Arlington Public Schools

EVERY STUDENT COUNTS EXCELLENCE FOR ALL

APS Strategic Plan
2024-30



Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Monitoring Report

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October 22, 2026

Agenda



Student Well-Being

- Strategic Plan alignment
- Background
- SEL in APS by tiers
- SEL and SOL baseline data
- Action Steps

APS Strategic Plan - Student Well-Being



Student Well-Being

Goal 2:

In partnership with families, staff, and students, APS will create inclusive, safe, and supportive learning environments that foster all students' intellectual, physical, mental, social-emotional growth and well-being.

Performance Objective:

By 2030, at least 80% of students will respond favorably about their school climate, mental health and self-management skills.

Strategies:

Implement evidence-based, culturally responsive curriculum materials and strategies that help build resilience and support students maintain and/or improve their physical, social, emotional, and mental health, with a deliberate focus on Black, Hispanic, Students with Disabilities, English Learners and other historically marginalized student groups.

Key Performance Indicator (APS SEL SURVEY)

% students responding favorably to SEL survey category Self-Management: 3rd-5th & 6th-12th.

Background - Before SEL there was…

THE EVOLUTION OF EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD

01

Early 20th Century - Progressive & "Whole Child" Education (1900s)

Constructivist theory - Learning is a social process/students actively construct understanding through experience. Schools are not just for academic testing, they must prepare students for society.

Taught: Social Interaction, Community Engagement, Civic Responsibility.

Classsroom: Experiential, hands-on learning, collaborative tasks over rote memorization.

02

Affective Education & Humanistic Education (1970s-1980s)

Stemming from 20th century humanistic psychology. Affective Education explicitly targeted the emotional (affective) side of learning.

Taught: Self-esteem, self-actualization, your feelings.

Classroom: Values clarification exercises, peer counseling, group discussions on feelings.

03

Character & Moral Education (1980s-2000s)

Most direct predecessor to SEL. Focused on values, ethics, and building character (e.g., Six Pillars of Character Ed, Character Counts.

Taught: Responsibility, honesty, respect, citizenship, fairness.

Classroom: "Word of the Week" banners (e.g., integrity, perseverance, awards for good citizenship).

04

Direct Prevention Programs (1980s - 2000s)

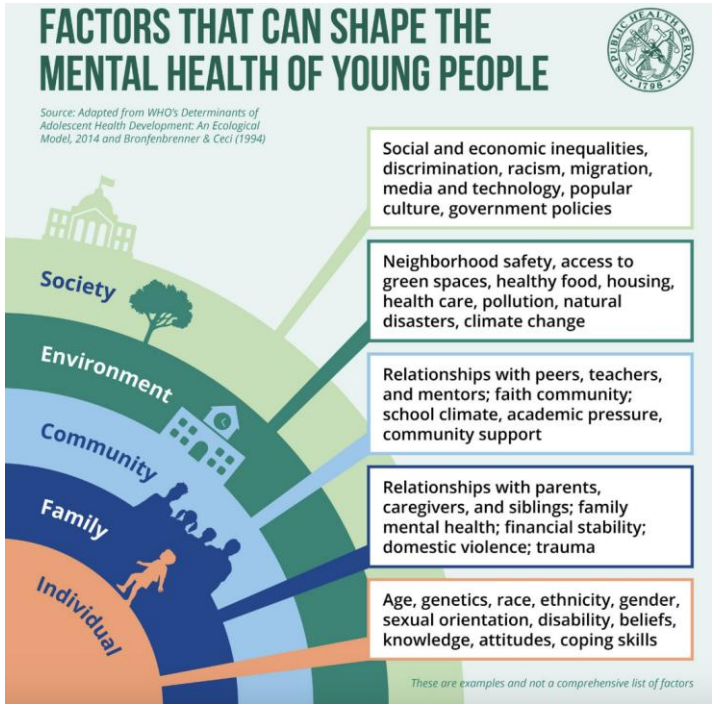
Reactive programs to combat societal issues (e.g., DARE, conflict resolution, peer mediation.

