

SPOTLIGHT



—Alyssa Schukar for Education Week

Teacher Perry Hollins listens to one of his students talk about how he works through emotional situations in his life. Hollins, a 4th-grade teacher at Oakton Elementary School in Evanston, Ill., teaches his students social-emotional competence by helping them learn to redirect feelings of injustice toward positive actions. Also pictured are students Jace Meeks, left, and Iman Bell

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

EDITOR'S NOTE

As schools embrace social-emotional learning, educators are integrating strategies into their lessons. In this Spotlight, see how teachers are using SEL to prepare students for civic engagement, how teacher-prep programs are addressing students' relational skills, and how social-emotional learning can better serve students of color.

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Social-Emotional Learning Has Long-Lasting Positive Effects on Students, Study Says

By Evie Blad

Programs that teach students how to recognize their emotions, solve problems, and form healthy relationships may continue to show positive benefits for students months, or even years, after they complete them, a new meta-analysis finds.

Students who completed social-emotional learning interventions fared better than their peers who didn't participate on a variety of indicators—including academic performance, social skills, and avoiding negative behaviors like drug use, finds the analysis, which examined follow-up data from dozens of published studies on specific interventions.

The meta-analysis builds on previous research that found social-emotional learning participants outperformed their peers academically. That research is frequently cited by policymakers and educational leaders who are seeking to promote social-emotional learning programs, through which schools teach students about emotions, relationships, and conflict resolution alongside traditional academic subjects like math.

The report, published in the journal *Child Development*, was completed by researchers from the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, or CASEL, Loyola University, the University of Illinois at Chicago, and the University of British Columbia. It was funded in part by the NoVo Foundation, which also supports *Education Week's* coverage of social-emotional learning.

"This study further solidifies the already powerful case for action—for a significant shift in how we think about education and the urgency of scaling evidence-based programs that unite head and heart," CASEL Chair Tim Shriver said in a statement. Shriver is also co-chair of the Aspen Institute's

National Commission on Academic, Social, and Emotional Development, which is working with educators and researchers to set an agenda for advancing social-emotional learning and similar approaches in schools.

How did the analysis work?

A meta-analysis is a review of existing, published research that looks for larger trends.

In this particular meta-analysis, researchers reviewed results of studies on 82 school-based, social and emotional learning interventions that were universal, or administered to all students instead of focusing on those with specific social or behavioral problems. Those studies involved 97,406 students, kindergarten through high school, from a variety of racial and demographic backgrounds. Thirty-eight of the interventions studied took place outside of the United States. To be included in the review, studies had to include follow-up data from at least six months after the interventions were completed.

Researchers tracked follow-up results in seven areas: social-emotional skills, positive attitudes, positive social behavior, academic performance, conduct problems, emotional distress, and drug use.

Not every study in the analysis included follow-up results from each category, so researchers worked with the ones that did, creating an index to compare students who participated in social-emotional learning programs with those in control groups who did not participate.

In the eight studies that measured academic results an average of 3.75 years later, participants in social-emotional programs performed about 13 percentile points higher than their peers in the control group, they found. Academic results were based on grades and test scores drawn from academic records.

They found participants similarly outperformed control group peers in all of the other areas, many of which were covered by a much larger number of studies in the analysis.

Social-emotional learning programs were more likely to have long-term positive effects if participants showed immediate gains in social and emotional skills at the end of the initial intervention, researchers found.

And the programs don't seem to work only for wealthy, white students. "Significant positive effects" were found across all demographic subgroups, the analysis says.

So what does this mean?

The analysis suggests that, in addition to their immediate effects on student behavior, SEL programs may have



Students in a 4th-grade class at Oakton Elementary School in Evanston, Ill., listen during a social-emotional learning discussion.

long-term preventative benefits. Perhaps students who've been given targeted instruction in areas like smart decision-making, forming healthy relationships, and goal setting learn to apply those skills in other areas of their lives. That may mean they are less likely to make unhealthy decisions related to drugs and other risky behaviors.

But there are some limitations. As I mentioned previously, not every study included results for every indicator. Many of the studies included in the analysis relied on students to self-report the follow-up data, which may lead to some inaccurate

results. And many studies also didn't provide detailed breakdowns of results by race and poverty level.

And researchers were unable to determine what components of the social-emotional learning programs made them more or less effective. For example, were the classroom programs in the analysis coupled with broader changes to school policy, like less punitive approaches to discipline?

So the analysis' authors find hope in their results. And, unsurprisingly, they suggest there's room for more research on the subject.

Should schools use this analysis as justification for adopting SEL program X? Not necessarily. Advocates for social-emotional learning say not every product that is packaged as SEL meets their standards for evidence-based programs.

And those advocates also increasingly support a broader approach. Even schools with evidence-based programs need to work to change bigger, systemic factors, like how their teachers approach their work, how they discipline students, and how they interact with families, they say. ■

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Harnessing Student Emotions In Service of a Cause

By Brenda Iasevoli

Students in Perry Hollins' 4th grade class at Oakton Elementary School, 12 miles north of Chicago, at times have trouble managing their anger. They might have arrived at school with home troubles on their mind, or they may have gotten into a dispute with a classmate on the playground.

"They're not trying to get on adults' nerves," said Hollins. "They are just trying to figure out their world and their place in it, and they rely on teachers to guide them."

