

THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the need for social and emotional skills to become embedded within the daily curriculum. It examines programs that are currently being used globally, and their effectiveness in addressing social and emotional deficits within school age children. Results of the evaluated studies promote the implementation of social and emotional skills. The success found with the integration of SEL skills within the daily curriculum, promotes the preparation of children for postsecondary education, careers, and productive citizenship. The findings of the evaluated programs lead into a discussion revolving around the creation of social and emotional standards, training of teachers on social and emotional standards, and buy-in from all stakeholders, as the necessity for successful implementation of social and emotional skills.

Keywords: *Social, Emotional Skills, SEL, education*

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social and emotional learning is defined by the American Institutes for Research as the ability to successfully communicate, resolve conflict, interact with others, and manage emotional responses. Extensive research has been done involving this area and it's need and benefit to children. Social and emotional learning strategies and programs aim to enhance students' abilities to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors to deal effectively and ethically with daily tasks and challenges. Social and emotional learning (SEL) provides the skills necessary to understand and manage emotions as well as feel and show empathy for others. It also promotes the formation of positive relationships and responsible decision-making. "Social and emotional learning helps create more engaging schools and prepares students for the challenges of the world" (Cascarino and Weissberg, 2013, pp. 10).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children and The National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education both assert that early learning standards must be based on significant developmentally appropriate content and outcomes, multiple and diverse perspectives of families, early childhood professionals and community members, ethical and appropriate assessment, and supportive environments where standards can be implemented effectively. In addition to graduating academically proficient students who are culturally literate, intellectually thoughtful, and dedicated to lifelong learning, schools must also develop students' interpersonal

and intrapersonal skills so they are prepared for work and life (National Research Council, 2012). When schools promote students' social, emotional learning, and academics students will acquire the basic skills, work habits, and values for postsecondary education, meaningful careers, and constructive citizenship (Dymnicki, Kidron, and Sambolt, 2013).

Social and emotional skills are essential to being a good student, citizen, and worker. Schools can help prevent or reduce many different risky behaviors such as, drugs, violence, and bullying when they participate in multiyear, cohesive efforts to develop students' social and emotional skills (Cascarino and Weissberg, 2013). In order to best implement a positive influence on a student's social and emotional well being, effective classroom instruction must begin in preschool and continuing through high school. During this time, students engage in positive activities in and out of the classroom. This implementation requires effective, direct classroom instruction in social and emotional learning, broad parent and community involvement in program planning, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the program (Cascarino and Weissberg, 2013).

Due to children spending a significant amount of their time in schools, schools are a major setting for social and emotional development, growing along with and connected to academics (Bouffard and Jones, 2012). There has been an increase in the adoption of social and emotional learning programs in schools, as well as the implementation of SEL standards across states in the last decade (Dusenbury, Mart, Weissberg, and Zadrazil, 2011). There has been an increased awareness to violence and bullying in our schools with the recent events of our society. We are seeing an increase in shootings, suicides, and bullying. The increase in this behavior has led to evidence that many young children are entering school without the social and behavioral skills necessary to succeed (Gilliam and Shahar, 2006). This evidence has prompted research reviews and meta-analyses of available SEL programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Caldarella, Christensen, Kramer, and Kronmiller (2009) used a quasi-experimental, non-equivalent control group design to study the *Strong Start Curriculum* and its effectiveness when implemented in a second grade classroom. They believe that the promotion of social and emotional learning in schools (SEL) may help prevent behavior and emotional problems of students. Their study focused on pro-social behaviors and the ability to regulate and understand emotions. They defined pro-social behaviors as helping, sharing, and caring to build and maintain positive peer relations.

The study specifically focused on the *Strong Start: A Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum*. The *Strong Start* curriculum was designed to meet three goals; the prevention of emotional and behavioral problems via the promotion of social and emotional wellness among young children, feasibility as defined by acceptable objectives and procedures, and the third was that it was adaptable and able to be used for universal prevention and targeted interventions. This is a curriculum that is designed for implementation within K-2 classrooms. They noted

that there had been other empirical studies of the *Strong Kid* curriculum to evaluate the curriculum with older students and the curriculum's ability to increase older student's emotions and decrease their negative systems, but this was the first study to evaluate the efficacy of *Strong Start*.