Taught: Coping strategies, peer pressure refusal skills, fairness.

Classroom: Often occurred outside of the classroom (e.g., assemblies).

Background - SEL Role Post-COVID

Protecting Youth Mental Health - US Surgeon General Advisory 2021



What Educators, School Staff, and School Districts Can Do

- Create positive, safe, and affirming school environments.
- Expand social and emotional learning programs and other evidence-based approaches that promote healthy development.
- Provide a continuum of supports to meet student mental health needs, including evidence-based prevention practices and trauma-informed mental health care.

Background - What is SEL?

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), defines SEL as: The process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to build healthy identities, manage emotions, achieve goals, show empathy, form supportive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

The Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) definition of SEL directly aligns with the CASEL definition.



Background - SEL & VDOE's Profile of a Graduate

Framework Alignment: VDOE 5 Cs & CASEL 5

VDOE's 5 Cs

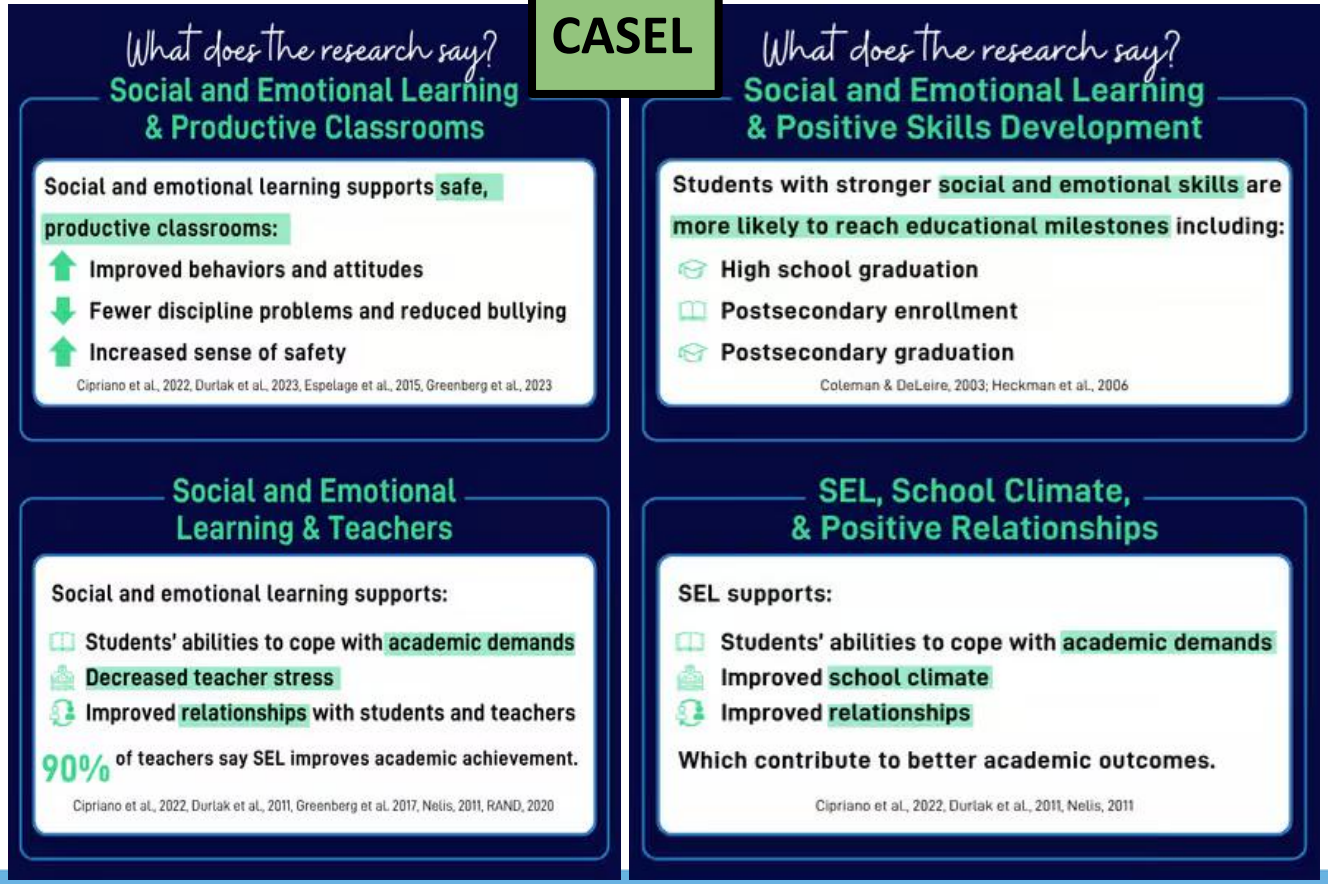
- Critical Thinking
- Creative Thinking
- Collaboration
- Communication
- Citizenship

