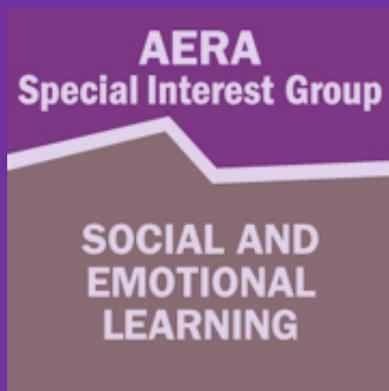


Advances in SEL Research

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Welcome from the Chair, David Osher...	1
Comments from our Editors.....	2
Legislative Update.....	3
Innovative Research in SEL.....	4
New Initiatives, Interventions, and Practices.....	11
International Initiatives.....	18
Announcements.....	21
List of SIG Officers.....	23

VOLUME 8, NUMBER 1

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

Welcome from the Chair, David Osher



We are happy to share the fall newsletter for the SEL Special Interest Group (SIG). Our SIG is now seven years old, and continues to grow. We now have 229 members—our highest to date! Our membership remains diverse and includes scholars, researchers, program developers, graduate students, and practitioners from colleges, universities, and research organizations around the world.

Please share this newsletter with your colleagues and students, and ask them to join so that our SIG can continue to grow among practitioners and policy makers—and become even more diverse. Research- and practice-based knowledge on SEL is growing, as is the appreciation of the importance of SEL among parents, educators, and policy makers. This appreciation of SEL is reflected in policy statements on post-secondary attainment, exclusionary discipline, dropout prevention, youth development and safety, as well as in the many attempts at distilling what we know about SEL and what some, using the language of economists, characterize as “non-cognitive” factors. SEL is being implemented in diverse countries and on every continent except Antarctica (and perhaps there as well,

among adults). It is important that our SIG continues to expand to reflect this growth and we continue to incorporate diverse perspectives on SEL. This is a good time to do so, as our business meeting at the annual convention of AERA will attempt to address the growth of SEL over the past two decades as well as its future.

This edition of our newsletter features reports of current research and practice in SEL conducted by members of our SIG as well as colleagues in China and other countries across the globe. We would like to thank our newsletter editors, Elise Cappella and Meghan McCormick for assembling and publishing this issue—not an easy task. We also want to thank the contributors who took the time to share their important work. We encourage each of you to submit your work for next fall’s edition of the SEL SIG newsletter.

Other SIG News and Activities

Program at the Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL April 2015

Our SIG’s reviewers have now finished their reviews of submitted proposals. We received high quality submissions to our SIG this year, totaling 38 paper and 3 session submissions. Following AERA’s allocations for our SIG and a high standard of submissions, we were able to maximize acceptance of 3 paper/symposia sessions, 13 individual paper

presentations, and 1 business meeting. We sincerely thank all SIG reviewers for their efforts in reviewing this year's submissions.

Elections: Call for nominations

We are currently accepting nominations for three positions on our SIG's Executive Committee, including Chair-Elect, Secretary-Treasurer-Elect, and Program Chair-Elect. Positions are held for three years. Please contact our Communications Chair-Elect, Lorea Martinez (loreamart@gmail.com) as soon as possible if you wish to make a nomination for one of the positions above.

Sincerely,

David Osher, Ph.D.

American Institutes for Research
SEL SIG Chair

Comments from our Editors

Elise Cappella & Meghan McCormick



Welcome to the fall 2014 issue of our SEL SIG newsletter!!! This year and for several years we have received many high quality submissions. Our submissions reflect growing SEL research and practice in the United States and around the world. Although some work is situated primarily in science and other work is situated primarily in practice or policy, these themes are increasingly merged in innovative, feasible, and rigorous ways, as is evident from the submissions below.

Themes across submissions evidence exciting areas of convergence in the SEL field. One clear theme is collaboration. The integration of science and practice in SEL is facilitated when the work is a product of collaborative partnerships, such as those among government and non-profit organizations (e.g., "The Social and Emotional Learning Project in China"), university researchers and school districts (e.g., "Collaboration to Achieve Whole-School SEL..."), teacher educators and teachers (e.g., "Cultivating Pre-service Teachers' Social-Emotional Competence..."), and youth themselves (e.g., "Youth Participatory Action Research ...").

Another theme is schools as complex contexts for social-emotional development. Several submissions highlight the dynamic interrelationships between individual, developmental, and contextual characteristics as they relate to students' social-emotional learning. For example, "Classroom Interactions and Behavioral Engagement" illuminates the importance of high quality teaching practices for students with relational difficulties in the classroom. "Profiles of Conflict in Middle Childhood" suggests the role of parent and teacher support in modifying trajectories of teacher-student conflict for students facing risk.

A third theme is the use of sound and practical assessment and recent advances in technology to provide feedback to teachers, parents, students, and schools on SEL contexts and competencies. Several articles highlight dashboards, "Brain Profiles," "Barometers" and other metrics as a basis for continuous improvement in schools. Other pieces describe apps to support children's acquisition of conflict-resolution skills ("SEL with a Video Game") and announce scientifically grounded and feasible web-based assessment of SEL skills in K-3rd grade students ("SELweb"). The "University of Illinois Early Investments Initiative" describes a statewide effort to increase access to high quality early childhood programs and the role of setting-level measurement of SEL in that effort. Bridging scientifically sound assessment with practical considerations and new technologies promises to move our science and practice/policy to new levels of integration.

Finally, these submissions demonstrate our increasing interest in implementation systems, structures, processes, and outcomes to better understand how to increase the capacity of schools to implement effective SEL programs and practices. This attention to implementation from a practice and research perspective is demonstrated by initiatives at Rutgers ("Strengths-based Assessment of SEL Program Implementation") and by evaluators of the Responsive Classroom Approach ("Using Indices of Fidelity to SEL Intervention Components to Identify Active Ingredients"). Researchers have also highlighted partnerships where data have informed and improved SEL program implementation, as evidenced in "Using Data to Tune into the Emotional Drivers of Learning."

We are struck by the creativity, determination, and thoughtfulness represented in each of these projects, and we appreciate all those who work together to understand and promote social-emotional and academic development among the diversity of children and youth in our schools. Thank you for your contributions and your excellence as we move the field forward. Enjoy the SEL SIG newsletter!

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Legislative Update



The University of Illinois Early Investments Initiative

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Like many other states, Illinois invests considerable public dollars into children's early care and education, and these investments are increasingly coupled with efforts to monitor and improve the quality of such programming. As in other states, the recent implementation of the Illinois *ExceleRate* Quality Rating Improvement System has somewhat outpaced the emerging evidence about the best practices in early childhood education. *ExceleRate* allows centers to achieve a higher level of quality for their learning environments in one of three ways: with the ECERS-R measure, the CLASS measure, or with accreditation from a third party body (e.g., the American Montessori Society or the National Association for the Education of Young Children). In recent years, the Illinois State Board of Education has implemented educational standards for desired child outcomes and teacher practice in state-funded pre-k. As a pioneer state in the establishment of Social Emotional Learning standards (SEL), Illinois preschool teachers are also held accountable to standards for promoting SEL in young students.

However, research into which teaching practices have the greatest impact on children's learning-related skills, including SEL, is by no means complete. The varying requirements in *ExceleRate* and early learning standards, and the differing emphases on SEL-related teaching practices in measures like the CLASS and ECERS-R, likely send mixed messages to teachers, directors, principals, and parents. This fall, researchers from across the University of Illinois campuses have come together to launch a new Early Investments Initiative. The initiative aims to help the state of Illinois -- and its local cities, school districts and communities -- build and leverage research evidence to advance access to high quality early childhood experiences. Led by the Institute of Government and Public Affairs, faculty members from the fields of Psychology, Education, Economics, Sociology, and Human and Community Development are supporting cross-disciplinary and cross-campus networks to foster conversation among the scholarly, practitioner, and policymaker communities. The ultimate goal is improve state and local data-collection efforts, and to make a case for embedding rigorous scientific evaluation into early childhood program initiatives and policy.

