Social Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales™

PAR

SEARS

Objectives

Describe
- Describe the theoretical concept of positive psychology.

Understand
- Understand the development and psychometric properties of the SEARS.

Demonstrate
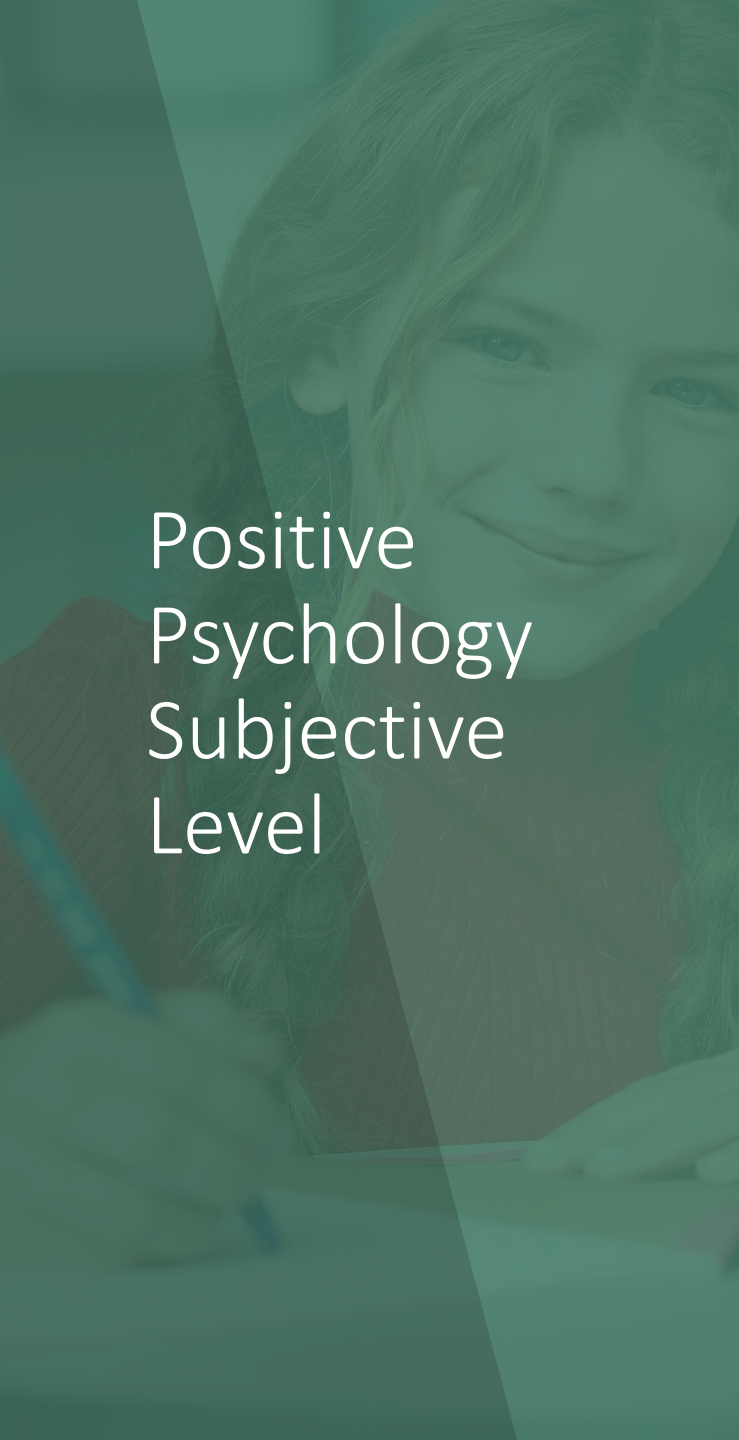- Demonstrate administration and application of the SEARS in a school setting.

Define
- Define SEL and provide information about the Strong Kids curricula.