Hollins has several ways of helping his students deal with these issues without veering from the curriculum. One of them is through analysis of conflicts in literature. His students read the graphic novel *March*, by John Lewis, the congressman and civil rights leader, who writes about the fight to end segregation through nonviolent sit-ins at lunch counters. Hollins said the book can teach students how to use their anger over injustice as an impetus for positive change.

Take the moment when the young Lewis character in *March* defies his mother and goes to school rather than remain at home to help out on the farm. Hollins said his students were surprised the boy had disobeyed his mother. But

they also recognized the injustice of Lewis' predicament. That sparked a conversation about getting into "good trouble." In this scenario, Hollins suggested asking: How does the character solve the problem? Could he have done something better? What would you have done?

Like many other teachers of language arts, social studies, and math, Hollins is using social-emotional learning, or SEL—teaching students to manage emotions, make responsible decisions, build relationships—to turn everyday lessons into preparation for civic engagement. The goal is to get students to reflect on their emotions and to deal with them in productive ways. A reading or math lesson can teach students to see their personal challenges as part of a wider struggle, where people work together to bring about change, what these teachers call social justice.

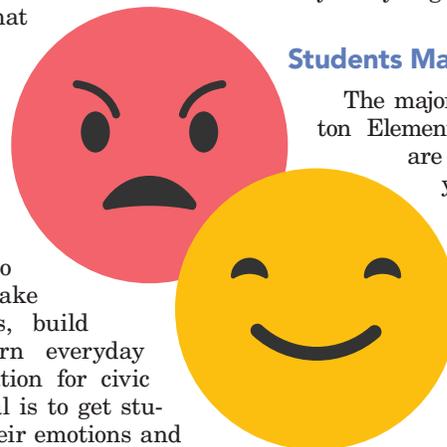
Such self-reflection doesn't have to be intimidating.

"Discussing books and analyzing characters are ways for me to bring out social-

emotional learning in a safe way," said Hollins. "Students don't necessarily have to deal with their own emotions directly. Without the risk of feeling exposed themselves, they are learning to work out conflict by analyzing the characters' actions."

Students Make a Stand

The majority of students at Oakton Elementary in Evanston, Ill., are poor and black. Each year since 1999 when the first black men's basketball coach at Northwestern University was killed in a hate crime in neighboring Skokie, the community has held a demonstration called Stand Against Hate. This year, Hollins' students were inspired by *March* to create banners that read "Black Lives Matter," "Pride is Power," "End Racism," and "MLK Should Be Here Today," which they held up outside their school. Then they devised action plans to address changes they wanted to see in their neighborhoods, such as placing cameras and guards in local parks to keep children safe.



“We can have a lot of confidence in the effectiveness of these approaches [to social emotional learning],” said Linda Dusenbury of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL, a research and advocacy group. “The research shows that social-emotional awareness can be weaved effectively into academics.” She pointed to the results of 213 separate studies that have shown improved academic outcomes in the form of increased test scores, as well as a reduction in discipline referrals, improvement in social-emotional adjustment, and reduced anxiety.

Janna Moyer stresses that none of these social-emotional teaching techniques should be dismissed as group therapy. As the Social Emotional Learning specialist at Procter Hug High School in Reno, Nev., Moyer helps teachers of all subjects to guide students into considering multiple perspectives when analyzing an issue and to develop communication skills that will help them positively interact with others. “We’re not just talking about emotions,” she said. “We are developing skills that kids need in a career, in their adult relationships, as voters and as citizens.”

Developing Self-Efficacy

The goal of Moyer’s speech and debate class is to teach students how to make themselves heard. Her students follow legislative bills, including one that would impose time limits on the testing of rape kits, and then analyze the various arguments for and against. Students have even testified at legislative hearings in favor of bills they supported.

The majority of students at Procter Hug High are Hispanic, and the entire student body receives free lunch. They feel they get stereotyped because their neighborhood is not the best in the area, according to Moyer. So the students decided to work on improving the neighborhood’s image. Their ideas included placing recycling bins alongside trash cans at bus stops, something they’d seen in higher-income neighborhoods. They also suggested better lighting for an area where witnesses of a shooting could not make out the license plate of the getaway car and a mural to dress up a plain wall. The students wrote up their ideas and presented them to the City Council, which promised to do a walk-through of the area in need of lighting.

“Afterwards, the kids felt a sense of self-efficacy that, ‘Hey, the mayor listened to me about what I thought my neighborhood needed,’” Moyer said. “They offered solutions, and the council was open to their ideas, and they learned that self-efficacy isn’t whining. It’s about having a sense of control over what you want to see happen.”



It’s that sense of control that math teacher Kelly Boles wants to impart to her students in her statistics class at Betsy Layne High School in rural, eastern Kentucky. Boles also co-leads a Teach For America-sponsored online course on the edX platform called “Teaching Social Justice Through Secondary Mathematics.” She teaches students to respond rationally to data that

provokes strong emotions, without immediately responding with arguments. She does so by having them focus on the wider implications of data. It’s making math relevant, but the ultimate goal is to get kids to start asking certain questions of the data that ultimately could lead to civic action.

The concepts taught in statistics are often abstract and difficult for students to grasp or relate to, Boles said. But when she presented data sets on gross domestic product and life expectancies for various countries, her students immediately saw the relevance and began asking interesting questions.