The researchers conducted the study within a Utah elementary school. The school that was selected was chosen due to an investigator's employment at the school. Two second grade classrooms were chosen to participate in the research study. Again these classrooms were chosen based on limited resources and an investigator's ties to the school and second grade classrooms. One classroom was used as the control group, while the other classroom was the treatment classroom.

The dependent variables in the research consisted of teacher ratings of student's behavior using the Peer Relations subscale, which consisted of 14 items. These items measure social skills, attributes important in establishing positive relationships, and gaining social acceptance from peers. The teachers responded to the 14 questions using a five point Likert scale, which ranged from never observe the behavior to frequently observe the behavior. The teachers also completed a SSRS, which is a norm-referenced, standardized instrument designed to evaluate pro-social skills and problematic behavior in students of all grade levels. The SSRS normally uses a three-point scale, but was adjusted to a five-point scale to mimic the previously used Likert scale.

The independent variable was the implementation of the *Strong Start* curriculum. There were ten lessons from the curriculum implemented weekly by a Strong Start instructor. The classroom teacher did not instruct the class on the curriculum. After each lesson a memo went home to the parents discussing the lesson and how to reinforce the lesson at home. One classroom received this curriculum weekly, while the other classroom received their regular math instruction at that time.

To measure validity, a research assistant observed and recorded curriculum fidelity of all implemented lessons using a lesson component checklist. Social validity was measured at the completion of the study by administering a questionnaire to the teacher and the students of the treatment classroom. The questionnaire consisted of 15 items with a six-point Likert scale that ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The teacher also completed an interview about their perceptions of the curriculum. Students also completed a questionnaire that consisted of 10 questions that used a smiley face Likert scale.

An analysis of the pretest and posttest was done in order to identify any decrease in improved function on the SSRS and any increase in improved function as measured by the SSBS. The results indicated that the treatment group experienced significant improvements on both measurable tests. The control group experienced significant worsening on both subscales. The results also indicated that the identified at-risk students experienced significant gains in each subscale.

The teacher that participated in the treatment classroom reported that the *Strong Start* curriculum was particularly relevant for young students. She reported that the curriculum supported the necessary skills needed to recognize and manage emotions for younger children. She felt that the lessons and instructional

methods complimented the second grade standards in the social studies content area. She also stated that she wished the curriculum was implemented early in the year to help alleviate some of the social friction that had already taken place in her classroom. The challenges with the curriculum that she included in her report were that the lessons seemed a bit long and didn't spend a great deal of time teaching the students how to solve interpersonal problems.

The findings of the study supported the implementation of *Strong Start* to foster social and emotional competencies in second grade students. The results indicated that the treatment classroom experienced significant increases in peer-related pro-social behaviors and significant decreases in internalizing behaviors. The results indicated that the curriculum seemed to specifically support the at-risk students, who had originally shown a high need on the pretest they were administered. These students showed a greater increase in pro-social behaviors and greater decreases in internalizing behaviors than their peers.

The researches did note the limitations and challenges with their study. They reported that the results were favorable for the curriculum but that a small sample size that was not randomly generated limited the research. The sample size also did not include a variety of races or economic diversity, with all participating subjects Caucasian from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, teacher's personal feelings could have skewed the initial pretest due to the students being too young to complete an interview and the teachers filling out the Likert scale for the students. Another limitation that was discussed was the fact that the classroom teacher did not teach the actual lessons. This may change the results if a teacher who is not specifically trained on this curriculum tries to implement it within the classroom.

Ashdown and Bernard (2012) conducted a research study to evaluate the effectiveness of the *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program* (YCDI). They wanted to study the effects the implementation of this program would have on student's social-emotional development, well-being, and academic achievement. The aim of the YCDI program is for all young children to achieve positive, emotional, social, and behavioral outcomes. This program also aims to achieve a positive academic outcome with its implementation. There has previous been research conducted to study the effects of this curriculum with older children, but this is the first attempt to study the curriculum's effect with younger children. The curriculum was previously written for older children, but a second version was written for younger children. The second version is the curriculum that Ashdown and Bernard (2012) focused on.