Positive Psychology

- A science of positive subjective experience, positive individual traits, and positive institutions promises to improve quality of life and prevent the pathologies that arise when life is barren and meaningless.
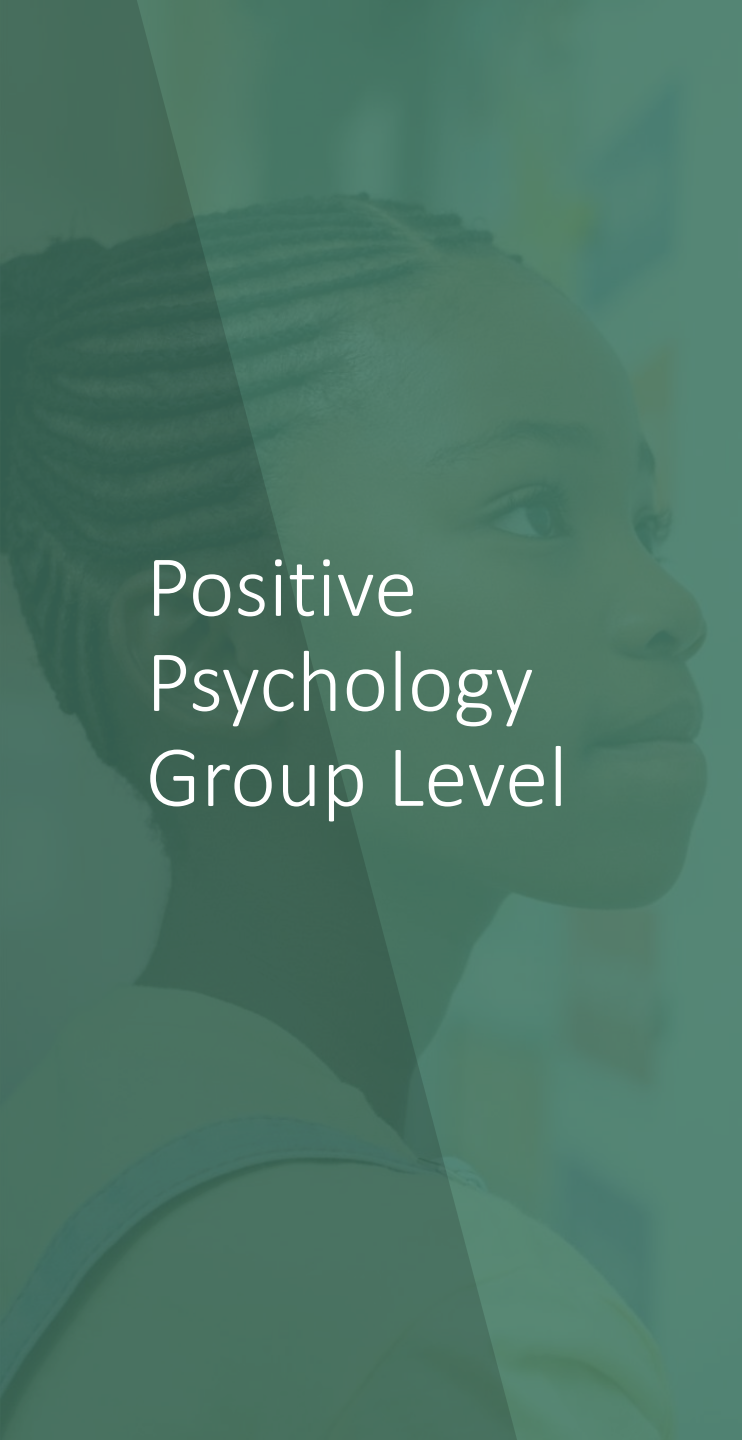
Positive Psychology Subjective Level

- Valued subjective experiences:
  - well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past)
  - hope and optimism(for the future)
  - flow and happiness (in the present).

Positive Psychology Individual Level

- Positive individual traits:
  - love
  - vocation
  - courage
  - interpersonal skill
  - aesthetic sensibility
  - perseverance
  - forgiveness
  - originality
  - future mindedness
  - spirituality
  - high talent
  - wisdom

Positive Psychology Group Level

- The civic virtues and the institutions that move individuals toward better citizenship:
  - responsibility
  - nurturance
  - altruism
  - civility
  - moderation
  - tolerance
  - work ethic

Positive Psychology

- "The aim of positive psychology is to begin to catalyze a change in the focus of psychology from preoccupation with the worst things in life to also building positive qualities."

  (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000)

Positive Education

Positive Education - incorporation of the science of positive psychology into the life and work of schools

- Benefits teachers personally
- Creates relationships that distinguish excellence
- Produces students capable of living a good life

Positive Psychology

- Students who were both free of psychopathology symptoms and high in perceptions of subjective well-being fared better in a variety of social, emotional, and academic outcomes.

(Suldo and Shaffer, 2008)

Strength-Based Assessment

- "Strength-based assessment is defined as measurement of those emotional and behavioral competencies, skills, and characteristics that create a sense of personal accomplishment; contribute to a sense of personal accomplishment; contribute to satisfying relationships with family members, peers, and adults; enhance one's ability to deal with adversity and stress; and promote one's personal and academic development."
(Epstein and Sharma, 1998)

Jimerson and colleagues (2004)

- Promotion of a positive arena from which to work with children and families

- Empowerment of children and families to take responsibility for navigating their own life experiences

- Enhancement of the processes of professional collaboration and consultation

- Identification of "keystone variables" to be used in intervention planning

- Promotion of more optimism and hope among professionals working with troubled children and families

