Social-Emotional Learning... and Life Success

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Starting Strong SUMMIT
Working Together for Early Social Emotional Development

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Outline

1. What are key SEL skills in childhood?
2. What do we know about their long-term role in children’s success?
3. What works? What can we do to foster them?
4. What are the challenges we face?
Punchlines...

1. What are the skills, actually?
   They are more than willpower, grit, and perseverance.

2. What do we know about their long-term impact?
   They play a central, perhaps the most central, role in key life outcomes.

3. What works? What can we do to foster them?
   Model, teach, practice, and discuss.
What are the skills &
What do we know?
Lots of interest and excitement...

Why it’s (long past) time for social emotional learning

More educators embrace social and emotional learning, national survey says

Stay focused

School reform

What if the Secret to Success?

Janine Francolini | Posted 08.26.13

Social

New research on Jan 19th 2013 | From the

The New York Times

Magazine

7 traits kids need to succeed

Character traits include grit, self-control and social intelligence


Can Emotional Intelligence Be Taught?

Rupert Murdoch’s Tablet Takeover

By CARLO ROTELLA

A disruptive idea for how to educate America.

This Is What Anger Looks Like

By JENNIFER KAHN

Can emotional intelligence be taught?
What are the skills?

- Cognitive Regulation/Executive Function:
  - setting goals, planning & organizing, transitioning, memory, attention

- Interpersonal Skills/Social Competence:
  - expressing & identifying emotions, regulating emotions & behavior, perspective-taking

- Emotional Competencies:
  - understanding social cues, resolving conflict, cooperating

Jones & Bouffard, 2012
**Skills in Concrete Terms**

- **Cognitive Skills/Executive Function**
  support children’s ability focus, pay & sustain attention, and use memory for planning and problem solving

- **Emotion Skills**
  help children understand & manage their emotions (e.g., frustration, anger, fear) so that emotions do not inhibit learning

- **Social Skills**
  enable children interact positively with teachers and peers, facilitating supportive and cooperative learning environments, and minimizing adult & child distractions related to social interaction
SEL skills emerge and change over time

EMERGE FIRST and GROW SIGNIFICANTLY – provide foundation for cognitive, emotion and social skills and behavior; continue to grow throughout childhood and adolescence.

1. Cognitive Domain
   - Cognitive Flexibility
   - Response Inhibition
   - Attention Control
   - Working Memory

2. Cognitive Domain
   - Planning, Organizing, Setting Goals
   - Empathy & Perspective-Taking
   - Understanding Social Cues

3. BECOME MORE SOPHISTICATED
   - Pro-social & Cooperation
   - Conflict Resolution

EMERGE NEXT – these skills build upon earlier skills as children get better at using them in new ways; increasingly used to support academic and social goals.

1. Emotion Domain
   - Emotion & Behavior Management
   - Emotion Knowledge & Expression

2. Social Domain
   - Basic Social Engagement

(Jones & Bailey, 2012)
Executive Functions improve dramatically in preschool/preK years coinciding with growth in the prefrontal cortex

(Center on the Developing Child, 2011)
The Payoff of People Skills

In a mechanized world, wages and employment are growing fastest in jobs where social skills and teamwork are primary (David Deming, NBER, 2015)

In childhood... 20-30 years later...

- Academic Skills
- "Non-Academic" Skills
- "People Skills"
- Social Competence
- Self-Control

- IQ, Grades
- Standardized Tests

- Labor Market Success
- Higher Education
- Physical Health
- Low Substance Use
- Personal Finances
- Low Criminal Offending

But, does SEL programming work? **YES**: 2011 meta analysis says...social-emotional skills=.57; Academic outcomes=.27 (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011)
We also know...

1 in 5 children growing up in poverty have **increased risk for social-emotional difficulty** (Evans & English, 2002; Evans, 2004)

Children who experience early adversity are more likely to exhibit **challenges with executive functioning and self-regulation** (Gunnar, 2000; Bos et al, 2009)

- The chronic fear, anxiety, and stress associated with unpredictable or chaotic environments can disrupt brain architecture, particularly those involved with executive function and self-regulation.
What about interventions?
What works?
Effective Approaches to SEL

Include two coordinated strategies:

1. Instruction in processing, integrating, and selectively applying social and emotional skills in developmentally, contextually, and culturally appropriate ways.
   • taught, modeled, practiced, discussed

2. Establishing safe, caring learning environments involving peer and family initiatives, improved classroom management and teaching practices, and whole-school community building activities.
   • instruction happens in a context that fosters the skills
Both are maximized if...