There were four teachers and one hundred students from preparatory classes and first grade classes. These students attended a Catholic School in Melbourne, Australia. All students that participated in the study were identified as low socioeconomic status. Forty-two of the students were in a preparatory class and fifty-seven of the students were in a first grade class. English was the main language spoken for forty-six percent of these students with other Asian Languages being spoken at home by thirty-eight percent of the participating students. One preparatory and one grade 1 classroom were randomly chosen to

participate in the teaching of the YCDI curriculum. The other preparatory classroom and 1st grade classroom was used as the control group.

To begin the implementation of the curriculum, all four teachers were trained on the curriculum. The teachers then completed pre questionnaires using the ACER Well-Being Survey, which consisted of fifty items. The teachers used this four-point Likert scale to evaluate their student's social-emotional well-being and their social-emotional competence. Part 1 of the survey contained 22 items that measured the student's social-emotional well-being and Part 2 of the survey contained 28 items that were broken into three categories: Positive Self-Orientation, Positive Social Orientation, and Positive Work Orientation. The teachers also completed the Social Skills Rating System-Teacher Form (SSRS-T). This survey consisted of fifty-seven questions that were divided into three sections: Social Skills, Problem Behaviors, and Academic Competence. These questions operated on a 0-2 scale with 0 being never and 2 being very often. The teachers also submitted each student's independent reading level. The reading levels ranged from 0-28, with 28 being reported as a second grade reading level.

To validate the integrity of the curriculum, a classroom observation form was developed. An observer used the form to rate whether the teacher followed the YCDI lesson plans, were well-prepared and presented the lessons as the lesson plan intended, provided helpful feedback to the children, checked for understanding throughout the lesson, and presented the lesson in a positive, enthusiastic way. The observer rated each of these areas on a three-point scale where 1 represented not at all and 3 represented very much. The teachers were observed twice during the research study.

The pre and posttest questionnaires were analyzed and coded. Variables were assigned to measure the different aspects that were reflected on the questionnaire such as social-emotional well-being, positive social-emotional well-being, total problem behaviors, social-emotional competence, and total social skills. The reading level was used to measure the academic impact.

The results of the research indicated that there were significant multivariate effects on the levels of social-emotional well-being and competence. The results also indicated that there was a significant level of difference in these areas between the curriculum implementation classrooms and the control classrooms. The results also reported that a significant effect was seen in student's positive social-emotional well-being. However, there was no overall reduction in problem behaviors according to the results. With regards to the Total Social Skills data, the preparatory classroom and the first grade classroom both showed an increase in this area. However, the first grade classroom showed a larger increase in Total Social Skills than the preparatory classroom.

The researchers did record the data of the observation forms as well. The data showed that both of the teachers that were implementing the YCDI curriculum were well prepared, provided helpful feedback to the children, checked for individual understanding of the lesson, and used enthusiasm to present the lesson. However, it was noted that neither teacher closely followed the scripted lesson plan found within the curriculum. The preparatory teacher covered the general content of the lesson, but significantly modified the scripted lesson. The

first grade teacher presented the lesson according to the curriculum but also supplemented the lesson with activities that she had created herself. The researchers noted that the first grade classroom did show more growth than the preparatory classroom in the total social skills section. They note that this may be in part to that teacher following the script more closely.

The results of the study indicate that the *You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program* was effective in improving the social and emotional competence of young children, with the children that received the instruction from their teachers showed significant gains in their teacher-rated social-emotional competence. Further research can be conducted to study the long-term affects of this program. In addition, expanding the research to a variety of different schools would benefit the results to validate the need for this program to be implemented within all schools.

Bartholdsson, Hultin, and Lundberg-Gustafson (2014) chose to analyze the Swedish Program Social and Emotional Training – Important for Life (SET) and its implementation in five different classes/groups in Swedish schools and preschools. They chose the SET program for their research for it's text-analytical sub-study, as well as the fact that it is one of the most widely used programs in the Swedish preschools/schools.

