



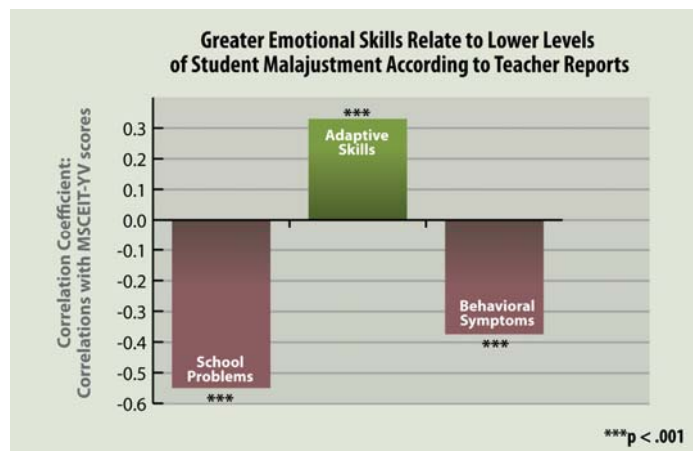
Emotional Literacy: Research and Results

The researchers at the Health, Emotion, & Behavior (HEB) Laboratory, Department of Psychology, Yale University have been studying the impact of emotions on our daily lives for over two decades. Accumulating research indicates that the ability to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions is critical to optimal functioning in adults and children. Peter Salovey, director of the HEB Lab, along with Jack Mayer referred to these abilities as “Emotional Intelligence.” The emotional literacy and curricula grew out of scientific research on emotional intelligence.

Evidence is quickly accumulating that performance on tests specifically designed to assess emotion abilities is related to a wide-range of important social behaviors in multiple life domains. The Mayer-Salovey-Caruso-Emotional Intelligence Test, Youth Version (MSCEIT-YV) is a performance test that measures adolescents’ ability to effectively recognize and manage emotions in themselves and to respond and affect the emotional states of others. For example, adolescents with higher scores on this test (those with higher emotional intelligence) report better quality friendships. In contrast, adolescents with lower scores are more likely to engage in maladaptive behaviors such as consuming drugs and alcohol, stealing, and fighting. Additionally, teachers rate students who score higher on the emotional intelligence test as having more social, leadership, and study skills; being less aggressive, anxious, and hyperactive; and having fewer conduct and learning problems¹.

In a study of 175 fifth and sixth graders, higher scores on the MSCEIT-YV correlated significantly with many indicators of schools success¹. For example, students with higher emotional intelligence scores had higher grades across all subject areas. They also held more positive attitudes towards teachers and school in general, and they showed fewer clinical symptoms, such as mood swings, anxiety and stress. Students with lower scores on the MSCEIT-YV have more problematic emotional symptoms (more anxiety and depression; lower self-esteem) and more negative interactions with peers. Students with lower emotional skills also reported more positive attitudes towards risk taking behaviors like fighting, smoking cigarettes, and drinking alcohol. Researchers conclude that there is a strong connection between school success indicators and emotional intelligence.

These results are supported by a large body of research indicating that limited emotion knowledge (e.g., inability to recognize emotion accurately, lack of understanding about the causes and consequences of emotion) is associated with numerous maladaptive outcomes among children, including depression, anxiety, violence, drug and alcohol use, destructive relationships, and poor academic performance²⁻⁸. On the positive side, students who are *emotionally literate*—those who can recognize, understand, label, express, and regulate emotions effectively—tend to be psychologically healthy, socially adept, and good performers in school^{2,9}.

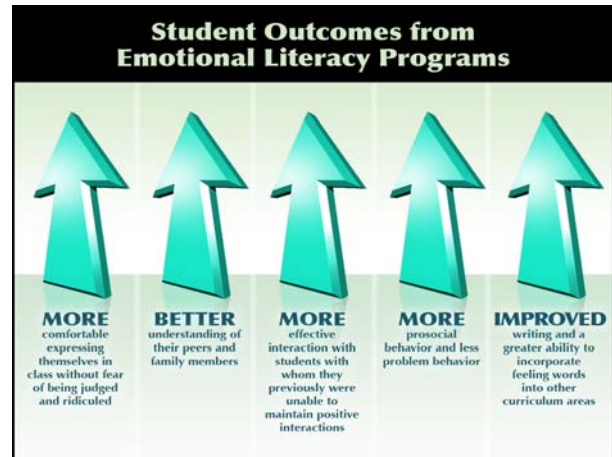


IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL LITERACY PROGRAMS

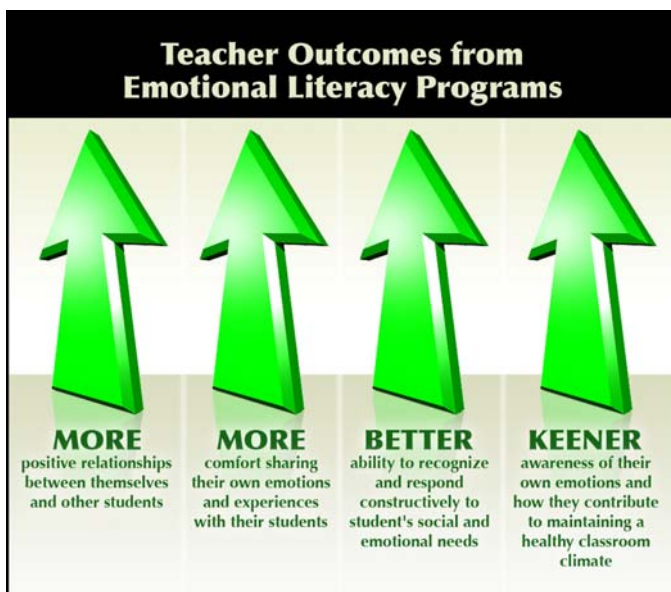
Teachers and students who have participated in emotional literacy programs designed to develop emotion skills and teach knowledge associated with emotions report a wide range of positive results¹⁰.

Teachers who are using the emotional literacy curriculum in their classes report that their students:

- appear more comfortable expressing themselves in class without fear of being judged and ridiculed;
- express a better understanding of their peers and family members;
- interact more effectively with students with whom they previously were unable to maintain positive interactions;
- demonstrate less problem behavior and more prosocial behavior;
- write better across the curriculum; and
- apply concepts from emotional literacy to other subject areas.



A recent experiment showed that after just four months of program involvement, students who participated in the emotional literacy program (as compared to the control group) were rated by their teachers as: a) being less anxious, depressed, and hyperactive, and b) having stronger leadership, social, and study skills. Importantly, the students in the intervention group as compared to the control group also had higher end-of-year grades in reading, writing, and work habits¹⁰.



Teachers using the program also report:

- more positive relationships between themselves and their students; and
- more comfort sharing both their own emotions and their experiences with students;
- a better ability to recognize and respond constructively to students' social and emotional needs; and
- a keener awareness of their own emotions and how emotions affect the classroom climate and student learning.

The effects of teaching the curriculum on teachers is particularly important given research indicating that teacher's emotions influence both teacher's and student's cognitions, motivations, and behavior.

Teachers, like their students, need to be emotionally literate in order to deal effectively with the spectrum of emotions and stressful situations they experience both inside and outside of the classroom. Emotionally literate teachers are better equipped to face the challenging aspects of their jobs, such as dealing with difficult parents and frequent disruptions from students. Not surprisingly, emotionally literate teachers also are more adept at creating a warm, supportive classroom climate. For example, students who believe their teachers care about and support them exert more effort, are more motivated and engaged in the classroom, and are more likely to adhere to classroom and school rules and norms¹¹⁻¹⁴.

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