Research Notes

A Snapshot of U.S. Public School Teacher Perspectives on Social, Emotional, and Civic Learning

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Social, Emotional, and Civic Learning in U.S. Schools

Public schools in the United States are responsible for producing graduates who have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to succeed in higher education and employment. Preparing young people for college and careers requires not only promoting academic learning but also attending to numerous interpersonal (e.g., social awareness) and intrapersonal (e.g., self-management) skills sometimes referred to as "social and emotional learning" (SEL) competencies. In addition, schools have a civic mission dating back to the founding of the American public education system (Mann, 1855; Vinnakota, 2019). Recent societal events including the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to evidence of systemic racism have shone a spotlight on the importance of civics-related competencies, including the ability to make sense of scientific data and the propensity to understand and tackle injustice. Although civic learning is typically not at the top of schools' lists of priorities (Winthrop, 2020), several initiatives (e.g., **Educating for American Democracy**) have been launched with the goal of increasing attention to, and resources for, schools' civic missions.

SEL and civics are often portrayed as involving different concepts and instructional approaches, but SEL shares much in common with civic learning. For example, the SEL framework developed by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) consists of five competencies: social awareness, relationship skills, self-awareness, self-management, and responsible decision-making (**Casel, 2020**). Meanwhile, a recent National Academy of Education report, *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse*, stated that "Civic discourse concerns how to communicate with one another around the challenges of public issues in order to enhance both individual and group understanding. It also involves enabling effective decision making aimed at finding consensus, compromise, or in some cases, confronting social injustices through dissent" (Lee et al., 2021, p.1). The connection between these two sets of concepts is clear.

Detailed definitions of the five CASEL competencies make the connection even more explicit. For instance, CASEL describes social awareness as consisting of specific competencies including "taking others' perspectives," "identifying diverse social norms, including unjust ones," and "understanding the influences of organizations and systems on behavior" (CASEL, 2020, p. 2) — all of which are relevant to effective civic engagement (see Table 1 in Hamilton & Parsi, 2022, for additional details about civic-related SEL competencies). However, the overlap between SEL and civics is not always evident to educators or others. In an analysis of the civic education landscape, Vinnakota (2019) noted that "many people who work in the critical areas of social and emotional learning, as well as leadership development, youth advocacy, and youth organizing — those who seek to instill 'civic dispositions' (i.e., a sense of agency and responsibility for the larger community) in young people — do not think of themselves as civic educators per se" (Vinnakota, 2019, p. 9).

Given this connection between SEL and civic learning, along with the lack of awareness (described by Vinnakota, 2019) of how civics can support SEL, an understanding of teachers' approaches to SEL could benefit from data on how they promote civic-related competencies in addition to SEL. In this report, we present nationally representative teacher survey data that shed light on how teachers were approaching SEL and civics toward the end of 2021, when the COVID-19 pandemic was still disrupting learning environments and broader reckonings with systemic racism, mistrust of scientists and government officials, and other societal challenges were placing new demands on educators. Our findings supplement a growing body of data gathered from United States public school teachers and are intended as an initial step toward understanding teachers' beliefs, needs, and practices related to SEL and civic learning.

Understanding teachers' perspectives

As we consider how to ensure that public schools are promoting the full breadth of competencies students need to succeed and thrive, understanding the beliefs and experiences of teachers is crucial. In recent years, majorities of educators across the United States. have expressed a commitment to both SEL (Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019) and civic learning (Diliberti & Kaufman, 2022; Hamilton, et al., 2020). Parents, too, have indicated support for schools' efforts to promote some of these competencies, though decisions about what to call them can influence that support (Tyner, 2021). More recently, however, SEL and other aspects of school curricula have been subject to a degree of politicization, including state legislation that prohibits coverages of certain topics and contentious school board debates about the presumed benefits and harms of SEL (Krauss, 2022). This environment threatens to dampen some of the enthusiasm of educators, parents, and others. It is important to continue monitoring teachers' perspectives so that we can explore how best to help them in these rapidly changing times.

We extend the research described above by drawing on nationally representative survey data gathered from K–12 United States public school teachers in November 2021. Our findings add to the existing evidence base by providing more recent data and by emphasizing some topics that have not been the focus of other recent research. Given the priority school principals and teachers place on both promoting and assessing student SEL competencies (Atwell & Bridgeland, 2019; Bridgeland et al., 2013; Hamilton & Doss, 2020), and SEL's fundamental connection to civic learning and engagement (Jagers et al., 2019; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2021), our questions were designed to elicit information about selected schoolwide supports for SEL, the availability and utility of SEL assessments, and teachers' prioritization of and instructional practices related to several civic learning topics that are directly related to SEL. The survey questions, listed in Figure 1, were administered to teachers via the RAND® Corporation's American Teacher Panel (ATP)[1]. All results below are weighted to be nationally representative following RAND's technical and statistical procedures for the ATP (Robbins & Grant, 2020). In addition to describing overall response patterns, we also present statistically significant comparisons by teacher grade level (elementary vs. secondary grades), teacher demographic subgroups (e.g., gender), and school characteristics (e.g., majority vs. minority of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch). Please see Data Analysis Methods below for more details on these analyses.

