



Welcome!

Welcome to another newsletter from the SEAL Community. There's a special focus on working with parents , plus new resources, fascinating research and some great tips from schools.

News Update

Registrations for Empathy Week 2025 go live

The world's largest empathy festival for schools is back for a 6th year. It is a free annual festival of film, storytelling and events for students aged 5-18. Mark your calendars for 10th - 14th March 2025 and get set for a week packed with dynamic assemblies, engaging events, and enriching classroom resources.

The theme for 2025, 'What's Your Spark?', will give students a chance to embark on a journey to discover the passions that shape their identities, while connecting with powerful stories from real and diverse individuals.

Sign up [here](#).

News from the USA

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has hit a new record in the USA, where more than 8 out of 10 schools are now implementing a SEL curriculum, according to [a new report](#).

This represents a steady increase from 76 percent in the 2021-2022 school year and 46 percent in the 2017-2018 school year.

The report, *Social and Emotional Learning in U.S. Schools*, also finds that in addition to formal SEL curricula, 60-80 percent of school Principals also report implementing SEL through regular check-ins with students, SEL integrated into academic content, and opportunities to promote student agency. Teachers who report greater SEL implementation report higher levels of student interest in learning and more supportive learning environments.



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More 15-year-olds are reporting lower life satisfaction in the UK than anywhere else in Europe

An analysis by the Children's Society reveals the UK is at the bottom of European rankings in terms of life satisfaction across 27 nations.

The study uses data from the UK Longitudinal Household Survey from 2021-22 and the OECD's programme for international student assessment (Pisa) from 2022.

Levels of low life satisfaction are at least twice as high among UK 15-year-olds as among their peers in Finland, Denmark, Romania, Portugal, Croatia and Hungary.

In the UK 25% of 15-year-olds reported low life satisfaction, compared with 7% of Dutch children of the same age.

Dutch teenagers have ranked as among the happiest in the world for several years, with supportive parents, low inequality, teachers who are not authoritarian but accept the feelings of pupils, and high levels of self-determination – for example cycling to school and being allowed to decide when to come home.

British girls are particularly unhappy, as are children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Children's Society study revealed that the largest gap in life satisfaction between the most and least disadvantaged 15-year-olds was in the UK.

Read more [here](#)

Increasing rates of suspension from schools in England

The most recent behaviour data for England's schools shows increasing rates of suspension following the pandemic. The proportion of year 7 (ages 11-12) pupils who received at least one suspension rose from 3.5% in the year before the pandemic to 5.5% in 2022-23, while the rate of year 8 (ages 12-13) pupils suspended rose from 5.5% to more than 8%. Older pupils in year 9 and year 10 (ages 13-15) had close to 10% of pupils receiving at least one suspension in 2022-23, also well above pre-pandemic levels.

The rate of exclusions at secondary schools rose fastest among year 7 and year 8 pupils, particularly among girls. Before and during the pandemic, roughly three boys were excluded for each girl – but the ratio in 2022-23 moved to nearly two to one, with 1,000 more female exclusions compared with 2018-19.

Sharing practice

Family SEAL at transition to secondary school



Four secondary schools in Torfaen in Wales developed a great project some years ago to ease transition to secondary school for students identified as at potential risk of exclusion.

There were four sessions of one and a half hours, all held at the secondary school, and a celebration session at the end - a family trip to a local climbing centre. Two sessions took place before the end of the Summer term and the rest in the Autumn term.

In Part 1 of each session, parents met to discuss the theme for the week with key secondary school staff:

- Understanding the teenage brain – it's like an entertainment system that isn't wired up right!
- Talking to your teenager – tips on good and bad communication
- Dealing with feelings – recognising and managing emotions
- Assertive parenting – the effective way to parent

Meanwhile their children took part in fun, SEL-based activities with staff from the secondary school. After a break, Part 2 involved parents and their children spending time doing a fun activity together, using some of the fabulous facilities at the secondary schools - making pizzas, decorating cakes, playing parachute games, working in the art room taking selfies and making frames for them that represented something important about themselves. There would always be something special to take home.



In one session parents and children had to make mini-pizzas together, following the instructions which included making a 'funny face' on the pizzas from the ingredients provided. The activity had a competitive edge, with staff judging both the funniest face and the pair that had worked most cooperatively. Everyone received a cheap 'medal' for taking part.

