

# Social and Emotional Learning and the Christian School

by Allen & Julie Quist

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is being widely used in our public schools and is now infiltrating private schools, including Christian schools. This article will examine the suitability of SEL in any school, and especially in Christian schools. But first we need to understand what SEL is. It is defined, at least in theory, in a recent article in *Education Week*, 2023, called: "[What is SEL Anyway? Seven Experts Break it Down.](#)"

This *Education Week* article, however, is problematic because none of the seven "experts" quoted actually defined SEL. They instead made statements promoting SEL, statements like: SEL enables students to "solve inter- and intrapersonal problems." And: [SEL is like helping] "kids do fire prevention." And: "SEL is like the mortar" [that holds bricks together]. And: SEL is like checking the pH in the water in a fish tank before putting in the fish because "if your pH is off, the fish will not survive." Do any of these statements actually define SEL? They do not. Analogies saying what something allegedly does are not definitions. They are like defining a car by saying it takes you to a grocery store. A horse can take you to a grocery store, too. One wonders if the SEL advocates prefer that the public not know what SEL is.

We notice that such SEL "experts" commonly mention processes like "control emotions," "build self-esteem," and "facilitate empathy." Again, describing SEL's supposed outcomes does not define what it is. And according to SEL scholar James Lindsay ([Lies, Damned Lies, and SEL - New Discourses](#)), "empathy" in the SEL context requires affirming LGBTQ lifestyles and accepting the belief that people can actually change their gender. Every cell in a person's body is either male or female, so people can pretend to change genders, but they are only impersonating the other gender.

Teachers complain that SEL takes too much time away from academic instruction. And *Education Week* said that "SEL" is a "nebulous" term (impossible to define). Why, then, do many schools teach it? The reason is they receive major federal funding if they do ("Every Student Succeeds Act" of 2015 and the "American Rescue Plan" of 2021). We used to call this "bribery."

## **Biblical SEL**

In spite of all the questions surrounding SEL, some Christian schools have adopted it. Some use secular SEL programs, and others use supposedly "Christian" or "Biblical" SEL programs, one example being "God's design for Friendship." (See: [FRIENDZY BIBLICAL SEL FRIENDSHIP CURRICULUM Teaching Guide: We Need Each Other.](#)) But is this SEL curriculum consistent with "God's design" for anything? No, it's not. God's design and SEL are opposites. The curriculum claims to be God's design because it's supposedly based on what it calls two "key verses of the

Bible.” The first and most important verse is *Genesis 2:18*, which reads: “The Lord God said: ‘It is not good for man to be alone.’”

The Friendly curriculum ignores the second half of the verse, however, which states: “I will make a helper suitable for him.” That is, when *Genesis 2:18* states “it is not good for the man to be alone,” it is speaking specifically, and only, about his need for a marriage partner. God met that need by creating a woman and bringing her to the man. The two then became “one flesh.” They married.

The Friendly curriculum has twisted this section of Scripture to mean a friendship between two or more men, or two or more women, or a mixed group of men and women. But the verse does not mean that; it’s speaking only of the marriage relationship. Even more shocking, the curriculum never even mentions marriage, not even in passing. Why not? The reason is the cultural Marxists behind this supposedly “Biblical curriculum” don’t believe in marriage, as confirmed by SEL scholar James Lindsay and numerous other experts. Why not? The reason is they see marriage through a Marxist/feminist lens as an oppressive relationship where men manipulate and control women. So one of the “key Bible verses” for this “Christian SEL curriculum” is deliberately distorted to supposedly prove that Scripture describes a need that is met by SEL. Most anything can be proven by the Bible if its statements are taken out of context. This is manipulation and distortion by the advocates of SEL, not information.

The Friendly curriculum also ignores the fact that *Genesis* chapter 2 states that God created two and only two genders, male and female. Why is this truth ignored? The reason is that the SEL advocates promote transgenderism.

The Friendly curriculum uses *1 Thessalonians 5:11* as their second “foundational” Bible verse. It says: “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up.” The curriculum says this means we should encourage positive emotions in our friends and additionally build up their self-image. They have once again taken Scripture completely out of context, however. The context of the verse reveals Paul advising his followers to be prepared for the Second Coming of Jesus the Christ. Would he be telling them to build up the self-image or foster friendly emotions in one another in such circumstances? Obviously not.

Friendly illustrates its application of this verse by means of the following examples: The curriculum says students should:

- a) “Say “hi”
- b) Make room at a table for a classmate to sit
- c) Say “good job”
- d) Tell a classmate what you like about them.