Strength-Based Assessment

- More intuitive links to intervention planning with respect to identifying areas of strength on which to build the intervention
- Ease with which assessment items and results may be restated info positive intervention goals
- Less stigmatizing nature
- Strong social validity with parents and teachers

Strength-Based Assessment-SEARS

- Individual items are phrased as desirable positive characteristics
- Four-point rating scale (0 = Never to 3 = Always)
- Higher score values are assigned to rating that are indicative of a child or adolescent possessing more of that characteristic
- Higher scores are indicative of perceptions of higher levels of social-emotional competence

Strength-Based Assessment-SEARS

- Assessment of at-risk youth may result in low scores
- Suggests a deficit in skill acquisition or skill performance
- The lower-rated items can be used as positively-stated targets for intervention and skill enhancement
- Very low scores may have some association with behavioral pathologies or disorders but such problems are not directly assessed or assumed

Social and emotional assets and resiliencies

- A set of adaptive characteristics that are important for success at school, with peers, and in the outside world.

- Friendship skills, empathy, interpersonal skills, social support, problem solving, emotional competence, social maturity, self-concept, self-management, social independence, cognitive strategies, and resilience.
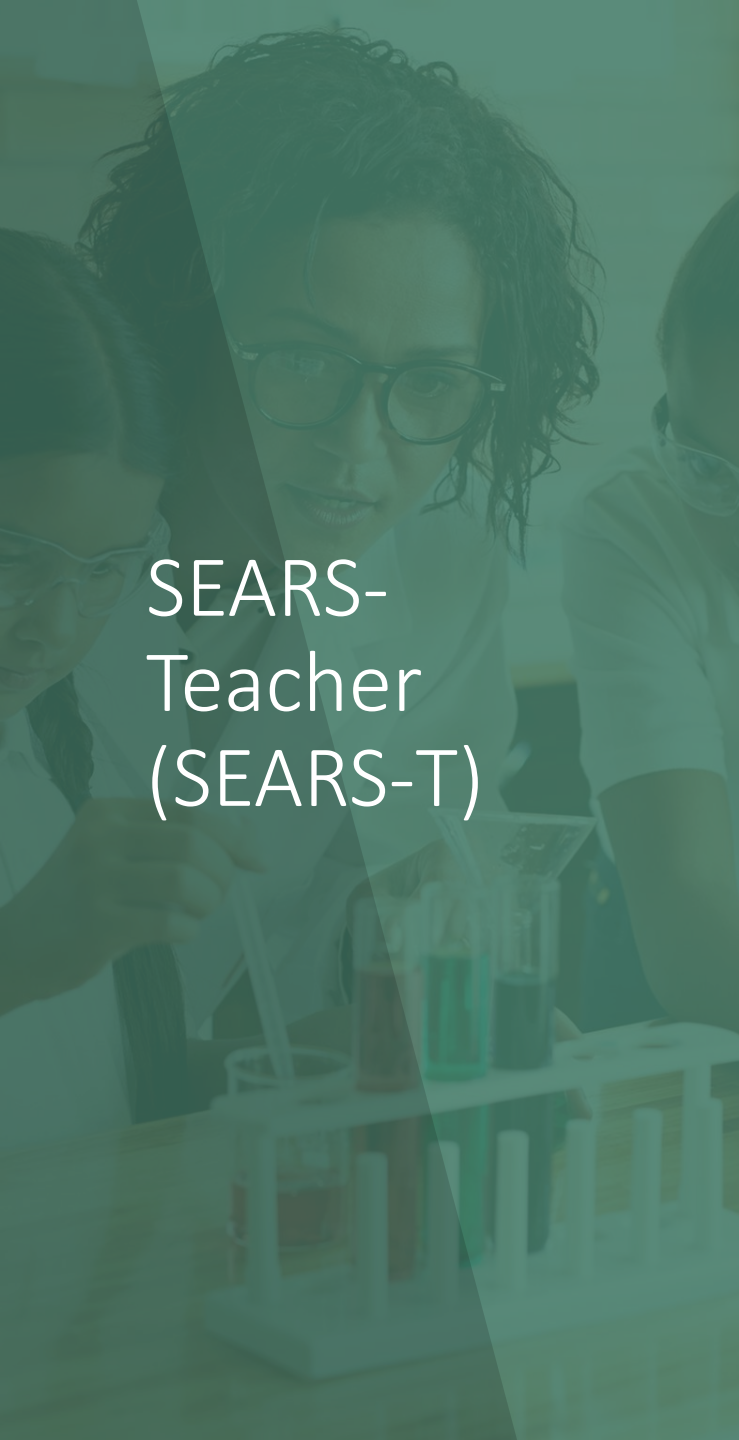
- **Self-Regulation**: Self-awareness, metacognition, intrapersonal insight, self-management, and direction.

