personally apply what they are learning through work in their community?



Teachers who responded very/fairly important

Middle school teachers	86%
High school teachers	82%
City	86%
Suburbs	82%
Small twm/rural area	82%
Free/reduced-priced lunch:	
Less than 40%	81%
40% to 59%	82%
60% to 100%	86%
Low-performing school	87%
No service-learning at school	79%

In particular, teachers in schools where 60 percent or more of the students are low-income are more likely to believe SL will help students feel like members of the community, improve students' ability to get along with and understand those different from them, prepare them for jobs, careers, and life after high school, build students' awareness of different career possibilities, improve the school community, benefit students' ability to solve disagreements in a positive way, and benefit students' ability in academic subject areas like Math, Science, and History. This is a significant finding, as it indicates SL may be able to help close equity gaps for students from different income levels.

Parents Whose Children Participated in Service-Learning Report Significant Benefits

Six in ten parents report their child has participated in community service or some type of volunteer opportunity. Of these parents, 85 percent say their child benefited "a lot" or a "fair" amount from the experience, emphasizing the

potential positive impacts SL can have. Yet, these opportunities are not equally accessible to all students. Only 49 percent of parents in small towns or rural areas say their child has participated in such a program, compared to 66 percent of parents in cities and 60 percent in suburbs. Parents who self-reported below average income (47 percent) were also much less likely to report their child participating in community service or volunteer opportunities compared to their average income (58 percent) and above average income (77 percent) peers.

Parents and Teachers Want Schools to Offer More Service-Learning Opportunities

Understanding the benefits of service-learning programs, the majority of parents and teachers are calling on schools to offer more SL opportunities. Seventy-nine percent of parents believe schools should offer more SL opportunities, while 86 percent of teachers agree. These results were consistent for parents and teachers in all areas of the country and

Seventy-nine percent of parents believe schools should offer more service-learning opportunities, while 86 percent of teachers agree.

locale types. Interestingly, both parents who self-reported their family income as below average and teachers in low-income schools were more likely to believe schools should offer more SL opportunities than those with higher income or in schools with fewer low-income students.

Additionally, teachers believe providing students with service-learning experiences should be a priority for schools. Eighty-four percent of teachers say it is "fairly" or "very" important to provide students with SL opportunities.

Path Forward

Both parents and teachers see benefits in students engaging in service-learning opportunities on academics, including the learning environment, and preparedness for work, life, and beyond, including community and civic engagement.

*“When students are able to apply their learning to the real world, it becomes more personal and sticks with the student. **Community service activities help students see the world in a different perspective, and it helps develop character.**”*

—Teacher

Create a new vision for student success that prioritizes the whole child

Repeatedly through survey results, parents and teachers advocated for a broader vision of student success that equally emphasizes the academic, as well as the social and emotional aspects of learning. It is imperative that education not only prepare students for success in high school and postsecondary, but also develop future leaders with good character who are ready to meet the challenges of their time.

This vision must be developed for policymakers in partnership with students, teachers, parents, and youth-serving community organizations, especially after-school providers, to ensure buy-in and continuity across learning settings. It should be the foundation for all efforts to support students across a wide range of learning opportunities that includes SL and other opportunities for students to engage with their community and the issues of the day. Once established, policymakers, administrators, and educators at all levels must communicate the vision clearly and consistently through learning standards, mission statements, and curricula.

Expand access to service-learning opportunities

*“**The benefits far outweigh the costs . . .** service-learning increases motivation and retention of academic skills because specific learning goals are tied to community needs.*

—High School Teacher

Both parents and teachers see benefits in students engaging in SL opportunities on academics, including the learning environment, and preparedness for work, life, and beyond, including community and civic engagement. Moreover, research shows SL increases student engagement in school and coursework, one of the major challenges to student learning reported by teachers. Still, both parents and teachers indicated that SL opportunities remain rare.