Before presenting our findings, it is important to acknowledge their limitations for informing our understanding of SEL and civics instruction in schools. First, we rely on a relatively small number of survey questions, which provide a limited view into teachers' practices and experiences. Second, the survey was administered in Fall 2021, when most schools had returned to in-person instruction (after closing buildings in response to the COVID pandemic) but were continuing to experience a great deal of turmoil and uncertainty. Of note is that the current political backlash to instruction about SEL, systemic racism, and other aspects of school curricula was underway, but had not yet reached the levels it did in 2022. All these factors suggest that readers should interpret our results cautiously. At the same time, these data add to a growing trove of findings related to SEL and civics, and together these studies support some common themes, which we discuss at the end of this report.

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[1] RAND American Educator Panels, American Teacher Panel, RAND 2021 Omnibus Survey, data file, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA [January 7, 2022].

Most teachers and schools support SEL, but fewer have sufficient SEL resources.

FIGURE 1: Survey questions

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about social and emotional learning (SEL) in your school:

- Pressure to improve student academic achievement makes it hard to focus on SEL.
- My efforts to promote SEL will improve my students' academic achievement.
- The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills.
- I would like more guidance about how to use SEL lesson plans and/or curricula in my school.

Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with the following statements about the use of social and emotional learning assessments that are administered to your students.
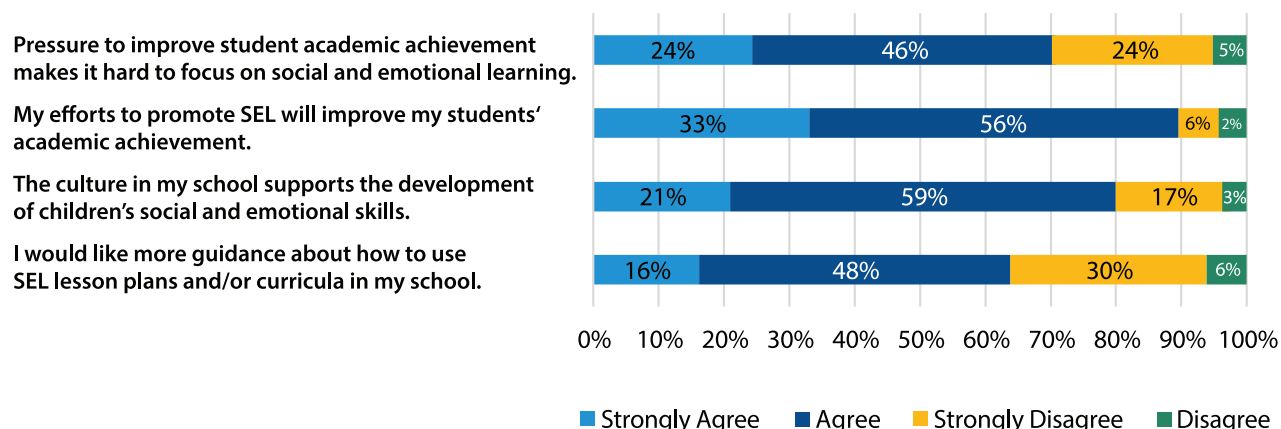
- Allow teachers to track growth in social and emotional learning competencies
- Are used to help adapt or modify instructional practices
- Communicate results in a way that is easy for me to understand

(1) Please indicate how important you think it is for students to develop competencies in each of the following areas. (2) Please indicate the extent to which you emphasize each area in your instruction.

- Engage in responsible social media use
- Evaluate the credibility of information in the media
- Understand and appreciate people and groups from different social and cultural contexts
- Engage in constructive debates with others with whom they disagree
- Understand the responsibilities of civic life in the United States
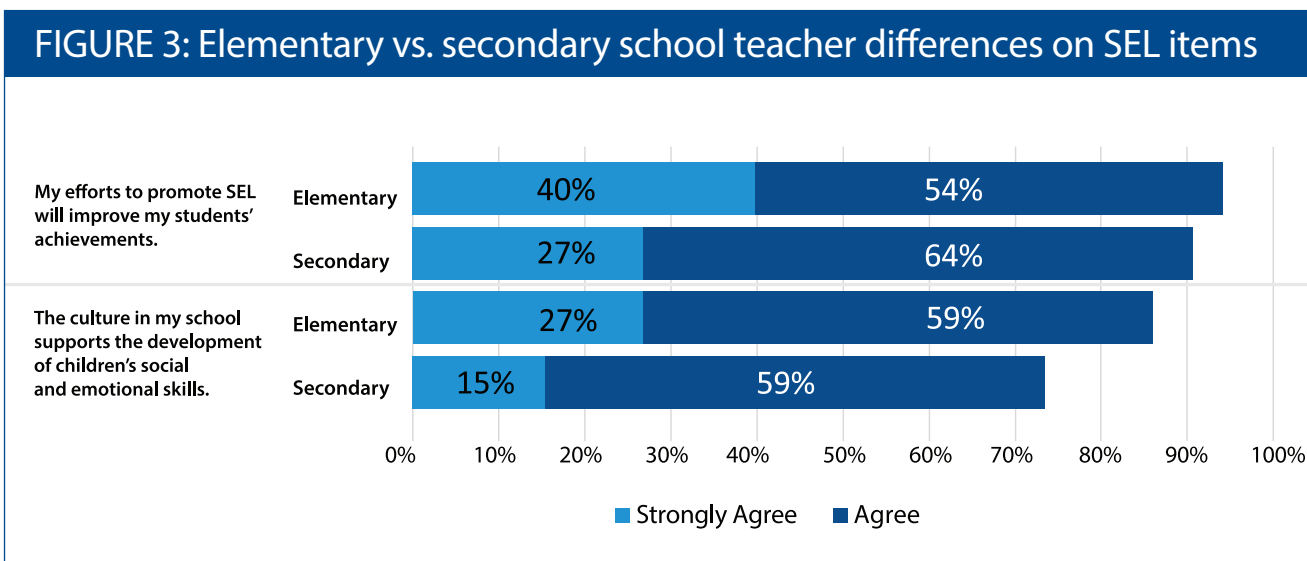
Teachers' beliefs about the importance of SEL and about conditions that support or hinder SEL instruction can contribute to both their SEL practices in the classroom (Brackett et al., 2012; Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Zinsser et al., 2014) and are related to their levels of job stress and satisfaction (Collie et al., 2015). The four questions we asked teachers about their beliefs (Figure 2) address only a subset of relevant beliefs and conditions, but the responses shed some light on the current extent of SEL-supporting conditions in public schools across the United States.