CASEL 5 Core Competencies

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

Background - SEL Research

CASEL



Published in 2025, a **12 year meta-analysis** study conducted by Yale University found a positive connection between SEL and school performance in reading and math.

APS Alignment with SEL Research

SEL & SOL Performance - A Positive Correlation

	Reading	Mathematics	Science
Self-Efficacy	YES	YES	YES
Self-Management	YES	YES	YES
Social Awareness	YES	YES	YES
Growth Mindset	YES	YES	YES

Key Takeaway: Social Emotional Learning has a positive correlation with Reading, Mathematics and Science SOL performance.

Background

WHEN DID SEL EXPAND IN APS?

01 — 2020-22

- Collected and analyzed the following:
  - Your Voice Matters 2020 & 2022
  - Surgeon General's Call to Action on Youth Mental Health - Post COVID
  - Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2019 Results (Arlington County/CDC)

02 — 2022-23

- Completed CASEL Audit
- Developed a menu of evidence-based SEL programs and practices
- Aligned with the district strategic plan and equity work
- Increased Staffing
  - SEL Leads (Stipend Position)

03 — 2023-24

- Increased staffing
  - SEL Coordinator
- Identified, purchased & implemented curricula
- Trained staff
- Conducted student focus groups
- Differentiated curriculum for SWDs (SEL for All)
- SEL added to standards-based report cards

04 — 2024-26

- Wakefield piloted revised SEL implementation model
- School Based Mental Health Collaborative Learning Teams (CLTs) restructured
- Adult SEL Training

SEL in APS - Tier 1

Student Well-Being

Multi-tiered SEL Support Framework

- Highly specific, high-intensity support
- 1-5% of student population

Tier III: Individualized intensive interventions

- Additional support for students needing more help
- 10-15% of student population

Tier II: Targeted small group interventions for at-risk students

- Universal approach for all students
- 80-90% of student population

Tier I: Whole class research-based core instruction

Responsive Classroom · RULER · Second Step

SEL - Expectations & Individualization



Student Well-Being

Elementary

- 20-30-minutes of explicit SEL instruction daily (Morning Meeting/Closing Circle)
- Use of approved curriculum chosen by your school or program
- SEL Lead at each building to support Tier 1 SEL implementation: supported centrally through monthly meetings and ongoing support as needed

Secondary

- At least one 30-minute block per week of explicit SEL instruction (advisory) or embedded into academic content by department
- Use of approved curriculum chosen by your school or program
- At least one 30-minute block per week of relationship building with staff and peers
- SEL Lead at each building (2 at the comprehensive high schools) to support Tier 1 SEL implementation: supported centrally through monthly meetings and ongoing support as needed

School Personalization:

- Scheduling the 30-minute blocks of relationship building
- Supplementing curriculum with:
  - Substance education and prevention
  - Digital Citizenship curriculum
  - College & Career Planning (which is already part of SEL competencies)
- Building relationship with staff and students

SEL in APS - Tier 2



Student Well-Being

Top 3 most used Tier 2 SEL interventions

Elementary:	Secondary:
Everyday Speech (self-management, self awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness)	**Homework, Organization and Planning Skills (HOPS)** (self-management, responsible decision making)
Coping Cat (self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision making)	**Trails to Wellness** (self-management, self awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness)
Camp Cope A Lot (self-management, self-awareness, responsible decision making)	**Check and Connect** (self-management, self awareness, responsible decision making, relationship skills, social awareness)

SEL in APS - Tier 3



Student Well-Being

Tier 3 incorporates school and external resources.