“Instead of talking about x and y variables, students started talking about GDP and life expectancy, and ‘Why does this country have such a high life expectancy per capita relative to other countries, and why is this one so low?’” Boles said. “Standard questions look at the lengths of the wings of a particular type of fly. That is hard for kids to have real interest in. But when you talk about life expectancy or labor or slave labor, even if they don’t identify with it, they latch onto it as something that is real about their world.”

Students analyzing the data noticed that as GDP increased, so did life expectancy. They wanted to know what that meant. They did research and found that richer countries have more medical resources. That finding led them to ask more questions: “How is it fair that a child my age in a poorer country might live 20 years less than I will?” These are the kinds of questions that may well lead to civic action, and not because of the teacher’s prompting but through students’ own analysis, Boles said.

Students asking questions about fairness and equity—that’s the sign of a healthy mind, according to Hollins. He stresses the imperative of teachers helping students get there, to become fully actualized adults.

“If we really want to produce mentally stable, healthy citizens, we have to make room for social and emotional learning,” Hollins argued. “Students bring all of themselves into the learning experience, and teachers can’t just say, ‘Keep those emotions on hold.’ That would invalidate [students’] experience.” ■

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Teachers Lace Academics With Relationship Skills

By Evie Blad



—Ramin Rahimian for Education Week

OAKLAND, CALIF.

In Susannah Young's 2nd grade classroom, the first step in a student's writing process isn't a rough draft; it's a conversation with a peer.

Students explain their ideas to a partner, respond to questions, and push each other to more fully explore their thoughts before they put them down on paper.

Young, who teaches at Oakland's Lincoln Elementary School, developed the approach through an unusual professional development experience designed to help a cohort of Oakland teachers integrate social-emotional learning strategies into their teaching of traditional academic subjects, like reading and math. In sessions led by faculty from Mills College, a liberal arts school in Oakland, the Mills teacher scholars each select one instructional practice as a focus area, spending at least a year improving it through guided inquiry work.

Inquiry is basically a structured, reflective conversation through which

Zolboo Bayarnyam talks with a fellow student about the effects that words and acts can have during morning circle time in teacher Susannah Young's 2nd grade class.

listeners help guide their peers and challenge their thinking. Teachers in the cohort meet weekly with their school peers and monthly as a large group for open-ended, reflective conversations and to review student work and videos of children interacting in their classrooms.

They pay close attention to how students' emotions and peer interactions affect their learning. For example, one teacher focused on helping students have productive conversations about math problems, developing strategies to help them talk through disagreements about how to find a solution, and how to explain their reasoning.

"I really feel like the most powerful part of it is that it's starting with what's happening in your classroom," Young said. "Not what's supposed to be

happening, not what the curriculum thinks should be happening. What's actually happening."

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning involves nurturing students' interpersonal and behavioral skills through a variety of educational strategies. Around the country, more schools are experimenting with social-emotional learning, buoyed by research that correlates it with positive outcomes, like academic gains and reduced disciplinary incidents. Employers have also pointed to so-called "soft skills" as desirable traits for future employees.

Young's inquiry work, which focused on classroom writing workshops, led her to bring more peer interactions into the writing process as a way of separating the act of conceptualizing an essay from the work of writing it out. She got the idea after she interviewed students about the purpose of the workshops and got answers revealing some students' misunderstanding of why writing matters. "We do writing workshops to help improve our handwriting," one boy told her.

"The purpose of writing was not clear to him," Young said. "That really changed my thinking in a dramatic way."

The process she devised improves students' academic work, she said, and it leverages skills they've learned through the Oakland district's social-emotional learning strategy, skills like how to listen, how to relate to the experiences of their peers, and how to provide feedback.

Schools that promote comprehensive social-emotional learning focus on three strategies: changing school climate through areas like discipline and family engagement, direct instruction of research-based social-emotional learning curriculum, and incorporating a social-emotional learning approach into traditional classroom work.

Districts that have committed to the strategy, including Oakland, say weaving social-emotional learning strategies into everyday classroom practices can be the most challenging. Strategies are still developing, and when the work feels like a fad, or a new, top-down mandate, teachers are less likely to "buy into it," school leaders say.

Most teachers are also coming to classrooms from schools of education and other pre-service programs that did little to address social-emotional learning, forcing them to learn on the job, according to a

recent survey of U.S. teacher-preparation programs by researchers at the University of British Columbia.

While social-emotional learning advocates emphasize concepts like prioritizing student discussions over teacher lectures, strategic thinking over a narrow focus on the correct answer, and giving students a chance to learn from their mistakes through productive failure; many teachers have never had such classroom experiences in their own K-12 educations, said Carrie Wilson, the executive director of Mills teacher scholars.

'Adult SEL'

That's why many refer to the program's inquiry process as "adult SEL," the shorthand for social-emotional learning. Before teachers in the program commit to the vulnerable experience of sharing their work with their peers, they have discussions about what they need to learn and how they can help each other meet their goals, Wilson said.

"Our theory of action is that in order for adults, teachers, and principals to be able to provide certain types of learning experiences for students, they have to be able to have those experiences themselves," she said. "When you look at the opportunities for adults in schools to really engage in that type of experience, what we hear from teachers is that they are really few and far between."

The Mills teacher scholars program partners with Oakland and five other districts in the San Francisco Bay Area, leading cohorts of teachers who are focused on a range of academic subjects and teaching areas.