FIGURE 2: Overall teacher perspectives on SEL in U.S. schools

Pressure to improve student academic achievement makes it hard to focus on social and emotional learning.
24% | 46% | 24% | 5%

My efforts to promote SEL will improve my students' academic achievement.
33% | 56% | 6% | 2%

The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills.
21% | 59% | 17% | 3%

I would like more guidance about how to use SEL lesson plans and/or curricula in my school.
16% | 48% | 30% | 6%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Agree   ■ Strongly Disagree   ■ Disagree

Note: The total for each statement may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Overwhelming majorities of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their efforts to promote SEL would help improve students' academic achievement (92%), and that their school's culture supported the development of children's SEL skills (80%). Elementary school (grades K–5) teachers exhibited stronger agreement with both statements in comparison to their secondary (grades 6–12) school peers (Figure 3), suggesting perceptions of a more direct link between SEL and academics in the elementary grades (also observed by Hamilton & Doss, 2020) along with greater school-level emphasis on SEL in buildings serving younger students.

FIGURE 3: Elementary vs. secondary school teacher differences on SEL items

My efforts to promote SEL will improve my students' achievements.
- Elementary: 40% Strongly Agree, 54% Agree
- Secondary: 27% Strongly Agree, 64% Agree

The culture in my school supports the development of children's social and emotional skills.
- Elementary: 27% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree
- Secondary: 15% Strongly Agree, 59% Agree

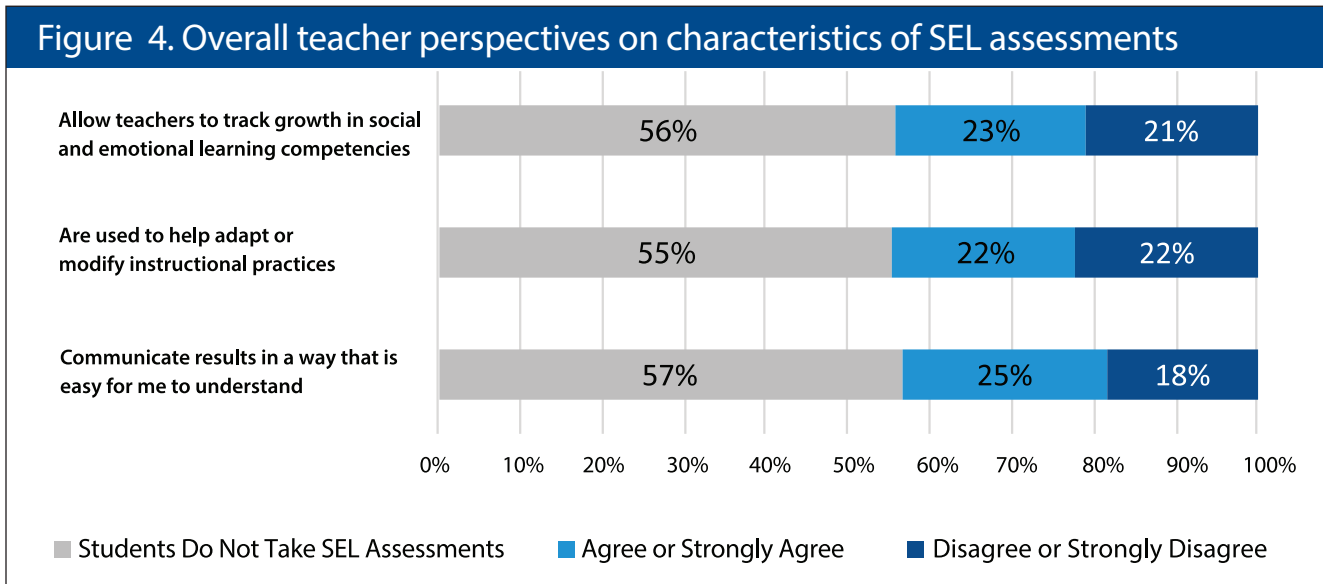0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Strongly Agree   ■ Agree