To encourage attendance at the sessions, local shops and businesses were asked to donate prizes for a raffle, with the children picking the tickets out of a hat.

The project team asked as many secondary staff as possible who would be involved with the children in Y7 to attend – either leading an activity or 'dropping in' to say hello informally. The primary schools found it easy to identify the pupils who would benefit and worked hard with these (often hard to reach) families to engage them. This took some energy and usually individual discussions, visits and phone-calls. Many of the feeder schools also provided familiar staff to attend the sessions with the Y6 children and their families.

In the end the programme looked quite different in each school, but the thing that united them all was the fun nature of the sessions. Parents got to know each other, the school and secondary staff on an equal, informal footing and they were able to share the ups and downs of their parenting experiences. The children formed strong bonds and didn't spend the summer dreading the move.

Evaluation showed the impact of the project. Parents felt that the sessions had made a difference to their child's attitude and anxiety levels around the change. They were enthusiastic about the benefits they felt they had reaped personally – a better relationship with their child, more understanding of the emotional and social demands of the transition process and some good ideas for supporting their child through these. On the school front they reported feeling more relaxed in the school, more likely to contact the school proactively and more comfortable talking to key staff members who they had met during the sessions.

Two of the schools recorded no Y7 exclusions for the year following the project, and the rest showed reduced exclusions in Y7 when compared to the previous three years.



Family SEAL for transition in the primary school

Each year, staff at Exminster Primary ran a series of five weekly Family SEAL sessions for new Reception class parents. The format was an adult session immediately followed by time for adults and children to undertake activities together.

Parents were told 'over the next few weeks we will be investigating what happens in our children's brains as they grow.' One session focused on attachment, with activities that involved eye contact between parent and child. Children and adults made pipe cleaner spectacles, drew around each other and had a competition to see who could make the tallest tower.

The next session looked at children's brains and what happens to them when they are upset or angry. There was discussion about how we can help our children when this happens. Activities were based on mirroring and trying to relate to children's mood.

Another week was about relaxation and massage. Everyone learned a simple massage with a story attached, which allows gentle touch. Later children and their parents tried different ways to relax such as hand massage, colouring and reading.

Then the school had the idea of running one-off sessions for other year groups. One was a 'pop up' session towards the end of Y6 that enabled children to spend time with their parents reflecting on their time in primary and their aspirations for the future. The children helped design the afternoon activities. There were blindfolded trust games, designing and making cards, dressing up and a photo booth, photo frames for memory photos, listening to stories the children had heard when they were younger and making worry dolls.

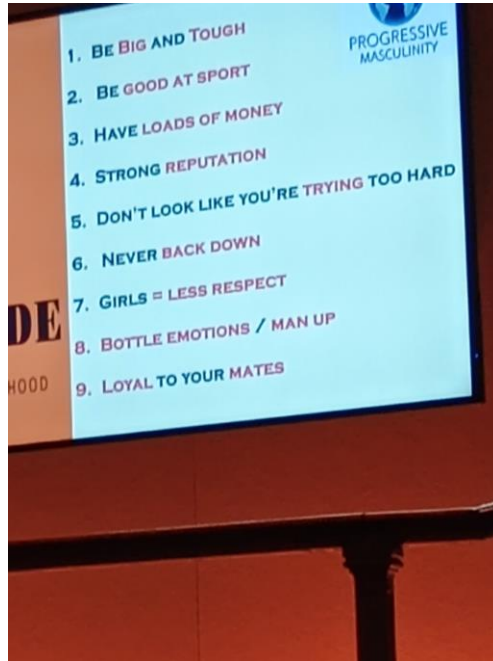
Top tips

Toxic masculinity

If your school can find £1200 we think a good investment would be two days of groupwork with the organisation [Progressive Masculinity](#) . Mike Nicholson and his team provide brilliant workshops for groups of boys – they suggest focusing on the older ones and the leaders/peer influencers first.

These are some of their activities/discussion questions.