Oakland's cohort, which focuses specifically on social-emotional learning implementation, is made up of about three K-12 teachers from each of five "learning hub schools," including Lincoln, where district leaders are trying new strategies to improve their social-emotional learning approach.

District leaders hope those teachers, who have now participated in the Mills cohort for three years and serve as instructional leaders, will eventually be able to lead the teachers at their own schools in similar inquiry work on-site. It's part of a larger strategy to expand a deeper understanding of social-emotional learning districtwide.

Oakland is one of 10 largely urban school districts that have partnered with the Chicago-based Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional



Teacher Susannah Young leads the morning circle time with her 2nd grade students at Lincoln Elementary School.

Learning, or CASEL, to implement comprehensive social-emotional learning strategies and to allow researchers to study their results. Each of those districts—which also include Atlanta, Cleveland, and Anchorage, Alaska—has taken its own approach.

Oakland created social-emotional learning standards that outline age-appropriate strategies for developing relational and cognitive skills at each grade level, from pre-K to high school. In an unusual move, those standards also apply to the adults working in its schools.

The standards focus on the five competencies that CASEL emphasizes in its definition of social-emotional learning: self awareness, self management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decisionmaking. Every school in the district is required to adopt a research-supported social-emotional learning curriculum that teaches students about skills such as how to recognize and respond to a peer's emotions and how to resolve conflicts.

The challenge for teachers is helping students recognize how they are using those strategies throughout the day, including in their academic work, said Sonny Kim, a program manager in the Oakland district's office of social-emotional learning.

"We wanted to give teachers space to work this out," he said. "In the classroom, you can think of the teacher as the unit of change. How do we support teachers in really understanding how to teach social-emotional learning? Also, how does it become part of what they do?"

Peer conversations can be a valuable tool for teachers, helping them evaluate their approach and identify successes, Kim said. And teachers can also help each other recognize their own biases and identify the learning needs of specific students, he said.

'Focal Students'

That's especially helpful in Oakland, where a mostly white teaching staff teaches racially and ethnically diverse students, Kim said.

For example, at Lincoln Elementary School, which is located in Oakland's Chinatown neighborhood, students are largely from Asian immigrant families. Traditional cultural motifs like dragons hang in the hallways, and school leaders send notes home in both English and Chinese.

Every teacher in the Mills program watches how changes in strategy affect a small group of "focal students," to look for success. Those students may be of varying skill levels or students with particular needs, such as English-language learners.

Malia Tayabas-Kim, a Mills participant who teaches 2nd grade at Oakland's Garfield Elementary School, chose two English-language learners and two higher-level native speakers for her focal students when she completed

her first inquiry, which focused on academic discussions of books.

“I would observe them on the playground and see how can they have these conversations that go on forever about Pokémon or basketball ... And I thought, how can I get them to use that in an academic setting?”

After observing their classroom discussions on video with her Mills peers, she realized she needed to help students understand what an academic conversation actually looks like, and how to ask good questions and provide feedback. She had students complete “fish-bowls,” sitting in a circle around two peers to observe their discussion. And she provided “scaffolding,” posters with conversational prompts and questions.

“They could see it, hear it, practice it constantly, and internalize it,” Tayabas-Kim said.

This year, her inquiry focuses on teaching her students to ask their classmates for evidence to support their opinions. That work hones students’ academic skills of analytical thinking and reading, and it relies on social skills like how to handle disagreements and how to have constructive conversations, Tayabas-Kim said.

After students mastered asking one another for evidence, she extended the lesson further, helping them identify what makes good evidence and why they should ask for it.

She saw the effects of her work when she witnessed two students discussing a book called “Why Do Puddles Go Away?” The girl who read the book responded to her partner’s prompts for evidence by referring back to diagrams as she carefully explained how condensation works.

The inquiry work helped Tayabas-Kim recognize things she might not have noticed in those peer interactions, she said.

“Being able to share my inquiry, having people listen and ask questions,” she said, “has moved my thinking forward.” ■

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Teacher-Prep Slow to Embrace Social-Emotional Learning

By Evie Blad

As social-emotional learning gains traction in schools, many teachers are coming into their jobs unprepared to develop students’ skills in areas like self-awareness and navigating relationships, advocates say.

That’s because many teacher-preparation programs don’t provide enough training on how to identify the skills students need to be successful, and how to teach those skills, they say. Some states have also been slow to adapt teacher-licensing requirements to the reality that a growing number of schools and districts are exploring or implementing social-emotional learning.

Developing students’ abilities in understanding their emotions and making responsible decisions is accomplished through a combination of direct instruction, incorporating those skills into academic work, and changes to whole-school factors like discipline policies and family engagement.

“It’s important for teachers to learn how to specifically identify social and emotional competencies that are important for their students to have and to learn how to systematically develop them,” said Roger Weissberg, the chief knowledge officer of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL. “This does not necessarily come naturally to people.”

While a majority of states include at least some social-emotional-learning competencies and whole-school factors in teacher-certification requirements, very

few teacher-prep programs address such issues in mandatory coursework, according to a report by researchers at the University of British Columbia that was prepared for the collaborative.

