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Memo on Social Emotional Learning compiled by Sarah Fowler and Alexandria Hall

What is Social Emotional Learning (SEL)?

“Social Emotional Learning is government control over your interpersonal relationships.¹” It is achieved through evaluation and manipulation of a student’s beliefs, values, and ingrained responses to specific stimuli.

SEL is often masked under softer-sounding terminology such as “soft skills,” “interpersonal relationships,” and “emotional maturity” or “good behaviors.” The Ohio Department of Education described Social Emotional Learning to include, “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, collaboration, empathy, relationship skills, and responsible decision making;²” all areas that focus on student attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and interpersonal relationships. The 2018 Strategic Plan also referenced Ohio’s Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) as a key SEL implementation tool.

What are the implications of Social Emotional Learning?

Government intervention in individual beliefs and values, someone must decide the appropriate values, beliefs and behaviors to be taught. This has traditionally been the role of the family; however, creating a statewide standard for expected behaviors and competencies will require a state determined value system.

Teachers are expected to teach government approved values in addition to academic subjects. While good teachers have always cared about the emotional development of their students, they have sought to develop them with respect to the family’s values rather than replacing them.

Teachers will be evaluated based upon the development of students in Social Emotional Learning competencies. Not only is it an unfair burden to put on already overwhelmed teachers, we are further disincentivizing work with the neediest children. Those who have severe behavioral issues may not perform as well on the state SEL standards or assessments, resulting in a poor grade for any teacher who’s evaluation is dependent upon student assessments (ie. OTES, OPES).

Social Emotional Learning Presents a Student Data Privacy Issue:

Unlike other types of research, psychological research can be used to manipulate an individual’s responses, beliefs, values, and actions, all without their awareness. This opens the door to brain washing, political control, and indoctrination.

Most SEL assessments are conducted without the knowledge or consent of the parents of minor students or of the students being tested. Many federal programs have focused on enhancing the education system’s ability to capture, analyze and use SEL data through a variety of assessments³. The gutting of the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) to allow unknowing collection of student data for “research” purposes further endangers individual choice and parental rights⁴.

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Statewide Social Emotional Learning Standards Necessitate Assessments:

In June 2018, the Ohio State Board of Education passed a Strategic Plan heavily emphasizing Social Emotional Learning STANDARDS and de-emphasizing testing of those standards. Board members overlooked the use of a standard, which is to ensure conformity. The document affirmed the intent to TEST SEL repeatedly: “The four learning domains require the state to explore innovative approaches to assessments that go beyond academic content, particularly for the leadership and reasoning and social-emotional domains.”⁵ According to the same document, the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment currently measures competencies beyond academics.

Assessments are the tool used to ensure conformity with the designated standards. “The purpose of Ohio’s accountability (testing/report cards) system is to gauge performance of state, district and school-level education systems and to identify areas that need improvement so that each student is on a path to success.”⁶

In Summary:

SEL is a mandated evaluation of the emotional and relational development of students. This is problematic for numerous reasons. A few of these include:

- SEL forces a numeric grade on subjective, seemingly unquantifiable material;
- SEL is often evaluated and implemented without parental or student consent;
- SEL implements government-dictated ideas of morality (it is, in short, political correctness training);
- SEL standards place the determination of right and wrong, proper emotional skills and individual expression into the hands of the government;
- SEL allows room for agenda-driven indoctrination and cognitive manipulation;
- SEL takes precedence over basic academic skills, resulting in neglect of traditional scholastic subjects;
- SEL puts teachers into positions that they were not trained for—instead of fully using the skills that they studied at university, teachers are being asked to take up a therapeutic role. A good teacher will already exhibit and encourage good character and development without a mandated class.
- SEL homogenizes students—the collectivist, group-think mentality behind SEL does not account for the unique abilities and demeanors of children. It strives to transform all students into the government’s preconceived idea of a well-rounded human, rather than allowing families to determine beliefs and values.

1. Propaganda - Countering Social Emotional Learning by Stella Morabito, Senior Contributor at The Federalist <https://youtu.be/v8eM7IS4Sys> ;
2. Each Child, Our Future - Ohio’s 2018 Strategic Plan, Domain 4; 3. One example is the USDOE [Grit, Tenacity and Perseverance Report](#) from 2013; 4. Controlling Education From the Top by the Pioneer Institute, May 2012 (FERPA changes, page 19); 5. Each Child, Our Future - Ohio’s 2018 Strategic Plan, Strategy 5; 6. Each Child, Our Future - Ohio’s 2018 Strategic Plan, Strategy 6