Tier 3 is individualized, multi-faceted, and intensive. These are some examples of supports used at Tier 3 level for K-12.
DHS Children's Behavioral Health School-Based Therapy Program Students receive outpatient therapy at school from DHS therapists.
RESET Program Students receive intensive education and support to prevent substance misuse.
Coordination of care for home-based and community-based services. School staff coordinate with outside agencies so that students receive needed support outside of school.

SEL in APS - Action Steps

Student Well-Being

- Instructional Playbook addition
- Collaborative meetings with Office of Academics
- Pre-service on *Building Community within the Community* training for all Schools led by Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Student Support (DEISS)
- Active DEISS partnership on Partners for Progress (PfP) Teams



SEL in APS - Action Steps



Student Well-Being

- A summer workgroup was convened to create lessons by grade band aligned to the SEL competencies and standards-based report cards to be used by Responsive Classroom schools.
- Continue co-facilitating Attendance Summits ensuring the connection between school attendance and social emotional learning.
- Continue participation in the CASEL Fellows program to maintain connection to SEL best practices and research nationwide.
- Continue to highlight kindness and executive functioning connection to SEL.
- Diversity Equity and Inclusion Office: ½ Day Responsive School Training (October 12 & 26) - Focus on Responding to Hate Speech in a “train the trainer” model, all schools will be completed by winter break.

SEL in APS - Action Steps



Student Well-Being

Survey Revision

- **Align Survey Questions with CASEL 5:**
  Redesign the survey questions to better align with the five CASEL competencies.
- **Gather Stakeholder Feedback:**
  Solicit feedback from various stakeholder groups regarding the SEL survey to ensure that the implementation of the SEL survey results effectively meets the intended objectives at the school level.
  - SEL Leads (September)
  - Student Services Leadership Team (October)
  - SEL Leads, teachers, administrator (November)
- **Conduct Pilot Testing**
  Ensure age-appropriate comprehension of redesigned survey by field testing questions with students in grades 3 and 6 (January/February).
- **Protect Strategic Plan Metrics:**
  Ensure any revision or restructuring of survey questions maintains the Self-Management category for 2030 APS Strategic Plan reporting.