- **Social Competence**: Ability to maintain friendships with peers, engage in effective verbal communication, and feel comfortable around groups of peers.

- **Empathy**: Ability to empathize with others' situations and feelings.

- **Responsibility**: Ability to accept responsibility, behave conscientiously, and ability to think before acting.

SEARS-Adolescent (SEARS-A)

- Grades 7-12 (ages 13-18)
- 35 items
- 4 scales and total score
  - Self-Regulation
  - Social Competence
  - Empathy
  - Responsibility

SEARS-Teacher (SEARS-T)

- Completed by classroom teachers or other educators that know the student well

- Grades K-12 (ages 5-18)

- Separate norms for Grades K-6 and 7-12

- 41 items

- 4 scales and total score
  - Self-Regulation
  - Social Competence
  - Empathy
  - Responsibility

SEARS-Parent (SEARS-P)

- Completed by parents, guardians, or other home-based caregivers
- Grades K-12 (ages 5-18)
- Separate norms for Grades K-6 and 7-12
- 39 items
- 3 scales and total score
  - Self-Regulation/Responsibility
  - Social Competence
  - Empathy

SEARS-Child (SEARS-C)

- Grades 3 to 6 (ages 8-12)
- 35 items
- One total score, no scales
- General assessment of global self-concept

Short Forms

- Short form version for each full-length version
- 12 items that are the best representation of the general constructs measured by that form
- Primarily for intervention outcome measurement and progress monitoring within an RTI model

Item Development

1. Generate potential items
2. Identify item types and clusters
3. Delete items to reduce duplication and balance content coverage
4. Informal content validation panel
5. Reword items, organize into cross-informant research prototypes
6. Develop research rating form format and instructions
7. Readability analysis
8. Create final scale configurations and rating forms
9. Create SEARS short forms

Standardization Sample

- SEARS-C $N = 1{,}224$
- SEARS-A $N = 1{,}727$
- SEARS-T $N = 1{,}400$
- SEARS-P $N = 1{,}204$

- Little variance accounted for by gender, age, or ethnicity. Largest difference was Female scoring higher than Males on the Empathy scale of the SEARS-A.
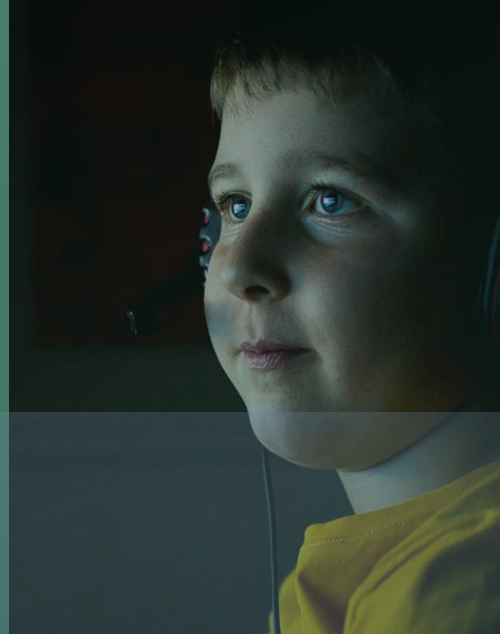- Separate age norms to match SEARS-C age range.

Reliability

- SEARS-C
  - Total Score   .92
  - Short Form   .85

- SEARS-A
  - Self-Regulation   .84
  - Social Competence   .85
  - Empathy   .85
  - Responsibility   .80
  - Total Score   .93
  - Short Form   .82

Reliability

- SEARS-T
  - Self-Regulation .95
  - Social Competence .94
  - Empathy .91
  - Responsibility .95
  - Total Score .98
  - Short Form .93

- SEARS-P
  - Self-Regulation/Responsibility .95
  - Social Competence .89
  - Empathy .87
  - Total Score .96
  - Short Form .89