• The program is SAFE:
  – **S**equenced (step-by-step approach)
  – **A**ctive (dynamic forms of learning)
  – **F**ocused (spend sufficient time)
  – **E**xplicit (learning goals are clear)

• There is a **direct focus on and supports for adults.**
Three Types of Effective Approaches

- **Preschool PATHS (and Second Step, Als Pals, etc.):** includes structured lessons designed to teach children ways to think about emotions and responses to peers in social interactions.

- **Tools of the Mind:** promotes children’s intentional and self-regulated learning through structured make-believe play activities.

- **Chicago School Readiness Project (and Incredible Years):** address classroom management and teacher-student relationships as *levers* for changing both social-emotional/behavioral and pre-academic outcomes.
What is common to effective curricula?

**Exposure** (Modeling)
- Adults and peers who model the language and skills across environments

**Explicit Instruction** (Teaching)
- Children’s literature
- Skill-based activities
- Puppet dialogues

**Opportunities to practice** (Practice & Discuss)
- Routines and games
- Prepared role-play
- Real-world experiences as they arise as key context for learning and applying SEL skills

I feel __________ because ______.

(My name) (period)
Approaches Focused on Classroom Management/Stress: Spotlight on CSRP

Teacher training and in-room coaching in:
  • effective classroom management
  • managing stress
  • building relationships

Randomized study conducted in Head Start. Children now followed through to 10th grade.
Impacts on CLASS, end HS Year

SOURCE: Raver, Jones, Li-Grining, Metzger, Champion, & Sardin (2008), *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.*
NOTES: Significance levels are indicated as * p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.
Impacts on EF, Self-Reg, Pre-Ac Skills (end HS)

![Bar Chart]

SOURCE: Raver, Jones, Li-Grining, Zhai, Bub, & Pressler (2011), Child Development.
NOTES: Significance levels are indicated as * p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.
Effects of CSRP treatment on child BPI Externalizing scores. Dots represent point estimates; lines represent their 95% confidence intervals.

Mediating Processes: e.g., Pre-Ac Skills (during HS)

**Model Fit Statistics**

$\chi^2 (df) = 103.24 (40)$,
$p < .001$
CFI = .885
RMSEA = .051, ns

SOURCE: Jones, Bub & Raver (2013), Early Education and Development.
NOTES: Significance levels are indicated as * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$. 
What do we know...

• We can improve children’s social and emotional skills via curricula.
• We can improve children’s behavior and early academic skills by supporting teachers to manage behavior and stress in the classroom.
• Key underlying pathways are child/adult regulation and the quality of relationships.

• What if we SUPPORT teachers in classroom and stress management, and BUILD skills directly with children?
An Organizing Framework

1. Building High-Quality Relationships:
   - Establishing high-quality relationships with students is a key feature of classrooms that promote social-emotional and self-regulation skills.
   - High quality relationships are characterized by interactions that are:
     - Warm and emotionally supportive (talk about feelings, don't punish children for having them);
     - Involve positive feedback and encouragement (give praise for hard work and positive behavior — affirm all students);
     - Predictable and consistent (expectations are clear, daily schedule/routines are familiar and comforting);
     - Ultimately about getting to know your students... (safe place to try something new and make mistakes).

2. Daily Routines and Structures:
   - Routines and structures are critical because they ensure that SEL occurs across the school, throughout the day, in predictable ways.
   - What are Routines?
     - Recurring, predictable, expected events or times of day (greeting/arrival, Morning Meeting, transition to recess/math, lining up to wash hands, walking in hallways, end of day/departure);
     - Typically occur during unstructured time and serve as key opportunities for independent, un-mediated interactions with peers.
     - Routines provide lots of opportunities to practice.
   - What are Structures?
     - Anything in the room that supports you and scholars;
     - Reminders, tools, and specific techniques:
       - Visual mediators, pictures, posters
       - Physical manipulatives
       - A place in the room (Thinking Spot or Cool-Down Corner)
     - Structures are part of the day and part of the room.

3. Activities and Lessons:
   - Teaching specific strategies through discrete activities and lessons is another key feature of classrooms that promote social-emotional and self-regulation skills.
   - Activities and lessons go beyond having a strategy or poster on the wall:
     - Ideally, they follow a scope and sequence for the year;
     - They involve intentional instruction in social-emotional and self-regulation skills and situations (REACH; Pump Up Plans);
     - They actively teach using small group modeling, role play, children's literature, puppet dialogues, time for exploring scholars’ questions via real inquiry and dialogue;
     - They return to these ideas many times. (It takes a long time to master these skills! And new situations require re-learning...)

