CHAPTER 20

Social and Emotional Learning: Recent Research and Practical Strategies for Educators

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Success in school is not exclusively based on students' academic abilities. Increasingly, educators are recognizing that students who struggle with social and emotional well-being fail to meet academic goals. Students with a disability such as blindness or visual impairment may face additional hurdles related to self-esteem and social relationships. Professionals in visual impairment who have an understanding of the components that facilitate social and emotional prosperity can more readily recognize when students are struggling with aspects of social and emotional learning. If deficits related to social and emotional learning are noted early, remediation can begin earlier, and the risk that students will suffer academically as a result of these deficits is reduced. This chapter will provide important general information to help professionals working with students who are blind or visually impaired support the educational team and the student in regard to social and emotional learning. —Eds.

VIGNETTE

Frank is 12 years old and in the sixth grade. He lives with his mother, stepfather, and five siblings. His stepfather has been out of work for more than a year and no one in Frank's family has ever graduated from high school. Frank wears thick glasses and often comes to school wearing clothes that do not fit properly because they are hand-me-downs from his older siblings. The school administrators are concerned about Frank because his attendance record is sporadic—he often misses school for weeks at a time.

According to Frank, he does not attend school because of the frequent teasing and bullying that he receives from his classmates. He states that his classmates exclude him from activities and call him names, and he reports that his teachers never intervene in these situations, even when it was happening right in front of them. He feels that his teachers simply do not care about him. Frank does not seem to have the confidence to defend himself, and the taunting and exclusion by classmates have become commonplace within the classroom. His classroom teacher reports that she really has no idea how to help Frank, and that many of her students just seem to lack empathy. She believes

that her role is to teach the academic subjects to her students, not social and emotional skills.

INTRODUCTION

The prospects for Frank's future success seem rather bleak—both in school and in life. His home situation is troubling and at school he faces bullying and exclusion. Frank's schoolwork and his ability to learn are undeniably compromised because of the social problems that he encounters on a daily basis in school and at home. Frank also does not have a supportive, caring relationship with his teacher. Perhaps she feels that she lacks the knowledge and skills to help Frank and her other students to develop their social and emotional competence, and create a classroom context that is safe, caring, and collaborative—a context in which all students feel that they belong. Does it have to be this way? Are students such as Frank destined for a predictable path that leads to more risks and subsequent failure? Or are there ways in which teachers could design schools and classrooms to nurture *both* the academic and the social and emotional competence and well-being of students without compromising academic process?

In conversations about the future of education in North America and around the world, questions such as these are being raised—in dialogues between policy makers and educators deciding whether to integrate the promotion of students' social and emotional competence into learning standards (see, for example, Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.; British Columbia Ministry of Education, n.d.). Indeed, there is a growing consensus among educators and educational scholars that a more comprehensive vision of education is needed—one that includes an explicit focus on educating "the whole child" and one that fosters a wider range of life skills, including social and emotional competence (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2007; Bushaw & Lopez, 2013; Greenberg et al., 2003; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Parents, students, and the public at large are also beginning to call in increasing numbers for such a focus. In the face of current societal, economic, environmental, and social challenges, the promotion of these "nonacademic" skills in education is seen as more critical than ever before, with business and political leaders urging schools to pay more attention to equipping students with what are often referred to as "21st century skills" (Heckman, 2007; National Research Council, 2012), such as problem solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-management. In order for children to achieve their full potential as productive adult citizens in a pluralistic society and as employees, parents, and volunteers, there must be explicit and intentional attention given to promoting children's social and emotional competence in schools (Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014; Weissberg & Cascario, 2013).

This chapter focuses on one approach for enhancing children's success in school and in life through universal, school-based educational practices designed to promote students' *social and emotional learning* (SEL). It begins by providing a rationale, definition, and description of the various dimensions that compose social and emotional learning. Next, a brief review of recent research that offers strong empirical support for an SEL approach is provided. Following this, specific strategies are provided that can be used to promote SEL in a variety of educational contexts. The chapter ends by offering some conclusions on how an understanding of SEL has implications for thinking about education in schools, along with some resources for educators.