The team selected particular projects of focus for AY 14-15, one of which is examining how the state is defining and measuring high quality SEL within *ExceleRate*. The team will evaluate the degree of alignment across the state's early learning standards and professional teacher standards, aiming to identify and clarify potential contradictions confronting policy makers, practitioners and families. The team will also collect pilot data to inform strategies for monitoring the quality of teacher practices in preschool and childcare and author a policy brief focusing on the key issues in high-stakes quality measurement. The initiative is also partnering with the Illinois Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, Chicago Public Schools Office of Early Childhood Education, and Illinois Action for Children, among others, to sponsor a public conversation about innovative strategies to support program quality and children's readiness. Further information about the Initiative can be found at <http://igpa.uillinois.edu/early-investments>. Through the translation of existing evidence about SEL measurement and social-emotional teaching practices, the Initiative team hopes to help

policymakers, practitioners, and communities advance informed early childhood policy, strengthen early childhood programs, and better understand how to best support our young learners.

Innovative Research in SEL



Using Indices of Fidelity to SEL Intervention Components to Identify Active Ingredients

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Of key value to teachers, administrators, and program developers is the ability to detect which components of an intervention constitute critical, or active, ingredients. Knowledge of active ingredients can be used to identify specific SEL practices that promote desired change, optimize existing SEL interventions, and create highly effective integrated SEL interventions that combine active ingredients. In order to identify active program ingredients, however, we must understand the extent to which component parts of an intervention promote targeted outcomes. Measures of implementers' fidelity to intervention core components are useful in this regard; however, effectively identifying active ingredients in this way requires more nuanced indices of fidelity than are typically utilized. In a study recently accepted for publication in the *American Journal of Evaluation*, Abry, Hulleman, and Rimm-Kaufman (2014) used the *Responsive Classroom* (RC) approach—recognized by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning as a comprehensive, evidence-based SEL program—to illustrate how indices of fidelity to individual core intervention components could be used to identify program active ingredients.

Abry and colleagues first created three types of intervention fidelity indices. The first relied on the traditional approach of averaging across fidelity

ratings to create an overall score of fidelity to the intervention, as a package. In this study, *intervention composite indices* were created by averaging all ratings within three separate observed and self-reported measures of fidelity to RC, yielding measures of fidelity to the overall program. The second two approaches were novel in that they isolated implementers' fidelity to individual hallmark RC core components: Morning Meeting, Rule Creation, Interactive Modeling, and Academic Choice. In the first novel approach, fidelity indices for these four core components were computed by averaging responses for like-items across the three fidelity measures (i.e., *core component averaged indices*). In the second novel approach, core-component specific indices of fidelity were factor scores derived from a multitrait, multimethod factor analysis (i.e., *core component factor score indices*). Next, each of the three sets of fidelity indices were used to predict gains on standardized test scores of reading and mathematics achievement among 1,442 fourth grade students.

Using the core component averaged and factor score indices, Academic Choice emerged as an active RC ingredient, contributing to gains in both reading and math scores; students in classrooms where teachers encouraged autonomy to plan, enact, and reflect on the process and content of their schoolwork demonstrated greater academic gains, likely by connecting students to the material and enhancing their engagement in learning. Moreover, the core component indices explained more variance in achievement outcomes compared to the traditional composite indices. Similar patterns of relations among the core component averaged indices and core component factor score indices suggested little benefit in adopting the more statistically complicated factor score approach.

A common challenge faced by school-based SEL implementers is how to best adapt an intervention to suit their students. Yet, in the absence of knowledge of active ingredients, such adaptations risk the dilution or complete exclusion of the most potent components. The results of this study demonstrate how evaluators can use fidelity data (in relatively simple ways) to identify these crucial components, and highlight Academic Choice as an active ingredient of the RC approach predictive of an outcome that teachers, principals, policy-makers, and

researchers agree is important. These findings are important not only for the thousands of teachers using *RC* in their classrooms, but to all those interested in how SEL interventions operate to promote children's learning and development. Perhaps most importantly, this study informs the application of similar methods to other SEL interventions, which can ultimately enhance the effectiveness of existing and future SEL programming. Other information about recent papers from the Responsive Classroom Efficacy Study can be found at www.socialdevelopmentlab.org.

Placing SEL Assessments in the Right Frame of Mind

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Many SEL initiatives, conference presentations and reviewed publications rely on assessment results in the SEL or emotional intelligence (EI) realms. Since the validity of these assessments is critical for sound project outcomes, it is good practice to reflect on the frame of mind within which they are positioned when planning and executing project/research designs.

Mainstream Models of Emotional Intelligence

Just as an important part of intelligence constitutes our emotions, emotions can also be intelligently utilized. Unlike cognition and intelligence, which are historically viewed as synonymous, affect (emotions) and intelligence are recognised as complementary only fairly recently. This acknowledgement of connection makes it possible for more than one mainstream model of EI to co-exist and thrive based on different points of entry: dominantly as intelligence, as emotions, or as some mix of the two.

Ability Model

This model of EI emphasizes the intelligence part of the feeling-thinking duality. Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer are credited as the originators of this model. In collaboration with David Caruso, Salovey and Mayer developed an assessment for their EI model called the MSCEIT (Mayer-Salovey-Caruso

Emotional Intelligence Test). Other, perhaps lesser-known assessments that qualify as adhering to the EI ability model are the EARS, EISC, and FNEIPT.

The authors remarked that EI is a class of intelligence that operates on emotional information and includes the social, practical, and personal intelligences. It entails our capacity to reason about emotions and use emotions to enhance our thought. They developed EIQ as a measurable quotient (compared to IQ) with intelligence as the prominent feature in their four-branch model of EI and in the MSCEIT. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso defined EI as:

“...the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth.”

A commendable feature of the ability model of EI is that this definition is worded to closely resemble linguistic definitions of the terms emotion and intelligence, demonstrating construct purity. Less desirable is that the measurement of EI ability in the MSCEIT is judgemental; correctness of responses determined by consensus opinion of the norm population or otherwise of a panel of experts is graded. Hence, demonstrated EI development using the ability model is geared towards measured compliance of what is deemed correct at this time. Learning is facilitated through the intelligence part of EI. However, since learning is associated with other innate abilities also, one can expect that within this model, most people will not develop their EI to any extreme. If we want to develop and predict behaviour that is emotionally intelligent, we may need to look at situational and other human factors that lie beyond EI if it is purely defined as ability.

Model of Well-Being

This model emphasizes the emotion part of the E-I duality. It acknowledges the link between feeling and thinking as they relate to understanding and behavior. Reuven Bar-On is credited as the originator of this model and associated EQ-i assessment (Emotional Quotient Inventory). The EQ-i had an approximately six-year head start on the MSCEIT, which may have helped to contribute to its popularity as the first and claims as the most validated EI

assessment of note in the market. As a measured quotient (similar to what we know as IQ), the emotion part features prominently and is known as EQ. Other, perhaps lesser-known assessments that qualify as adhering to the EI model of well-being are the TEIQue, EI-IPIP, EIS, and SPTB.

Influenced by early psychometric history, Bar-On's initial concern for and interest in general well-being morphed into emotional-social intelligence as closely tied to the original domains measured by the EQ-i, which he defined as:

“...a cross-section of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills and facilitators that determine how well we understand and express ourselves, understand others and relate with them, and cope with daily demands, challenges and pressures.”

As a model of well-being, Bar-On contends that by necessity, EI combines with other important determinants, such as cognitive intellectual capacity, biomedical predispositions and conditions, and the realities and limitations of change in and around us. This is a significant qualification and another key driver of the success of the EQ-i. This notion opens the door for accepting self-judged and mirrored 360 observer type measures, also called self-reported measures, wherein Likert-type response scales often feature. It is a measure completed “by the self on the self,” referring to an individual who self-completes an assessment on him or herself on the premise of knowing his or her internal thoughts, feelings and motivations better than anyone else can.

This acquiescence breaks away from the criterion-type measures that are traditions within a cognitive intelligence perspective until now and within ability models of EI. It recognizes that behaviour never occurs in a vacuum, but always takes place in a specific context. A discussion of the one will be lacking, unethical even, without the other. The model of well-being relates to potential for performance; its EI attributes underlie effectiveness and success, but do not necessarily translate directly to performance and competence itself. Standard EQ profiling reveals the journey, not the destination; therefore it can be further developed provided individuals are reasonably self-aware and ready. Each EQ-i attribute is directed at individual accentuation and tendency (as opposed to ability). Only when the EI attributes (and their

associated emotions) are applied effectively in practical contexts, they may be called emotionally intelligent.

