

Outdoor Education & Social Emotional Learning Connection

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is crucial to outdoor education for several reasons. Research highlights that integrating SEL into outdoor education can significantly enhance students' overall development, learning experience, sense of belonging, and connection to education and their community. Overarching themes in research also suggest that educators see the emergent, unstructured or structured nature of outdoor learning as drivers of SEL-related benefits, leveraging the context of outdoor learning to help integrate SEL more deeply into their teaching practices.

Improved Social Skills

Outdoor education often involves group activities that require teamwork and cooperation. This setting helps students develop relationship skills, such as communication and collaboration, which are essential components of SEL. Classroom settings play an integral role in helpful youth develop socially and emotionally, while outdoor classrooms offer a unique and enriching environment to enhance these essential skills. [How familiar are you with the benefits of school gardening on promoting student mental health? | National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments \(NCSSLE\)](#)

Enhanced Emotional Well-being

Being in nature has been shown to reduce stress, anxiety, and depression. Outdoor environments provide a calming effect, which can improve students' emotional regulation and overall mental health. not just physical development but also social and emotional growth. It provides a holistic approach to learning that integrates SEL into everyday experiences. When individuals are provided opportunities to learn in outdoor spaces, the emotional well-being of self and others (self & social awareness and social management) increases. [Choose Your Own Adventure: Promoting Social and Emotional Development Through Outdoor Learning | Early Childhood Education Journal](#)

Increased Self-confidence and Stewardship

Outdoor challenges and activities help students build self-awareness and self-management skills. Successfully navigating these challenges boosts their confidence and resilience. In addition, cultural awareness and environmental stewardship begin with the skills necessary to understand the complexity of the world and how they are important in sustaining it. [Outdoor Education and Social-Emotional Learning – Inclusive Perspectives in Primary Education](#)



Better Decision-making Skills

Outdoor education encourages students to assess risks and make responsible decisions. This aspect of SEL is crucial for their personal and social development. The unpredictable nature of outdoor learning requires SE skills such as self-management and self-efficacy. These SEL skills prepare individuals to adapt, be patient, and effectively manage their emotions. [The Power of Social-Emotional Learning in Outdoor Classrooms](#)

Academic Achievement & Future Readiness

Outdoor education supports lifelong learners by providing authentic learning environments that encourage hands-on exploration, problem-solving, critical thinking, and collaboration (SEL skills) among students, thereby creating the link to classroom content and contribute to positive post-secondary outcomes. On average, students who are taught SEL skills score 11 percentile points higher on academic achievement test compared to peers who do not participate. [What Does the Research Say? - CASEL](#)

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