THE CASE FOR A FOCUS ON SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The increased emphasis on the role of schools in promoting students' social and emotional competence and well-being reflects, in part, growing

concerns about the problems facing students today, such as declining academic motivation (Eccles & Roeser, 2009; Roeser & Eccles, 2014), escalating school dropout rates (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000), increasing school bullying and aggression (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010), and the number and intensity of stressors experienced by today's young people (for example, see Caspi, Taylor, Moffitt, & Plomin, 2000; O'Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). Epidemiological reports highlight increased childhood mental health problems, with an estimated one in five children and youths experiencing psychological disorders severe enough to warrant mental health services (US Public Health Service, 2000). Longitudinal studies indicate that, between the ages of 9 and 16, over one-third of youths have been diagnosed with one or more psychiatric disorders (Jaffee, Harrington, Cohen, & Moffitt, 2005), and follow-up studies indicate that the prevalence of psychiatric disorders grew to 40 to 50 percent by age 21 (Arseneault, Moffitt, Caspi, Taylor, & Silva, 2000). Currently, a large proportion of students who require mental health services do not receive them (Malti & Noam, 2008). As well, by high school, as much as 40–60 percent of students become chronically disengaged from school (Klem & Connell, 2004).

As mental illness and youth problem behaviors are increasingly recognized as significant predictors of overall health and long-term adjustment, the cost of addressing such problems is staggering. A 2009 US Institute of Medicine report on mental, emotional, and behavioral disorders of young people estimated the cost of these disorders to be $247 billion annually, and emphasized the need for prevention and intervention efforts as essential for reducing mental illness and promoting social and emotional health. Such extraordinary costs are not limited to the United States; a 2001 report by Stephens and Joubert, for example, indicated that Canada spends about $14.4 billion annually on the treatment of mental illness. By 2020, it is estimated that mental illness will represent the leading health care cost in the country.

In this regard, SEL is increasingly recognized as foundational to the promotion of positive mental health (Greenberg, Domitrovich, & Bumbarger, 2001; Sklad, Diekstra, de Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012; Wells, Barlow, & Stewart-Brown, 2003). Mental well-being is not a static condition that exists only within a child; it is also affected by the interactions the child has with his or her environment. Creating supportive, safe, and respectful school environments in which all children feel they belong can not only reduce the stigma of mental health difficulties, but also encourage help-seeking when children need it, promoting mental well-being in all children. From a cost-benefit perspective, schools are one of the primary settings in which promotion of social competence and prevention of unhealthy behaviors can occur (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). In other words, in addition to promoting knowledge and skills in reading, writing, and math, schools play a critical role in preparing students to graduate with the capacities to get along with others in socially and emotionally skilled ways, to practice healthy behaviors, and to make responsible decisions (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

WHAT IS SEL?

SEL involves the processes through which individuals acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage their emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and achieve positive goals, develop and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013; Weissberg, Payton, O'Brien, & Munro, 2007). That is, SEL teaches the personal and interpersonal skills humans all need to handle themselves, their relationships, and their

work effectively and ethically. As such, social-emotional competence is viewed as a "mastery skill" underlying virtually all aspects of human functioning.

Historically, SEL has been characterized in a variety of ways, often being used as an organizing framework for an array of prevention and intervention efforts in education and developmental science, including conflict resolution, cooperative learning, bullying prevention, and positive youth development (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006; Elias et al., 1997). SEL builds from work in child development, classroom management, and prevention, as well as emerging knowledge about the role of the brain in self-awareness, empathy, and social-cognitive growth (for example, see Best & Miller, 2010; Carter, Harris, & Porges, 2009; Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007; Diamond & Lee, 2011; Gallese & Goldman, 1998; Goleman, 2006; Greenberg, 2006; Singer & Lamm, 2009). It focuses on the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices. Moreover, SEL offers educators, families, and communities relevant strategies and practices to better prepare students for "the tests of life, not a life of tests" (Elias, 2001, p. 40). In short, SEL competence comprises the foundational skills for positive health practices, engaged citizenship, and school success.