Questions



APS Strategic Plan 2024-30



APPENDIX

SEL Research



Student Well-Being

RULER Approach Evidence of Effectiveness

Responsive Classroom Evidence of Effectiveness

Second Step Elementary Evidence of Effectiveness

Second Step Middle School Evidence of Effectiveness

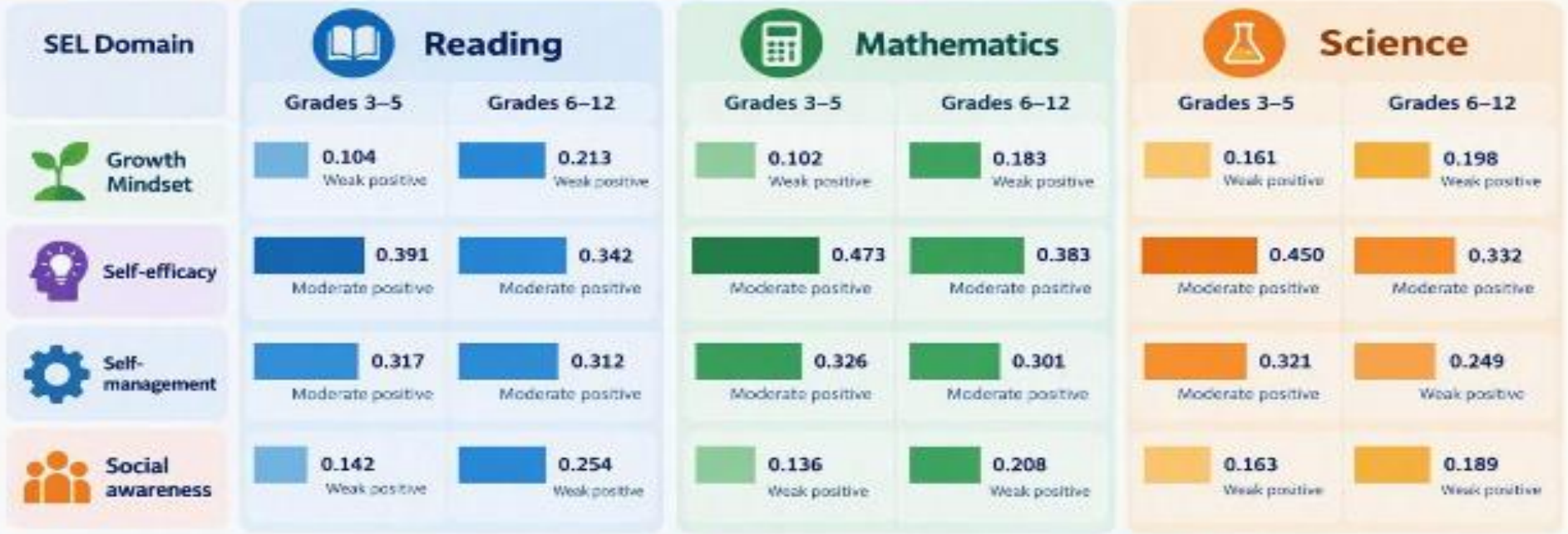
As the field leader in social and emotional learning (SEL), CASEL offers a solution to one of the most persistent issues facing school and district leaders.

Social-Emotional Learning Linked to Higher Math and Reading Test Scores

Some social emotional lessons improve how kids do at school, Yale study finds

How SEL Skills Relate to SOL Test Scores

Higher SEL scores were positively associated with higher SOL test scores in reading, mathematics, and science for both elementary (grades 3–5) and secondary (grades 6–12) students.



Key Takeaway

Self-efficacy had the strongest relationship with SOL performance, especially in mathematics and science for grades 3–5.

Other SEL domains showed weaker or less consistent relationships.

Relationship Strength Guide

Negligible: $|r| < .10$
Weak: .10 – .29
Moderate: .30 – .49
Strong: ≥ .50

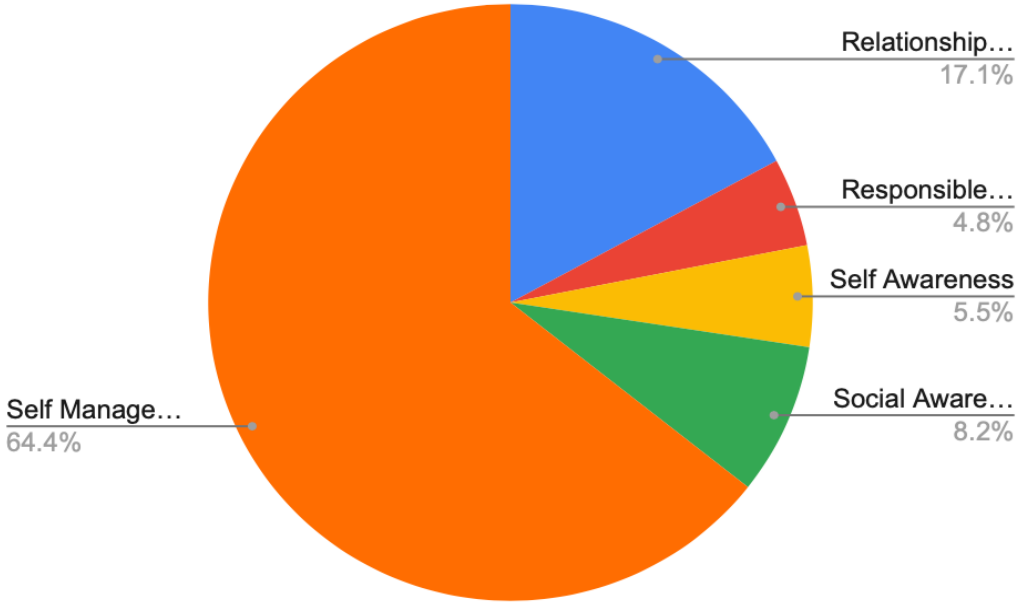
Note: All correlations are statistically significant ($p < .001$, two-tailed).