The SET was designed based on two American programs, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) and Botvind's Life Skills Training (BLT). The adapted program offers a set of techniques that focus on a student's emotional intelligence through training in self-knowledge, social competence, empathy, motivation and the management of emotions. The techniques implemented within this program are rooted in the behavioral and neurobiological science, where the main goal is to change the child's attitude and thinking. The program is intended to neutralize the effects of risk factors such as, aggressive behavior, domestic violence, and truancy. The program also states that there are internal and external protective factors that can work against the risk factors. The internal factors are self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy, with the external factors being good relationships with peers, positive behavior, and a non-violent home environment.

The program is intended for preschool through upper secondary school. There are 10 student books and 10 teacher's manuals, with each book consisting of 30-40 exercises.

The secondary curriculum is comprised of 66 due to the intention to cover the content in 3 years. The teachers are instructed to work with the curriculum 2 times a week through age 6 and then it goes down to once a week.

The researchers chose a theoretical study that consisted of text analysis that was carried out in 3 steps. The first step consisted of an analysis of the introductory book for all teachers, the teacher's manuals for preschool to lower secondary school, and the student books. The focus of this analysis was to understand the constructions of risk and the risk factors. The results of this step led to a next step to contribute to an understanding of how discursive routines are constructed in the program material for social and emotional learning. From the first step, a second step was put into motion to analyze the materials that accompany the curriculum.

After the first two steps were complete, a third step was implemented to analyze three examples chosen from the first two steps. The three examples were chosen because of their reoccurrence throughout the curriculum and their representation of the material as a whole. The three lessons highlighted the understandings of dangers and risks to the child and the implementation of the curriculum that teaches self-regulation techniques and skills/abilities to help manage one's emotions.

Once the researchers had finished the analysis of the curriculum, they moved their research to an actual classroom to observe the curriculum in action. They observed secondary students applying their lessons in an actual real-life setting that required them to apply their social skills that they have been learning in a situational game that could produce many outcomes depending on how a student reacts to the different situations. The researchers witnessed the students making cognizant decisions about what to do next within the social context of the game. They felt that the 'game' produced the desired results by promoting the desired values and skills taught within the curriculum.

The researchers concluded that the certain structure of the curriculum aligns with the institutional needs for compliant participants in everyday school life. The chain of expertise that ranges from the program designers to the teachers who are implementing the curriculum, promotes an understanding of children as a special social category in need of guidance as one of the main hurdles that are handled in the SET program. The SET program was found to align with the need to help children understand their emotions and be able to establish self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-efficacy. The program was found to contribute to preparing children for their future life as citizens.

The researchers conducted a theoretical study that supported the implementation of the SET program. However, it would be useful to research the effects of the program on test groups verse control groups. It would also be useful to understand the long-term effects of students participating in this program for the majority of their schooling in Sweden. The extended research may allow for other countries to see the success of the curriculum and implement a similar curriculum to help further develop their children's social and emotional well-being.

Gumbiner, Lipton, McKown, and Russo (2013) completed a study to evaluate a model of social and emotional learning (SEL) skill and to evaluate the criterion-related validity of individually administered tests of SEL skill. To create an SEL model they referenced prior models and created a hybrid model that integrates components of the referenced models. The model created by the researchers is comprised of three skill domains. The first domain is nonverbal accuracy, which they defined as the ability to label others' emotions from nonverbal cues. The second domain is social meaning, which they define as the ability to interpret others' intentions, to understand the social meaning of language, and to experience others' feelings. The third domain they defined was social problem solving, which is the ability to identify and solve complex social problems. The researchers hypothesized that each of the three domains of SEL skill constituted an important

element of SEL skill that was necessary for successful students to possess. They then broke the study into two different components.

The first study conducted by the researchers consisted of two elementary schools that included children in preschool through 8th grade. The data was collected over three years from 2006-2009. The first year twenty children participated, the second year ninety-six children participated, and the third year one hundred fifty-eight children participated.

Parents were invited to participate in this study that focused on SEL skill. All parents signed consent forms. The researchers then held informational meetings for the parents and teachers who would be participating in the study. Both schools were located in Chicago with school A being a north-suburban public school where 28.5% of the students were identified as ethnic minorities, and school B was an urban Catholic school where 95.2% were classified as ethnic minorities.

The researchers measured nonverbal accuracy by having the students complete The Comprehensive Affect Testing System (CATS) that is administered on a computer. Children completed a 16-item test in which they were shown pictures of faces and they had to identify what emotion the face was displaying. The internal consistency reliability was .61.