SEL is sometimes called "the missing piece," because it represents a part of education that is inextricably linked to school success but has not been explicitly stated or given much attention until recently. SEL emphasizes active learning approaches in which skills can be generalized across curriculum areas and contexts when opportunities are provided to practice the skills that foster positive attitudes, behaviors, and thinking processes. The good news is that SEL skills can be taught through nurturing and caring learning environments and experiences (Elias et al., 1997; Greenberg, 2010).

Since 1994, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (www.casel.org), a nonprofit organization in the United States, has been at the forefront in North American and international efforts to promote SEL in schools. Since its inception, CASEL has defined SEL more specifically and has served as a guide to school-based SEL programming (CASEL, 2005). CASEL's mission is to advance the science of SEL and expand evidence-based, integrated SEL practices as an essential part of preschool through high school education. Based on extensive research, CASEL (2013) has identified the following five interrelated competencies that are central to SEL (also see Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015):

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize how thoughts, feelings, and actions are interconnected, including the capacity to accurately assess one's strengths and limitations, and have a positive mind-set, a realistic sense of self-efficacy, a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism, and an understanding of one's emotions, personal goals, and values.
2. **Self-management:** The skills and attitudes that facilitate the regulation of emotions and behaviors, including the ability to delay gratification, manage stress, control impulses, motivate oneself, and work toward achieving personal and academic goals.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
4. **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups, including skills in communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resist-

ing inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking help when needed.

5. **Responsible decision making:** The knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to make realistic evaluation of consequences and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms across diverse settings, and to take into consideration the health and well-being of both self and others.

SEL programs and approaches are founded on a variety of theoretical perspectives, including social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), social-cognitive (Coie & Dodge, 1998) or cognitive-behavioral approaches (Tobler et al., 2000), and theories of emotional intelligence (for example, Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). All of these are predicated on the notion that the capacity to process, reason about, and use emotion can enhance cognitive activities, such as thinking and decision making, facilitate the development and maintenance of social relationships, and promote personal growth and well-being (Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012). SEL programming also draws from theories that emphasize the primacy of *relationships* (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991) and are based on the understanding that learning is a social process—that is, students' learning occurs in collaboration with their teachers and in interactions with their peers, and that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful.

Many SEL approaches include both an *environmental focus* and a *person-centered focus* (Zins, Bloodworth, et al., 2004). Hence, in addition to focusing on specific instruction in social and emotional skills, SEL is a process of creating a school and classroom community that is caring, supportive, and responsive to students' needs. Indeed, effective SEL interventions and skill development should occur in such an environment, one that is safe and well managed, supports a child's development, and provides opportunities for practicing the skills. Communication styles, high performance expectations, classroom structures and rules, school organizational climate, commitment to the academic success of all students, district policies, teacher social and emotional competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), and openness to parental and community involvement are all important components of an SEL approach.

RECENT RESEARCH FINDINGS

Centuries ago, Aristotle contended that "educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all." The same sentiment rings true today. The aim of education should not only be to help students to master essential subject content areas such as reading, writing, math, science, and social studies, but should include an explicit and intentional focus on teaching students the competence to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show caring and concern for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (CASEL, 2013). What is different today from Aristotle's time, however, is that there is now strong scientific evidence to back up this claim.