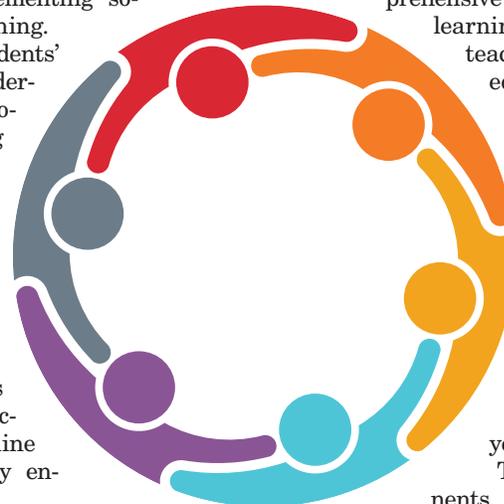
Advocates for social-emotional learning point to research showing that the approach can help boost students’ academic performance and that employers are increasingly seeking recruits with strong relational and emotional skills.

Lack of Familiarity

Leaders of school districts using comprehensive social-emotional learning programs say teachers’ lack of knowledge can make implementation difficult. That’s particularly true in schools with high rates of teacher turnover, where training teaching staff in a consistent, long-lasting strategy can be difficult as classrooms turn over between school years, they say.

That’s why proponents of social-emotional learning have set their sights on the teacher pipeline as they scale up the work at the state and district levels.

The University of British Columbia report assesses all states’ teacher-certification requirements in three areas. The first is whether those requirements address working with students on five social-emotional learning competencies identified by CASEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Researchers looked for mentions of those concepts and associated terms



as they relate to students. The second is whether there were mentions of those concepts as they relate to teachers' own social and emotional development.

In the third area, researchers explored whether would-be teachers are required to learn about issues related to students' "learning contexts": coordination across school departments and between classrooms to meet the needs of students, school-community partnerships, school-family partnerships, and social-emotional learning in the classroom context.

Researchers found that 27 states have teacher-licensure requirements that address four or five of the competencies. All 50 states and the District of Columbia addressed at least one area of "teachers' SEL" in their certification; just 10 states addressed four or five of the competencies. Researchers found that 42 states addressed all four areas of the "learning context."

State-by-State Look

But those state requirements weren't always reflected in mandatory coursework in teacher-prep programs, the researchers found. They explored a sample of 30 percent of programs in every state, weighted for each state's ratio of public-to-private programs.

In 14 states, a majority of the programs reviewed addressed three of the

five social-emotional learning dimensions for teachers. In the rest of the states, a majority of the programs addressed fewer of the competencies. Researchers did not identify any state where the majority of teacher-prep programs they reviewed covered more than one of the student social-emotional-learning skills.

The majority of teacher education programs in 18 states addressed between one and three of the four "learning context" dimensions. Only in Ohio did a majority of programs reviewed by researchers address all four areas of the learning context. (The research was supported by the NoVo Foundation, which also helps to support coverage of social-emotional learning in *Education Week*.)

After seeking input from deans of schools of education, the report recommends more social-emotional-learning research that relates specifically to teacher preparation.

It takes thoughtful work to shift the offerings of a teacher-prep program, said Nancy Markowitz, the director of the Center for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child at San Jose State University in California. Eight years ago, Markowitz worked with the university's teacher education faculty to infuse a social-emotional-learning approach into coursework.

Professors explored how to teach teacher-candidates to nurture their own

personal and relational skills while also developing them in students. They devised strategies, such as how to teach children the "self talk" they need to get through the sometimes defeated feelings of solving a difficult math problem, and how to greet every student at the doorway in the morning as a means of quickly assessing their readiness to engage in class.

"My belief has been that you've got to start upstream at the beginning," said Markowitz, who added that she's seen many programs come and go in schools. "Unless it's built into the way people think and approach their work, it's not going to be institutionalized."

Now the whole-child center is piloting a program to help spread its social-emotional-learning strategies to other colleges of education, a process that requires time, flexibility, and a commitment to collaboration among faculty, she said.

As more states adopt standards for social-emotional learning and add related concepts into such areas as accountability and teacher evaluations, Markowitz expects teacher-preparation programs will have greater incentive to incorporate the concept into a greater number of courses.

When it comes to social-emotional learning, she said, "the university has been left out of the equation in terms of implementation of change." ■

COMMENTARY

Published July 19, 2017, in *Education Week's Global Learning Blog*

5 Ways to Support Social-Emotional Learning In the 21st Century Classroom

By Heather Ridge

Students who feel better about themselves, their relationships, and their ability to constructively contribute to their community perform better academically and socially at school.

This data, collected by a review of over 300 studies, would surprise no educator, anywhere.

As global educators, we observe firsthand the qualitative impact that a sense of wellbeing and a positive mindset can

have on educational outcomes. Fortunately, recent attention to the quantitative research on social-emotional learning (SEL) has provided many schools with a framework to help.

What is SEL?

Social-emotional learning is defined as the skills used to understand and manage our own emotions, and recognize and show empathy for the emotions

of others. This concept arose in the mid-1990s from research around emotional intelligence. Current research has been investigating how these skills and processes can be developed in the classroom to help students establish positive relationships, set goals, and undertake responsible decision making.

In their "Effective Social Emotional Learning Programs" guide, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), cited five core competencies that can be developed through classroom instruction and student en-

agement to support SEL. Below, we explore how these might be crosswalked into best practices for global competence.

1. Self Awareness

“Self awareness” is described as a student’s ability to accurately recognize their own thoughts and emotions and understand how these might influence their behavior.

One of the core components of global learning is the opportunity to weigh perspectives. To do this, we ask students to recognize their own biases and world-views and explore how those might influence their observations about the world around them.