The students then completed Match Emotional Prosody to Emotional Face (MEPEF). This was a 22-item assessment in which the students listened to recordings of a person saying sentences and then selected the face that represented the emotion heard in the voice. The internal consistency reliability for this assessment was recorded as .66.

To measure the student's ability to infer others' emotions from posture, the students viewed 24 photos of adults in different postures with different emotional facial expressions. The children looked at the photos and indicated which emotion they felt was being expressed by the adult in the photo. The internal consistency reliability was recorded as .80 for this measure.

The students were then asked to view 20 short video clips in random order that showed "point-light walkers" or abstracted walking humans. The students had to identify the emotion based on the human's gait. The students identified if the human was happy, sad, angry, or scared with an internal consistency reliability of .60.

The students were assessed 5 more times using a variety of assessment tools such as Strange Stories, Theory of mind 2-NEPSY-II ToM, empathy self-reporting scale, Comprehensive Assessment of Spoken Language, and vignettes. Each assessment was scored and coded.

To further the researchers exploration of student self-regulation the SSRS, a behavior rating scale that assesses the frequency of socially competent and socially interfering behavior, was used. The SSRS included three scales to assess social competence. The range for internal consistency reliability was .72-.94.

In all, the data collection consisted of student interviews that took place at their school by one of ten trained research assistants, up to three interviews were conducted for the first six weeks, the testing that took place lasted about 3 hours over the course of two or three testing sessions conducted at the school, and the teacher and parent questionnaires were completed between one and five months

after the initial testing. Preliminary analysis evaluated the relationships between age and raw scores on each measure and each score was converted to an age-corrected standard score. The students were nested in classrooms and the teacher ratings were nested within teachers.

For their first study, the researchers suggest that their findings on SEL measures reflect three underlying variables, including nonverbal awareness, social meaning, and social reasoning. The results also indicated that the factors in turn load onto a wide-ranging latent factor reflecting overall SEL skill. The better the students performed on the SEL assessments they were administered, the more social competence their parents and teachers report. The parent and teacher analysis of the student's self-regulation is associated with social competence and SEL skill and SEL skill and self-regulation independently predict social competence.

The researchers then extended their study to replicate the models from study 1 using different measures and with a clinic-referred sample. The participants for their second study included clinical data from a north-suburban Chicago pediatrics clinic. There were 126 children ages 5 to 17 years of age who were administered an IQ test, parent and teacher behavior rating scales, and at least one of the following measures: Diagnostic Analysis of Nonverbal Accuracy, the Comprehension subtest of a Wechsler scale, the CASL Pragmatic Judgment subtest, or the Test of Problem-Solving.

The children were evaluated to address parental concern about their academic, social, behavioral, or emotional functioning level. Seventy-one percent of the sample was boys with ninety-four percent of the participants being white. The children that participated in the study were diagnosed with a variety of disorders including ADHD, ASDs, learning disorders, and mood and anxiety disorders.

The children completed a variety of social assessments similar to those conducted during study 1. The children had to identify emotions based on pictures of faces, listen to or look at pictures of people doing things and answer questions that required them to identify the social situation, predict outcomes for the situation, and then problem solve through the social situation, and complete questions that asked them to interpret and apply knowledge of social conventions. They also completed the CASL Pragmatic Judgment subtest. The parents and teachers completed a Behavioral Assessment for each child as well.

The children in study two were not given the same battery of tests that the children in study one completed. There were different combinations of tests administered to address the individualized referral questions for each child. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the fit of the data to a three-factor model of SEL skills. CFA was also used in study one. As in study one, the structural model was constructed so that the underlying variables associated with awareness, meaning, and reasoning were treated as indicators of a second-order latent construct labeled SEL skill. The findings from study one were identical to the findings from study two.

The researchers were able to provide evidence of what specific SEL skills are related to social success in typical and clinic-referred children. They concluded that the study they completed was comparable to literatures on theory of mind,

empathy, and pragmatic language, and problem solving. The data from both studies fit a three-domain model. The researchers found that this method was superior to the one-domain model. In both the typical and clinical samples, the three latent factors representing nonverbal awareness, social meaning, and social reasoning all reflected on a second factor that was labeled with an SEL skill. The evidence found that the three domains of SEL skill and self-regulation are conjecturers of proficient social behavior.