Skills in Childhood Predict Later Success

A growing body of literature supports the premise that children's social and emotional competence not only predicts success in school (for example, see Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014; Wentzel, 1993), but also predicts a range of important outcomes in late adolescence and adulthood, including physical health, substance dependence, and overall well-being

(Moffitt et al., 2011). Recognizing the interrelationships between social-emotional competence and academic success, researchers have argued that fostering positive social and emotional development may be key to enhancing academic growth (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). In a study of 423 sixth and seventh graders, Wentzel (1993) found that students' prosocial classroom behaviors, such as helping, sharing, and cooperating, were better predictors of academic achievement than were their standardized test scores, even after taking into account academic behavior, teachers' preferences for students, IQ, family structure, sex, ethnicity, and days absent from school. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of 294 Italian children, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) found that prosocial behavior in third grade (average age 8.5 years), as rated by self, peers, and teachers, significantly predicted both academic achievement (explaining 35 percent of the variance) and social preference (explaining 37 percent of the variance) five years later, when children were in eighth grade. Most interestingly, this "prosocialness" score, which included cooperating, helping, sharing, and consoling behaviors, significantly predicted academic achievement five years later, even after controlling for third-grade academic achievement. In contrast, early academic achievement did not contribute significantly to later achievement after controlling for effects of early prosocialness.

In a more recent short-term, longitudinal study of 441 sixth-grade Canadian students, Oberle et al. (2014) examined the association between social and emotional competence and academic achievement in early adolescents. Social-emotional competence in grade six, operationalized in terms of both self-reports of social responsibility goals and teacher assessments of frustration tolerance, assertive social skills, task orientation, and peer interaction, were evaluated as predictors of student academic achievement test scores in math and reading in grade seven. As hypothesized, teachers' reports of students' social-emotional competence significantly predicted higher scores in math and reading in seventh grade. Self-reported social-emotional competence in grade six was a significant predictor of grade seven reading scores for boys but not girls. Although more research is needed regarding the link between SEL and academic achievement, there is a confluence of empirical evidence suggesting that, if students' success in school is desired, efforts should be made to intentionally and explicitly teach SEL.

In addition to playing a crucial role in predicting academic success, recent longitudinal research also documents links between children's social and emotional skills and later success in adulthood. Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley (2015) examined the degree to which late adolescent and early adult outcomes were predicted by teacher ratings of children's social competence measured many years earlier, when children were in kindergarten, following 753 kindergarten children longitudinally 13 to 19 years later. Kindergarten teacher ratings of children's prosocial skills (getting along with others, sharing, cooperating) were found to be significant predictors of whether participants graduated from high school on time, completed a college degree, obtained stable employment in adulthood, and were employed full time. Moreover, kindergarten children who were rated by their teachers as high in prosocial skills in kindergarten were less likely as adults to receive public assistance, live in or seek public housing, be involved with police, be placed in a juvenile detention facility, or be arrested. Early social competence inversely predicted days of binge drinking in the last month and number of years on medication for emotional or behavioral problems during high school. Given these findings, the authors emphasized the importance of assessing young children's social and emotional competence early on. They contended that these "softer" skills can be more malleable than IQ or

other cognitive measures and, hence, important contenders for intervention.

In another recent and notable longitudinal study, Moffitt et al. (2011) followed a cohort of 1,000 children from birth to age 32 in New Zealand, assessing children's self-control across the ages of 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11 years via reports from researcher-observers, teachers, parents, and the children themselves. Self-control in childhood was found to predict outcomes in physical health, substance dependence, personal finances, and criminal offending in adulthood, even after taking into account intelligence, social class, and problems the children had in adolescence (for example, smoking, school dropout, unplanned pregnancy). The authors concluded that focusing on the promotion of children's self-control "might reduce a panoply of societal costs, save taxpayers money, and promote prosperity" (p. 2693). Thus, results from several recent longitudinal studies examining the association between early SEL skills and later adult adjustment suggest that, in the long run, higher levels of social and emotional competence can increase the likelihood of high school graduation, financial success, mental and physical health, and reduced criminal behavior.

Social and Emotional Skills Can Be Taught

SEL is grounded in research from developmental cognitive neuroscience (for example, Diamond, 2012) that indicates that social and emotional skills can be taught across the life span and are viewed as more malleable than IQ. Moreover, the research that informs SEL indicates that emotions and relationships affect how and what is learned (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, & Miller, 2006; Izard, 2002; Spinrad & Eisenberg, 2009). As Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007) assert, "The aspects of cognition that are recruited most heavily in education, including learning, attention, memory, decision making, motivation, and social functioning, are both profoundly affected by emotion and in fact subsumed within the processes of emotion" (p. 7). Hence, how individuals feel affects how and what they learn.