Some people think of the emphasis on emotion in this EI model as personality theory repackaged. However, Bar-On was not strongly influenced by scientists working in the field of personality (e.g., Raymond B. Catell, author of the well-known 16PF). Furthermore, EI development programs generally show much larger differences in pre and post measures than what we typically see for personality development programs where change is hard. Personality attributes are often described as traits (as opposed to states, which are not innate and can be further developed).

Overall, validity studies of the EQ-i show moderate correlation with other personality assessments. One meta-analysis shows an overlap as low as 15% between the EQ-i and personality assessments, which is further put in perspective by other studies that show an overlap between the EQ-i and cognitive intelligence assessments of maximum 4%, and an overlap between the EQ-i and EI assessments from other models of 36% at the domain level.

Mixed Models

This model incorporates both intelligence and emotion parts of the E-I duality. Daniel Goleman, who popularized EI, is credited as the originator of this model. The ECI (Emotional Competency Inventory) and its successor, the ESCI (Emotional and Social Competency Inventory), are designed as a 360-degree measure of EI. The ECI, which date of publication fits right in between that of the EQ-i and the MSCEIT, falls in the competing publisher's camp of the latter two assessments. Competition is seen as a healthy development for EI to enjoy an optimal shelf life. Other, perhaps lesser-known assessments that qualify as adhering to the mixed-model approach to EI are the TMMS, SEIS, SUEIT, SEI, EISRS, DHEIQ, TEII, GENOS, etc.

Goleman and Richard Boyatzis expanded the pool of items used in the Self-Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ), which Boyatzis developed to assess management competencies among MBA and executive students of the university where he worked. They used conceptual and logical considerations to try and capture the full spectrum of EI. From here,

Hay/McBer consultants further refined these items according to David McClelland's revision of their Generic Dictionary of Competencies, and added psychometric properties based on other studies and expert opinion. Goleman is also associated with the EIA (Emotional Intelligence Appraisal).

Repeatedly, mixed models are loosely based on the original ability model and Salovey and Mayer's definition of EI and its four broad branches, which then sub-divide into different attribute combinations found in the EI model of well-being or in other psychological models. For example, Goleman's definition of EI is:

“...the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”

While elements of Salovey and Mayer's original definition of EI are evident, Goleman's reference to motivation is based on the psychological construct of connotation (i.e., attitude or will; driving how we act on thoughts and feelings). Mixed-model assessments often use self-judged, Likert-type response scales, while EI attributes are interchangeably referred to as abilities, skills, or competencies. Strong claims of improved performance or leadership, or predictions of success are made, which are aggressively marketed.

Enthusiasm for EI is prominent among proponents of mixed models, which is certainly welcomed. Intuitively, this may sound like the best of both worlds. While clouding of terminology can serve the purpose of prompting theorists to continue honing the purity of their conceptualization, we need to recognize that continued growth of the field of EI depends on thoughtful collective action. To enhance the application value of EI models and assessments, practitioners will do best by ensuring their assessment interpretations stay close to the modeled EI definition within which they work and that the assessments they draw on are rigorous and statistically validated.

Peeking into the Future of EI and SEL

The first two mainstream models solidify affect as an essential scientific anchor within the realm of intelligence; the third strives to help add practical value and market-driven purpose to this foundation. One can expect that existing and emerging front-runners of EI will keep a close look on each other to

responsibly create new development and facilitate growth.

A notable example of this behavior was the timely expansion of the term emotional (intrapersonal, self) to also include the social (interpersonal, others) side, which stems from Thorndike's work in 1920. Many followers responded by adding studies with this complement to EI definitions, assessments and the EI body of literature. This development is also reflected in Educational circles over the past two decades, when the SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) movement was first created and will be aptly celebrated at AERA in Chicago in 2015.

Initially, comparisons of EQ to IQ, thanks to the ability model, were highly impactful and influential and largely established and steered the field of EI through its infancy. Today, the spotlight shining on EI within the well-being model is far from dimming. While well-being received renewed attention under the scrutiny of emotions, it is increasingly being looked at from the perspective of four quadrants: the emotional (heart, belonging), mental (mind, meaning), physical (body, purpose) and spiritual (spirit, hope). Some may see these as facets of multiple intelligences, others may prefer a more interrelated, even holistic take on them in pursuit of wellness, the whole person. I expect these four together spell measured pathways for SEL going forward.

Classroom Interactions and Behavioral Engagement: A Focus on Students with Relational Difficulties

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) may be maximized in classrooms with effective teaching practices and supportive social contexts (Durlak et al., 2011). However, individual students vary in their social-emotional and relational skills, with some students struggling to build and maintain positive relationships with teachers and peers. Given how important teacher-student and peer relationships are to learning and engagement (Dika & Singh, 2002; Roorda et al., 2011), it is critical to understand how to support students with relational difficulties in classrooms.

Building on current literature on classroom social settings (Pianta et al., 2012), we examine the role of teaching practices (emotional support, classroom organization, instructional support) in the behavioral engagement of students with relational (teacher-student, peer) difficulties. Participants included 111 K-5th grade students from 31 classrooms in four urban schools with predominantly Latino and low-income students, recruited as a part of Project BRIDGE, an experimental trial of a teacher consultation and coaching program (Cappella et al., 2012). Multi-informant (e.g., peer, teacher, and observer) data were collected across one academic year to examine research questions.

Aligned with the previous literature, we found that students with more conflictual relationships with their teachers or few social connections to their classmates were less likely to be engaged in classroom academic activities. Extending prior research, however, students with conflictual relationships with their teachers were equally as engaged in academic activities as their classmates with more positive relationships when their classrooms had high quality overall teaching practices (emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support). We found similar patterns for the students with few connections to their classmates. These students were more likely to be behaviorally engaged in academic activities when their classrooms had higher quality teaching practices. These findings are noteworthy as they indicated that students with low levels of support from individual relationships are protected from academic disengagement when teachers create a positive and productive overall classroom environment.

Interventions to improve individual students' relationships with their teachers or peers can be time- and resource-intensive. The finding that students are behaviorally engaged regardless of their personal relationships when they are members of classrooms with high quality teaching practices is important. Universal strategies to improve overall teaching practices, accompanied by targeted strategies to support individual students' relationships, may be the most effective combination of teaching interventions. This combination may facilitate more effective classroom environments for all students, as well as alleviate a negative cycle of poor social-emotional skills and academic disengagement for students with relational difficulties in elementary school.

Youth Participatory Action Research Advancing Social and Emotional Learning with a Social Justice Lens

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) highlights the importance of students' peer relationships for classroom engagement and academic success (Wentzel, 1991). Interventions targeting bullying behaviors and promoting prosocial relations among students have been tied to an improvement in academic scores, and a decrease in delinquent behaviors (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feingerg, 2005). Yet, these interventions often rely on teachers identifying and implementing clear behavioral strategies and expectations for students, and thus may be limited in sustainability, losing effectiveness after students' transition out of the classroom.

Youth Participatory Action Research (yPAR) consists of students engaging as co-researchers and decision makers in some or all stages of the research cycle (Torre & Fine, 2004). This includes identifying a social problem impacting their own personal lives, collecting data to understand the root causes of the problem, analyzing the data, and engaging in action strategies to address the problem (Langhout & Thomas, 2010). yPAR offers the potential for SEL because it helps students develop prosocial relations with each other through the construction of a social justice lens, and active collaborations in promoting setting level changes.

Although many identified benefits of yPAR focus on social action, yPAR can also play a vital role in students' SEL. For example, the research I am conducting in collaboration with a nonprofit around the Youth Research Hub demonstrates how participation in yPAR can contribute to students' SEL. In this project three yPAR classrooms conducting their own projects in three distinct schools were connected within an online platform. On this platform, students shared their successes and challenges, and provided critical feedback to one another. Throughout this process, students engaged in SEL. First, in order to select a particular social problem, students investigated each other's lived experiences by posting photographs and sharing narratives regarding personal challenges. This

process promoted skills in communication. *“When, I read classmates posts, I thought ‘wow’. I mean they just never express themselves like that in class”* (student interview). Furthermore, online communication fostered self-awareness, and perspective taking. *“I didn’t know that they were having an issue with their health class. That really interested me! I took for granted the health classes at my school”* (student interview). Second, students gathered data on a social problem. These data included sharing personal documentation (i.e. poetry, photographs) and gathering information from students and school staff (i.e. interviews, anonymous notes, and surveys) within the online group. In both steps, students developed a skill set in active listening in order to solicit valuable information to guide their action. Third, students analyzed the data, and selected a plan for action applying a social justice lens to identify root causes. By negotiating and working together students developed a strong rapport with one another with the goal of promoting change in their personal schools, and through their peers within the larger school district.

yPAR offers a promising approach for building SEL skills. Future research would benefit from examining potential growth in students’ SEL prior to and after engaging in yPAR. In addition, further research ought to explore the linkages between developing a social justice lens and the exhibition of prosocial skills by children and adolescents.