One possible explanation of the findings above might be that some secondary school teachers perceive greater competition for finite resources (e.g., instructional time) between SEL and academics. However, we did not observe statistically significant differences between grade levels in teachers' overall levels of agreement (Figure 2) that pressure on academics made it hard to focus on SEL in their classrooms. To understand this issue further we looked at the extent of overlap in agreement with these two items in the overall sample and found that 66% of teachers who agreed academic pressure made it hard to focus on SEL also reported their efforts to promote SEL would improve academic achievement (similar to the 64% who reported they would like guidance on how to use SEL lesson plans in their school; Figure 2). Of those teachers who reported both feeling pressure to focus on core academics over SEL *and* confidence that their SEL efforts would also improve academic achievement, most (71%) also expressed a desire for more guidance on SEL lesson planning.

There were relatively few statistically significant disparities across subgroups of teachers (see the Data Analysis Methods section) on these items suggesting that, overall, responses to them were not conditional on teacher or school characteristics. Notable exceptions were: (a) urban teachers were more likely to disagree compared to their suburban peers that their promotion of SEL would impact student achievement, (b) teachers identifying as Black expressed more strong agreement versus their White peers with the idea that pressure to improve academic achievement made it had to focus on SEL, and (c) teachers with less than five years of experience and those from town or rural settings expressed a greater need (vs. more experienced teachers and teachers in urban settings, respectively) for help using SEL lesson plans and curricula.

Most teachers lack access to SEL assessment data to inform instruction.

One key source of instructional support for teachers implementing SEL in their classrooms is the availability of high-quality SEL assessment information (McKown, 2019), but teachers and schools face multiple challenges with respect to successfully implementing and using SEL assessment in practice (McKown & Herman, 2020). We now turn to survey results speaking to teacher perspectives on three such challenges.

Figure 4. Overall teacher perspectives on characteristics of SEL assessments

Statement	Students Do Not Take SEL Assessments	Agree or Strongly Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
Allow teachers to track growth in social and emotional learning competencies	56%	23%	21%
Are used to help adapt or modify instructional practices	55%	22%	22%
Communicate results in a way that is easy for me to understand	57%	25%	18%

Note: The total for each statement may not equal 100% due to rounding.

The availability of assessments of students' SEL competencies increased substantially throughout the last decade (Assessment Work Group, 2019), and developers, researchers, and educators continue to explore innovative strategies for assessing SEL (Burrus et al., 2022; Jones et al., 2022). Regular monitoring of students' SEL competencies is not only crucial for informing instruction but can also help foster a sense of community and trust among teachers if it occurs as part of a thoughtful approach to formative assessment (Formative Assessment for Students and Teachers State Collaborative on Assessment and Student Standards, 2018; Vander Ark & Ryerse, 2018).

Unfortunately, most United States public school teachers lack access to high-quality SEL assessment information. In response to questions about "the use of social and emotional learning assessments that are administered to your students" (Figure 4), more than half of United States teachers (55–57%) reported their students did not take SEL assessments. Considering the nearly universal support for teaching SEL, described earlier, and that 92% of teachers in our sample reported their promotion of SEL would improve student's academic achievement (Figure 2), these results suggest a substantial unmet need for informative SEL assessments across all grade levels.

Focusing on the approximately 45% of U.S. teachers reporting that SEL assessments are administered to their students, we found slight majorities of these teachers agreed that SEL assessments possessed the three beneficial elements of assessments we asked about: 52% reported assessments facilitated tracking growth in SEL competencies, 50% said they were useful for adapting or modifying instruction, and 58% indicated they produced easily understood results. The remaining teachers in this subgroup disagreed with these statements, indicating that a substantial proportion of teachers using SEL assessments recognize considerable room for improvement in their utility.

With respect to the above three survey questions, the only statistically significant subgroup comparison indicated that relatively inexperienced teachers (those with less than five years in the classroom) were more likely to agree that SEL assessments communicated results in an easy-to-understand way. One potential explanation for this difference in perception could be that teachers newer to the field are likely to have been trained more recently versus veteran teachers on innovative assessment techniques (and/or interpreting SEL or other assessment results) in their pre-service programs.