Paul would not be saying such things to his followers to help them prepare for the Second Coming. What Paul actually did say in order to "encourage one another and build each other up" includes the following admonitions: "be awake and sober," "putting on faith and love as a breastplate and hope of salvation as a helmet," "warn those who are idle," "do what is good," "pray continually," "reject every kind of evil," and "do not quench the Spirit."

Once again, the "Christian SEL" is taking the verse completely out of context. Because it invents examples to fit its dishonest interpretations of Scripture, we can again see that we are dealing with manipulation and politics, not scholarship and information.

### **Can SEL be changed to become "Bible based?"**

Can SEL be modified to be aligned with Christianity? No, because group identity is one of the central principles of Marxism. All SEL programs are designed to instill in students "group consciousness." *Genesis*, in contrast, describes Adam and Eve as individuals. Each one is viewed as being personally responsible for what they have done. Interestingly, both of them tried to minimize their personal guilt by saying they were just following the crowd—but without success because God held them individually responsible for what they did.

SEL exercises are constructed to maximize group awareness, group decision-making, and group activities. The peer pressure for conformity to the group becomes irresistible. Christian training, in contrast, encourages kids to conform to what is right and to avoid and oppose what is wrong. They are not to go along with the world. This is a big reason why Christians often play lead roles in opposing societal evils such as abortion, infanticide, pedophilia, euthanasia, and transgender hormones and sex-change surgery on children. For example, pro-life organizations have always been dominated by Christians. The anti-slavery movement in the West was also dominated by Christians.

### **Is there a Biblical philosophy of education?**

Yes, the Biblical philosophy of education is clearly stated in the very first proverb in the *Book of Proverbs* (1:7) which reads:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of **knowledge**."

Other supporting verses include (emphasis added):

The heart of him who has understanding seeks **knowledge**, (*Proverbs* 15:14).

For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come **knowledge** and understanding, (*Proverbs 2:6*).

The LORD is a God of **knowledge**, and by him actions are weighed, (*1 Samuel 2:3*).

”But grow in the grace and **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity, Amen, (*2 Peter 3:18*).

Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and **knowledge** of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! (*Romans 11:33*).

” . . . and that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the **knowledge** of God’s mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, (*Colossians 2:2-3*).

These verses make it abundantly clear that the goal of Christian education is the teaching of knowledge. This means knowledge about history, science, mathematics, the arts, languages, vocational skills—all the subjects we properly teach in our schools. More than anything else, the goal of Christian education is teaching the knowledge that “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life,” (*John 3:16*). And true knowledge cannot begin without a reverential understanding of the person, attributes, character, and nature of our One True God.

But does a Christian view of education preoccupy itself with emotions? No, it concerns itself with teaching knowledge, good study skills, a good work ethic, and promoting character, self-control, and the like. What allows students to be successful in school and later in life? It’s knowledge more than anything else. By teaching knowledge, we also foster positive emotions and a positive self-image as students realize they are accomplishing something worthwhile. Many of our nation’s students are substandard regarding knowledge. This is the real issue we need to address. If we make progress here, positive emotions and a good self-image will result.

Some Christians may wonder, however, is it possible to use SEL and replace the Marxist doctrines with Christian beliefs and values? No, this is not possible because, as mentioned above, the entire structure of SEL, including its activities, are formulated to have children view themselves as members of a group rather than as individuals. **In contrast, look at the way Jesus related to other people. It was always as individuals, not as members of a group.** Consider *John 4:1-26* (Jesus and the woman at the well). Jesus could have related to this person as a member of three groups. She actually looked at herself as a member of three groups: she was a woman, a Samaritan, and an adulterer. She was amazed that Jesus didn’t look at her that way.

On the contrary, Jesus saw her as a person, an individual, and someone who needed the salvation He was bringing her. **He looks at us the same way—as individuals for whom He lived, died, and rose again.**

### **What is SEL?**

We now return to our original question: What is SEL anyway? In answer to this question, UNESCO, an internationalist organization and branch of the UN, says in [SEL for SDGs: Education for Emotional Resilience](#):

The question we ask ourselves is how can we develop these competencies? One such avenue could be our formal education system. Recent experiences with SEL in schools show promise in improving pro-social behavior and inculcate actions that go beyond just the self but towards the **collective good**. This, however, suggests **a radical change in our education systems**. [Emphasis added.]