Kindergarten Contexts for Academic and Social-Emotional Development

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Many children enter kindergarten without the social-emotional and cognitive skills required to succeed in school, particularly children from low-income households (Macmillan et al., 2004). Head Start was designed to provide early academic enrichment as well as social and emotional learning (SEL) opportunities to help close the socioeconomic gap in school achievement; however, gains made during Head Start often dissipate in elementary

school. Researchers have speculated that poor quality classroom and school contexts impede the academic and behavioral adjustment of low-income students after they transition into kindergarten (Lee & Loeb, 1995).

Several studies have demonstrated the importance of classroom supports for SEL and others have explored the impact of school-level adversity, but few studies have examined both levels of context simultaneously. Supportive and well-managed classrooms may promote children’s academics and SEL by providing clear expectations and models for adaptive classroom behaviors, and offer few distractions to interfere with learning engagement (Pianta et al., 2008). Conversely, in classrooms characterized by a lack of supportive teacher-student interactions and poor classroom organization, rates of student disruptiveness and aggression often increase as children model the negative interactions of peers and teachers (Thomas et al., 2008).

Schools vary in the degree of adversity that characterizes the student body, and rates of student poverty and low achievement at the school level may also affect student progress and outcomes. When schools serve many low-income children, they are often located in communities with elevated rates of disorganization and violence, exposing children to stressors that impede learning and social-emotional development (McCoy et al., 2013). Also, schools serving many low-income and low-achieving students often lack the economic and personnel resources to effectively support students, including larger class sizes, compared to schools serving fewer low-income students (NICHD ECCRN, 2004). In larger classes with less adult support, teachers often focus more time on responding to problems that disrupt learning and less time scaffolding instruction for diverse student needs or supporting SEL (Ehrenberg et al., 2001).

There are only modest correlations between classroom teacher-student interaction quality and school-level adversity (Pianta et al., 2002), suggesting that these different levels of classroom and school context may have different effects on student adjustment. This study used latent profile analysis to characterize kindergarten contexts in terms of both classroom teacher-student interaction quality and school-level adversity. Associations between kindergarten context profiles and first grade

outcomes revealed that children in dual-risk contexts (classrooms with poor quality teacher-student interactions in schools with high levels of adversity) demonstrated the greatest aggression and social difficulties. Poor quality teacher-student interactions rather than school adversity levels appeared more strongly associated with academic outcomes.

Elementary school experiences provide additional opportunities for SEL after Head Start and other preschool experiences, and findings from this study suggest that initial kindergarten experiences may play critical roles in setting the trajectory of social-emotional functioning and achievement in later school years. Improving classroom quality may enhance the academic progress of low-income children in elementary school, but additional attention to school-level risks may be needed to enhance behavioral and social-emotional adjustment.

Profiles of Teacher-Child Conflict in Middle Childhood

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Student-teacher relationship quality (STRQ) is well recognized in the literature as an important factor predicting students' social and emotional and academic experiences in school. STRQ is primarily composed of the degree of conflict or closeness between the student and teacher. Conflict in particular has been found to be salient for students' development. Students who experience higher levels of conflict in their relationships with teachers are at risk for increased rates of behavior problems and academic underachievement, both concurrently and longitudinally. Little research has examined the particular student-, family-, and classroom-level characteristics that distinguish students who fall into patterns of higher conflict from their peers who do not, and how distinct patterns of conflict across the elementary grades are associated with behavioral outcomes in middle childhood.

Co-authors and I are preparing a manuscript using data from the NICHD Study of Early Childcare and Youth Development to construct latent profiles of teacher-rated conflict in first through fifth grade. We identified five distinct groups of children with

particular patterns of conflict with various teachers over time: low stable, moderate stable, moderate ascending, high descending, and high stable. We then looked at differences between the groups. Preliminary analyses indicate that the characteristics that distinguished children in the four moderate and high profiles from their peers with stable patterns of low conflict were consistent with the existing literature predicting STRQ: compared to the low group, they were more likely to be male, less likely to have a mother who went to college, had poorer quality home environments in early childhood, displayed higher levels of externalizing behavior prior to entry into kindergarten, and had lower levels of parent involvement, on average. Also, as expected, membership in the moderate and high conflict groups was associated with higher levels of externalizing behavior problems in fifth grade.

Interestingly, ratings of classroom and parent support seemed to distinguish children who maintained stable patterns of moderate or high conflict from those whose conflict with teachers increased or decreased over time. Compared to students in the moderate stable group, students in the moderate ascending group were in classrooms with significantly lower ratings of global emotional support in first, third, and fifth grade. Students in the high descending group had higher levels of parental involvement in first and third grade than those in the high stable group.

Demographic predictors indicate that children with particular demographic profiles at the beginning of elementary are at risk for developing stable or worsening conflictual relationships. However, associations between family- and classroom-level support variables and profile membership suggest that higher levels of support from teachers and parents may have altered the trajectories of conflict for some students at risk. The results of these analyses provide further evidence that social and emotional learning has a crucial role to play in education, and indicates a need to support teachers in creating positive emotional climates in their classroom and involving parents in students' learning.

New Initiatives, Interventions, and Practices



Cultivating Pre-Service Teachers' Social- Emotional Competence via the 5 Dimensions of Engaged Teaching

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Over the past ten years of my 14-year career as a teacher educator in Colorado, I have noticed that teacher candidates are increasingly worried about entering a profession in which high-stakes accountability tests and teacher evaluation systems linked to student academic performance are the norm. These pre-service teachers are already stressed out about the current high-pressure environments of schools and are wondering how they will be able to stay centered and balanced once they become teachers of record and have their own classrooms. Indeed, they are wrestling with how to maintain their “inner core” while working in the context of the Common Core, as Michalec (2013) conceptualized. What might it look like for teacher education programs to help pre-service teachers learn how to negotiate this tension of staying true to their inner selves while the outer demands of the teaching profession tug at them vigorously?

A search of the scholarly literature reveals few publications that report *from the inside* of actual classrooms of teacher educators who are integrating forms of social and emotional learning as part of the pedagogy in their own teacher education courses. Although some publications exist documenting the contemplative classroom practices of higher education faculty in other disciplines (e.g., Barbezat & Bush, 2014), more investigation is needed regarding what is happening in terms of contemplative pedagogy and social and emotional learning *inside* teacher education classrooms. This innovation and related study is designed to do just that.

It is my intention to help pre-service teachers learn that good teaching goes beyond the “what” and

“how” of content and method to the “why” and “who” of purposes of schooling and the question of “who is the self who teaches?” (Palmer, 2007).

Palmer reminds us:

“As important as methods may be, the most practical thing we can achieve in any kind of work is insight into what is happening inside us as we do it. The more familiar we are with our inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching—and living—becomes.” (p. 5)

In an effort to cultivate a more holistic approach to teacher development that aligns with Palmer’s (2007) views, I now introduce pre-service teachers to the framework of *The 5 Dimensions of Engaged Teaching: A Practical Guide for Educators* (2013) by Laura Weaver and Mark Wilding. The five dimensions can be summarized as follows (Weaver & Wilding, p. 13) and apply to teachers as well as their own students:

- *Cultivating an open heart*: “Expressing warmth, kindness, care, compassion,” cultivating relationships (teacher-student and student-student) and trust in the classroom
- *Engaging the self-observer*: Noticing, observing, and reflecting on our thoughts, beliefs, biases, emotions, and behaviors to lead to more conscious actions
- *Being present*: “Bringing attention to the present moment and learning to manage distractions so we can be responsive, aware, focused, and creative in the classroom”
- *Establishing respectful boundaries*: “Respectfully establishing clear and compassionate boundaries for ourselves and with others”
- *Developing emotional capacity*: “Developing emotional intelligence, expanding our emotional range, and cultivating emotional boundaries so we can effectively address a range of feelings in ourselves and others”

My intention is that these five dimensions will offer pre-service teachers concrete tools that they can use to manage the stresses and emotional intensity of teaching in the context of high-stakes accountability testing and teacher evaluation so they do not burn out

and end up leaving the teaching profession like so many novices do.

