

Building a Culture of Care

Schools cannot underestimate the profound impact Covid-19 has had on students. Now, more than ever, it is important to build a “Culture of Care” within school communities to support both students and staff. For more than a decade a many educational institutions have focused on building capacity in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies with varying degrees of success. SEL is a comprehensive approach that supports students in acquiring the skills, attitudes, and tools needed to make responsible decisions, build and maintain supportive relationships, demonstrate empathy and establish a strong sense of self. Research indicates a strong correlation between SEL competencies and improved classroom behavior and academic achievement (CASEL Research, n.d.). To foster a true culture of care, SEL needs to be approached in a thoughtful and organized manner through an aligned, age-appropriate curriculum. Dedicated time must be allocated in the timetable for skills embedded throughout the curriculum to be explicitly taught and reinforced across all academic and co-curricular areas. This session will introduce the process Vienna International School is currently undertaking in evaluating and revising its SEL program. This session will also share friction points in comprehensive SEL curriculum development and implementation as well as strategies for overcoming these. Social emotional learning resources and learning engagements that can be immediately implemented into classroom practice will also be provided.



J. Eileen Rueth, is a National Board Certified Teacher, with an MA+30 in Education. With over 20 years of teaching experience, she has served the last 11 years in international schools. Eileen currently serves as the Deputy Principal (Pastoral) and Child Protection Lead at Vienna International School (VIS) and previously worked in both Kuwait and China. Throughout her career, she has held a variety of teaching and leadership roles, including activities director, Model United Nations coordinator, student life coordinator and athletic coach. Within all of these positions she has primarily focused on developing positive relationships with students and supporting them in a social emotional capacity as they navigate transitions through elementary school to graduation. To that end Eileen has attended diverse Social Emotional Learning (SEL) trainings, including The Greater Good at the University of California at Berkeley and multiple child safeguarding trainings through the Council of International Schools. She has collaborated extensively with the Institute for Social Emotional Learning (IFSEL) Sea Change Mentoring to strengthen its mentoring program and also partnered with the Vision Systems Impact Collaborative in creating a comprehensive secondary school SEL framework and scope and sequence for its pastoral program. Eileen serves as CIS visiting team member and is currently pursuing her SEL Leadership certification with IFSEL.