There are a variety of ways schools can make SL more accessible for students. Schools could employ SL coordinators to spearhead community outreach efforts and identify SL opportunities to cultivate school-community partnerships. Districts and schools can either hire a staff member or utilize VISTAs or AmeriCorps volunteers to fulfill the role and support SL efforts in schools.

State policymakers must do more to expand access to service-learning opportunities as well. According to the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), as of the 2017–18 school year, 37 states and the District of

Columbia required or encouraged districts to include community service education or SL programs (Blanco, 2019). Yet, survey findings show that these policies are not doing enough to create widespread accessibility in schools. To encourage SL, states should allow schools and districts to offer SL as an elective.

One possible way to do this is to tie SL to work-based learning experiences associated with career and technical education program requirements. States can also allow districts to require community service for graduation, but it is important that these requirements be tied to classroom learning so that students may better understand the applicability of the subject matter, boosting school engagement. Reflecting on their service experience and how this relates to course material helps boost SEL by allowing students to understand how their service impacted them and their community.

The federal government can support states and schools in expanding SL opportunities by authorizing and appropriating a Service-Learning Fund through the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) to replace Learn and Serve America eliminated in 2011. CNCS would work to ensure all K-12 students have in-class, hands-on SL opportunities through grants for higher education SL programs, Summer of Service pilot programs for grade 6-12 students, and Semester of Service pilot programs for grade 9-12 students. Funding levels for the program should be an annual *minimum* of \$250 million and be structured such that half of the funds support SL projects in economically disadvantaged communities (Service Learning, 2020).

Promote the development of adult capacity, strengthen SEL and SL knowledge among educators, and ensure teachers have adequate support

Teachers have a big appetite for further training in teaching SEL skills and SL. More than seven in ten teachers said they were

“fairly” or “very” interested in additional training on best practices for teaching SEL. Similarly, 68 percent were “very” or “fairly” interested in further training on teaching classes with a SL component.

Teachers understand the benefits SEL and SL have on their classrooms and their students, and are calling for additional training for both. In the online discussion boards, teachers also requested resources for adapting curricula and programs, particularly for SEL and SL, to virtual forums. Policymakers should heed those calls and ensure educators have access to these resources.

State leaders should ensure that educator preparation programs and licensure requirements reflect the knowledge and competencies necessary to successfully support students’ social and emotional development. SEL training should also be embedded in continuing education requirements for faculty and educators, and districts should hire and retain educators with proven background or training in SEL. In addition, training in SL should be included in teacher preparation and continuing education programs to build awareness of these types of programs and their benefits on student learning and classroom engagement. Organizations like CASEL have curated free [Remote Learning SEL Resources](#) and developed roadmaps for supporting teachers and students as they return to school.

Reports of heightened teacher stress and waning teacher morale have also given rise to fears of a potential teacher exodus. Several states have seen drastic increases in the number of teachers applying for retirement benefits (Singer, 2020). Moreover, research indicates that teachers with high stress levels deploy less effective teaching strategies that can lead to worse student outcomes (Oberle & Schonert-Reichl, 2016; Harmsen et al., 2018; and Tolan et al., 2020). State, district, and school policymakers must understand the burden that has been put

on teachers due to the pandemic and ensure they have the necessary supports to be effective at their jobs.

Some leaders are already stepping forward. Amid fears of widespread burnout, Governor Tim Walz (D-MN) issued an [executive order](#) requiring teachers have an additional 30 minutes of prep time for online and hybrid courses. Montgomery County (VA) has designated every Wednesday as a workday, where no classes are held, allowing students and teachers time to refresh, catch up on work, and plan ahead. In addition, schools and districts should provide added mental health supports in school or virtually.

Support integrated SEL and SL state learning standards and competency benchmarks backed by funding and resources for full implementation

Increasingly, educators are calling for states to explicitly include the development of students’ social and emotional skills into state learning standards (Dusenbury et al., 2018). State SEL standards should be used as a high-impact lever to implement many of the policy recommendations included here. Specifically, they can include the vision for students’ success that emphasizes SEL and character development and informs best practices and continuous learning for integrating SEL into academic curricula. They can also provide guidance for higher education institutions by laying the groundwork for integrating SEL into pre-service teacher training programs and guide professional development of teachers and administrators.