Large majorities of teachers believe SEL-related civic competencies are important; smaller majorities report emphasizing them in instruction.
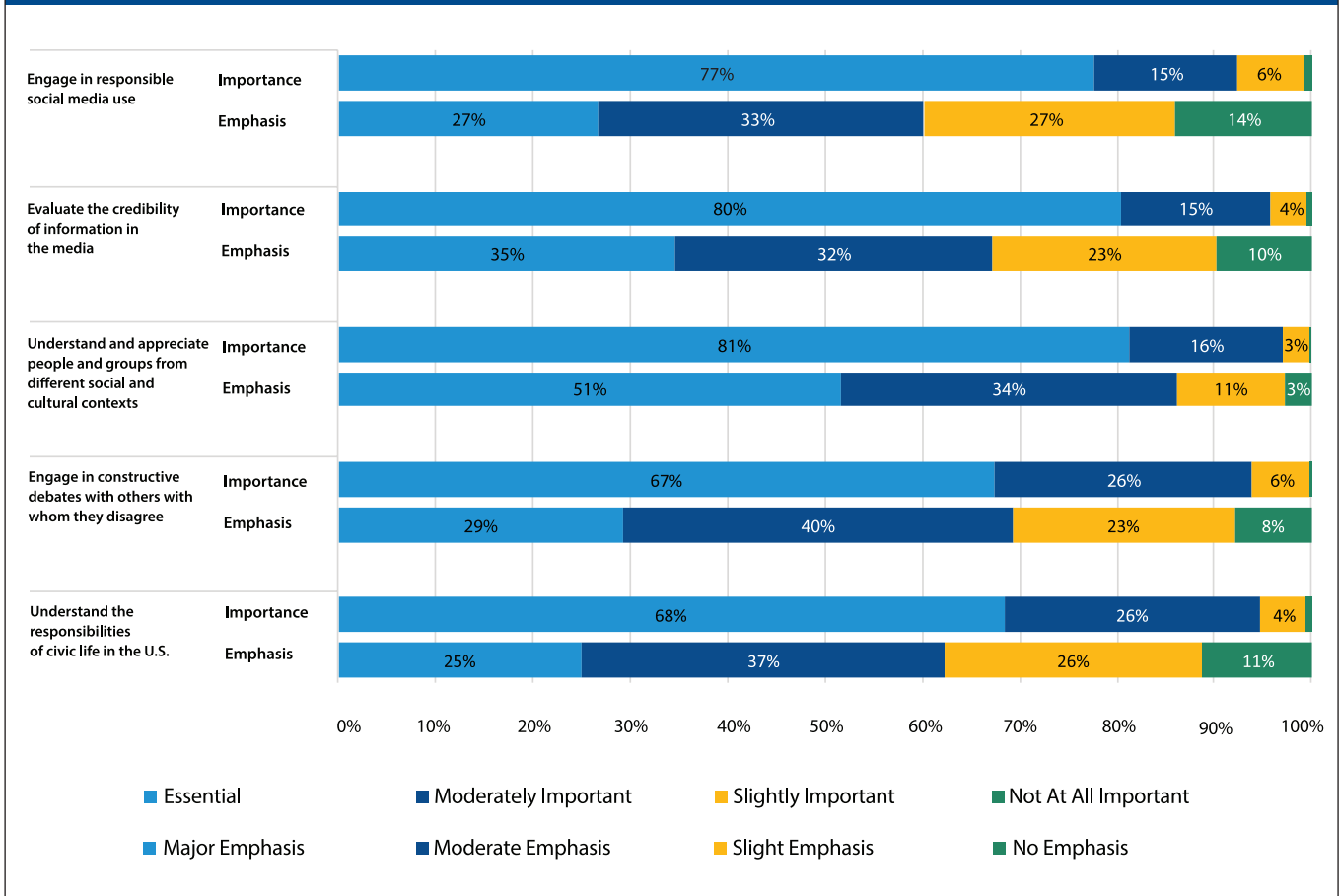
Given the conceptual overlap between SEL and civic learning discussed above, the current survey also provides insight into how teachers view and work to support several key civic learning competencies requiring students to leverage SEL in their expression. "Civic learning" is a broad concept, encompassing multiple frameworks whose components can be classified into four broad categories of competencies: Civic knowledge, skills, dispositions, and engagement (Hamilton & Kaufman, 2022). We selected five competencies aligned with these areas that seemed particularly salient to our current social and political climate (including the changing media landscape and growing political partisanship) and that are related to SEL. We asked teachers to share their perspectives on both how important it is for students to develop each competency, and the level of emphasis they put on each competency in their instruction. In Table 1, we list the five competencies and indicate some of the key SEL competencies to which they align, drawing on CASEL's framework .

TABLE 1: Connections between selected civic competencies and social and emotional learning (SEL)

CIVIC COMPETENCY	RELEVANT SEL COMPETENCIES [a]
Engage in responsible social media use	*Responsible decision making:* Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
Evaluate the credibility of information in the media	*Responsible decision making:* Learning to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, facts
Understand and appreciate people and groups from different social and cultural contexts	*Social awareness:* Recognizing strengths in others *Relationship skills:* Demonstrating cultural competency
Engage in constructive debates with others with whom they disagree	*Social awareness:* Taking others' perspectives *Relationship skills:* Resolving conflicts constructively
Understand the responsibilities of civic life in the United States	*Social awareness:* Understanding the influences of organizations/systems on behavior *Relationship skills:* Standing up for the rights of others *Self-management:* Demonstrating personal and collective agency