Perhaps the most compelling evidence for the importance of SEL programs in promoting students' social-emotional competence and academic achievement comes from a recent meta-analysis conducted by Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 students from kindergarten through high school. Students in SEL programs, relative to students who did not receive an SEL program, were found to demonstrate significantly improved social-emotional competence, attitudes, and behavioral adjustment (increased prosocial behavior and decreased conduct problems and internalized problems). SEL students also outperformed non-SEL students on indices of academic achievement by 11 percentile points. Durlak et al. (2011) found that classroom teachers and other school personnel effectively implemented SEL programs. Thus, SEL programs can be easily incorporated into routine school practices and do not require staff from outside the school for successful delivery. Taken together, these results provide strong empirical evidence for the SEL programs as "value-added" in fostering students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors, and also counter the claim that taking time to promote students' SEL would be detrimental to academic achievement.

Similar results were obtained in a more recently conducted meta-analysis by Sklad et al. (2012) of 75 recently published studies of SEL programs. Sklad et al. found that universal, school-based SEL programs had significant positive effects on seven outcomes: social-emotional skills, prosocial behavior, positive self-image, academic achievement, antisocial behavior, mental health problems, and substance abuse. Not surprisingly, the most positive effects were found for social-emotional skills, with an effect

size of .70. In other words, students participating in SEL programs had social-emotional skills 7 standard deviations higher than comparison students, indicating that the average SEL program student had better social-emotional skills than 76 percent of non-SEL students. Moderate effect sizes (program effects of nearly a half of a standard deviation) emerged for four of the outcomes: academic achievement, positive self-image, prosocial behavior, and antisocial behavior. As for follow-up effects, the largest effects were found for academic achievement, followed by substance abuse.

SEL Skills Are Durable

Do students maintain their SEL competence after the SEL program has ended? Findings from Durlak et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis provide additional support for the durability of effects of SEL programming on students' social and emotional competence. Among a smaller group of 33 interventions that included follow-up data (an average follow-up period of 92 weeks), the positive effects remained statistically significant, although the effect sizes were smaller.

Research by Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, and Abbott (2008) documented the long-term positive effects of multiyear SEL programming on student outcomes. Specifically, Hawkins et al. found significantly reduced diagnosable mental health disorders (for example, major depression, generalized anxiety disorder) at age 24 and age 27, 12 and 15 years after their SEL intervention had ended. Their results also showed intervention effects indicating better educational and economic achievement among those individuals who received the SEL intervention in contrast to those who did not. Although more research is clearly needed, Hawkins et al.'s (2008) research provides important evidence about the potential long-term benefits of well-designed and well-implemented SEL interventions.

SEL Is Important to Educators

Recent research indicates that the myopic focus on academics as the sole purpose of education appears to be shifting, at least among teachers and the general public. A nationally representative survey published by Civic Enterprises and Peter D. Hart Research Associates of more than 600 teachers (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013) illustrates this point. Their report showed that the vast majority of preschool to high school teachers believe that social and emotional skills are teachable (95 percent), that promoting SEL will benefit students from both rich and poor backgrounds (97 percent), and that it will have positive effects on their school attendance and graduation (80 percent), standardized test scores and overall academic performance (77 percent), college preparation (78 percent), workforce readiness (87 percent), and citizenship (87 percent). Additionally, these same teachers reported that, in order to effectively implement and promote SEL in their classrooms and schools, they need strong support from district and school leaders. These findings are important because they demonstrate that, although there is a readiness among teachers to promote SEL, there is a need for systemic supports for implementation at the district level.