4. Targeted Scaffolding:
   - Targeted scaffolding moves you from a universal approach (strategies, routines, etc.) to something more specific in order to meet individual scholars’ needs.
   - Targeted scaffolding:
     - Draws upon high-quality relationships (need to know the scholar, what s/he can do, what s/he is struggling with, and why);
     - Draws upon a deep understanding and knowledge of the skills, what they look like and how they progress (getting specific about what aspect of self-regulation is causing the problem...what does a learning progression look like, identify discrete and incremental steps);
     - Asks us to provide students with gradually more challenging demands, while slowly decreasing reliance on external supports
     - This is where the strategy meets the kid!

Jones, Bailey, & Partee (2015); Harvard Graduate School of Education; Do not circulate
Conscious efforts to mitigate external pressures

Targeted Supports for Adults

Opportunities for building community

School-wide guidelines, rituals, and problem-solving strategies; predictability across micro-contexts

High quality relationships among adults in a school building

Opportunities to practice self-regulating and managing emotions.

Jones, Bailey, & Partee (2015); Harvard Graduate School of Education; Do not circulate
What are the challenges we face?
Existing interventions frequently (like fads) address one domain of academic skill or one aspect of child development.

Reform efforts are not typically two-generational; they lack direct and specific attention to adult skills and knowledge.

Early childhood practices (in this domain +) are not often data-driven.
A dilemma...

Environment characterized by young children’s physical and emotional turbulence

Environment taxes educator’s S/E & regulation skills

Children’s S/E & self-regulation depends on educator’s consistent modeling & teaching (in face of turbulence)
## Integrated Instruction, e.g.,…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy Instruction</th>
<th>PRINCIPLES</th>
<th>Social-Emotional Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...in meaning-based and code-based skills</td>
<td>Provide direct instruction...</td>
<td>...in emotion management, social skills, and attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... for discussing academic concepts and questions</td>
<td>Use rich texts as a platform...</td>
<td>... for promoting emotion language development, self reflection, and empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...of words and how they work</td>
<td>Cultivate Consciousness...</td>
<td>...of our own feelings and the feelings of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...to build language and reading skills</td>
<td>Increase classroom talk...</td>
<td>...to build cooperation and conflict resolution skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...to support instructional cohesion across classrooms and grades</td>
<td>Use consistent routines and language...</td>
<td>...to reduce chaos and minimize anxiety, create common social norms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Workforce Development & Support Plan

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Collection and use of assessment data and information

Connected Coaching

An Integrative Perspective on Early Childhood with Regulation as Central Focus: *The Rigorous and Regulated Learning Environment* (Jones & Lesaux)
Miss Kris’s preschool class is studying a unit about things that grow. Kris has just finished setting up containers of seeds, soil, and water for today’s science activity station. “Finish cleaning up and walk to the rug. It is time for morning meeting,” Kris announces. She watches as Jayden walks boisterously toward the rug, his hand knocking the big container of soil to the floor. The other children step through the dirt screaming, “Miss Kris, Jayden made a mess!” Kris’s head begins to pound; her body starts to feel tense; her heart beats a little faster. She is aware of feeling helpless. She takes a deep breath and lets it out slowly. As she begins to calm down, Kris says, “Some soil spilled in the science area. If you have dirt on your shoes, come over here and I will help you clean it off. Otherwise please head to the rug.” Brushing the dirt off shoes, she says, “Sometimes accidents happen. I know Jayden didn’t mean to knock the soil over, he was just excited to get to our morning meeting.” Jayden looks to the floor. Ms. Kris gives Jayden’s shoulder a gentle squeeze. “Jayden, thank you for helping me clean up the dirt.” Later, as Ms. Kris opens morning meeting, she says, “Sometimes it’s hard when we make mistakes, especially if anyone sees us. When I make a mistake, I sometimes feel embarrassed. Do you feel when you make a mistake? Would anyone like to share?”
# Elements of Effective PLCs

## Structure
- Small group
- Skilled facilitator & teaching teams
- Ongoing, frequent sessions
- On-site

## Approach to Knowledge-Building
- Sessions are:
  - guided by learning objectives to foster $R^2$ competencies
  - interactive, using discussion and dialogue
  - incremental, building off previous sessions
  - part of a long-term plan
  - anchored in meaningful case examples

## Mechanisms for Transforming Practice
- Leaders and facilitators:
  - provide decision-making and leadership opportunities
  - collaborate with educators to identify areas of strength and challenge
  - promote problem-solving and anticipation of roadblocks
  - encourage role-play, demonstration, and practice

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**Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)**

**Connected Coaching**

**Collection and use of assessment data and information**
PLC Framework

1. Notice
2. Reflect
3. Build Knowledge
4. Plan
5. Try

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
Connected Coaching
Collection and use of assessment data and information
Elements of Connected Coaching

“(With) training, you learn so much in one day, and then you forget it. Here we learn something every day and then try it out in the classroom.”

