



# Essentials

## of **Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

**The Complete Guide for Schools and Practitioners**

- Provides a practical and comprehensive look at the evidenced support for SEL in schools and communities
- Examines issues in education that often lead to inequities and create barriers to learning for many students
- Addresses learning from a whole-child perspective and extends the domains of learning beyond that of academic achievement
- Includes the tools needed to guide schools through a multi-phased, systemic approach to whole-school implementation of SEL

**Donna Lord Black**

**Alan S. Kaufman & Nadeen L. Kaufman, *Series Editors***



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*Essentials of Social Emotional Learning (SEL): The Complete Guide for Schools and Practitioners*

by Donna Lord Black

# **Essentials of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)**

## **The Complete Guide for Schools and Practitioners**

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This edition first published 2022  
© 2022 John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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*Registered Office*

John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

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*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Name: Black, Donna Lord (Psychologist), author.

Title: Essentials of social emotional learning (SEL) : the complete guide for schools and practitioners / Donna Lord Black.

Description: Hoboken, NJ : Wiley, [2022] | Series: Essentials of psychological

assessment series | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021028407 (print) | LCCN 2021028408 (ebook) | ISBN 9781119709190 (hardback) | ISBN 9781119709237 (adobe pdf) | ISBN 9781119709220 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Affective education. | Social learning.

Classification: LCC LB1072 .B63 2021 (print) | LCC LB1072 (ebook) | DDC 370.15/34-dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028407>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021028408>

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © Greg Kuchik/Getty Images

# **PREFACE**

In the Essentials of Psychological Assessment Series, we have attempted to provide the reader with books that will deliver key practical information in the most efficient and accessible style. Many books in the series feature specific instruments in a variety of domains, such as cognition, personality, education, and neuropsychology. Books like this Essentials of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), focus on crucial topics for professionals who are involved with any aspect of assessment and intervention with school-age children. For the experienced professional, books in the series offer a concise yet thorough review of a test instrument or a specific area of expertise, including numerous tips for best practices. Students can turn to series book for a clear and concise overview of the important assessment tools, and key topics, in which they must become proficient to practice skillfully, efficiently, and ethically in their chosen fields.

Wherever feasible, visual cues highlighting key points are utilized alongside systematic, step-by-step guidelines. Chapters are focused and succinct. Topics are organized for an easy understanding of the essential material related to a particular test or topic. Theory and research are continually woven into the fabric of each book, but always to enhance the practical application of the material, rather than to sidetrack or overwhelm readers. With this series, we aim to challenge and assist readers interested in psychological assessment to aspire to the highest level of competency by arming them with the tools they need for knowledgeable, informed practice. We have long been advocates of “intelligent” testing—the notion that numbers are meaningless unless they are brought to life by the

clinical acumen and expertise of examiners. Assessment must be used to make a difference in the child's life or adult's life, or why bother to test? All books in the series- whether devoted to specific tests or general topics- are consistent with this credo. We want this series to help our readers, novice, and veteran alike, to benefit from the intelligent assessment approaches of the authors of each book.

In *Essentials of Social Emotional Learning (SEL)*, the author captures the essence of why SEL is not only important, but necessary in preparing students for a future that envisages far more than academic achievement. Donn Black- a national expert on SEL, a long-time public servant, and a school practitioner with extensive knowledge and experience in the educational systems- offers a comprehensive approach to SEL that examines the logic for it in schools, the underpinnings of successful implementation (including the role of assessment and data), and the evidence that supports SEL as a positive and sustainable approach to educational reform.

This book is grounded by an exhaustive review of the research and science on SEL, children's mental health, and the neuroscience of learning. It examines the far-reaching implications of issues that have long plagued our educational systems, including the barriers to learning that have led not only to underachievement, but to gross inequities and injustices as well. The book covers these issues and more, and asserts that SEL can be the great equalizer in education. It offers an approach to SEL that can be implemented in phases that are practical, yet manageable, and are complemented by a complete set of tools and templates to aid in the process. At a time when the world is struggling to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, this book offers a timely examination of the important role SEL will play in schools. As education

systems face the challenges of re-engaging students and recovering the learning losses resulting from school closures, the need to integrate SEL with existing school structures has never been greater. With this book, the author provides schools with a realistic and thorough guide for implementing SEL in a way that is meaningful and sustainable.

Alan S. Kaufman, PhD, and  
Nadeen L. Kaufman, EdD  
Series Editors  
Yale Child Study Center  
Yale University School of Medicine

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing this book was the most exciting, painstaking, glorious, nerve-wracking, challenging thing I've ever experienced. Without the patience, encouragement, and support of my family, friends, and colleagues, I'm quite sure the emotions would have gotten the best of me. Before I express my heartfelt gratitude to those who helped make this book possible, I'd like to acknowledge my granddaughters, Kayla and Kelsi. You are my hope and my inspiration. You are the reason for this book, so I dedicate it to you.

