

# Social and Emotional Learning Is Associated With Students' Hard Work

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) is known to have positive effects on students' social and emotional skills (Mahoney et al., 2008). We sought to determine if the efficacy of SEL could be detected with single-item predictor and criterion variables in a large sample of students ( $N = 487,064$ ) who took the ACT® on the December 2023 National test date. Nearly all students were in 11th (42.5%) or 12th (49.0%) grade. Students were asked two questions, the first a measure of SEL programming in their schools and the second a measure of sustaining effort:

1. Social and emotional skills include things like cooperation, persistence, remaining calm, keeping an open mind, and leadership. Have you ever been taught these types of skills in school? (yes/no)
2. Do you work harder in school than most of your classmates? (yes/no)

There was a statistically significant relationship between these two items ( $\chi^2 = 3,068.48$ ,  $p < .01$ ). **Compared to students who did not have SEL programming in school, students who had SEL programming in school were much more likely to say that they work harder in school than their classmates.**

**Figure 1.** Relationship Between Having SEL in School and Working Hard



This finding underscores the importance of SEL in promoting social and emotional skills. Furthermore, we demonstrate that single-item measures work well to capture the effect of SEL programming on social and emotional skills.

## Reference

Mahoney, J. L., Durlak, J. A., & Weissberg, R. P. (2018). An update on social and emotional learning outcome research. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 100(4), 18–23.



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