The researchers were able to isolate SEL skills that are necessary to possess competent social skills. The next step in this research would be to analyze the SEL curriculums that support these identified components. The goal of that study would be to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum in developing proficient SEL skills in children. It would be beneficial to maintain typical and clinical participants in order to compare the curriculum's efficacy with different populations that display different SEL needs.

During the past two decades, Greece has seen an increase in immigration and repatriated students. These students comprise 10% of the school population. It has been shown that these students have an increase in social and emotional deficiencies and struggle to make relationships. These children report difficulty in being accepted by the native students. It was thought that due to the increase in immigrant students within the Greek school system and their difficulties assimilating, a social and emotional program would be implemented to help these students as well as the native students develop the necessary social and emotional skills that seemed to be lacking.

Avlidou-Doikou and Dadatsi (2013) conducted a study to develop and to implement a small-scale intervention based on an SEL program and to explore its outcomes concerning the social functioning and the social position of repatriated and immigrant pupils who presented externalizing and/or internalizing behavior problems and difficulties in their relationships with their peers. The study aimed to investigate whether there would be any positive changes regarding the targeted students' social position and social behavior in the school setting during the implementation of the SEL program. The intervention SEL program was carried out in two parts that comprised a broader project titled 'School integration of repatriated and immigrant pupils in primary school' and 'School integration of repatriated and immigrant pupils' in secondary school'. The implementation of the SEL interventions intended to provide psychosocial support to immigrant and repatriated students by fostering communication, social interaction and acceptance between students.

The researchers conducted their study in ten schools that were selected for their high number of immigrant and repatriated students. Five of these schools were primary schools, with the other five being secondary schools. Ten teachers volunteered to participate in the study and implement the SEL program in their classrooms specifically targeting and gathering data on ten students. Due to time constraints, absences of students, and limited implementation, fewer students' results are presented in the study than originally planned. Data was collected on five boys and two girls who displayed serious behavior problems and/or

emotional difficulties such as, withdrawn, disruptive, poor concentration, distress, and difficulties forming positive relationships.

Before classroom implementation of the SEL program participating teachers participated in a short-term education program in counseling skills. The programs aim was to provide the teachers with an opportunity to develop qualities such as congruence, unconditional positive regard and empathic understanding and communication skills. Once the teachers received the training they were briefed on the SEL program they would be implementing whole class. They were shown how the program was created based on the data they provided the researchers about the targeted students. The activities that were to be implemented whole class aimed at enhancing self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills. The activities were to be implemented over a two-month period, during the spring semester. The teachers were provided all the materials and instructions necessary for implementing the activities, as well as a questionnaire that they were to complete after each activity. The activities were comprised of small group work, group discussions, and the teacher as the coordinator. Two school psychologists supported the teachers throughout the implementation by answering questions and providing feedback.

The participating teachers participated in a semi-structured interview to discuss the targeted student's problem behaviors, inability to adapt, interaction with their peers, what the teacher is doing to support the student, what the teacher felt were suitable interventions for the student, and where the problematic behaviors occur. The teachers also completed the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which attempts to screen emotional symptoms and behavior problems of children age 4-16. The teachers used a modified Greek version of this questionnaire.

To understand the peer acceptance of these students, the researchers had the class complete a peer nomination form. This form asked the students to identify two classmates that they would spend school breaks with and/or team and collaborate with in a work group for a school project. The intention of this sociometric measure was to understand the indexes for peer acceptance.

All three measures were done at the beginning of the study and at the end. Quantitative and qualitative data collection was applied. The SDQ was scored according to the provided scoring instructions. The analysis of the sociometric measure was based on the calculations of the frequency that a student received a nomination. The teacher's questionnaires were analyzed based on a percentage rate that was applied to their responses. The data was carefully read to formulate common themes. This led to the creation of categories and subcategories. Indexes of intercoder reliability were then estimated for each category.

The researchers used the qualitative content analysis of the final interview to create three core categories; targeted student's responsiveness during the implementation of the SEL activities, changes in their behavior, and changes in their relationships with their classmates.

