

MI Student Voice Perception Survey – Social and Emotional Learning Brief

Basis Policy Research

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the “process through which students acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions” (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2023). A focus on SEL helps students cultivate skills in five interrelated areas (henceforth titled the “CASEL 5”), including: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023).

Implementing SEL programs is associated with improvements in students’ social and emotional competence, academic performance, and well-being (Taylor et al., 2017). Students are also better positioned for future success when districts and schools purposefully implement and reinforce skills associated with social and emotional competency (Jagers et al., 2019). Finally, the need for implementing SEL programs has grown in light of recent research indicating that COVID-19 related disruptions have negatively impacted students’ mental health, social connections, and emotional well-being (Rosanbaum, 2021).

Prior research has shown students develop social and emotional competence when teachers and schools provide opportunities to learn and apply skills associated with the CASEL 5 (Durlak et al., 2011; Yoder, 2014). Further, SEL instruction is enhanced when implemented in safe and supportive learning environments where teachers have developed positive and caring relationships with students (Williford & Wolcott, 2015).

Given the importance of SEL on students’ academic performance and emotional health and the role the learning environment has on students’ development of social and emotional competence, the MI Student Voice survey includes SEL- and learning environment-focused questions. The questions gauge students’ (a) development of SEL knowledge, skills, and attitudes, (b) exposure to discussions on responsible decision-making and conflict resolution, and (c) perceptions of the learning environment. The Kent Intermediate School District, through a grant funded from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund, contracted with Basis Policy Research to analyze survey results and produce three research briefs covering topics of interest to Kent ISD. The current brief explores the relationship between the learning environment and the development of social and emotional competence.

About The Survey

This executive summary draws on data from the spring 2023 administration of the MI Student Voice perception survey. Fifty-five districts in Michigan participated in the survey. At the conclusion of the survey window, 33,233 students in grades 5 through 12 completed the survey. The sample is restricted to 26,990 students with complete survey data. The analyses included in this executive summary explore descriptive trends in the percentage of students responding to different response options and the predictive probability of different student subgroups reporting social and emotional competence.

Research Questions

- 1 How do Michigan students perceive their own social and emotional competence?
- 2 To what extent does the learning environment support students’ development of social and emotional competence?
- 3 Do students report stronger social and emotional competence if their teachers have more frequent discussions with them on responsible decision-making and conflict resolution?

Key Findings**Sixty-eight percent of students report demonstrating social and emotional competence.**

- Of the sub-domains comprising social and emotional competence, 80 percent of students report strong social awareness while 69 percent report strong self-management and 63 percent report having a strong growth mindset.
- The predicted probability of Black or African American (henceforth titled “Black”), Hispanic or Latinx (henceforth titled “Hispanic”), and multiracial students reporting social and emotional competence is between 62 to 65 percent as compared to 75 percent for White and Asian students.
- Male students (74 percent) are more likely to report demonstrating social and emotional competence as compared to female (67 percent) and non-binary or third gender students (54 percent).

Positive learning environments increase the likelihood of students’ reporting social and emotional competence.

- The predicted probability of White and Asian students reporting positive learning environments is between 76 to 79 percent as compared to between 66 to 71 percent for Black, Hispanic, or multiracial students.
- Male students are more likely to report positive learning environments (75 percent) as compared to female (70 percent) and non-binary or third gender students (64 percent).
- The predicted probability of reporting social and emotional competence is 80 percent for students who report positive learning environments as compared to 41 percent for students who report negative learning environments.
- Students indicating positive learning are almost six times more likely to report social and emotional competence.

Students reporting more frequent discussions on responsible decision-making and conflict resolution are more likely to report social and emotional competence.

- Upper elementary students are more likely to report frequent discussions on responsible decision-making and conflict resolution.
- The predicted probability of reporting social and emotional competence is 77 percent for students who report more frequent conversations on responsible decision-making as compared to 59 percent for students who report less frequent discussions on these topics.
- Students indicating more frequent discussions on responsible decision-making and conflict resolution are 2.5 times more likely to report social and emotional competence.

Recommendations

- Dedicate time and space for teachers to focus on individual social and emotional skills.
- Support the implementation of instructional practices that promote students’ social and emotional competence.
- Use the Kent ISD [Student Perception Planning Guide](#) when analyzing district- and school-level results.
- Implement district-/school-wide frameworks for promoting positive learning environments.

Learning environment. Items address teachers’ respect towards students, teachers’ encouragement of students, and adequacy of resources school provide.

Growth mindset. Items gauge students’ perceptions of their ability to improve academically.

Social awareness. Items include how much students care about other people’s feelings and how much respect students have of the views of those who disagree with them.

Self-management. Items include how often students come to class prepared, get work done right away, and pay attention when distractions are present.

Discussing responsible decision making and conflict resolution. Items gauge the frequency teachers talk about how student actions affect others or ways to solve disagreements.

Social and emotional competence. Students selecting the top answer choices (e.g., “agree or strongly agree”) on at least half of the survey items about growth mindset, social awareness, and self-management.

Historically Marginalized Groups. Includes students identifying as Black or African American, Hispanic or Latinx, or multiracial.

Predicted probability. The likelihood or chance of a specific event or outcome occurring.

Upper Elementary. Students in grades five to six.

Middle School. Students in grades seven to eight.

High School. Students in grades 9 to 12.