According to UNESCO, SEL promotes the “collective good”— a central and fundamental construct of Marxism. You won’t find “collective good” in any of the foundational documents of the United States. You won’t find “collective good” in the Bible. It’s a hostile thesis to a free people and it means, among other things, that we have no inherent human rights because the “collective good” is more important than the individual.

UNESCO is correct, however, in saying SEL requires “a radical change in our education system.” It additionally requires a radical change in all the principles our nation was built upon. (Do Christian schools that teach SEL realize they are creating a “radical change in our education system”? It’s doubtful.)

UNESCO also states:

This article builds a case for how the United Nations (UN) **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** can be achieved through social and emotional learning. [Emphasis added.]

“**Sustainable Development**” is an Orwellian term based on the myth of man-made global warming. Those who peddle global warming claim we are catastrophically heating the atmosphere because our use of fossil fuels emits too much carbon into the air. This warming, in turn, supposedly melts sea ice, and raises ocean levels. Al Gore’s film *Inconvenient Truth* (2006), which focused on supposed global warming, led us to expect a ten foot or more rise in sea levels because of all the melting ice. Many of us remember the film showing 2/3 of Florida

under water supposedly because of global warming. How much has the ocean actually risen since this film was produced? Not even one inch—the reason being that man-made global warming is one of the biggest hoaxes of our time.

But Marxists promote this myth as fact to scare people into accepting global government. The good news is that the number of people who believe this nonsense is steadily declining. The bad news is that, according to UNESCO, SEL assumes that the Sustainable Development Goals (global warming goals) are legitimate, making students afraid, regardless of the myth having been discredited.

### **CASEL is the command center for SEL.**

CASEL (Consortium on Academic & Social Emotional Learning) is a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that says its one purpose is to [“integrate SEL into every child’s education, pre-K through 12.”](#) CASEL is also the delivery system for CRT ([Primer: Social Emotional Learning – Its also the delivery mechanism for Critical Race Theory, CRT](#)).

CASEL emphasizes that it is [dedicated to equity and social justice](#). “Equity” and “social justice” are synonyms; they have the same meaning. “Social justice” does not mean real justice in the normal sense of the word. Social justice and equity mean equal outcomes by identity groups, not equal rights or equal opportunities. It’s a socialistic view that all identity groups must have the same financial status regardless of their effort or achievement. All student identity groups must receive the same grades. The words require quotas by racial and ethnic groups for admission to colleges and/or engineering programs, for scholarships, discipline, and the like. Equity and social justice are central to Marxist ideology and for promoting the planned Marxist revolution.

Equity and social justice are accurately described by the slogan: “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs,” a statement popularized by Karl Marx. Equity and social justice are also the central concepts of SEL. “Cultural Marxism” is now the dominant form of Marxism in Western cultures. Formulated by Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1931), cultural Marxism holds that for the Marxist revolution to succeed, it must transform a nation’s culture. Doing so, said Gramsci, requires controlling the media and the education system of targeted nations—exactly what we are seeing today, exactly what SEL is all about.

CASEL and SEL embrace Critical Race Theory (CRT) which includes the radical doctrine of “white supremacy,” the notion that all whites are inherently racist. (The Bible disproves this doctrine, however, because it was largely written by whites, and no racism can be found in any of its

many hundreds of pages. If racism is actually inherent in whites, you would find it in the Bible. It's not there.)

To understand CASEL is to understand SEL, and CASEL makes an important statement about itself [on its webpage](#) which says:

An **equity lens** is important when developing SEL standards, particularly to ensure that the standards do not unintentionally reinforce implicit power and privilege inequities. . . . Consistent with the pursuit of educational equity, we recently offered the concept of transformative SEL to reflect our interest in making explicit issues such as power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, social justice, empowerment and self-determination in the field of SEL with the goal of developing **justice-oriented, global citizens**. [Emphasis added.]

CASEL here states that an equity lens is required to understand and implement SEL. Equity is Marxism; it's the core concept of Marxism. It not only means equal outcomes, it also requires the elimination of most everything that has been important historically in our education system and western culture. This includes eliminating equal opportunity, as well as eliminating the following: student decision-making on their own majors and minors, objective grading systems, admissions and scholarships based on merit, parental involvement in education, patriotism, genuine history, the importance of mathematics, and the list goes on. (See ['Equity 2030': Higher ed's brave new world](#)) (No culture can have equity and freedom at the same time. They are incompatible concepts.)