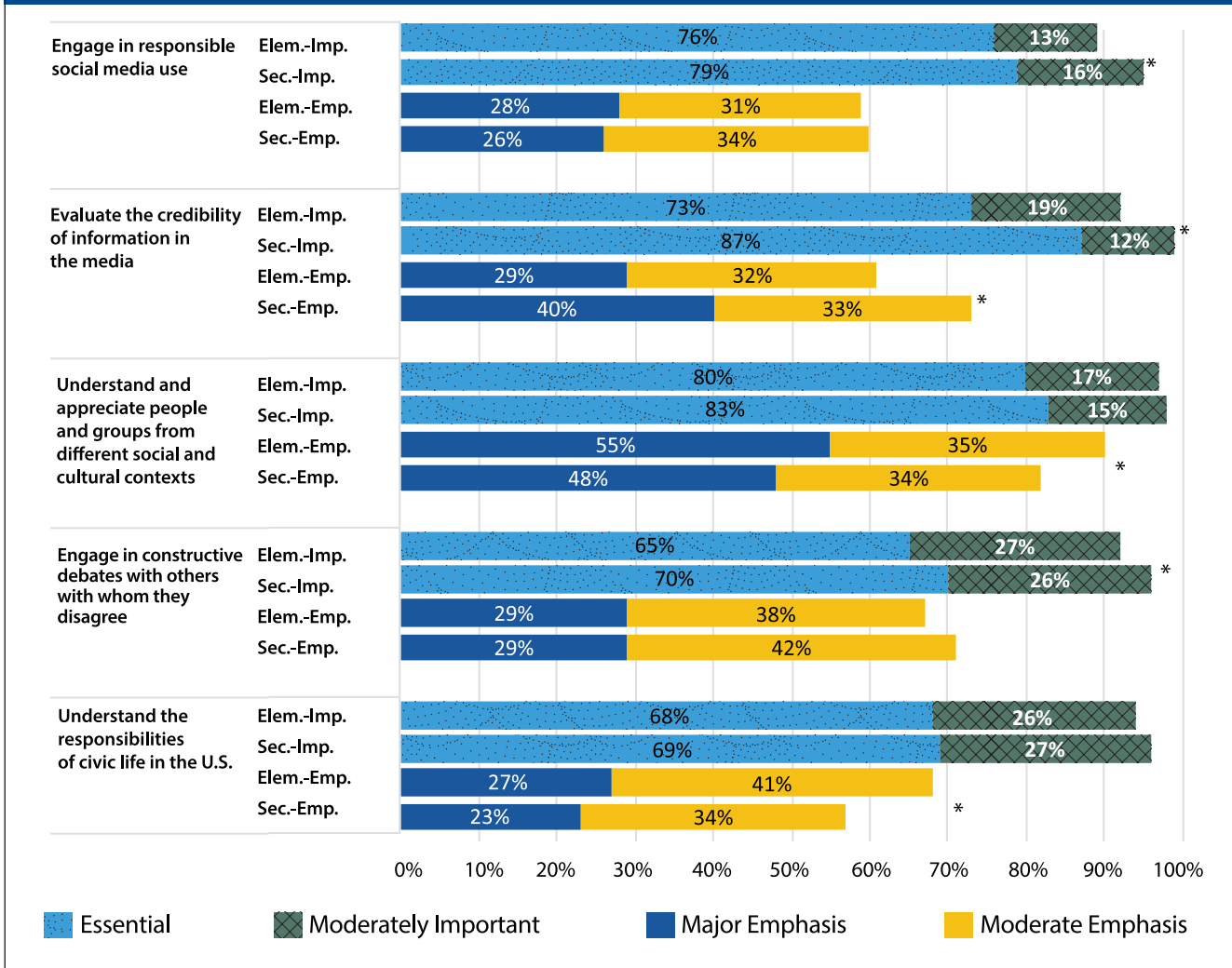[a] From CASEL's SEL Framework by CASEL, 2020, p. 2, *https://casel.org/casel-sel-framework-11-2020/?view=true*

FIGURE 5: Overall teacher perspectives on SEL-related civic competencies

Engage in responsible social media use

Importance	77%	15%	6%
Emphasis	27%	33%	27%	14%

Evaluate the credibility of information in the media

Importance	80%	15%	4%
Emphasis	35%	32%	23%	10%

Understand and appreciate people and groups from different social and cultural contexts

Importance	81%	16%	3%
Emphasis	51%	34%	11%	3%

Engage in constructive debates with others with whom they disagree

Importance	67%	26%	6%
Emphasis	29%	40%	23%	8%

Understand the responsibilities of civic life in the U.S.

Importance	68%	26%	4%
Emphasis	25%	37%	26%	11%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

- Essential
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Not At All Important
- Major Emphasis
- Moderate Emphasis
- Slight Emphasis
- No Emphasis

Note: The total for each statement may not equal 100% due to rounding. SEL=social and emotional learning. Values of 2% or less are not shown.

Figure 5 shows the complete distribution of teacher responses with respect to each of these competencies. A clear pattern is the consistent disparity between the levels of importance and instructional emphasis placed by teachers on each competency. Over 90% of teachers thought each of the five competencies were essential or moderately important for students to develop, yet in four of the five areas only 60% to 69% of teachers indicated placing either moderate or major instructional emphasis on each respective competency. The exception here was the relatively smaller discrepancy in rates observed in the extent to which teachers placed moderate or high levels importance (97%) versus emphasis (85%) on students understanding and appreciating people from different social or cultural contexts. This suggests that, at the time of the survey (late 2021), issues of cultural competency and diversity had found greater traction in teachers' classroom instruction versus the other civic competencies listed in Figure 5.