In alignment with integrating this framework, I added explicit learning objectives to my courses around students developing their ability to reflect on their emerging teaching practice and on their embodiment of these five dimensions. These objectives connect directly to specific teaching standards in Colorado, specifically about reflective practice and establishing a safe and respectful environment for a diverse population of students. Incorporating these objectives helps increase buy-in from students and administrators for this social and emotional learning pedagogical approach.

One way we are working with these five dimensions is through ongoing reflection grounded in the following questions:

- In what ways are these dimensions meaningful to you in your personal and professional lives?
- How would you “rate” yourself on each dimension at this moment in your development?
- How can we deliberately cultivate and develop these dimensions in ourselves? In our students?
- In what situations/contexts have you noticed yourself (or others) demonstrating these dimensions (in class, field studies, conversations, etc.)?
- How can these dimensions help us deepen our understanding and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy and multicultural education?
- How do these dimensions explicitly connect to our prior reading, conversations, and other course activities?
- In what ways do we engage these dimensions in this course as a community of learners?

We are also having group discussions on the ideas in the book chapters and practicing with some of the suggested experiential exercises. For example, to develop the capacity to be present, we often practice mindfulness meditation at the beginning of class time. Students also reflect in writing on what aspects of the text ideas they feel most drawn to and how they might apply the concepts in their own future classrooms. I also ask students to deliberately consider these five dimensions during their field

study interactions and subsequent written reflections. For example, I ask them to consider what reactions and responses they noticed that day in their interactions with particular K-12 students, classmates, or clinical teachers. What happened in their physical bodies when that student would not stop having a side conversation during whole-class instructional time? What thoughts or emotions came up when a student seemed to respond with genuine interest and gratitude when the teacher candidate offered individual help?

Thus far, my teacher education students appear to be responding positively to the infusion of the *5 Dimensions of Engaged Teaching* into the curriculum. One student is so excited about the book’s ideas that she sent her teacher father a copy. Another student is engaging in her own independent inquiry into how to cultivate an open heart with her own students, since she observed that she keeps herself at an arm’s length from a certain group of high school students because of her own fear of not being taken seriously as a teacher. Other students have noted that they now practice observing their own physical and emotional reactions when they hear someone make a disrespectful comment such as an ethnic slur and before they verbally respond.

In addition to collecting students’ written work as documentation of the effects of this innovation, I am tracking my lesson plans and keeping an ongoing journal about our class and field study discussions related to the five dimensions. I also hope to interview pre-service teachers as well to learn more.

The 5 Dimensions of Engaged Teaching represents an exciting resource to foster the social and emotional competence of future and current teachers, especially in this day and age of high-stakes accountability testing and teacher evaluation systems. I look forward to sharing results of this systematic inquiry in the future.

Using School Climate Data to Guide SEL Implementation in Schools

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Extensive research shows the profound impact that having a positive school climate can have on

students' mental and physical health (Thapa et al., 2013). School climate has been shown to affect students' self-esteem, frequency of substance abuse, absenteeism and school suspensions, amongst other outcomes. A positive school climate contributes not only to the well-being of students, but also promotes their abilities to learn (OECD, 2009). Given that measuring school climate is a suitable, data-driven strategy that recognizes the social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of student learning (NSCC, 2014), how can it be used to guide the implementation of SEL programs and interventions at our schools? And how can SEL consultants support this process?

Identifying strengths and limitations in the quality and character of the school's life.

Statistically validated, well designed school climate surveys, like the Educational Vital Signs (EVS) created by Six Seconds, provide schools with valuable information about the level of safety in the environment, the degree of trust and mutual respect amongst members of the community, the level of commitment and drive of different stakeholders, and the general sense of belonging to the school. SEL consultants can help schools analyze and interpret these results by guiding the process of identifying strengths and the potential improvement areas that should be included in the SEL implementation action plan, as CASEL suggests in *Leading an SEL School* (2011). SEL consultants can also support schools by showing how these constructs are linked to the social and emotional development of the students and adults on campus. I worked with a large suburban middle school where trust was an area of concern amongst the adults on campus. Based on the EVS results, the principal made it a priority to improve the time and space her staff had for both formal and informal collaboration, and changed the way school decisions were made and communicated.

Engaging leadership teams in conversations about "why" these things are happening.

Results from the school climate survey will give leadership teams information about "what" is happening at the school. Although this information is the key starting point, school teams should go a step further and reflect on *why* the school might be excelling in certain areas and struggling in others.

During these conversations, school teams should pay attention to both the *rational outcomes* (existing structures, policies, management and supervision procedures, current objectives, etc.) and the *experiential outcomes* (the school's identity and values, the development of relationships, celebrations and appreciations, etc.) that might be hindering and/or enhancing a positive school climate. Since school climate is the product of both the explicitly stated norms, as well as those that are communicated implicitly through the daily experiences in school, reflecting on the *why* might generate difficult conversations. SEL consultants can play a key role in facilitating these conversations and moving teams from identification to understanding, and from understanding to action planning. In my experience, it is very important to model the skills of emotional intelligence for leadership teams during these conversations; the same skills that, as an SEL consultant, I am trying to have the school teach and develop in students and adults.

Creating a data-driven, measurable and sustainable SEL action plan that will meet the needs of students, parents, and teachers in the community.

Research demonstrates that SEL produces beneficial outcomes by helping students and adults develop social and emotional competencies, as well as by creating caring and supportive learning environments (Durlak et al., 2011). These benefits are possible when schools work strategically to embed SEL in the school's culture, from the behavior expectations in the cafeteria to the way staff is being appreciated. When schools create SEL action plans based on school climate results following the two steps outlined above, they are in a much better position to make decisions that are:

- a. Contextualized on identified needs
- b. Integrated with the existing operational and experiential school outcomes
- c. Collaborative between all stakeholders
- d. Data-driven, using tools that will allow for further evaluation and growth measure

SEL consultants can support schools during action planning by offering advice on which pieces should be included during year 1, year 2, or year 3 of

implementation, allowing leadership teams to create both a vision and a strategic plan that will ensure the sustainability and impact of the SEL programs and interventions. After only one year of implementation, a charter school principal shared with me: *“It is common to hear students talk about learning from challenges and mistakes, navigating their emotions and creating positive actions both in their classrooms and on the playground. After one year of implementation, behavior referrals were reduced by 35%. We are still refining our SEL curriculum and school-wide program, but are really pleased with the outcomes thus far.”*

School climate data offers schools information about the social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of student learning. Schools initiating the design of SEL programs and interventions, and those SEL consultants supporting them, can benefit from using school climate data to identify the strengths and limitations in the school’s life, engage leadership teams in finding out *why* things are happening and using this information to create a sustainable action plan. Using school climate data to guide SEL implementation in schools is about meeting the particular needs of the learning community, students, teachers, and parents.

Integrated Assessment of School-Wide SEL Activities

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The Rutgers Social and Emotional Learning Lab is currently developing a school-wide assessment tool to “unjumble the jumbled schoolhouse.” Building on the work of CASEL and others interested in school-wide programming, this tool aims to integrate social and emotional learning (SEL) and character development principles to provide a comprehensive evaluation of existing and needed SEL and related practices in a school community. This assessment tool will be piloted in a district-wide initiative to

improve the culture and climate in all public schools in New Brunswick, NJ. After pilot assessment, we plan to make the tool available for widespread dissemination.

Collaboration to Achieve Whole-School SEL Across a Large, Urban District

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Few studies of social and emotional learning (SEL) have examined whole-school, district-level SEL implementations or efforts to ensure that SEL programs are implemented effectively and sustained over time. In June 2012, researchers at the Wellesley Centers for Women initiated a three-year study of process and program outcomes of a district-level implementation of *Open Circle*, an SEL program for Kindergarten through Grade 5. The study includes a sample of over 7,000 students, nearly 800 staff members and 23 schools (majority low-income and racial/ethnic minority), and includes measures of program implementation, school climate, and social and emotional development at the student, classroom, school, and district levels. This article focuses on process outcomes from the first two years of the study.