As stated above, CASEL and SEL are committed to creating "global citizens." There are no global citizens without global government. In his recent book *Covid-19 and the Great Reset*, Klaus Schwab, one of the globalists behind SEL, explained that most people mistakenly see nations as being comparable to ships on the sea—some are bigger, some are smaller, some are more sophisticated, and so on. This is the wrong way to see nations, said Schwab. The proper way to see nations, he said, is to view nations as apartments on one big ship. That is the goal of CASEL and SEL—to indoctrinate our kids to see themselves as global citizens for whom global government is natural, desirable and right—persons who will give up their freedom and national citizenship and become part of a global cabal believing they are doing the right thing.

### **SEL assessments**

Through continual data collection, assessments, and surveys, SEL measures how well each student is meeting the objectives of the radical program described above. Students' answers to these non-academic surveys will be reported as "competencies" and will become part of the

student's permanent record. These assessments violate student's privacy rights, and students should be advised that their answers will follow them for the rest of their lives.

For example, CASEL emphasizes that students will be assessed on "empathy," which in the SEL context means, as mentioned above, the acceptance of LGBTQ activities as well as their support of transgenderism. This ultimately means support for the administration of gender-changing hormones and sex-change surgeries on minors.

The [Rand Corporation](#), a firm that designs surveys for measuring SEL outcomes, says its surveys will measure attitudes and beliefs along with emotional stability and the like. Because these surveys will be required to be based on the "equity" standards of SEL, they will measure the students' progress on concepts like "group consciousness," and adoption of "global citizenship," as well as the students' "beliefs" (i.e., religious and moral values).

Expect the surveys to monitor agreement with "sustainable development" and other major doctrines of cultural Marxism. Students not aligned with these "competencies" can be subjected to "extensive interventions" to bring them up to speed. And if this process follows typical Marxist practice, non-conforming students will be denied most opportunities for success of any kind.

The powers of darkness typically come to us disguised as angels of light. We need to recognize that we have been deceived. We have been deceived on man-made climate change. We have been deceived on the history and proper treatment for the Covid-19 virus. We have been deceived in being told that the vaccines are "safe," even for pregnant women and children. Not true. (It's not surprising that the FDA has rescinded its approval for both the Moderna and Pfizer Covid-19 vaccines.) We have been deceived about elections supposedly being honest and fair. They are not. We have been deceived about the January 6<sup>th</sup> protesters supposedly conducting an insurrection. Not true. We have been deceived about children being able to decide what gender they want to be. Not true. We have been deceived about the medical profession being trustworthy. No longer true. We have been deceived about the FBI and Department of justice being honest. Not so. We were deceived about the Hunter Biden laptop being Russian disinformation. Now even the *New York Times* admits it's authentic. We have been deceived about the Hippocratic Oath (do no harm) being followed, and about the Nuremberg Code (no drugs without informed consent) being upheld. No longer true. We have been deceived about Ukraine winning the war with Russia. Not happening.

We have been deceived about the disparities between the races in academic achievement supposedly being primarily due to racism. But liberal scholar, Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, determined that [these disparities exist because of a lack of fathers in the home](#) due to



government welfare policies and medical policies that discriminate against married people. Dafoe-Whitehead found that **when you adjust for fatherlessness in homes, the racial disparities in academic achievement largely disappear. CRT and SEL are sold on a falsehood.**

When it comes to Social and Emotional Learning, we have been deceived once again. We have been lied to again. And why? What is this really all about? It is this: Just as the global warming hoax with its Green New Deal was never intended to benefit our planet, so also SEL was never intended to benefit our students. Both agendas, along with many others, have been advanced to bring about the creation of a utopian global government where all nations and all people are subject to elite globalists. Throughout history there have been many who have tried to rule the world. Why should we expect our time to be any different?

Is it possible to have a Christian form of Social and Emotional Learning? No. Christian schools are being misled. SEL and Christianity are opposites. All schools that are using SEL are being misled. Cultural Marxists are skilled in manipulation. Cultural Marxists believe there is no morality, no right or wrong, no Ten Commandments. Don't expect them to tell the truth about anything—including SEL.

### ***Authors***

*Allen Quist is a former 3-term Minnesota state legislator and retired professor of religion and political science at Bethany Lutheran College. He is a retired adjunct professor of Christian apologetics at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and has authored ten books on education and Christian apologetics.*

*Julie Quist is Board Chair of [Child Protection League](#).*

*The Child Protection League (CPL) is committed to promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from exploitation, indoctrination, and violence. We educate citizens on issues that protect or threaten the safety of children.*