FIGURE 6: Elementary vs. secondary school teacher responses to civic learning survey items

Engage in responsible social media use

	Essential	Moderately Important	Major Emphasis	Moderate Emphasis
Elem.-Imp.	76%	13%		
Sec.-Imp.	79%	16%		*
Elem.-Emp.			28%	31%
Sec.-Emp.			26%	34%

Evaluate the credibility of information in the media

Elem.-Imp.	73%	19%		
Sec.-Imp.	87%	12%		*
Elem.-Emp.			29%	32%
Sec.-Emp.			40%	33%	*

Understand and appreciate people and groups from different social and cultural contexts

Elem.-Imp.	80%	17%		
Sec.-Imp.	83%	15%		
Elem.-Emp.			55%	35%
Sec.-Emp.			48%	34%	*

Engage in constructive debates with others with whom they disagree

Elem.-Imp.	65%	27%		
Sec.-Imp.	70%	26%		*
Elem.-Emp.			29%	38%
Sec.-Emp.			29%	42%

Understand the responsibilities of civic life in the U.S.

Elem.-Imp.	68%	26%		
Sec.-Imp.	69%	27%		
Elem.-Emp.			27%	41%
Sec.-Emp.			23%	34%	*

Legend: ▨ Essential   ▨ Moderately Important   ■ Major Emphasis   ▨ Moderate Emphasis

Note: Elem. = Elementary. Sec. = Secondary. Imp. = Importance. Emp. = Emphasis in instruction. *p < .05.

Responses to items about the five civic-learning competencies split by elementary and secondary teachers are displayed in Figure 6. With respect to the level of *importance* placed on each competency, we found statistically significant differences in response patterns in the extent to which elementary versus secondary teachers valued students engaging in social media use, evaluating the credibility of media information, and engaging in constructive debates with others in situations where they disagree. In each of these cases, elementary teachers placed slightly less importance on these competencies than did their secondary peers.

Turning to the level of *emphasis* placed on each civic competency in teachers' classrooms, we found statistically significant differences in elementary versus secondary teacher response patterns on three of the civic learning competencies. Secondary school teachers tended to place greater emphasis than elementary school teachers on evaluating the credibility of media information, whereas elementary school teachers tended to place greater emphasis on both understanding and appreciating social and cultural diversity, and understanding the responsibilities of civic life in the United States. Readers may find the difference with respect to understanding civic responsibilities unexpected given students are more likely to encounter a dedicated civics course at the high school

level. This finding is consistent, however, with other results from the same ATP survey reported recently by Diliberti and Kaufman (2022), in the United States elementary teachers were more likely than United States secondary teachers to indicate civic and citizenship education is integrated into all subjects taught at school (para. 5).

We found that Black teachers tended to place stronger emphasis in comparison to White teachers on instructing students on how to engage in constructive debates with those with whom they disagree. Unfortunately, subgroup sample sizes by teacher race/ethnicity across survey item response categories were too small to elicit confidence in other statistical comparisons by teacher racial or ethnic background. This points to a clear need for additional research with a concerted focus on oversampling teachers from historically underrepresented backgrounds. Such research would inform not only specific perspectives among diverse teachers serving United States public schools, but also contribute to the larger literature on the value of maintaining a diverse teacher workforce (e.g., Carter et al., 2019; Goldhaber et al., 2019; Putnam et al., 2016). [2]

Finally, we found that female teachers reported placing less emphasis than male teachers in their instruction on evaluating the credibility of information in the media, engaging in constructive debates, and understanding the responsibilities of civic life in the United States. Diliberti and Kaufman (2022), who reported on data from a different set of question on this survey, also observed differences between male and female teachers' responses. They examined teachers' reports of the top aims of civic education and found that female teachers endorsed some aims (conflict resolution, reducing racism) at higher rates than male teachers, whereas female teachers endorsed other aims (promoting civic knowledge, promoting capacity to defend one's point of view) at lower rates. Although the current survey data do not allow us to examine the reasons behind observed gender differences, we encourage future mixed methods research to reveal greater nuance in how teachers with different gender identities approach civics instruction.

Implications

The importance of preparing young people to engage effectively in education, the workplace, and civic life has never been clearer, and teachers in K–12 public schools play an indispensable role in ensuring this preparation. Therefore, understanding teachers' opinions and experiences is crucial for informing decisions about how best to support teachers in this important work. The results presented in this report supplement other recent surveys to shed light on how teachers think about, value, and implement social, emotional, and civic learning and what they might need to engage in those activities more effectively. We conclude this report with a brief discussion of a few implications of interest to anyone involved in making decisions affecting the lives and work of public school educators and students.

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[2] In terms of school characteristics, teachers working in suburban schools were more likely to place no or only slight instructional emphasis on evaluating the credibility of media information versus their peers working in rural or urban schools. This same competency was also more strongly emphasized by teachers working in schools serving a majority non-White student population (vs. their peers in majority-White schools). Teachers in majority non-White schools also placed both stronger importance and instructional emphasis on understanding or appreciating social and cultural diversity. Teachers working in schools serving students from more affluent backgrounds (those where < 50% received free or reduced-price lunch) were less likely to place major (vs. moderate) emphasis on engaging in responsible social media use, and more likely to place major emphasis on evaluating the credibility of media information. Teachers at more affluent schools were also more likely to place no or only slight emphasis in their instruction on understanding the responsibilities of civic life in the United States.

Support for SEL among U.S. teachers remains high.