Results from the 2013 PDK/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools indicate that sentiments of the general public echo those espoused by teachers (Bushaw & Lopez, 2013). The report found that most Americans agree that public schools should teach students a full range of social, emotional, and cognitive competence, including how to set meaningful goals (89 percent), communication skills (94 percent), how to collaborate on projects (84 percent), and character (76 percent). Despite the strong consensus among educators and the public regarding the enormous potential of SEL as a fundamental component of school re-

form, it is essential that policy makers take action in order to make SEL a national priority.

NECESSARY INGREDIENTS FOR PROMOTING SEL

> *Imagine schools where children feel safe, valued, confident, and challenged, where they have the social, emotional, and academic skills to succeed, where the environment is safe and supportive, and where parents are fully engaged. Imagine this not as the exception in an elite or small school but in every school and for all children. Imagine the integration of social and emotional skills as a part of education at every level, from preschool to high school. Imagine it as part of district, state, and federal policies.* (O'Brien, Weissberg, & Munro, 2005/2006)

How can this dream be moved to reality? What can educators do to promote their students' social and emotional skills? The authors posit three necessary ingredients: creation of caring, safe, collaborative, participatory, and inclusive school environments; explicit teaching of SEL skills; and caring for teachers.

School Environments

Classrooms and schools operate as systems, and decades of research suggest that the unique culture and climate of classrooms and schools affects how and what students learn (for example, see Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2013). *School culture* refers to a general set of norms, beliefs, and practices, or "the way things are done around here" (Hemmelgarn, Glisson, & James, 2006), whereas *school climate* "reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (National School Climate Council, 2007, p. 4). Culture and climate in combination influence the interactions and relationships among administrators, teachers, school staff, and students and their approaches to teaching and learning (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Payne, & Gottfredson, 2005). Therefore, any approach to promoting SEL needs to take into account both school culture and climate and systematically and intentionally embed SEL into the fabric of a school.

SEL interventions and skill development should occur within supportive classroom and school environments, as well as help to create such a climate. Additionally, successful SEL-related school and classroom activities foster an active student voice in decision making, problem solving, and engagement in lifelong learning. Research also has shown that effective programs provide repeated opportunities to practice new skills and behaviors within the program structure and to apply them in real-life situations. That is, providing opportunities to practice within classroom lessons is important, but opportunities to practice in real-life situations are likely to have even more impact (Durlak et al., 2011; Nation et al., 2003; Weare & Nind, 2011).

A caring teacher can transform the school experience, especially for students who face enormous difficulties, such as dysfunctional home lives. The quality of teacher-student relationships is critical for children's academic achievement, as illustrated by the work of Maldonado-Carreno and Votruba-Drzal (2011). Using data from the National Institute of Child Health and Development Study of Early Childcare involving 1,364 children from kindergarten through fifth grade, they found that increases in the quality of teacher-student relationships were associated with concomitant improvements in teacher-reported academic skills. Although their study was correlational and hence cannot provide direct evidence that changes in teacher-child relationships *cause* improvements in children's academic skills, the study does illustrate the interrelation between teacher-student relationships and students' school success.

Some explicit strategies for fostering positive student-teacher relationships and caring classrooms include the following:

- Greeting students every day as they enter the classroom, with intentional efforts to have a brief *positive* conversation with them (for example, noticing their new backpack or shoes).
- Getting to know each student and the lives they live, learning about their strengths, challenges, interests, and dreams. This could be done at the beginning of the school year, through individual interviews with each student. Teachers can also ask students about what they, as teachers, can do to help students learn and thrive in school.
- Actively listening to students to show you care. Authentic listening is demonstrated by hearing your students and then checking back with them to make sure you understand. Such interactions help to develop a trusting relationship between teachers and students.
- Asking students for advice and feedback as well as help when needed. For example, teachers can ask for help in setting up the classroom (for instance, what to put on the classroom bulletin boards, how to arrange the seating, or how to organize activity centers), giving students a voice in the nature and organization of their physical environment. Through regular class meetings, teachers can engage students in developing the rules for the classroom and in creating a positive classroom environment. By considering student feedback, teachers demonstrate that student opinions and experiences are valued, and help to create a classroom culture in which students feel safe to ask questions and take chances, enhancing the development of their SEL skills as well as their academic success.