Developing a safe space and process for students to explore their own unique strengths and interests can happen in a variety of ways in the classroom. Individualized education plans or portfolios can help to house different activities students curate to “know thyself.” Assessments are great starting points but only become meaningful with reflection and application throughout the content over time.

As global educators, we can bring this personalized knowledge through extension by starting a project with a strengths-based approach, or using it as a way for students to reflect on a learning experience in any content area.

2. Self Management

“Self management” reflects the student’s ability to successfully regulate their emotions and behaviors in different situations.

As global learners, we invite students to investigate the world around them and explore situations outside their everyday experience. In doing so, they expose themselves to questions and challenges beyond their comfort zone from a variety of sources. Creating time to talk about this process itself, and the vulnerability they may feel about researching problems that have no “right” answer, is an opportunity for growth.

3. Social Awareness

“Social awareness” champions the ability of the student to take the perspective and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

At its core, this is the ultimate rationale for global learning, isn’t it? While content knowledge is still critical, it’s this skill that allows students to know some-

thing about the world around them. As an educator, I’ve been guilty of spending more time trying to connect my students with classrooms across the world than with other students across their classroom.

The importance of empathy has been linked to everything from business to career success and has a huge impact on the ability of students to form successful relationships throughout life. It provides them with the curiosity needed to ask meaningful questions about the world and a solid platform for critical thinking around real-life challenges.



4. Relationship Skills

“Relationship skills” addresses the student’s ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse groups and individuals.

Global competence requires a student be able to communicate ideas to a variety of audiences. We may do this in small

group projects and design challenges or class presentations to give students an opportunity to express themselves. While speaking and listening are part of our language arts standards, students also must navigate new forms of relationships in their worlds, such as those through social media. Additionally, previously inherent inter-generational relationships are becoming less common as communities have fewer opportunities to engage across generations. What are we doing to help students cultivate skills to keep them safe in the digital world and stay connected in the real one? Simple adjustments to the way in which we ask or evaluate how students are communicating can help build relationship skills.

5. Responsible Decision Making

“Responsible decision making” highlights the student’s ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms.

Globally competent students feel empowered to take action. For many of us, the evidence that learning took place in our 21st-century classroom is that some action occurred as a result of student inquiry. The ability to take action comes from the confidence and actualization that is built into the process of investigating the world, weighing perspectives, and communicating ideas. When students are given the opportunity to practice these global competencies in your classroom, their ability to make responsible decisions outside your classroom increases as well.

There are many compelling reasons to embed social-emotional learning into classroom practice, and a recent cost-benefit analysis provides one more. In a 2015 report, researchers from Columbia University released data showing the return on investment in SEL programs to be 11 to 1 across six different interventions they investigated. This return on investment could be calculate in terms of lower drop-out rates, reduced mental health costs, higher wage outcomes, and reduced need for public services.

While teachers have long shared anecdotal evidence of the long-term benefits of SEL, recent data presents an excellent opportunity for making it a priority this coming school year. ■

Heather Ridge is the dean of students at Boulder Universal school in Boulder, Colorado.

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COMMENTARY

Published June 19, 2017, in *Education Week*

Why Are Schools Still Peddling the Self-Esteem Hoax?

Social-emotional learning is rooted in 'faux psychology'

By Chester E. Finn Jr.

The longtime Democratic lawmaker John Vasconcellos is resting in peace since his death in 2014, but the educational disaster he laid on California in the 1980s is far from gone. Indeed, its likeness thrives today across a broad swath of America's K-12 schooling, supported by foundation grants, federal funding, and both nonprofit and for-profit advocacy groups. Only its name has changed—from self-esteem to social-emotional learning.

If only the trend had stayed in the Golden State.

Younger readers may not remember Vasconcellos, the late assemblyman and state senator whom one obituary described as a "titan of the human-potential movement." In 1986, Vasconcellos managed to persuade California's conservative GOP Gov. George Deukmejian to support a blue-ribbon task force to promote self-esteem and personal and social responsibility. The ensuing hoopla loosed a tsunami of enthusiasm for building self-esteem as a solution for almost everything that ails an individual, including low achievement in school.

The task force's final report, in 1990, ascribed (as I wrote at the time) "near-magical powers to self-esteem, characterizing it as 'something that empowers us to live responsibly and that inoculates us against the lures of crime, violence, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, child abuse, chronic welfare dependency, and educational failure.'"

Yes, Doonesbury cartoonist Garry Trudeau and others made fun of the trend, but the self-esteem movement had legs, and not just in California (where, reportedly, more than 80 percent of local school systems launched programs to promote it after the report's release). New York state's education commissioner and board of regents picked up on the trend and tucked self-esteem into the mandate

and recommendations of their own task force on inclusion. Endorsements of the task force's report came from such eminences as Bill Clinton, then the governor of Arkansas; first lady Barbara Bush; and retired U.S. Army Gen. Colin Powell.

What gave strength to those legs was the assertion that a panel of prominent scientists at the University of California, having examined all relevant studies on the relationship between self-esteem and major social concerns, had validated the task force's findings and recommendations. A quarter-century later, an investigation published this month by *The Guardian* newspaper claims that none of this was true. According to journalist Will Storr, the determined Vasconcellos had first browbeaten the university to engage a platoon of scholars by suggesting the damage he could do to its budget, over which he had control, and then—even more astonishing—radically reframed a key quote to bolster the scientific credibility of his cause.