Of the seven-targeted students, four took a great interest in the SEL activities. Five of the targeted students reportedly cooperated well with their classmates during the small group activities. Four of the targeted students showed an

improvement in their motivation and willingness to cooperate with their classmates. The positive changes were attributed to the implementation of the SEL interventions according to the data that the researchers collected. The researchers assume, from the information they gathered during their data collection, that the specific content of the SEL activities contributed towards promoting cooperation and communication between the targeted students and their classmates. This cooperation and communication led to more positive interactions between the immigrant and repatriated students and the native students.

There were no noticeable changes in the student's behavior, as noted by the teachers. This may have been due to the brief time period that the interventions were implemented. In addition to the brief implementation period, other limitations of the study include the small sample size and lack of substantial data points. These limitations would hinder the advancement of the suggested SEL interventions. To strengthen the study a larger participation group would be necessary. It would also be necessary to address the student's socioeconomics, culture, and family history to have a completed picture of the targeted students. This may lead to different appropriate SEL interventions based on a picture of the whole student.

CONCLUSION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL INTERVENTIONS

The research studies that were analyzed all support a need for social and emotional learning. The researchers were able to demonstrate through their data that implementation of social and emotional strategies tends to support the student's overall success in becoming academically proficient as well as becoming socially proficient to contribute to the success of one's future academic studies, career, and citizenship. To strengthen the research, it would be beneficial to discuss the exact population the social and emotional programs targeted and their success. It would also be beneficial to understand the long-term effects of the programs. Social and emotional skills are a critical curriculum element that needs to be implemented daily within classrooms in order to develop successful citizens that are prepared to navigate the challenges of the world.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Before a school can implement a social and emotional curriculum, they need to understand the population they are serving. There are many research based curriculums available, but understanding exactly what your population needs will help drive the correct implementation of a social and emotional curriculum. Kauffman and Landrum discuss the importance of understanding culture, community, family, biology, and the school setting in order to form a complete picture of a person. All casual factors need to be addressed and identified in order to fully understand a person's needs. Each of these factors needs to be analyzed when deciding upon a social and emotional curriculum that would best support one's school population.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning have identified five core competencies. The five core competencies, according to CASEL, allow students to regulate their emotions, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, avoid engaging in risky behaviors, and make ethical and safe choices. Many of the reviewed programs included some aspect of each of these competencies.

The first core competency that needs to be incorporated in a social and emotional curriculum is self-awareness. Self-awareness is defined as correctly assessing one's feelings, interests, values and strengths and preserving a well-grounded sense of self-confidence. Self-awareness also includes the ability to make precise self-judgments, have a sense of internal motivation, and have a sense of fulfillment when goals are reached (Dymnicki, Kidron, Sambolt, 2013).

Self-management is defined as regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles. Self-management involves setting and monitoring progress towards personal and academic goals and expressing emotions appropriately (Dymnicki, Kidron, Sambolt, 2013). Self-management is important as students experience more challenging coursework in high school and college (Arguelles, Atkinson, Bradley, Daugherty, McCraty, Tomasino, 2010). Students who are resilient and can cope with stress have been found to be better prepared to handle the transition to college more successfully, and perform better academically (DeBerard, Julka, Spielmans, 2004).

Social awareness is defined as the capacity to take the perspectives of and empathize with others. It is the ability to recognize and welcome individual and group similarities and differences, as well as to recognize and use family, school, and community resources (Dymnicki, Kidron, Sambolt, 2013). A person needs to be able to respect others' perspectives and value others' opinions in social settings. This ability has direct implications both for the development of healthy interpersonal relationships and for moral and prosocial behavior (Decety, 2009).

Relationship skills have also been identified as a core competency that needs to be addressed when implementing social and emotional curriculum within a school setting. Relationship skills are defined as, establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation. These skills also include resisting inappropriate social pressures and preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict. It is also the ability to seek help when there is a need (Dymnicki, Kidron, Sambolt, 2013). These skills will allow students to work collaboratively in groups that present different cultural, family, community, and biological differences.