Explicitly Teaching SEL Skills

There is no one way to promote SEL, as there are many different approaches to fostering student social and emotional competence, including such things as utilizing collaborative or cooperative learning structures in the classroom, teaching children how to resolve conflicts peacefully or how to solve social problems effectively, addressing bullying and discrimination in schools, promoting emotional literacy and moral education, and fostering positive teacher-student and student-student relationships. (Resources for obtaining information about specific programs appear in the Resources section of the online AFB Learning Center; see also CASEL, 2005, 2013.) Indeed, a large number of SEL programs have been developed in recent years that vary considerably in terms of the scope of SEL skills addressed, the content of the curriculum, the target audience (for example, elementary versus high school teachers), and the empirical evidence supporting the program's effectiveness. Whereas some SEL programs include lessons that focus on explicit instruction in SEL competence, others integrate SEL content into core academic subject areas, such as language arts or social studies. There are also SEL programs and approaches that target teachers' instructional practices and pedagogy to create safe, caring, engaging, and participatory learning environments that foster students' attachment to school, motivation to learn, and school success (Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004). Research has shown that the most beneficial school-based prevention and promotion programs are rooted in sound theory and research, and provide sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in SEL skills (Bond & Hauf, 2004). They are implemented in a coordinated manner, and are preferably school-wide, from preschool through high school. Lessons are reinforced in the classroom, during out-of-school activities, and at

home. In effective SEL programs, educators receive ongoing professional development in SEL, and families and schools work together to promote children's social, emotional, and academic success (Nation et al., 2003). In short, SEL can be seen as a template for effective school reform.

In their meta-analyses, Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan (2010) and Durlak et al. (2011) provided evidence that SEL programs promote better student outcomes when program implementers incorporate four elements represented by the acronym SAFE:

- *Sequenced:* Connected and coordinated set of activities to foster skills development
- *Active:* Active forms of learning to help students master new skills
- *Focused:* A component that emphasizes developing personal and social skills
- *Explicit:* Targeting specific social and emotional skills

The effective *implementation* of an SEL program plays a crucial role in influencing student outcomes. Unfortunately, some well-designed SEL programs do not promote positive student outcomes, often owing to variability in the way the program is implemented in the real-world setting of a school or classroom. When implementing an established SEL program that has been shown to be effective, it is important for educators to recognize the importance of completing all lessons and activities in the program (*dosage*) and doing so as designed by the program developers (*fidelity*) in order to maximize the likelihood of success of the program in their own classroom environment.

Care for Teachers

> *Classroom teaching . . . is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species has ever invented. In fact, when I compared the complexity of teaching with that much more highly rewarded profession, "doing medicine," I concluded that the only time medicine even approaches the complexity of an average day of classroom teaching is in an emergency room during a natural disaster.* (Shulman, 2004, p. 504)

Recent evidence indicates that efforts to improve teachers' knowledge about SEL alone are not sufficient for successful SEL implementation. Indeed, teachers' own SEL competence and well-being appear to play crucial roles in influencing the infusion of SEL into classrooms and schools (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Reviewing the evidence linking teachers' own SEL competence and student outcomes, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) pointed to the importance of quality teacher-student relationships and effective student and classroom management skills (as well as implementation dosage and fidelity) in obtaining the best outcomes for students. Accordingly, they recommended the development and implementation of interventions designed to specifically address teachers' SEL competence, reduce teacher stress and burnout, and improve teacher well-being.