Similarly, states must do more to make SL an educational priority. In 2014, 33 states had some type of standard or framework related to SL or community service, while in 2019 a majority of states required or encouraged participation in some type of service (Baumann, 2014; Blanco, 2019). Yet, both parents and teachers indicated that formalized SL programs remain rare. States should



work to further embed SL into state learning standards. The National Youth Leadership Council developed K-12 SL standards for quality practice that states can adopt (RMC Research Corporation, 2008). These research-based standards were developed by experts in the field and vetted by youth and educators.

Unlike academic standards, however, it is important that SEL and SL standards and benchmarks are only used to improve teaching and learning and are excluded from high-stakes accountability systems at this time. Standards should also be backed by the funding and state level infrastructure necessary to successfully support schools and districts as they implement systemic SEL and expand access to SL.

Build integrated workforce preparation models that embed SEL and SL

“As an adult, I’ve found that emotional awareness and cultural sensitivities are pertinent to successful business and personal relationships.”
—Parent

Research shows that the skills most in-demand by employers are social and emotional skills, including self-management and relationship skills with an emphasis on communication and collaboration. They look for employees who have deep respect for people from different backgrounds, can think critically and strategically to make wise and ethical decisions, and can effectively manage themselves (Yoder et al., 2020).

This research makes clear that it is essential to embed SEL into workforce preparation models that begin during elementary and secondary school to better prepare youth for the future workforce. State education and labor departments should work together to build integrated workforce preparation models that embed both SEL and SL. This should emphasize the role of SL to build SEL skills, as well as prepare students for work and postsecondary education, as both parents and teachers believe SL benefits future preparedness for students. Moreover, research has shown that student participation in high-quality SL is positively related to the acquisition of 21st century skills (Baumann, 2012).

States and districts should work to develop public-private partnerships with community partners and businesses to design opportunities for work-based learning and SL that are tied to the jobs of the future and in-demand fields. Integrated state workforce preparation models should collect and publish data on industry sectors where jobs are growing fastest and workers are most in-demand, and strive to develop strong workforce pathways that prepare youth to enter those fields.

Some states are leading the way. Massachusetts’ Workforce Skills Cabinet developed regional labor market blueprints to identify economic priorities and labor market gaps in seven workforce regions. The blueprints have been used to inform policy and planning in each region and align high quality pathways to regional labor market needs. Nevada’s Perkins program is working to align their CTE program to high-growth sectors. In addition, CASEL has developed a new project under its Collaborating States Initiative to work with states to bridge education and workforce pathways through SEL and jobs of the future.

Conclusion

The evidence and perspectives of teachers, parents, and youth are clear: social and emotional learning and service-learning increase student engagement in school, improve academic outcomes, and reduce the chances of dropping out. In turn, these programs do not only develop good students, but good citizens who are ready to give back to their communities.

Yet, parents and teachers have also shown that implementation of programmatic, schoolwide SEL and opportunities for students to participate in SL are far too rare at a time in our nation's history when these

qualities are most important. Both parents and educators are calling for policymakers to ensure students have a holistic educational experience that develops not just their academic abilities but nourishes their social and emotional competencies and cultivates the leaders of tomorrow.

The promise of a nation rests in its youth and America needs the talents of its young people now more than ever. Social and emotional learning and service-learning can help strengthen an educational system to meet the needs of our young people and build a generation of leaders prepared for the challenges of this century.

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Appendix I

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on the results of a survey of both parents and teachers conducted by Hart Research Associates in 2020.

The survey of teachers was conducted online among 803 middle and high school teachers working in public schools. It was fielded from February 3 to February 12, 2020. Teachers were invited to participate from an opt-in panel and pre-screened to ensure qualification. Slight weights were applied using a raking methodology to ensure the sample is representative of middle and high school public school teachers and consistent with benchmark data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Table 3 features characteristics of the teachers that were surveyed.

