



## Should SEL Curriculum be Mandated Across the U.S.?

By Educator Barnes – January 9, 2020

Social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum is being incorporated into schools across the United States, but it is not mandated. Maybe, it should be. In Denmark, empathy classes are part of the national curriculum. According to [Bright Vibes](#):

*Denmark has consistently ranked in the top three happiest countries in the world in the UN's World Happiness report over the past seven years. The secret to their happiness may stem from their education system where, in 1993 the Denmark education curriculum introduced mandatory empathy classes.*

Empathy is typically part of SEL curriculum in American schools that implement this programming. My current school and the school my sons attend both use Second Step. This program takes a holistic approach. Teachers teach a lesson at the beginning of the week and the skills are reinforced throughout the week. The program incorporates families by providing activities to complete at home.

When school leaders decide to rearrange their building schedule to accommodate SEL curriculum, it is because they believe it is needed and will greatly benefit students. Furthermore, despite potential benefits, some schools do not adopt or implement the curriculum. Parent pushback could be a reason.

SEL curriculum teaches children how to understand and manage their emotions. Some parents believe that is not the role of the school. They may not have time to help their children with their homework in addition to completing an SEL activity at home.

There are teachers who agree with these parents. The bumper sticker, "Just let me teach" used to be slapped across the bumpers of many teachers' vehicles. To narrow in further, these teachers want to teach what they attended college to learn. SEL curriculum was not one of those content areas.

Nevertheless, it is important to note how the current changed in this direction in the first place. Children were not learning because their behavior and inability to manage their emotions was a hindrance to their education. School leaders had two choices: do nothing, or try SEL.

It will be interesting to review the research years from now to see what impact the SEL curriculum has had in the United States. Will it show US children who have been exposed to SEL curriculum are happier and productive citizens? Time will tell.