The grade-differentiated *Open Circle Curriculum* proactively develops children’s skills for recognizing and managing emotions, social awareness, positive relationships and problem solving. The curriculum also helps schools build a community where students feel safe, cared for and engaged in learning. Teachers implement the *Open Circle Curriculum* during twice-weekly, 15-minute classroom meetings. *Open Circle* involves a comprehensive whole-school approach in which all adults in the school community learn to model and reinforce pro-social skills throughout the school day and at home.

For this study a total of 793 staff (413 teachers; 332 counselors, specialists, paraprofessionals; 48 administrators) received professional development

directly impacting 7,434 students. Of 23 participating schools, 78% trained “all”/“nearly all” teachers and 43% trained “all”/“nearly all” specialists and paraprofessionals. Training engagement was high across the majority of schools. Coaches rated 63% of teachers as skilled implementers and an additional 30% as somewhat skilled. Most teachers reported implementing the *Open Circle Curriculum* two or more times per week (56%), and a quarter (25%) implemented the curriculum once per week. A majority of teachers reported that they “frequently” or “very frequently” infused SEL by: integrating *Open Circle* skills, vocabulary and concepts throughout the day (75%); modeling *Open Circle* skills and vocabulary throughout the day (69%); and posting visuals reflecting *Open Circle* concepts (60%).

A majority of trained specialists and paraprofessionals reported “frequently” or “very frequently” infusing SEL by using *Open Circle* vocabulary in interactions with students (61%) and encouraging students to practice *Open Circle* skills (59%). Many also reported “occasionally” to “very frequently” using *Open Circle* community-building activities (70%), posting *Open Circle* visuals (55%), and using *Open Circle* approaches and vocabulary in school-wide activities such as assemblies (66%). Among principals, 100% agreed that SEL was an integral part of their schools’ programming.

Survey and interview data suggest the following success factors to this large district implementation: securing sustained commitment from principals, robust whole-school professional development, cultivating multiple SEL champions at the district-level and throughout schools, leveraging relationships and funding from external partners and community groups, following up and following through to ensure schools complete training and implement programming, and expecting and adapting to a wide range of school needs, capacities and commitment.

Preliminary results indicate that this whole-school SEL program is highly scalable, reaching over 7,000 students with training for nearly 800 staff members at 23 district schools in a two-year period. Forthcoming data will enable conclusions about program impact.

Strengths-based Assessment of SEL Program Implementation

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Implementing new SEL programming is a difficult and complex process, particularly in urban schools that are strapped for time and resources (Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003). When a school makes the important decision to roll out new SEL programming, the challenges of implementation are compounded by a lack of clear procedures for tracking the implementation process. Without defined assessment procedures in place, it is difficult for implementation teams to respond to challenges and effectively problem solve. In response to this need for implementation assessment, the action-research team in the Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Lab developed a brief, strengths-based observation form to standardize implementation data and provide a basis for implementation improvement.

As part of a collaborative school turnaround process, the Rutgers SEL Lab and the New Brunswick Middle School developed a Life, College, Career Advisory (LCCA) curriculum to build SEL skills and character in middle school students. LCCA drew on evidence-based programs and SEL pedagogy, adapted to the constraints and circumstances of an urban, “Priority,” school of over 1400 children. Beginning in the program’s pilot year, LCCA implementation has been characterized by many familiar challenges, including competing priorities, increasing competition for LCCA instructional time, and sparse resources. Despite frequent collection of student and teacher feedback and ongoing discussions about how to effectively support implementation, the program implementers (teachers), the program development committee

(teachers and Rutgers consultants), and school administrators found themselves stymied, trapped in a cycle of anecdotal reporting and frequent discussions about implementation challenges. Developing a simple, standardized observation form provided an opportunity for this cycle to be broken.

The standardized observation form was created to address two impediments to the LCCA implementation process: 1) the small amount of daily instructional time taking place simultaneously in approximately 90 advisory classes and; 2) insufficient student engagement reported by teachers. The observation form includes four fields:

- Time of observation
- Duration and timing of observed SEL instruction
- Implementation strengths
- Implementation areas for improvement

Within one week of its development, the form was used to track 10 independent observations. The program implementation staff found that the form allowed observations to be systematically documented and compared, instead of relying on implementer reports. This documentation was critical for credible accountability to building and district administration. Further, the form allowed the program implementation staff to discover opportunities for building on instructional strengths, instead of focusing on barriers.

This implementation assessment tool marks a significant breakthrough for the LCCA program because it supports the school's ability to strengthen its implementation capacity (Wandersman et al., 2008). The form is potentially generalizable because many schools find themselves trapped in a similar anecdotal cycle that prevents challenges from being addressed and maintains the status quo of attention to negativity. It also serves as an in vivo professional development tool for staff, as their discussions of instruction deepen and broaden over time. A simple strengths-based observation form has the potential to move implementation support teams beyond constant attention to barriers toward active problem solving, capacity building, and improvement.

Bouncy the People Trainer Pilot Study

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Bouncy the People Trainer is an iPad-based, character driven, social/emotional training program for early learners. A pilot study was conducted examining its integration within 3 Kindergarten classrooms in a diverse urban setting. The goal of this qualitative study was to describe and analyze issues and experiences associated with using "Bouncy" from student perspectives.

Findings suggest children were engaged while using "Bouncy." A valid assumption is that participating children received positive feedback, which gave them confidence (greater self-efficacy) about answering questions and contributing; children feeling estranged from school experienced positive outcomes. Additional data will be collected this academic year.

Using Data to Tune into the Emotional Drivers of Learning

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Imagine a school where teachers knew themselves and their students better? How would educators fare with greater self-awareness and the ability to make more intentional choices? How would this increased awareness facilitate powerful learning? What would be the effect of educators deepening their emotional intelligence (EQ) competencies?

What would happen if teachers, then, compared their own EQ competencies, brain styles, and talents with those of their students? What if they compared their own strengths and challenges in life success factors to their students' outcomes? We recently had the opportunity to find out.

My colleague and I spent a day at Synapse School, an independent elementary and middle school in Menlo Park, CA, working with teachers at each level. Synapse is the lab school for Six Seconds, a not-for-profit global EQ network. Synapse offers an advanced academic curriculum fully integrated with

EQ and social emotional learning (SEL). The program is carefully designed to demonstrate the power of blending SEL with brain-based, project driven, constructivist learning focused on school-wide themes.

At the start of the school year, teachers and administrators at Synapse took a research-based, validated EQ assessment, the SEI (Six Seconds, 2007). Students took the youth version of the assessment, the SEI-YV (Six Seconds, 2012), and parents completed a “perspective” version of the assessment (pYV) for their children under the age of 8. The SEI competencies comprise emotional literacy, recognizing patterns, applying consequential thinking, navigating emotions, engaging intrinsic motivation, exercising optimism, increasing empathy, and pursuing a noble goal.

Researchers have found that in designing SEL interventions, greater attention needs to be paid to student-teacher relationships and to the development of SEL skills in teachers themselves (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). With the importance of relationships in mind, teachers reviewed their individual SEI reports, noting EQ strengths and challenges and developing action plans to apply these competencies in their work with students and for themselves. Some teachers, for example, focused on increasing empathy for students and parents, while others explored recognizing patterns and applying consequential thinking in the emotional, social, and behavioral issues that they confront daily in the classroom.

My colleague and I recently met with Synapse teachers to review two additional reports, the Brain Brief and Brain Talent profiles, derived from their original SEI assessments, and their classroom’s Dashboard or group report derived from the student assessments. What follows is a brief description of each of these reports.

The Brain Brief Profile

This report provides a snapshot of the brain’s current style for processing emotional and cognitive data. It reports on brain “style” not behavior. It’s based on three elements:

Focus: Does one prefer data that is analytical or emotional?

Decisions: Does one tend to protect or innovate?

Drive: Is one usually motivated by the practical or the idealistic?

In multiple studies, scores on the SEI assessment predict 50-60% of the variation in key performance factors – meaning the Brain Brief Profile may help build: Effectiveness, Influence, Decision Making, Health, Quality of Life, and Relationships. The Brain Brief profile results in one of eight styles, pictured below. In a classroom or group, each brain style may contribute strengths to performance and teamwork.