The survey of parents was administered online among 806 parents of middle and high school students attending public schools. Parents were invited to participate from an online panel and pre-screened to ensure qualification. Parents with more than one child attending a public middle or high school were asked to answer the questions thinking about their child with the most recent birthday. Slight weights were applied using a raking methodology to ensure the sample is representative of parents of middle and high school students based on Census demographic and geographic data for parents of children ages 13 to 17. The survey was fielded from February 3, 2020 to February 11, 2020. Table 4 contains relevant characteristics of the parents surveyed.

Table 3. Teacher Characteristics

Students' Grade Level	
Middle/Jr High	40%
High School	53%
Other/multiple	7%
Race	
White	78%
Hispanic	9%
Black/African American	8%
Other	5%
Gender	
Male	37%
Female	63%
Age	
Under 35	27%
35 to 49	42%
50 and older	31%
Public School Type	
Regular Public School	95%
Magnet/optional/charter School	5%
Free/Reduced Lunch	
Less than 40%	36%
40% to 59%	23%
60% to 79%	18%
80% or More	23%

Table 4. Parent Characteristics

Child's School Level	
Middle/ Jr. High	38%
High School	56%
Other/multiple	6%
Race	
White	57%
Hispanic	21%
Black/ African American	13%
Other	9%
Gender	
Man	45%
Woman	55%
Age	
Under 40	23%
40 to 49	45%
50 to 59	24%
60 and older	8%
Child's Gender	
Boy	51%
Girl	49%

Appendix II

FINDINGS FROM OTHER SEL SURVEYS BY HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES, CIVIC, AND CASEL

Students attending a SEL school reported a more positive climate, stronger relationships, and greater preparation for life than those attending a weaker SEL school, and the gaps between responses from weaker and stronger SEL schools on these topics were pronounced.

Findings from *Ready to Lead: A National Principal Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Prepare Children and Transform Schools*

Civic and Hart Research Associates' 2017 report *Ready to Lead* gauged school and district leadership's perspectives and practices surrounding social and emotional learning. The report focused on findings from a nationally representative survey of 884 Pre-K to 12 principals, plus interviews with 16 superintendents and 10 district-level research and evaluation SEL experts. The survey found a high commitment among principals to SEL practices and outcomes but major areas for growth in implementation strategies and assessment of on-the-ground practices. This 2019 update was informed by results from the 2017 survey, and methodology and demographics are consistent between the two, allowing for comparisons integrated throughout this report.

Findings from *Respected: Perspectives of Youth on High School & Social and Emotional Learning*

Civic's 2018 collaboration with Hart Research Associates and CASEL entitled *Respected* was a survey of student perspectives on school environment and social and emotional learning in both SEL and non-SEL schools. The survey included 800 high school youth and 500 recent high school graduates, as well as interviews with 11 middle schoolers, 10 current high schoolers, 10 high school graduates, and 17 high schoolers in

SEL-focused schools. Broadly, the results matched findings from other SEL surveys: students believe in the power of SEL and see its far-reaching benefits in strong-SEL schools, and students with less SEL exposure also want it in their schools, demonstrating the need for further SEL integration and growth for SEL to reach the students and schools in most need of support.

Students attending a SEL school reported a more positive climate, stronger relationships, and greater preparation for life than those attending a weaker SEL school, and the gaps between responses from weaker and stronger SEL schools on these topics were pronounced. When asked to give their high school a letter grade, 90 percent of recent students from a strong SEL school responded with an A or a B, compared to 42 percent in weak SEL schools. A 50 percentage point difference existed between recent students from strong SEL and weak SEL schools who said students at their schools got along well with each other, and there was a 30 percentage point difference in whether students felt safe at high- and low-SEL schools.