The professors found that the correlation between self-esteem and its expected consequences—though positive in a few areas, such as academic achievement—were fundamentally "mixed" or "absent." To hide this truth under the rug, one task force member told *The Guardian's* Storr, a more positive report was published first. The task force member termed it the kind of lie that can only be described by a four-letter expletive.

Today, few people talk explicitly about self-esteem or other kooky curricular enthusiasms of the past, but the worldview and faux psychology that impelled them have never gone away. Of late, they've reappeared—and gained remarkable

traction—under the banner of social-emotional learning, which claims to build the ways by which children learn and apply skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, make decisions effectively, sustain positive relationships, and practice empathy.

The notion has attracted much buzz, thanks in part to its very own advocacy organization—the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, or CASEL—which is backed by many high-status funders across the country. The National Education Association climbed aboard as well. Social-emotional learning also enjoys a high-profile national commission under the aegis of the Aspen Institute.

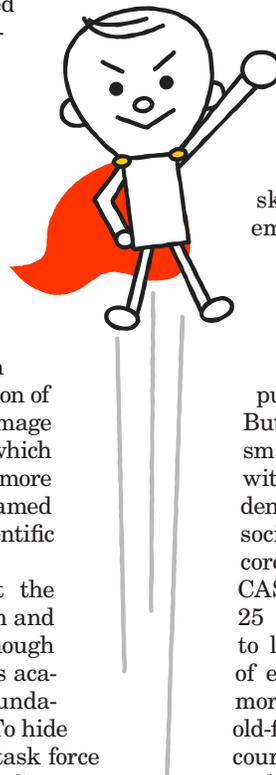
Adding fuel to the social-emotional-learning bonfire is its recent association with hot-button issues, such as reforming school discipline into restorative justice. Another major push comes from the federal Every Student Succeeds

Act's encouragement of states to include school quality in their rating systems, with school climate as a key metric in many jurisdictions. Another current education enthusiasm, known as 21st-century skills, also contributes to social-emotional learning's popularity.

There's nothing exactly wrong with many of these ideas, some of which partake of legitimate performance-character traits such as impulse control and self-discipline. But social-emotional learning also smacks of the self-esteem mindset, with entries such as "self-confidence" and "self-efficacy." Dig into social-emotional learning's five core competencies, as laid out by CASEL, and you'll spot—among 25 skills students are supposed to learn—just one feeble mention of ethics and none whatsoever of morality. You won't even find such old-fashioned virtues as integrity, courage, or honesty, and certainly nothing as edgy as patriotism.

Though its partisans will contest the point, social-emotional learning does not seem intended to build character in any traditional sense, nor is it aimed at citizenship. It's awash in the self, steeped in the ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, values, strengths, and limitations.

All good things, up to a point, but note how far they are from the traditional ob-



ligation of schools to impart academic skills and knowledge. Think how many other vehicles American society has for advancing social-emotional concepts—the Girl Scouts, religious youth groups, Little League, swim team—while we have essentially no others that will teach children to read, write, or compute.

Like Mr. Vasconcello’s self-esteem edifice, social-emotional learning will almost surely turn out to have no real scientific foundation—just a lot of much-hyped “qualitative” and “anecdotal” studies that nobody could replicate via gold-standard research. Indeed, those who are still sentient a quarter-century later may well

read an exposé of social-emotional learning by a journalist, perhaps containing another telling quote that one isn’t supposed to utter in front of one’s students. ■

Chester E. Finn Jr. is a distinguished senior fellow and president emeritus of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

COMMENTARY

Published July 7, 2017, in Education Week Teacher’s Special Report: Social-Emotional Learning: It Starts With Teachers

‘Is Social-Emotional Learning Really Going To Work for Students of Color?’

By Dena Simmons

As a black educator, trainer, and researcher in the field of social-emotional learning, I am often asked, in confidence, by teachers and school leaders: “Is this SEL program really going to work for my students of color?” I continue to be taken aback by the question and wonder about its genesis, especially since we know from research the benefits of school-based, social-emotional learning for students: improved attitudes and behaviors, better relationships, and increased academic performance.

But deeper reflection leaves me feeling conflicted. On the one hand, I recognize the good intentions of educators and their desire for all students to be successful. I also know, from my own experiences as a student and former middle school teacher, that good intentions do not always lead to good results.

The inquiring educator may rightfully suspect that her students of color need teaching and curricula that are responsive to their life experiences. Yet, the question implies that her students need something more, something remedial, in order to be reached. As such, the question inadvertently positions the student as the problem. It highlights the incomplete narrative that children of color are in need of some intervention to save them from themselves. It further reveals the educator’s implicit bias—the unconscious stereotypes about groups of people that drive behavior and decisionmaking—

and the need to create and teach social-emotional learning programs within a culturally relevant context.

Without also changing the teaching behaviors, curricula, and school policies that can be assaultive to our students, particularly students of color, incorporating social-emotional learning into teaching will not be enough. Students of color suffer more adversely than their white peers on nearly every measure of well-being—educational, social, financial, emotional, and physical—which impacts them in the long run. As such, there is an urgency to expand the definition and practices of social-emotional learning to ensure that we serve all students more effectively and equitably.