Table 5.18
Summary of Basic Psychometric Properties of SEARS Short Forms

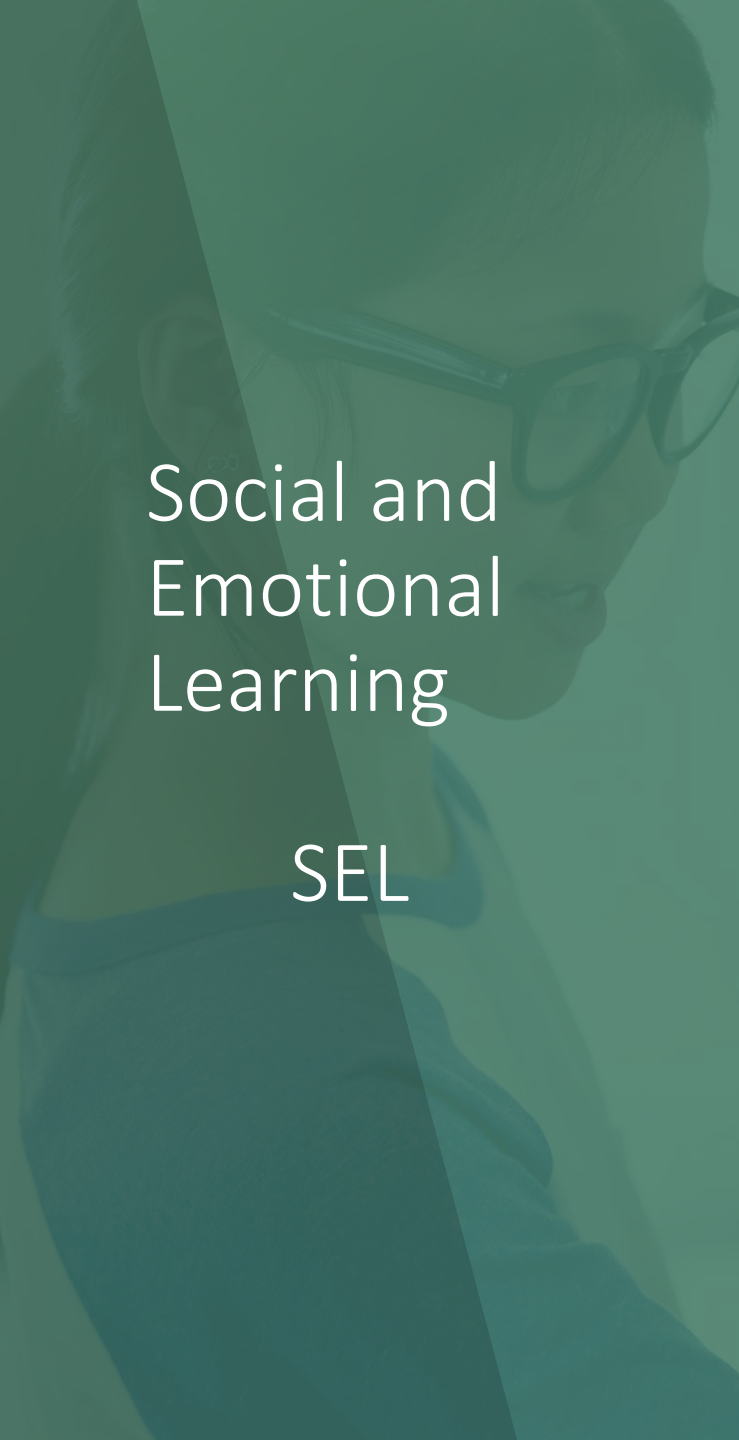| Psychometric property	SEARS Short Form			
	SEARS-C-SF	SEARS-A-SF	SEARS-T-SF	SEARS-P-SF
Internal consistency reliability (alpha)	.85	.82	.93	.89
Correlation of Short Form total score with full-length total score	.93	.94	.98	.97
Average item-total correlation with full-length scale	.57	.48	.71	.61
Test-retest reliability at 2 weeks	.74	.84	.90	.92

Validity

- Test Content
- Convergent: Logical relationships across form with Social Skills Rating Scale, Internalizing Symptoms Scale for Children, Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale, Student Life Satisfaction Scale, School Social Behavior Scales, Home and Community Social Behavior Scales
- Group Differences: Special education, academic performance
- Intervention Outcomes

Applications

- Assessment, evaluation, decision-making, and intervention planning for individual students
- Screening individual students or groups of students (e.g., class-wide or school-wide)
- Monitoring progress during the course of interventions
- Providing data to help fine-tune or adjust interventions to best meet student needs
- Determine effectiveness of social-emotional interventions
- Applied research: Effectiveness of intervention programs, psychometric validation of other assessment tools

Research Support

- Cohn, B., Merrell, K. W., Felver-Grant, J., Tom, K., & Endrulat, N. (2009, February). **Strength-based assessment of social and emotional functioning: SEARS-C and SEARS-A**. Presented at the Meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Boston.

- Endrulat, N. R., Tom, K., & Merrell, K. W. (2009, August). Strength-based assessment: **Applications and development of the Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales, parent version**. Presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Canada.

- Endrulat, N. R., Tom, K., Ravitch, K., Wesley, K., & Merrell, K. W. (2010, March). **Gender differences in positive social emotional functioning**. Presented at the meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Chicago.

