

The SEL-EF Connection

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By Dr. Nancy Sulla

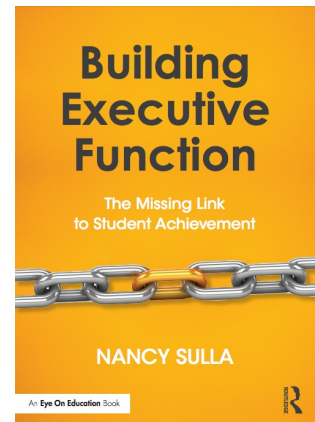
We know from research that social and emotional learning (SEL – casel.org) **supports** academic achievement and better life outcomes for students. So it's critical that schools build practices into the day that **support** the advancement of SEL. As you walk through the SEL competencies, you'll find that there are some "foundational" skills students need:

In order to achieve the SEL competency of "Self-Awareness," you need to be able to self-assess, focus, reflect on goals, and more. In order to achieve "Self-Management," you need to be able to initiate a task, follow multiple steps, monitor performance, organize actions and thoughts, and more. And the list goes on!

SEL Competencies	Foundational Executive Function Skills
Self-awareness: Know your strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a "growth mindset."	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-assessing• Focusing• Concentrating• Categorizing Information• Managing conflicting thoughts• Reflecting on goals
Self-management: Effectively manage stress, control impulses, and motivate yourself to set and achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overcoming temptation• Setting goals• Initiating a task• Managing time• Persisting in a task• Working towards a goal• Following multiple steps• Monitoring performance• Organizing actions and thoughts
Relationship skills: Communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attending to a person or activity• Maintaining social appropriateness• Identifying cause and effect relationships

(Download the pdf of this mapping of executive function skills to SEL competencies.)

All of these are the skills of executive function. In my book *Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement*, I present the case for why pursuing instructional initiatives toward student achievement must include attention to executive function. That means using activities, structures, and teacher facilitation strategies aimed at the growth of the brain's prefrontal cortex, and, thus, executive function. You can present the best lesson or use the best textbook; without strong executive function, your students will not benefit from the instruction. The same is true of fostering SEL. You can't achieve SEL competencies without strong executive function — the building blocks to what makes us uniquely human.



The above downloadable document “maps” CASEL’s SEL competencies to executive function skills. You can download an activity to map in the other direction: from executive function skills to the SEL competencies they support. This chart is intentionally left incomplete so that you can use it as an activity with colleagues.

How Executive Function Skills Support Social and Emotional Learning
(EF → SEL)

In *Building Executive Function: The Missing Link to Student Achievement*, Nancy Sulla presents forty executive function skills based on the higher level life skills they support. Executive function skills are also foundational for social and emotional learning (www.casel.org). Check off all of the social and emotional learning competencies that are supported by each executive function skill.

EF ↓	SEL →	Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Relationship Skills	Responsible Decision-Making
<i>Efficacy:</i>						
Being creative						
Working towards a goal						
Organizing actions and thoughts						
Considering future consequences in light of current action						
Making hypotheses, deductions, and inferences						
Applying former approaches to new situations						
Defining a problem						
Analvzino						

As you pursue social and emotional learning for your students, pay attention to the activities, structures, and strategies that will build executive function skills for greater success. When you're ready to take SEL to the next level, read my blog post on SEL in the Student-Driven Classroom.

For more on online PD on both SEL and executive function, visit EdQuiddity Inc.