

K-12 Teachers and Administrators Agree about the Importance of Social and Emotional Skills in Education

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The ACT® National Curriculum Survey® is a nationwide survey of educational practices and college and career readiness expectations. Every few years, educators across the country are surveyed about the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn that are essential for college and career readiness. As part of this study, over 6,000 elementary, middle, and high school teachers and administrators¹ were asked questions related to social and emotional skills at school. The purpose of this data byte is to share the results of this part of the survey, which provides evidence that K-12 teachers and administrators overwhelmingly agree that social and emotional skills are important at school.

As shown in Table 1 below, a large majority of the surveyed K-12 teachers and administrators agreed that it is both possible to teach and assess social and emotional skills in school. Additionally, many agreed that school districts should make investments in both social and emotional interventions (88%) and assessments (75%). A large majority of K–12 educators and administrators also felt that improving the school climate would lead to improved social and emotional skills for students (95%) and vice versa; 96% agreed that improving skills in students would lead to a better school climate.

Table 1. Percent of Teachers and Administrators who Agree it is Possible to Teach and Assess Social and Emotional Skills in School

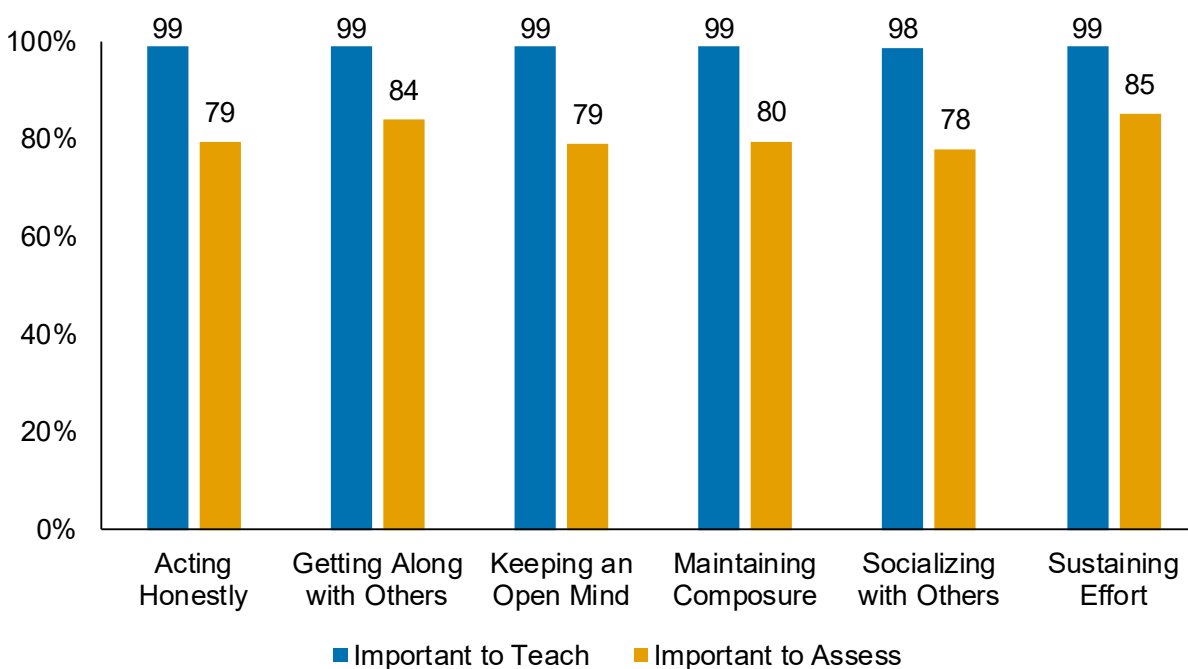
Statement	Elementary	Middle	High	Admin	Average
It is possible to teach social and emotional skills in school.	95%	91%	90%	94%	92%
School districts should make financial investments in interventions for social and emotional skills.	91%	87%	84%	89%	88%
It is possible to assess social and emotional skills.	78%	73%	74%	79%	76%
School districts should make financial investments in assessments of social and emotional skills.	74%	74%	73%	80%	75%
An improved school climate will lead to improved social and emotional skills in students.	96%	95%	95%	94%	95%
Improved social and emotional skills in students will lead to an improved school climate.	98%	96%	96%	95%	96%



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In addition to answering questions about the relative importance of social and emotional skills in school, educators were also asked about the importance of particular skills. Using the ACT Holistic Framework^{®2} as a guide, educators were asked if the following behavioral skills were important to teach and/or assess: (a) Acting Honestly, (b) Getting Along with Others, (c) Keeping an Open Mind, (d) Maintaining Composure, (e) Socializing with Others,³ and (f) Sustaining Effort. Educators overwhelmingly responded in favor of teaching and, to a lesser extent, assessing social and emotional skills in school. The following graph shows the percentage of K-12 educators who agreed that these skills were important to teach and assess in school.

Figure 1. Percent of K-12 Teacher and Administrator Agreement that Social and Emotional Skills are Important to Teach and Assess



Given the significance of social and emotional skills in education, it's important to keep in mind some of the important features of an intervention or assessment when selecting the appropriate one for your school. Both interventions and assessments should be based on evidence-based practices and research. For example, assessments of social and emotional skills should provide clear definitions of the skills being measured and should be thoroughly backed by rigorous scientific evidence—usually in the form of technical documentation that provides specifics about the reliability and validity of the assessment. Interventions should also be based on best practices and should provide evidence of efficacy. Selecting research-based assessments and interventions, and implementing these with fidelity, will help educators build these much-needed skills in their students.

Notes

1. Sample includes 405 administrators, 2,428 elementary school teachers, 1,623 middle school teachers, and 1,619 high school teachers.
2. Visit the following link for more information on the Holistic Framework: ACT. (2020). *The Holistic Framework: Planning for future success starts now*. Retrieved from <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/k12-educators-and-administrators/college-and-career-readiness/holistic-framework.html>
3. After the administration of the ACT National Curriculum Survey 2020, the skill “Socializing with Others” was updated to “Social Connection” to better reflect feedback from educators. While the term was updated, the definition of this social and emotional skill remains the same: a person’s preferred level of social interaction, behavior in interpersonal situations, and optimism.

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