- ❖ Ask the group what words they associate with being a man. They might come up with a list like this- the 'Guy Code'



- ❖ Ask them what kind of a man/friend/partner/father they want to be in the future
- ❖ Think of a man you really admire .. a man who represents the best of what masculinity is capable of
- ❖ Ask what would stop them from talking to someone if you were going through a difficult stage in your life (options Looking weak/I don't know where to go/who to talk to/I don't know what to say. (Most of the 600 boys they have asked so far choose 'I don't know what to say')
- ❖ What would make it easier?(Most boys said 'Seeing someone else do it', then 'Knowing what to say.' Only a few chose 'This being seen as normal')
- ❖ Step to the line – ask the boys to step forward to a line on the floor if they have ever cried (most will step forward... they cried as babies) ...then cried in last year.. then cried in the last month then cried this week (note the courage of those who step up)
- ❖ The mask you see. Use cardboard full face masks.. on the outside they write what they want others to see, and on the inside they write the things about themselves that others don't see

Mike recommends that in schools we try to

- ❖ Ask boys questions that demand an emotional response(What was that like? How did that feel?)
- ❖ Provide low-stakes practice with role play scenarios about seeking help (Who would you talk to? What would you say?), with modelling and scaffolding
- ❖ Draw attention to relevant relatable male role models

Using the Zones of Regulation in the Early Years

Leah Kuypers, who devised the very popular Zones of Regulation, has some advice on using the Zones in the early years. She suggests , for four-year-olds, ‘Keep it to two emotions per zone. For example, start with just happy and calm in the Green Zone. Spend time identifying facial expressions and body language for each zone. And ensure that parents are kept informed about The Zones.’

She suggests that adults model language around The Zones, saying things like ‘I’m feeling excited because we have a fun day planned. I’m in the yellow zone’, and then referring to the Zones ‘in the moment’. For example, if you notice that a child has her head hung low and her lip out, you might say, ‘Lily, let’s check in with The Zones. How are you feeling?’ You might pull out some portable visuals of the Zones or go to an area with the Zones displayed, and ask the child to show how she feels by pointing to the colour. If the child is unsure, the adult can support by saying, ‘Your lip is out. Your head is down. Maybe you’re feeling sad. Sad is in the blue zone.’

These tips come from an interview with Leah in an article by Nicole Weinstein for Nursery World .

Resource Round Up

[New on the SEAL community website for Getting on and falling out/Learning to be together](#)

Don’t hate, educate

DON'T HATE, EDUCATE

There has rarely been a time when there has been so much division and ‘othering’ in our

society. Empathy Lab have worked with the United Kingdom Literacy Association to produce a set of free *Don’t Hate, Educate* classroom resources to develop empathy skills and support anti-hate

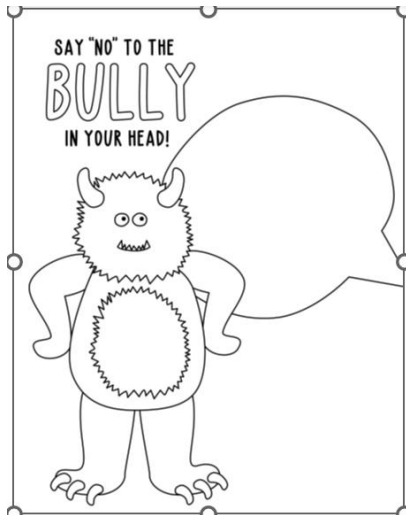
discussions. There are [suggestions for recommended reads](#) for primary and secondary, and [teaching resources](#) – discussion prompts and Empathy shorts (short stories to share).

How to be a good listener

Voice 21 have produced some nice 'Oracy October' resources to help children develop good listening skills – including resolving conflict, empathy and understanding another perspective. The activities are based on a series of challenges and there are separate resources for early years, primary and secondary, plus a teachers' guide. We've uploaded them to the SEAL site [here](#).

Getting ready for work on Going for Goals/Keep on Learning

Bully in your head



[This teacher guide](#) from Go Noodle focuses on negative self-talk, the inner voice that shames us and weakens our self-confidence. The guide includes student activities (for the primary age group) and worksheets including responding to the 'bully in your head' and learning about 'famous fails'.

If you're looking to energise a primary class or a (well spaced-out) assembly and are working on children's self-belief, you might like Go Noodle's song and dance routine 'I can do that'.

