

# The Role of SEL in ASD Practices

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## Background

- Social-emotional (SE) deficits experienced by individuals with ASD: social-emotional reciprocity, nonverbal communicative behaviors, and relationships (American Psychiatric Association, 2013)
- Children with ASD need support in social skills, developing their sense of self, and improving their ability to understand others.
- Increasing awareness of social-emotional learning (SEL) (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2022)

## Purpose

How can elementary students with ASD benefit from SEL interventions when combined with current evidence-based practices for ASD?

## Methods

- Various educational and psychological databases led to 20 peer-reviewed research articles
- Keywords: social emotional learning, SEL interventions, autism spectrum disorder, ASD interventions, emotional regulation, social competence, appropriate practices, elementary education

The benefits of SEL for elementary students with ASD are better supported emotional regulation, social competence, relationship-building skills, behavior, academics, and teacher efficacy.

## Themes

### *Current Effective Practices for ASD and their Connection to Social-Emotional (SE) Development*

- Early intervention and additional support for SE development within ABA frameworks (Tiura et al, 2017; Mohammedzaheri et al, 2014)
- AAC training in both students with ASD and non-disabled peers (Lerna et al., 2012; Thiemann-Bourque et al., 2016)
- Improved social skills within ESDM (Estes et al., 2015; Vivanti et al., 2019)

### *Current SEL Programs and Interventions*

- Positive school and classroom climates (Belfield et al., 2015; Allbright et al., 2019; Upshur et al., 2019)
- Emotional and physical health (Belfield et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017; Al-Jbouri et al., 2022)
- Student SEL profiles (Denham et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2017)
- Professional development (Waaqid et al., 2013; Allbright et al., 2019)

### *Benefits of SEL for Students with Autism*

- Emotional regulation (Low et al., 2019; Jahromi et al., 2021; Kirst et al., 2022; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Belfield et al., 2015; Charman et al., 2015; Lorenzo et al., 2016)
- Social competence and relationship-building skills (Berard et al., 2017; Hollingsworth & Winter, 2013)
- Behavior (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Taylor et al., 2017; Belfield et al., 2015; Charman et al., 2015)
- Academics (Belfield et al., 2015; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015; Low et al. 2019)
- Teacher efficacy (Denham et al., 2012; Waaqid et al., 2013; Upshur et al., 2019)

## Discussion

- SEL may improve SE deficits
- Need for specific SE support for children with ASD
- Increased SEL training in teacher prep programs and professional development
- Unknown extent to which SEL can improve SE deficits in children with ASD

## Limitations

- Limited research on SEL as an evidence-based practice for ASD
- Literature on current ASD and SEL practices guided process of identifying areas in which SEL-specific practices may significantly improve SE deficits of ASD

## Implications

- What are evidence-based SEL practices for students with ASD?
- How effective is a combined use of ASD and SEL practices for targeting SE needs?