Responsible decision-making becomes a part of each individual's daily life. Developing this skill helps a person make decisions based on considerations of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions. When one applies decision-making skills to academic and social situations, they are contributing to the well-being of one's school and community (Dymnicki, Kidron, Sambolt, 2013). During adolescence, there is an increasing capacity for abstract reasoning, counterfactual reasoning, and systematic reasoning, which are all relevant to decision making (Steinberg, 2012).

Beyond program characteristics, implementation fidelity and quality are also key factors in the effectiveness of SEL programs. Teachers and schools, who effectively integrate the programs into their daily practice, have been shown to have more positive outcomes (Bouffard and Jones, 2012). Students are more likely to benefit when programs are intense and embedded in everyday interactions and school culture. A reflective, collaboration between all stakeholders also becomes a necessity when implementing an SEL program. SEL programs that included all stakeholders, were attentive to places outside classrooms such as hallways and playgrounds, and were intentional about continuously monitoring student behavior led to the implementation of a successful SEL program (Farrington and Ttofi, 2009).

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL STANDARDS AND POLICY

There is ample data to suggest that large number of students are contending with significant social, emotional, and mental health difficulties that prevent them from succeeding in both school and life. Students' inability to understand and address these issues leads to them engaging in risk-taking behaviors that will often contribute to deficits within their academics (Dymnicki, Kidron, and Sambolt, 2013). These social, emotional, and mental health difficulties can be addressed within the school setting by helping students develop better SEL skills. Districts need to treat SEL as a priority equal to their academic proficiency priority. "Embracing SEL as part of implementing the Common Core State Standards will also be critical. The classroom activities required to help students meet the Common Core – effective communication, project collaboration, interdisciplinary thinking – necessitate strong social and emotional competence among learners, including the ability to persist, empathize with others, and manage their behavior so they can achieve challenging goals" (Cascarino and Weissberg, 2013, pp. 12).

Several states have begun to adopt SEL standards. These states include Illinois, Kansas, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and New York. Illinois was the first state to pave the way in adopting SEL standards in 2003 as part of the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act (Gordon, Ji, Mulhall, Shaw, and Weissberg, 2011). In 2012, Pennsylvania used three out of ten of Illinois' SEL standards to finalize their SEL standards. Pennsylvania's standards, much like Illinois, address the skills students need to empower themselves and to successfully navigate the social world of family, school, college, and career connections in America and in the global marketplace (Dymnicki, Kidron, and Sambolt, 2013). Creating SEL standards is an important impact that states can make to prepare students for postsecondary success. Once standards are established, states must help districts and schools implement them by providing support for programs and initiatives that support student achievement of SEL skills (Dymnicki, Kidron, and Sambolt, 2013).

The adoption of SEL standards cannot happen at the school level alone. Educational and public policies need to provide support that encourages and enables the change to happen (Dymnicki, Kidron, and Sambolt, 2013). Building a shared commitment and vision among all of the stakeholders and structures will require finding common ground when it comes to values, priorities, and policy

(Aber, Berg, Brown, Jones, and Torrente, 2011). When formulating policy the stakeholders need to establish adequate and flexible funding that understands the training that teachers will need in order to successfully and proficiently implement any SEL standards or curriculum that is adopted. The implementation of SEL standards needs to be given as much financial support as the implementation of new math curriculum. In order to fully implement the standards and check for long-term positive effects on students, assessments need to be created and followed through with. Data must be collected that supports the standards and their success. If the standards are not achieving the desired goal, the data needs to be evaluated and the standards may need to be adjusted to maximize success. The assessments and data collection are critical to the proven success of any standard or curriculum. There must also be buy-in from all stakeholders. Each person responsible for developing the whole child needs to understand and see the importance of the SEL standards. Without complete buy-in, any implementation of standards and curriculum will become pointless. There needs to be a clear connection between SEL skills and academic success. Moving toward integrated approaches to SEL development will necessitate that all stakeholders be open to improvement and committed to evaluation and tweaking (Bouffard and Jones, 2012).

The case for social and emotional skills being integrated into the daily lives of students is strong. The research and data has shown the need for these skills to be the forefront of our priorities. It has also supported the necessity to develop these skills in order to support the student's academic achievement and overall life success. We must place a high priority on developing SEL standards, training teachers on the implementation of these standards, and creating social and academic success for each child. "We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future." Franklin D. Roosevelt (1940).

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