To do so, we must teach and create social-emotional learning content within an equity literacy lens. This means educators should be able to identify inequity and make an effort to create just learning for all students and their families. It will take concerted efforts across financial, educational, health, and political sectors to create equitable school environments for students of color, but educators can begin now by implementing the following practices:



Flex your self-awareness muscles to understand your power, privilege, and unconscious bias.

Self-awareness, or the ability to recognize how emotions and experiences influence behavior, is important for teaching that puts equity and justice at the forefront. As educators, knowing how our identity positions us in a classroom, a school, and the larger community helps ensure that we are not missing opportunities for meaningful connections with our students and their families or inadvertently abusing our power and privilege, especially if we have different backgrounds from our students.

For example, I once had a student steal a phone from another student. When I suggested to the student's mother that she buy a replacement phone for the other student, she cursed me out. "That's easy for you to say," she said. Though I was shocked, she was right. While I had grown up poor in a single-parent home in the Bronx borough of New York City like many of my students, I now had access to social and cultural capital, and came across as insensitive to the mother, who struggled financially. I failed to reflect on how my status as an educated, now middle-class black woman was perceived within a school located in one of our nation's poorest districts.

Regardless of our background, we can benefit from constantly practicing a keen awareness of our values, emotions, thoughts, and identity. Peggy McIntosh, a scholar on white privilege at Wellesley Centers for Women, suggests reflective statements that can help educators become more aware of their privilege to mitigate unintended harm toward students. And psychologist Robert C. Weigl recommends an eight-step process to support self-study, including describing your ancestry and historical roots and the personal characteristics that are valued by your culture.

Part of this self-awareness must include deliberate reflection on our implicit biases, which can negatively affect student engagement and academic performance. Mindfulness meditation, the moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, and sensations, is one effective strategy for reflection. In particular, a 2014 study from researchers at Central Michigan University found that loving-kindness meditation, which includes discussing and cultivating love and compassion toward oneself and others, increases social connectedness and reduces bias.

Make social-emotional learning instruction and programming meaningful for students.

School-based social-emotional learning programs have the potential to shift the climate and culture of our schools, but they do not always guarantee that students will apply the skills they learn at school to their lives outside the classroom, especially if those skills seem irrelevant to their realities. About half of the nation's public school students are youths of color; yet, only 18 percent of the teaching force is teachers of color. Though rarely discussed, most of the social-emotional learning curricula—like much of the education curricula in the United States—is based on dominant white, Western, and individualistic culture. This exclusion likely contributes to a student-teacher disconnect, imposing on students of color a particular set of values and beliefs about behavior, conflict resolution, relationship-building, and decisionmaking.

For example, the emotional education that students receive at school can differ from what they receive at home. Students often learn at school that to show respect, you must look adults in the eyes. Yet, in Asian, Latino, and African cultures, direct eye contact is considered disrespectful. When we teach students that there is one right way to do something, it can send the message that what's done at home is wrong. Being aware of the different ways certain cultures display emotions, for example, can prevent us from sending students the message that they are inferior for being who they are.

To begin to make social-emotional learning instruction meaningful, allow all students a safe space to critique and to explore the differences of navigating the world at school and at home. What might arise is an opportunity to teach students about code-switching—altering the ways one speaks or behaves depending on a given context—so they can learn that there are multiple ways to be acceptable. Another way to make social-emotional learning instruction relevant to students is to invite them to be a part of creating the curricula. This input can create a safe environment where students feel free to discuss what is happening in their lives and problem-solve around difficult topics like white supremacy, racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of injustice.

Build relationships with students, their families, and their community.

Getting to know our students, families, and communities beyond who we believe they are allows us to humanize them and challenges our biases about them. When we build relationships with the students, families, and communities we serve, we not only understand the barriers that marginalize some groups of people and not others, but we also can work in partnership with them toward equity instead of believing we are the sole saviors.

To get to know students, use surveys throughout the year to learn about their hobbies, home lives, academic strengths, areas of academic growth, social circles, favorite foods, and so on. When I was teaching middle school in the Bronx, I took my students out to lunch for one-on-one time and went to recess and gym class with them. By making time for them inside and outside of class, we learned so much more about one another. When we commit to knowing our students well, we allow each student's uniqueness to shine through. Building relationships with our students also contributes to students feeling more connected to school, which is a preventative factor against risky behaviors and increases students' likelihood of academic success.

For families, conduct a survey or call home to learn more about them and how you can partner together throughout the year. Establishing communication norms will allow you to share information in ways that are salient to your students' families and avoid potential misunderstanding. If possible, translating materials for non-English speaking homes can facilitate better communication. Unfortunately, current school-based SEL programs are mainly in English, and this is an area of growth needed to make programming more accessible to non-English-speaking school communities.

Understanding the larger community outside the school is also important, as there are community assets teachers can leverage to support the social, emotional, and academic development of students. I recommend a community-development approach called asset-mapping, which involves taking inventory of religious, political, economic, social-service, and health institutions, as well as the leaders in the community. Once you know what's available, you can devise an action plan for how you will use local resources to extend learning beyond the four walls of a classroom.

Whether or not a social-emotional learning program is really going to work for students of color depends not on students' ability, but on the work we are willing to do to ensure that our instruction, curricula, and school policies value and honor our students of color. As educators, we must recognize and respond to the subtle and not-so-subtle inequities that hinder student success. If we teach social-emotional learning in ways that ignore equity, we will woefully fail our students, particularly our most disenfranchised. ■

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