- Felver-Gant, J., & Merrell, K. W. (2009, February). **Teacher's ratings of student's assets and resilience: Development of the SEARS-T**. Presented at the Meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Boston.

- Tom, K., Merrell, K. W., Endrulat, N. R., Cohn, B., & Felver-Gant, J. C. (2009, February). **Assessing positive youth characteristics: Development and structure of the SEARS-P**. Presented at the Meeting of the National Association of School Psychologists, Boston.

Social and Emotional Learning

SEL

- Systematic, cohesive, and effective instructional programming designed to teach social and emotional skills to children and adolescents, to prevent mental health problems, and to provide effective early intervention for those problems
  (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissburg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004)

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- **Mission**
- To establish social and emotional learning as an essential part of education.
- **Vision**
- We envision a world where families, schools, and communities work together to promote children's success in school and life and to support the healthy development of all children. In this vision, children and adults are engaged life-long learners who are self-aware, caring and connected to others, and responsible in their decision-making. Children and adults achieve to their fullest potential, and participate constructively in a democratic society.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

- Social and emotional learning involves the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in five competency areas:

- **Self-awareness**: Recognizing one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior.

- **Self-management**: Regulating one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations.

- **Social awareness**: Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others.

- **Relationship skills**: Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.

- **Responsible decision making**: Making constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions.

- These competencies can be taught and measured, and research shows that students with these skills do better in school and life (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Goleman, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Institute of Medicine, 2009; National Research Council, 2012).
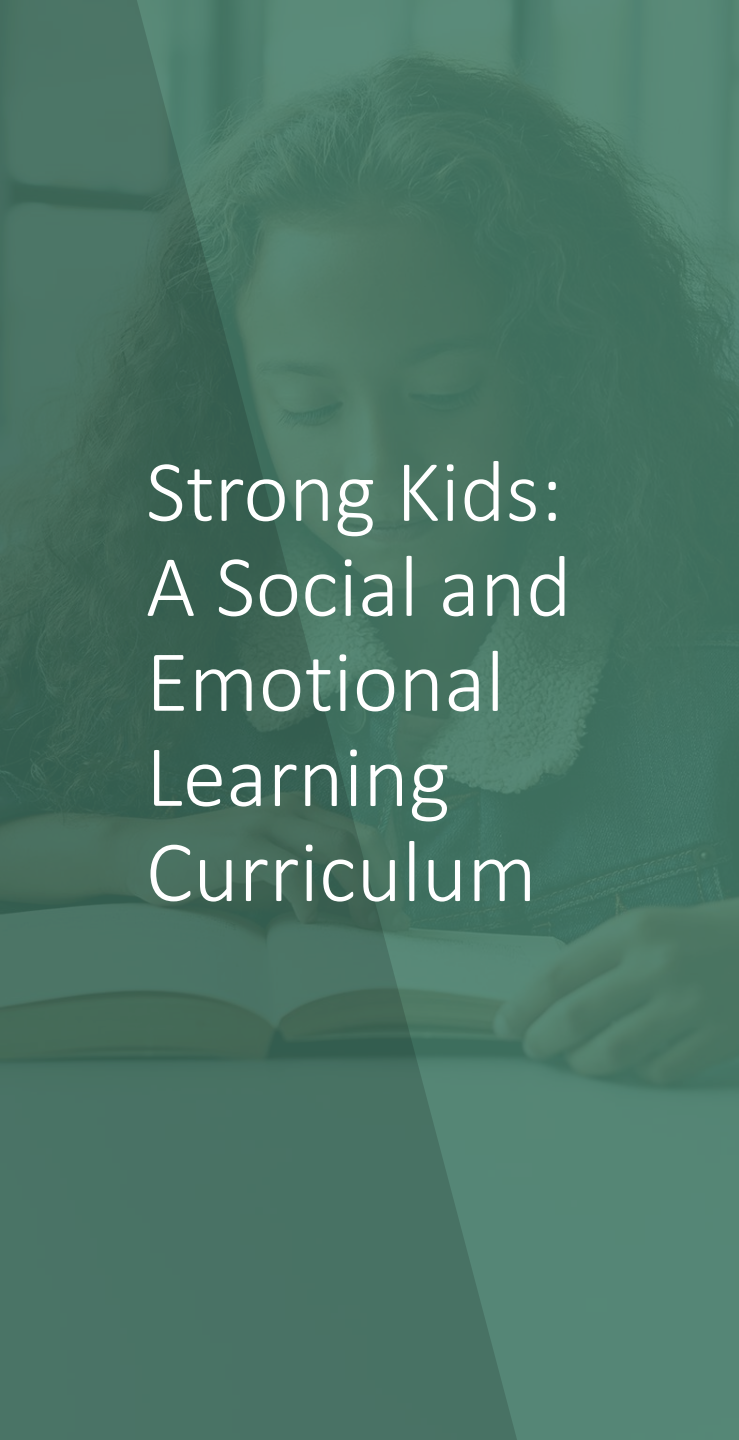
Benefits of SEL

- SEL improves students' positive behavior and reduces negative behavior.