“Connection to Site-Based PD Content & Objectives

Ongoing Observation & Hands-On Classroom Participation

Individualized, Reflective Discussion & Feedback

“Connection to Site-Based PD Content & Objectives

It wasn’t like the coach was there to crack the whip on you, or to observe you and make sure that you were doing everything right. She never gave that feeling. You felt like she was there to help better everything.”

“The activities were based on the classroom observations, not ‘cookie cutter’ activities... they were built around what was actually going on in the classroom.”

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Connected Coaching

Collection and use of assessment data and information
# Using Data for Accountability & Improvement

## Assessments of Formal Child Assessments
- Children’s learning and development across domains, including identifying risk
- Classroom interactions, instruction, and organization

## Assessments of Classroom Practices & Quality
- Curriculum approaches
- Health and safety routines
- Workforce qualifications and training
- Family/community engagement
- Leadership quality

## Setting Level Quality
- Patterns of illness, injury, and behavior
- Implementation of health and safety routines

## Incident Report and Daily Logs
- e.g., injury, attendance, medication, incident

### Data Categories
- e.g., ASQ, TS Gold
- e.g., CLASS, ELLCO, ECERS
- e.g., QRIS, accreditation
Case Example: Data Reflection for Use

After seeing the last child off, Melinda, the director of an early childhood center, sits at her desk and turns back to her quality rating report—the self-assessment is due at the end of the week. She picks up where she left off: Curriculum and Learning. The previous year, she and her teachers examined scores on their classroom observation tool and noticed that one weakness was the level of talk and discussion in the classroom. Understanding that discussion can help build higher-order thinking, the staff agreed to focus on using book reading and extended conversations to generate substantive talk during class time, among children and teachers. They committed time and attention during professional learning community sessions to this often difficult instructional approach and, as observations confirmed, the staff worked daily on increasing classroom talk. Before submitting this year’s classroom observations as documentation to support her self-assessment, she looks over the other areas on the report, to identify additional areas for growth. Next, Melinda moves on to review this month’s daily logs, flipping through the pages of the Incident and Injury Report. She recalls signing off on most, but hadn’t yet reviewed them together. Now, she sees a pattern: A majority of the behavior incidents and injuries occurred following afternoon snack, between 3:30 and 4:00 pm. She pauses, and then realizes that this is during a staffing change...

Self Study

- How do we support educators to interpret and use data such that we improve instruction and interactions?
- Do we use data to reflect on all the critical components of early learning? Do we look at:
  - individual children’s needs, including learning, health, and safety risks?
  - the overall setting, including patterns of interaction, instruction, organization, and children’s learning?
- Do we use patterns in data to guide decisions and improvement plans, including those focused on:
  - structures (e.g., daily routines, staffing, and scheduling)?
  - instruction and classroom interactions?
  - professional development? (briefs 4 & 5)
What we are learning...

TEACHERS...

- Planning steps for implementing classroom strategies
- Adjusting strategies to match the children & context
- Tuning into responses to challenging situations
- Using and teaching calming and de-escalation strategies
- Showing an emerging understanding of how adults’ and children’s responses influence each other in the classroom
- Using books as platforms for conversations and vocabulary learning
- Encouraging children to discuss their feelings

CHILDREN...

Children enrolled in the participating educators’ classrooms demonstrated significantly higher performance on measures of literacy (e.g., alphabet knowledge) and social-emotional skills (e.g., impulse control) when compared to their same-age peers in the setting studied, and to those in other similar settings in the region.

“They tell [each other] stop and think, the two [strategies] that we’ve taught them, the breathing, inhale, exhale, blow out the candles. I find that they tell each other that a lot, especially when one oversteps a boundary.” (Participating R² Teacher)
Summary

• Integration
• It’s Universal, Developmental, & Contextual
  – And we should focus (e.g., developmental pinpointing) – doesn’t need to be (and shouldn’t be) everything at once
  – Requires common experience, language, and practice (across age and place)
• It’s not whether we focus on SEL, because we are already (haphazard, unplanned OR intentional, explicit)
  – In relationships, environment (climate)
  – Necessary to support future success: deeper understanding of subject matter, learn how to think critically, and apply learning to the real world
• We can (and should) support it in the way we do other things:
  – Exposure (and modeling); Instruction; Practice; Adults need supports
END, thank you!
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