This climate translates directly into academics and students' futures. Almost all students from strong SEL schools reported that their schools do a pretty good or great job supporting them academically compared to one-third to half of students from weak SEL schools. Eighty-three percent of students from strong SEL schools reported their

school did a great or pretty good job of preparing them for future success after high school, compared to just 13 percent of students from weak SEL schools. Even regarding engagement with the community and civic-mindedness, 57 percent of students from strong SEL schools say they regularly volunteer, compared to 28 percent of graduates from weak SEL schools, and there is a 17 percentage point difference in students who say they would participate in full-time military, national, or public service for their community or country.

Out of the entire student population surveyed, 76 percent wanted to attend a strong SEL school, but many of those students did not have the opportunity to experience it. Fewer than half of recent graduates reported that their school did at least a pretty good job of supporting SEL, and although SEL implementation appeared to be expanding since many current high school students felt their high school did a pretty good job of supporting some SEL skills, only a few students reported support for all seven benchmark skills. Overall, only 36 percent of students considered their schools to be strong SEL schools, and four percent rated their school as doing a great job of supporting all seven SEL benchmarks.

Broken down by demographics, while overall responses were promising, certain student groups still did not report feeling adequately safe, respected, supported, or engaged. Although about 70 to 80 percent of students feel physically safe in school, Hispanic students and lower-income students reported feeling less safe in their high school, and students who felt less safe also reported receiving lower grades. Students from below average income backgrounds were more likely to feel negatively towards their high school experience, including lower comfort in participating, less engagement and motivation, and feeling bored, lonely, and bullied in school. Students who reported

having lower grades were also more likely to feel bored, lonely, bullied, and less comfortable participating, and additionally were less excited about learning, felt less comfortable being themselves, and took fewer risks in learning.

Respected provided the essential perspectives of youth on what students in America's schools need. The results were clear: SEL works, students want it, and far too many students are missing it in their education.

Findings from *The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools*

In 2013, with the support of CASEL, Civic Enterprises teamed with Hart Research Associates to ask teachers on the front lines of schools their opinions on social and emotional learning. The resulting report, *The Missing Piece*, shared the findings from a nationally representative sample of 605 educators from preschool through 12th-grade. The responses were resounding: teachers understood and endorsed social and emotional learning for all students, and believed in its ability to help students achieve in school and in life.

Nearly all teachers (93 percent) surveyed believed SEL is "very" or "fairly" important for the in-school student experience. Even more teachers (95 percent) believed that social and emotional skills can be taught, and 97 percent reported that SEL would benefit students from all backgrounds, rich or poor. Importantly, three in every four teachers believed a large focus on SEL would be a major benefit to students for a variety of reasons, including:

- Workforce readiness (87 percent);
- Students becoming good citizens (87 percent);
- Students' staying on track to graduate (80 percent);

- College preparation (78 percent); and
- Academic success (75 percent).

While 88 percent of teachers reported SEL occurring in their schools on some level, less than half (44 percent) said social and emotional skills were being taught on a school-wide, programmatic basis. When asked about barriers to teaching SEL in their schools, 81 percent ranked time as the biggest challenge to implementing SEL, while 36 percent of teachers noted a lack of training and knowledge of how to teach social and emotional skills as a big challenge. Another 30 percent of teachers believed their schools place too little emphasis on developing students' social and emotional skills.

Encouragingly, however, four in five teachers reported interest in receiving further training and nearly 6 in every 10 teachers believed schools should place a great deal of emphasis on developing students' social and emotional skills. *The Missing Piece* also found that teachers were calling for their states to prioritize SEL, as more than three in five teachers (62 percent) thought the development of social and emotional skills should explicitly be stated in their state education standards.

Teachers also identified three other key accelerators for social and emotional learning:

- Connecting social and emotional skills with the Common Core State Standards;
- Providing additional professional development for teachers; and
- Sharing research-based strategies about effective ways to promote students' social and emotional skills.

In *The Missing Piece*, teachers confirmed what the evidence was already saying: that social and emotional skills can be taught and SEL is a powerful tool, capable of boosting students' academic performance and future life success.