- SEL is also associated with significant improvements in students' academic performance and attitudes toward school.

- SEL prepares young people for success in adulthood.

SEL Mandates

- 2003 Illinois Children's Mental Health Act
  - Section 15(b)
- Children's Mental Health Act of 2006 (New York Office of Mental Health, 2006)
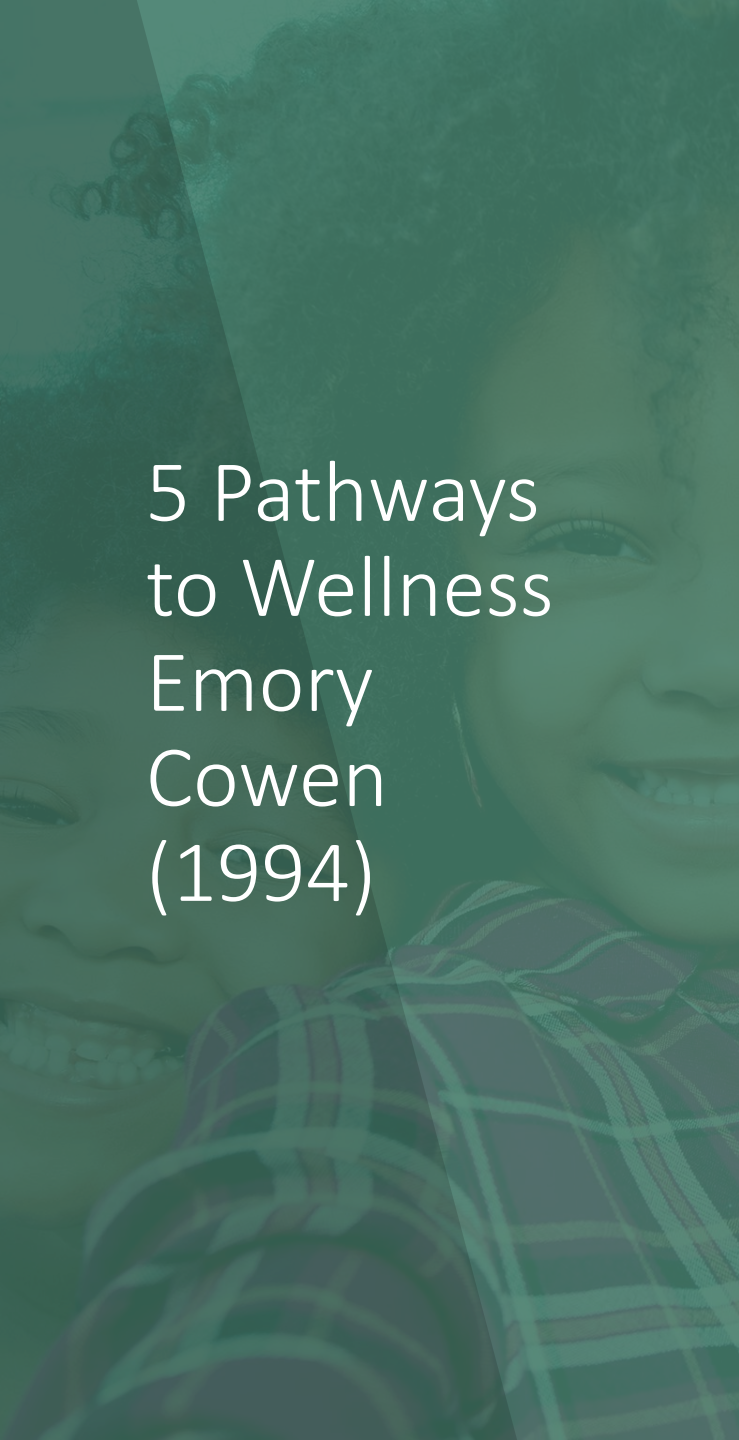 - $62 million initiative

Strong Kids: A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum

- Helps students develop empathy, solve interpersonal problems, and deal appropriately with negative emotions.

- An evidence-based intervention that integrates with RTI structures.

- Customized to one of five developmental stages: prekindergarten (Pre-K), early elementary (Grades K-2), older elementary (Grades 3-5), middle school (Grades 6-8), and high school (Grades 9-12).

- Research shows that Strong Kids increases knowledge of social-emotional concepts and coping skills and decreases problem symptoms.