Although limited, the past few years have seen the emergence of interventions specifically targeted at improving teachers' SEL and stress management. For example, two programs designed to promote teachers' SEL competence by incorporating mindfulness-based approaches are CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and SMART (Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques) in Education. (Sidebar 20.1 summarizes a number of programs designed to promote teachers' SEL.) Both programs aim to increase teachers' mindfulness, job satisfaction, compassion and empathy for students, and efficacy for regulating emotions and decreasing stress and burnout. *Mindfulness* is typically described as an attentive, nonjudgmental, and receptive awareness of present-moment

SIDEBAR 20.1

Social and Emotional Learning Programs Designed for Teachers

The following are some of the social and emotional learning programs designed specifically for teachers:

1. **CARE for Teachers** (www.care4teachers.com), from the Garrison Institute in New York, is a professional development program for educators teaching emotional skills, understanding, and emotion regulation and recognition through stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness, self-reflection, and breathing exercises.
2. **FuelEd** (http://fueledschools.com) is a program that trains teachers to meet the social and emotional needs of children in the classroom, based on research from developmental and counseling psychology and social neuroscience.
3. **The Greater Good Science Center** (http://greatergood.berkeley.edu), established in 2001 at the University of California–Berkeley, focuses on understanding individual happiness, compassion, strong social bonding, mindfulness, and altruism, with the dual goal of conducting and disseminating research to the public.
4. **The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation** (www.randomactsofkindness.org) is a nonprofit organization that seeks to inspire people to spread kindness, providing activities, lesson plans, and ideas for educators, schools, and the general public on how to inspire and act in kindness. The RAK Kindness in the Classroom Course, offered in collaboration with the University of Colorado, Boulder, explores ways to cultivate a caring classroom culture and school climate by learning about SEL and integrating it into the classroom and curriculum.
5. **SEL Resource Finder** (www.selresources.com), developed in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, is an online collection of social and emotional (SEL) and mental health resources for educators and other adults who work with children and youths.
6. **Six Seconds** (www.6seconds.org), established in 1997, is a nonprofit organization that provides training and assessment tools on emotional intelligence for both business and education, offering training for both students and teachers in skills related to emotional intelligence.
7. **SMART in Education** (http://passageworks.org/courses/smart-in-education), or Stress Management and Relaxation Techniques in Education, is a program for teachers and adults working in education. The program aims to improve emotional health and mental well-being through mindfulness exercises.

experience in terms of feelings, images, thoughts, and sensations or perceptions (for example, see Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Initial research to date has supported the effectiveness of both the CARE (Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013; Jennings, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2011) and the SMART-in-Education (for example, see Benn, Akiva, Arel, & Roeser, 2012; Roeser et al., 2013) programs in promoting teacher SEL competence and well-being. Nonetheless, further research is needed to examine whether such positive changes in teacher well-being spill over into the classroom and lead to improvements in students' SEL competence.

SUMMARY

Although much has been learned in the past decade about SEL programs and their effects on children's social and emotional competence and academic success, the field has further to go before firm conclusions can be made about the specific ways in which an SEL approach advances children's short-term and long-term school and life success. Indeed, many questions still remain regarding the ways in which programs and practices designed to promote children's SEL skills can forecast children's future success. For example, what are the processes and mechanisms that lead to successful improvements in children's social and emotional competence across programs? Which programs work best for which children? And under what conditions is optimal development fostered?

One of the biggest challenges that confronts the field of SEL is the translation of knowledge garnered from rigorous research on the effectiveness of programs into policy and widespread practice (Greenberg, 2010; Shonkoff & Bales, 2011). Clearly, there is a need for greater efforts to translate science for practice and policy so that SEL approaches can be better integrated into schools and communities. Such efforts can help build the processes and structures needed to foster high-quality implementation and promote sustainability (see Elias, Zins, Graczyk, & Weissberg, 2003).

Greater collaboration between researchers and educators is also needed so that research not only informs practice but is also informed by it. Indeed, to create a world characterized by the values and practices that illustrate caring and kindness among all people, it is essential that educators, parents, community members, and policy makers work in concert to achieve long-term change. In today's complex society, special care needs to be taken to encourage and assist young people to reach their greatest potential and to flourish and thrive. It is therefore critical that intentional efforts be made to devise the most effective preventions and educational practices that promote SEL in all students. Such efforts must be based on strong conceptual models and sound research. Only then will the advancement of the development of the world's children and youths be possible.

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