Although our survey did not ask teachers about their general level of support for SEL in schools, we found that more than 90% indicated that promoting SEL would benefit students' academic achievement. More than 90% of teachers also rated each of five SEL-related civic competencies we asked about as at least moderately important for students to develop, with more than two-thirds indicating they were essential. These findings suggest that, at least as of late 2021, the politization of SEL and pressures to address missed academic learning opportunities during the pandemic have not dampened teachers' high levels of commitment to SEL discussed earlier. Of course, it will be important to continue to monitor these perceptions as the political environment changes.

Increasing teachers' access to high-quality SEL assessment data could help inform instructional decision making.

The pandemic has been associated not only with missed opportunities for students to develop SEL competencies but also with significant threats to students' social and emotional wellbeing (e.g., expert panel discussion on this topic summarized in Hamilton & Gross, 2021), so the fact that Fall 2021 saw so many teachers still without access to SEL assessment data is concerning. Moreover, just under half of those using SEL assessments *disagreed* that they were helpful to informing instruction, tracking students' growth in SEL, and/or produced results that were easy to understand. Underlying reasons for the absence of such data are not evident from our survey and could reflect multiple factors such as a lack of awareness of available assessments, insufficient funding to obtain those assessments, or low levels of district support for assessing SEL. Assessment developers should also work closely with educators and the organizations that support them to inform the development of assessment approaches that meet teachers' needs and don't impose significant barriers (e.g., high cost, long administration time, overly technical results). Teachers may also benefit from access to professional learning opportunities to help ensure appropriate use of those data.

Additional resources are likely needed to leverage this support.

Differences between teachers' endorsement of civic-learning competencies are important and their reported instructional emphasis on these competencies suggest significant opportunity. As Jacqueline Rodriguez, Vice President of Research, Policy, and Advocacy for the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education stated, teachers are "our nation's first responders for democracy" (Hamilton & Parsi, 2022, p. 12). Teachers' championing of civic learning can help pave the way for schools to embrace it, but our results suggest there is room for improvement when it comes to teachers being able to act on their enthusiasm. Similarly, our results indicate that most teachers support SEL but face some challenges. Combined with results from the earlier survey reports discussed above, we can conclude that opportunities for students to engage in instruction that promotes their social, emotional, and civic learning could benefit from changes to policy and practice at all levels of the education system including (a) better guidance for school leaders on creating an SEL-promoting culture, (b) lesson plans and high-quality assessment to inform instruction, and (c) guidance regarding how to integrate SEL with academics in ways that don't detract from the latter.

Conclusion

Our analyses of how teacher and school characteristics were associated with teachers' responses predominately found differences based on grade level that are consistent with earlier research and with curricula and instructional approaches typically used in elementary and secondary schools. Aside from those differences, the analysis did not reveal a consistent pattern of evidence that teachers' beliefs, experiences, or reported approaches to SEL and civic learning differed in similar ways across schools serving different student populations.

The challenges our public school system and country face are significant and will require intensive, collaborative work to tackle. As public schools across the United States continue to struggle with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and with broader societal issues, it is essential that policymakers and others in positions to influence public education are attuned to the many responsibilities that have been placed on teachers. Our findings indicate large majorities of teachers are committed not just to providing academic instruction but to helping their students develop socially, emotionally, and civically. Given all the other demands on the system, along with the clear relationship between SEL and civic learning, teachers and students could benefit from instructional guidance, assessments, and other resources that capitalize on this connection while also remaining attuned to the importance of content that doesn't overlap (such as critical knowledge typically included in civics instruction). Efforts to develop such resources should involve both SEL and civic learning experts and reflect direct collaboration with teachers, students, school and district administrators, and other key interested parties.

Data Analysis Methods

1,003 public school teachers across the United States responded to survey questions about SEL and civic learning practices and assessment. These were administered as part of the American Teacher Panel, a survey fielded by the RAND Corporation between 11/2/2021 and 12/13/2021. Survey respondents were probabilistically sampled, and responses have been weighted by RAND to be nationally representative of public school teachers in the United States. To understand how teachers' response patterns varied across salient demographic groups and both school and teacher characteristics, we estimated a series of multinomial logistic regression models where each survey item was entered as the dependent variable. A binary indicator of school level (Elementary [Kindergarten–Grade 5] vs. Secondary [Grades 6–12]) and multiple other covariates were entered as independent variables, including: (a) School race/ethnic enrollment (Majority White vs. Non-White), (b) School geographic setting (Urban, Suburban, Town or Rural), (c) School Size (above vs. below student N = 450), (d) School poverty level (Majority vs. Minority of students receiving free or reduced-price lunch), (e) Teacher education level (Bachelor's degree or below vs. beyond a Bachelor's degree), (f) Teacher experience (more vs. less than 5 years), (g) Teacher gender identity (male vs. female), and (h) Teacher race/ethnic background (Black, Hispanic, White, Other). School demographic variables were gathered and linked to the ATP survey by RAND from the Common Core of Data maintained by the National Center for Education Statistics.

We reviewed statistical significance tests output by the multinomial regression models to determine whether survey response patterns were statistically differentiable across demographic or other subgroups denoted by the covariates listed above. In this report, we describe differences among teacher subgroups only in cases where the p-value for a given difference was less than 0.05.

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