The Brain Talent Profile

The Brain Talent Profile reveals one’s top six Brain Apps, representing the brain’s ability to apply an important skill *in action*. Using the metaphor of a smart phone app, a Brain App is like a tool for the brain. Developed from a database of over 60,000 emotional intelligence assessments from around the globe, an analysis of feedback from nearly 500 leaders, and insights from a panel of 20 experts on change, these 18 key Brain App competencies are clustered around the three concepts of Focus, Decisions, and Drive. The Brain Talent profile describes unique, powerful capabilities that are essential to flourish in complex times – at work, in school, in life – and suggests opportunities to use these talents more fully. Like a smart phone app, one can have a Brain App, but not necessarily be using it. Teachers can improve their own performance, and that of their class, by using their top Brain App strengths more fully and effectively and working to improve their lower ones.

One teacher who shared her own significant personal challenges this past year, realized the value of her highest apps, Resilience, Reflection, and Prioritizing, in allowing her to make healthy choices for herself and in her work.

The Dashboard

After reviewing individual Brain Brief and Brain Talent Profiles with teachers, we reviewed their classroom Dashboards. The Dashboard presents a fascinating opportunity to review a group’s combined EQ score, divergence of brain styles, brain apps in order of strength, and student performance. In the case of this Classroom Dashboard, we reviewed the students’ SEI-YV outcome scores of Good Health, Life Satisfaction, Personal Achievement, Relationship Quality, and Self-Efficacy.

In our work with the Synapse teachers, the synergy of educators reviewing their own Brain Styles and Brain Apps and aligning these with their classes' profiles was exciting and profound. Teachers later reported that ongoing discussions were directly impacting how they were addressing classroom and student needs. Recommendations made to the teachers included ways to better appreciate and utilize the diverse brain styles in the room. Further recommendations, based on a sample such as the one above, might include climate strategies to affect the low relationship quality or the lack of ability in this group to make connections. The three EQ competencies that contribute the most to Relationship Quality are Optimism, Navigating Emotions, and Empathy (Six Seconds, 2012). Activities could be designed to improve students' competencies in these areas, thus enhancing the App of Connection. They could be supported in developing the App of Reflection, another lower outcome, with great consequences for academics and social interactions. Teachers might consider how strengths such as resilience and adaptability could be used to increase academic performance areas, especially in content areas, such as math or language arts. Data derived from the Class Dashboard could be used for curriculum planning purposes, for modifying classroom groupings, and for differentiating instruction. Class meetings and circles are also excellent arenas for exploring this data with students.

For further research, teachers' comments on the application of these tools will be compiled. Imagine the impact on emotional, social, and academic skills, if all classroom teachers and students were using EQ competencies, Brain Profiles, and Dashboard results to become more self-aware, make more intentional choices, and consider empathy and purpose in their actions toward each other and as change makers in the world.

International Initiatives



Creating a School of Excellence: SEL @ Maus

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Three years ago I met the principal of Maus, a charter high school in Human, Social, and Economical Sciences in Padua, Italy during a conference where he presented. Mr. Visentin is a professor of philosophy and a passionate researcher in pedagogy. That night he engaged the audience of parents and educators talking about the meaning of "desiderium" (in Latin, missing the stars) and how it is important to allow students to desire and dream while learning. The principal had a noble goal that matched that of Six Seconds: create a great place to learn and teach kids to become change makers, with the leverage of emotional intelligence (EQ).

Together, we set the following objectives:

1. **Excellence.** Create a school that makes a difference in the territory and equips students with skills to face challenges in the XXI century.
2. **Community-360 approach.** Involve all community stakeholders (principal, teachers, students, parents).
3. **SEL-integrated curriculum.** Introduce SEL as a strategic process to create a great place to learn, integrating it gradually into the standard academic curriculum.
4. **2-year time frame.** Activate a 2-year plan, at the end of which, school and educators will be autonomous in the management of SEL.
5. **Piloting.** Run the project with 2 classrooms of 9th graders for the first year.
6. **Measurement.** Produce quantitative evidence, using individual and group assessment tools provided by Six Seconds.

Context

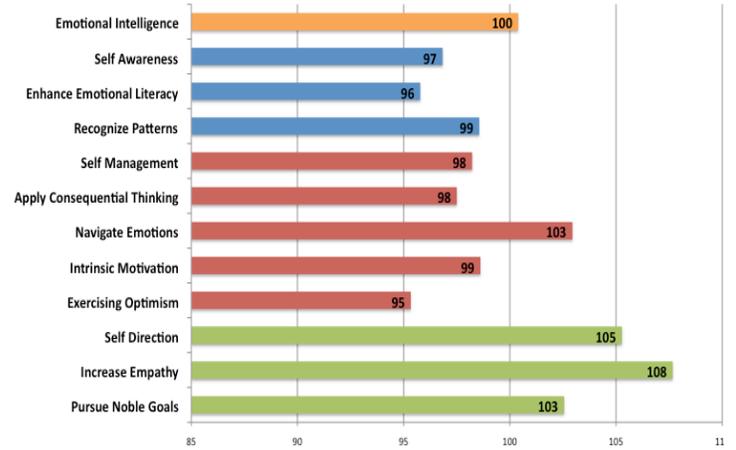
Maus is a Catholic high school with a sense of spirituality and commitment to serve the local community. These values contributed to the positive reception of SEL.

Method and Results: Year 1

In the summer of 2013, teachers were introduced to the Six Seconds Model, Know-Choose-Give Yourself, the 8 EQ competencies, and Youth Barometers of Life.



We conveyed the message that improving academic performance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2011) is possible when we know who we are and how the brain works. The teachers were extremely interested in the contribution of social neuroscience. When the school year opened, students took their first EQ self-assessment: SEI Youth Version Questionnaire. The charts below present results per class (Top: EQ competencies; Bottom: Barometers of Life):

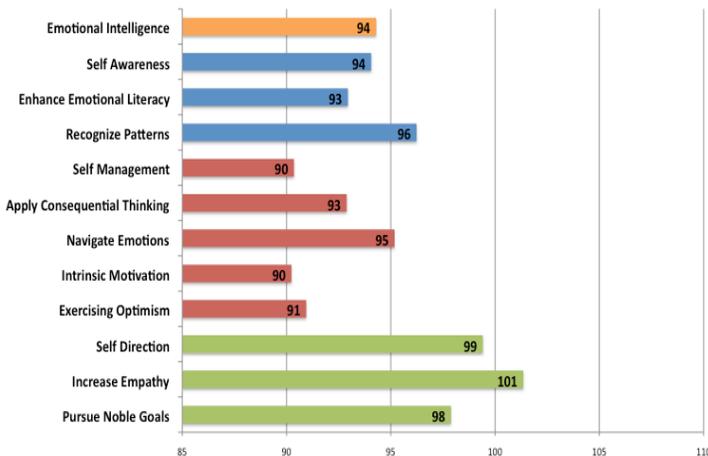


Parents received their child’s individual report and were instructed to talk about it at home. They were interested in reading the Barometers, which described their youth’s current perception of life outcomes. At school, teachers received the SEI YV Group Reports, and they analyzed the strengths and opportunities for each class. They found it exciting and challenging to search for correlations between EQ competencies and academic results in the different disciplines.

Students attended SEL LABS over the whole year. Each lab involved a one-hour lesson. Following the Six Seconds learning model, ENGAGE – ACTIVATE – REFLECT, labs were arranged to navigate the eight EQ Competencies through activities, games and arts. During labs, the two classes wrote their MANIFESTO – an agreement on what they wished to experience and what they did not want to interfere with their learning.

Students had the opportunity to discuss their Group SEI YV reports as well as enriching their emotional literacy through a physical representation of the Plutchik Emotions Wheel Model (Plutchik, 1980).

They experimented with empathy by watching a rock music video clip to embody young adults escaping from mysterious electronic waves that destroyed them. Youth opened a “reflect” phase about relationships, fears, and entropy of the world system. Co-facilitated by math teachers, students cooked cakes working in groups using percentages and fractions. They navigated their emotions and exercised optimism to find alternatives for recipes, producing a written test with calculations and deliver their delicious ready-to-eat product. Art and emotions were the theme of a lesson led by the art



professor. Students presented their work to the class and described the emotions felt in creating their drawing.

Lastly, mindfulness was introduced as a driver of learning, attention, and memory (Siegel, 2014). Students were taught the power of time-in (spend time inside oneself) focusing on breath or on the different parts of their body, rhythmically guided by the sound of a Tibetan bell. The principal and teachers decided to begin practicing mindfulness as a good routine.