Find the video [here](#)

Growing a growth mindset

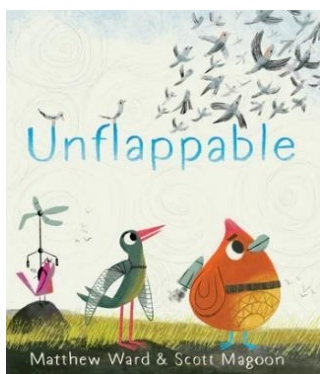
These are useful BBC Teach resources on growth mindset.

For primary (KS2), [a collection of clips](#) using a cast of animated characters who explore the differences between fixed and growth mindsets.

For secondary, [a collection of short films](#) that offer case studies of young people demonstrating a growth mindset. Each story introduces one of the five steps to wellbeing.

Persistence

Try this new picture book on persistence and resilience – Unflappable, by Matthew Ward.



Three flightless friends long to feel the wind beneath their wings. So, they try, and try, and try to fly. But all they do is fall, fall, fall. Flying, it turns out, is hard.

Will they give up—or get up? Celebrating resiliency, persistence, and the power of “yet,” easy-to-read text and distinctive artwork encourage and inspire readers who aspire to learn a new skill or to make a dream come true.

Working with families

If you're planning any workshops/discussions with families about social and emotional learning there are some nice ideas (used selectively) in this [CASEL Guide](#).

Inspirational films

Looking for an inspirational short film for an assembly or lesson? Have a look at the new [Character Counts](#) resources. There's a lesson library you can explore by SEL area (self-awareness, self-regulation etc) or by six character strengths/values, or search for specific topics such as kindness, empathy, perseverance, resilience or teamwork. The films are American in tone but many are lovely.

Have a look at [this film](#) and lesson plan on perseverance as an example, or [this one on kindness](#).

Zones of Regulation digital curriculum

Check out the [Zones of Regulation Digital Curriculum](#), which includes interactive presentations, videos and new visuals. It is the next evolution of the original best-selling book by Leah Kuypers, and offers a comprehensive approach to help learners ages four upward to understand and manage their emotions effectively.

- Flexibly designed for teaching individuals, small groups, or whole classes of learners in schools, homes, therapeutic, and community settings.
- Includes time-tested concepts from the first edition book plus new content that reflects a decade of innovation and research.

- Conveniently accessed on a web-based platform.
- A more inclusive, accessible, and neurodiverse-affirming approach

The annual subscription is 120 dollars per user and it's possible to pay by card or 'wire transfer' (whatever that is).

Online safety

Personal values

A graphic for the 'Connect' lesson pack. It features a light blue rounded rectangle with a lightbulb icon and two questions. To the right is a small photo of two boys sitting on a lawn. The word 'connect' is written in a stylized font above the photo. Below the rectangle is a yellow banner with a circular logo.

What personal values do you think Ellie and Samir might hold?

How might their personal values impact their actions? Can you think of any examples from the film?

The National Crime Agency's CEOP Education has launched new, free-to-download 'Connect' lesson pack —helping pupils aged 9-12 develop online independence and safer connections.

In each lesson, pupils are introduced to a new character through engaging situational films . There are

- 2 x lesson plans for year 5 or year 6 exploring healthy relationships, the influence of personal values, the benefits and risks of socialising online and the importance of privacy protection.
- 2 x lesson plans for year 6 or year 7 addressing appropriate online behaviour, consent, bullying, and how to recognise and respond to grooming and manipulative behaviour.

Each of the lesson plans are available as PDFs with accompanying slides, teacher guidance and pupil resources. Alternative and extension activities to support children and young people with SEND are included.

Download the resources [here](#)

Top resource



We've uploaded to the SEAL site a very useful [emotion wheel](#) for classroom work on identifying and naming different feelings . Use it as a poster or on the whiteboard. There's a pdf version and the same wheel as a photo.

Research

Can you grow empathy?

We regularly feature the work of Empathy Week and its offshoot Empathy Studios, which provides a priced programme of film and activities to build empathy in primary and secondary students. Empathy Studios have worked with Cambridge University to evaluate the impact of the programme in ten schools, with 900 students. The evaluation found that teachers reported higher student empathy and improved behaviour at the end of a five week programme, and at follow up five weeks later. There were smaller changes over time on student surveys, but noticeable improvement in answers to the questions ‘When my friends feel sad, I feel sad too’ and ‘When my friends feel happy, I feel happy too’. Read more [here](#) .