Correlation indicates association, not cause and effect.

SEL in APS - Tier 2 Data Elementary

Student Well-Being

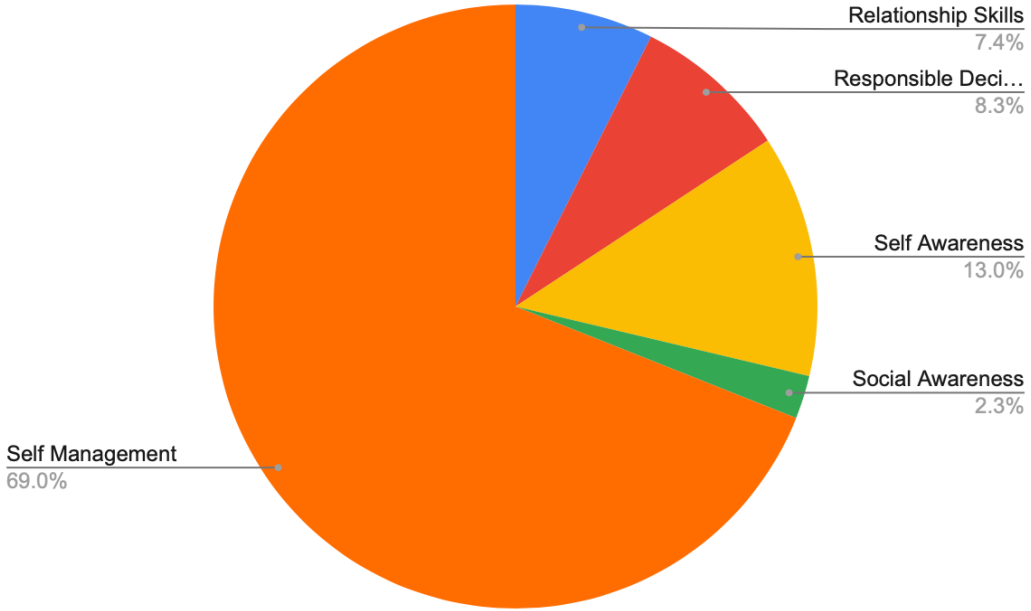
Highest level of need for Tier 2 interventions at the elementary level are related to self-management and relationship skills.



SEL in APS - Tier 2 Data Secondary

Student Well-Being

Highest level of need for Tier 2 interventions at the secondary level are related to self-management and self awareness.



SEL in APS



Student Well-Being

Elementary SEL Survey Results: Spring 2026

Area Measured	% favorable	Change from Spring 2025
Growth Mindset	60	-3
Self Efficacy	60	-3
Self Management	73	-2
Social Awareness	68	-1

SEL in APS



Student Well-Being

Secondary SEL Survey Results: Spring 2026

Area Measured	% favorable	Change from Spring 2025
Growth Mindset	50	+2
Self Efficacy	49	+4
Self Management	69	+2
Social Awareness	61	+4

SEL in APS - Survey & Data Limitations



Student Well-Being

CASEL Alignment with Current SEL survey

The current SEL survey does not fully align with the five CASEL competencies.

When comparing the survey's current items to the CASEL framework, OAESP found that certain competencies are overrepresented (Self-Awareness) while others are underrepresented (Relationship Skills, Self-Management, and Social Awareness). Additionally, none of the questions in the current survey directly or clearly target Responsible Decision-Making.

CASEL Competency	No. of SEL Questions
Self-Awareness	12 questions
Self-Management	7 questions
Social Awareness	4 questions
Relationship Skills	6 questions
Responsible Decision-Making	0 questions