Next Steps and Future Directions

At the end of Year 1, a webinar and a final evening meeting with parents was the occasion to recap all the steps taken. In the meanwhile, Mr. Visentin completed the EQ Certifications with Six Seconds, an excellent way to establish social and emotional leadership! This example can be deployed in other schools, as per its modular applications. The second year will begin with the second EQ assessment for students to be compared with previous year. EQ Questionnaires for teachers and EVS school climate assessments will be implemented as well.

SEL with a Video Game (Happy) to Resolve Interpersonal Conflicts

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Since 1997, a team of researchers in psycho-pedagogical orientation (GROP) from Universitat de Barcelona and Universitat de Lleida (Spain) are implementing and evaluating SEL programmes (<http://www.ub.edu/grop/english/>). They have recently created two video games in English and Spanish, *Happy 8-12* for children and *Happy 12-16* for adolescents (www.emotionalgames.com). In their theoretical foundations they have taken into account the orientations of evolutionary psychology and they are based in the emotional competencies promoted by GROP (Bisquerra y Pérez, 2007; Bisquerra, 2009): emotional awareness, emotional regulation, emotional autonomy, social competency, and life and

wellbeing competencies. The aim of the video games is to enable the players to resolve interpersonal conflicts assertively. This is achieved by training their social and emotional competencies and, as a result, improving their general wellbeing (Filella, 2014). The emotional regulation strategies of the game follow Gross's model (2007).

The games follow this pattern:

CONFLICT → EMOTIONAL AWARENESS (How am I feeling?) → TRAFFIC LIGHT (Stop / Deep breath / Think) → EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES (different options) → RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT (choosing the assertive answer).

Description:

In each video game there are 25 conflicts (9 featuring girls; 8 featuring boys; 8 mixed) and the players must resolve them all. The scenarios are the schoolyard (15 conflicts) and the living/dining room or bedroom at home (10 conflicts).

The players are presented with a conflict, for instance, a boy is forced by a group of boys to steal the sandwich of a classmate, or a girl is feeling rejected because she has not been invited to a birthday party. By following the steps of the game, they have the opportunity to recognize their feelings and those of others in similar situations and learn to select the best strategies to deal with each scenario assertively.

With the video game, children who are victims and the ones who are bullies discover a new world. The victims are given tools to be able to respond to the aggression, and the whole classroom realizes that there are children who suffer and this reduces anxiety quotation. The bullies become aware of the effects of their actions and learn empathy and assertiveness.

Evaluation:

The video game has been implemented and evaluated in 10 Primary Schools and the results confirm that *Happy* helps children to reduce anxiety and improve their self-esteem. There are fewer conflicts in the schoolyard and the classroom environment improves.

The Social and Emotional Learning Project in China

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With support from the Chinese Ministry of Education and UNICEF, the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) project in China began in 2011. The SEL project is aligned with the country's social development and education reform initiatives, and has brought positive practical significance to education reform. It changes the evaluation context of the school and students' development in basic education. It also helps policy makers and educators deeply recognize that increasing student enrollment into the best high school or university cannot be equated to the whole process of basic education, and increasing students' scores cannot be equated to students' integrative development. The new concept is accepted that education should nourish students' souls, help students develop their spirit and personality, and highlight the development of students' human nature.

The SEL project's implementation is informed by international experiences, while Chinese cultural characteristics are also seriously considered. The framework of SEL contains the students' self; others and collective knowledge; and management awareness, knowledge and skills. By improving school management in basic education, implementing a school-based SEL curriculum, improving SEL-infused teaching, and building communication and cooperation opportunities between schools and parents, the Chinese SEL project aims to help the school build a positive and better climate filled with "mutual respect, understanding and support." It also has increased children's wellbeing, helping children build self-confidence, a sense of responsibility, and positive relationships.

A total of 250 primary schools from Guangxi, Yunnan, Guizhou, Xinjiang and Chongqing provinces of China are taking part in the SEL project. The important components of this project are the training of school principals and teachers, the design of the school-based curriculum, the ongoing evaluation system, and school management guidance and research. Through learning in teamwork, principals and teachers can begin to understand the

goal of students' social-emotional learning and the desired qualities of principals, teachers, and parents. Seven topics of school-based textbooks have been designed for schools. By learning the teaching materials through team work, teachers can learn how to make use of local resources and determine how many class hours are used in each lesson, how to ask questions of students and provide feedback to them, how to organize their teaching, and how to deal with classroom discipline problems. By reviewing evaluations of school climate and social-emotional learning assessments completed by students and staff, school principals and other staff can understand the social-emotional development of their students; and they can determine problems of the principal or teachers, school systems and mechanisms, and classroom teaching. With this school improvement research, schools are helped to build effective teaching styles of social and emotional learning according to local conditions, thereby promoting student social-emotional competence and enhancing students' abilities and comprehensive development.

Announcements



Journal of Moral Education

2015 Special Topic: Flourishing and Morality
Call for Papers

Deadline: January 15, 2015

The Journal of Moral Education will publish a special issue on the topic of Flourishing and Morality in the fall of 2015. We are seeking paper submissions by January 15, 2015 through ScholarOne online.

Authors from different disciplines using various types of inquiry are encouraged to submit papers for this special section. These can include essays addressing philosophical concerns to empirical studies, empirical reviews or qualitative analyses. Papers can address questions such as the following: How should we define flourishing? What is the relation between flourishing and morality? Developmentally are they on parallel tracks or related in complex fashion? What are the components of

flourishing in moral contexts or what are the components of morality in flourishing contexts? What contextual factors influence one or the other? Are there contexts that promote both flourishing and morality? How do educational concerns influence flourishing? Is there a particular form of human flourishing? Can there be flourishing without morality? How extensive should the reach of flourishing be? For example, can an individual flourish alone, or does it necessarily require relational flourishing, and relations with whom or what? Can humans flourish without concern for the non-human? What are the relations between flourishing and sustainability? Are there moral limits to flourishing?

JME welcomes SEL topics generally, so you are invited to submit your research at any time. We are also interested in proposals for special issues on one topic.

The Journal of Moral Education (a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee) provides a unique interdisciplinary forum for the discussion and analysis of moral education and development throughout the lifespan. The journal encourages submissions across the human sciences and humanities that use a range of methodological approaches and address aspects of moral reasoning, moral emotions, motivation, and moral action in various contexts (e.g., cultural, gender, family, schooling, community, leisure, work) and roles (e.g., parent, teacher, student, civic, professional). The journal encourages proposals for special issues that address a topic relevant to these aims and scope.

Submitted by Executive Editor, Darcia Narvaez, University of Notre Dame Department of Psychology, Indiana, USA, dnarvaez@nd.edu

FREE use of SELweb to assess SEL in K-3!

SELweb is...

- A web-based system that assesses facial emotion recognition, perspective-taking ability, social problem-solving, and self-control.
- Easy-to-use: children wear headphones and navigate SELweb independently.
- Technically sound: two large field trials demonstrated excellent measurement properties.

- Informative: education partners report that SELweb data helps them understand their students and informs instructional planning.

As a partner, you get FREE...

- Access to SELweb for all students K-3.
- Technical assistance and assessment reports.

In exchange, you provide us with de-identified SEL web data.

Please contact us to learn more:

Nicole Russo-Ponsaran, Ph.D.
Rush University Medical Center
nicole_russo@rush.edu

Bouncy the People Trainer's FREE "You Can Learn" App Released

Some people train dogs. Bouncy is a dog that trains young children. The intrepid, three-legged, service dog helps kids learn that if they care enough, believe in themselves, try hard, and keep trying when things get tough, they can learn whatever they need to succeed in school. Users create life-like avatars, star in an animated adventure, interact with Bouncy through story and "what if?" exercises, create art to hang in their virtual room, play games to assess content mastery, sing and beat drums to the song "I can", and earn badges. Multi-sensory feedback builds self-efficacy about learning in 4-7 year olds. Efficacy research is ongoing.

See the [two-minute video here](#). Download *Bouncy The People Trainer's You can Learn App* here and share the link with parents.

Visit www.bouncykids.net to learn more.

Bouncy the People Trainer is a program of Ripple Effects, NREPP listed, technology-enabled, comprehensive children's mental health resources.



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6 Seconds

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The SEL SIG Newsletter is published twice per year—spring and fall.

Go to www.aera.net for more information about the SEL SIG #170.

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