Strong Kids Curriculum

- Low-cost
- Low-technology
- Brief
- Efficient
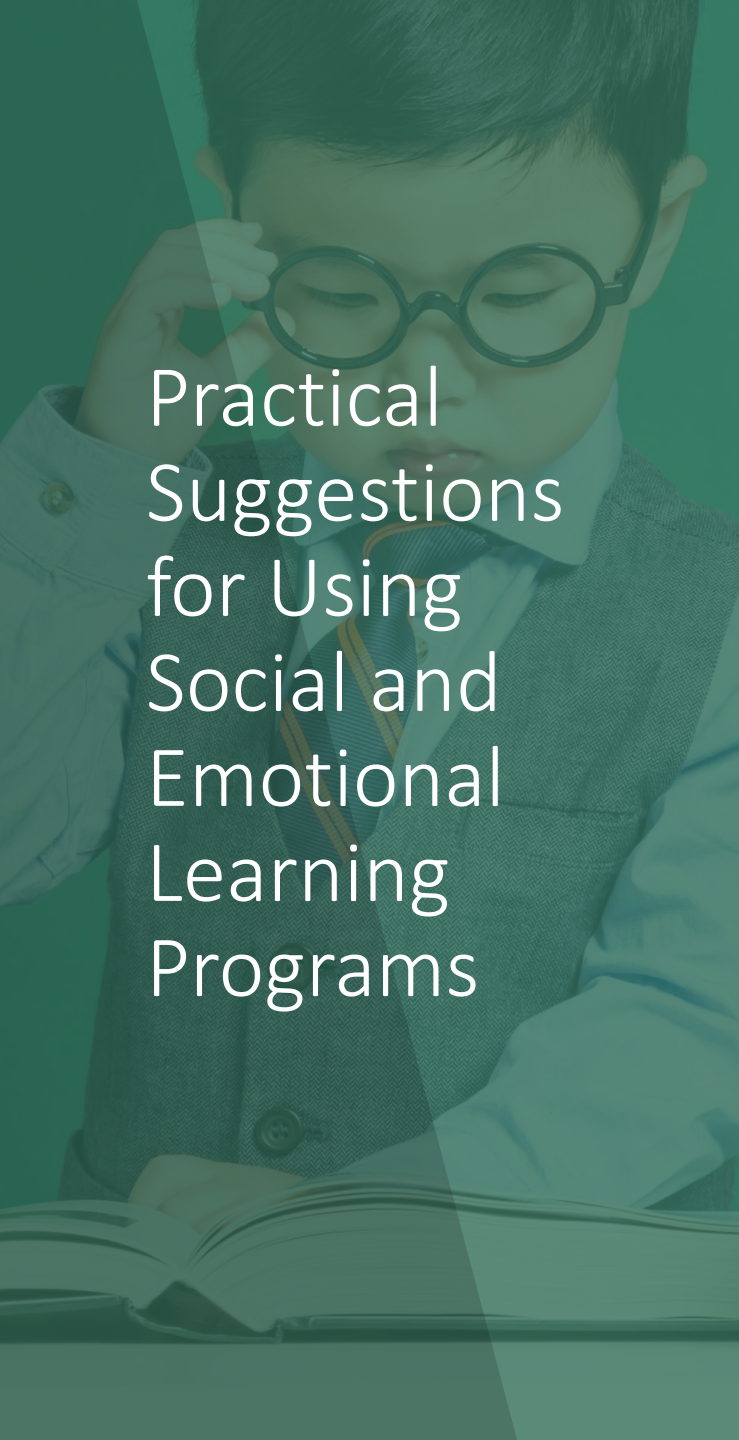- Skill-based
- Portable
- Focused

5 Pathways to Wellness Emory Cowen (1994)

1. Forming wholesome early attachments
2. Acquiring age-appropriate competencies
3. Exposure to settings that favor wellness outcomes
4. Having the empowering sense of being in control of one's fate
5. Coping effectively with stress

Strong Kids Grades 3-5 Lesson Overview

- About Strong Kids: Emotional Strength Training
- Understanding Your Feelings 1
- Understanding Your Feelings 2
- Dealing with Anger
- Understanding Other People's Feelings
- Clear Thinking 1
- Clear Thinking 2
- The Power of Positive Thinking
- Solving People Problems
- Letting Go of Stress
- Behavior Change: Setting Goals and Staying Active
- Finishing UP!
- Booster Lesson

Practical Suggestions for Using Social and Emotional Learning Programs

- Prepare materials and equipment in advance
- Make adaptations for unique needs
- Provide an agenda
- State expected behaviors and develop simple rules
- Plan for smooth transitions
- Deal in advance with physical arrangements
- Adapt curricula for diverse learners
- Use effective teaching strategies

Thank you