I begin by thanking my wonderful husband, Greg. For more than 48 years, you have cheered me on and made me feel there was nothing I could not do. We often have jokingly said that the only reason we are still married is because neither of us wanted a divorce on the same day. Well, this book tested that theory and proved it wrong! Neither of us could have imagined how challenging the book would be while living through a pandemic and enduring two surgeries in 10 months. Despite this, you were there to support and encourage me. I am blessed to have you by my side, and I hope you know how much I love and appreciate you, and look forward to many more years together.

I also could not have done this without the patience and understanding of my loving family. To my son Jason and his fiancée Melinda, you stepped up when your dad and I were not able. You were there after my surgeries to lend a hand. You ran errands, brought us food, and helped with the granddaughters. For all this, I am forever grateful. To my daughter Allison and my son-in-law Chris, you were so patient with me during a time when I knew you desperately needed relief. You were parents, teachers, and playmates to

your children, while also juggling the demands of working full-time from home. I cannot imagine how hard this has been for you, and I owe you some relief time. When it is safe, there will be sleepovers and outings with the girls once again, I promise. To my sister Yolanda and my brother-in-law Darryl, I can't thank you enough for helping keep the family connected. You were always there for the virtual happy hours and the family game nights because you knew how much they sustained us through these challenging times. Your being there supported me in ways you could not have known. To my nephew Aaron and his fiancée Lyndsey, your interest in my passion for SEL is inspiring and gives me hope for the coming generation. I thoroughly enjoyed our virtual discussions, and I thank you immensely for your support. To my nephew Kyle, just seeing you with your new fiancée during our virtual gatherings reminded me of how important it is to have hope and why this book is so necessary.

This book never would have been possible without the support of friends and colleagues. To my dearest friend and mentor Gail Cheramie, no words can express how much your support has meant to me. You have been there for almost 30 years, first as my professor and now as my dearest friend. If a teacher's success is measured by the success of her student, then I hope I have honored you well. There would not have been successes without you. You have taught me that anything is possible if you *believe* it is possible. Thank you for everything you do for me, and by the way, thank you also for helping review parts of the book. You are a true friend! I also want to thank my dear friend Ginger Gates for her help in reviewing the work. You inspire me every day with your humor and your positive nature, and I am always striving to become a better trainer because of you. You are the best. To Debbie Blackmon, thank you for sharing your knowledge of equine-assisted

learning and your applications of SEL to this specialized area. You are an incredible therapist and educator, and I am lucky to have you as a colleague and a friend. To my partner in crime, Angela Downes, I thank you for keeping me grounded and helping me see that the dirt at the end of the road is worth more than a pot of gold. Your co-counsel, Ashton, brought me a breath of fresh air when I needed it the most. To my physical therapist, Monica, and her assistants, Rishi and Courtney, not only did you get me through a tough recovery, you also lifted my spirits and kept me going. Through your relationship-centered approach to therapy and your caring, nurturing environment, you model the principles of SEL every day in the work you do with your patients.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Jeff Manson and Amanda Wynn at Western Psychological Services. Not only did you support me in writing this book, but your belief in SEL and your vision for its future strengthened my commitment, and I am forever grateful. I also want to thank Clark McKown for his willingness to share some of his work in this book. Your expertise in SEL assessment offers support for an area in which schools have a tremendous need, and I truly am grateful for your contributions. Lastly, I want to thank all the wonderful people at Wiley who have helped make this process as painless as possible. For Monica, Darren, and all the editing and production group, you were exceptionally patient in allowing me to work through this at my own pace, and I am especially grateful. Without you, there would be no book.

# INTRODUCTION

The intent of this book is to provide schools and practitioners with a comprehensive overview of SEL and a practical but systematic approach for implementing it in schools. The book also offers suggestions for how local communities can support schools through alignment of efforts and shared accountability. Please note that the information in the book is applicable to individual schools as well as to whole school systems, such as local education systems, state or regional education systems, or national education. Therefore, in the interest of clarity and consistency, the terms *school* and *school systems* are used interchangeably.

SEL is a global concern, so the information provided in this book is grounded in research from around the world. While a large part of the research focuses on schools within the United States, this book strives to offer ideas and information that can be applied to a global audience. Where there are gaps in research or information, there will be limitations to how applicable it is for international purposes. Thus, readers should be mindful of this and use their own judgment in how the information is applied. Nonetheless, the research contained in the book is the latest available at the time of this publication. Given the gaps between research and practice, however, it is expected that more research will be forthcoming and hopefully will expand beyond the United States.

## ABOUT THE COMPANION WEBSITE



This book is accompanied by a companion website:



[www.wiley.com/go/black/essentialsofsel](http://www.wiley.com/go/black/essentialsofsel)

This website includes fillable versions of forms included in the print book for the reader's download and practical use.

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