



Can Teachers Teach Emotional Regulation While Emotionally Exhausted?

What New Research Says About Educator SEL

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WHAT RESEARCH FOUND

A recent paper argues that educator social-emotional learning (SEL) involves far more than teaching students empathy or emotional skills. Teachers themselves function as:

- learners,
- emotional role models,
- classroom climate builders,
- and direct SEL instructors.

The research highlights that teachers with stronger SEL competencies are more likely to:

- manage classrooms calmly,
- build supportive relationships,
- respond proactively instead of reactively,
- and sustain positive learning environments.

However, the paper also warns that excessive stress and lack of institutional support can weaken educators' ability to effectively implement SEL practices.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Schools increasingly expect teachers to support:

- student well-being,
- emotional regulation,
- classroom relationships,
- and mental health.

Yet professional development often focuses more on curriculum delivery than teacher emotional well-being.

This research suggests an important shift:

Educator well-being may significantly influence the conditions that support student success.



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Research interpreted for real classroom

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CLASSROOM REALITY

Schools Want	Teachers Often Experience
Calm classrooms	Emotional overload
Positive relationships	Time pressure
SEL integration	Limited emotional support
Student regulation	Teacher exhaustion

This tension may explain why some SEL initiatives struggle despite good intentions.

TRY TOMORROW

Before beginning class:

1. Pause for one minute.
2. Identify your current emotional state.
3. Choose one relational intention for the lesson.

Example:

“Today I will respond more patiently during disruptions.”

Small emotional adjustments can influence classroom climate significantly.

CAUTION

Do not assume SEL succeeds through student lessons alone.

The paper suggests that emotionally unsupported teachers may struggle to sustain emotionally supportive classrooms.

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY

Supporting student well-being may begin with supporting teacher well-being.

Keywords: social-emotional learning, teacher well-being, classroom climate, emotional regulation, educator SEL

Reference:

Elbertson, N. A., Jennings, P. A., & Brackett, M. A. (2025). *The role of educators in school-based social and emotional learning*. *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy*, 6, 100134.