

GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The Challenge: What Should Schools Teach?

In the last decade we have witnessed one of the most significant eras of school reform since our system of public education was established. The need for high-quality education has risen to the top of the national agenda.

Most discussions about education have centered on the poor academic performance of American students compared with those in other industrialized nations and on concerns that they are not prepared to enter the workforce or succeed in higher education.

But in recent years the focus has expanded. If we have been concerned about the quality of many of America's schools, we have also been deeply distressed by widespread alienation, drug use, and violence among youth. It is becoming clear to growing numbers of parents and community leaders that in addition to pursuing their primary goal of improved academic learning, schools can and should play a critical role in preparing new generations of healthy, productive workers and citizens.

As indicated by numerous polls of parents and community leaders, there is a growing consensus about what we want our children to know and be able to do, and thus what we want schools to teach. We want young people to:

- ❖ Be fully literate, able to benefit from and make use of the power of written and spoken language through a variety of media and technologies;
- ❖ Understand mathematics and science at levels that will prepare them for the world of the future and strengthen their ability to think;
- ❖ Be effective problem solvers and recognize the consequences of their actions;
- ❖ Take responsibility for their personal health and well-being;
- ❖ Develop effective social relationships such as learning how to work in a group and how to understand and relate to others from different cultures and backgrounds;
- ❖ Be caring individuals with concern and respect for others;
- ❖ Develop good character, make sound moral decisions, and behave in an ethical and responsible manner.

Educational goals like these can be found in the mission statements of school districts throughout the country. All schools and communities want the very best for their children. Yet helping all children to develop to their fullest potential has been a continuing challenge as our society has grown more complex and our communities more fragmented.

The Central Role of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Growing evidence strongly suggests that a key element in meeting all our educational goals for children and youth, academic as well as social, and helping all children to reach their highest potential is social and emotional learning (SEL).

Social and emotional learning is the process through which children and adults develop the skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, form positive relationships, and successfully handle the demands of growing up in today's complex society.

The theory underlying social and emotional learning is based on research indicating that individuals learn in many different ways and that learning is influenced by a variety of social and emotional factors. A child who comes to school anxious, afraid, or alienated is a child whose ability to learn will be significantly diminished. A school in which teasing and bullying are everyday facts of life is not a place where children feel encouraged to learn and grow.

What all schools—and their parents and communities—want is students who are actively engaged in learning, who are motivated to learn, and who feel connected to their schools. Social and emotional variables are critically important to these key elements of student success.

Experience with SEL Programs: What the Research Shows

Aspects of social and emotional learning can be found in most of our schools. For example, programs designed to address a wide range of problems that interfere with children's ability to learn, such as drug education and violence or bullying prevention curricula, often include elements of SEL. The problem with many of these efforts, typically implemented as a response to a highly publicized issue or emergency, is that often they are not based on effective educational strategies.

Instead of the short-term, categorical programs that typify many prevention approaches, a growing body of research supports SEL programming that is planned, systematic, monitored, and improved and refined over time. Such an approach is consistent with the research on improving academic performance that stresses the need for “whole school” reform. When reforms are carried out in an isolated, fragmented way, their impact, even when they make a real difference, is often short-lived.

Uncoordinated programs assume that the fix can and should be simple or quick. Such programs ignore the fact that problems like youth drug use, violence, bullying,

sexual promiscuity, and alienation are closely interrelated, complex, and develop over time within the broader context of the school, family, and community. When an unexpected outbreak of negative behavior among students occurs, often the first question the public asks is, “Who is to blame?” Typically the next step is to adopt programs to “target” the problem. Rarely, however, do the school, the parents, and the community come together to ask, “How can we provide a positive and supportive environment for our young people, from grades K-12, that will be a lasting part of education in our community and make events like these much less likely to occur in the future?”

Guidelines for Effective SEL Programming

CASEL has identified the following characteristics of effective SEL programming:

1. Grounded in theory and research. It is based on sound theories of child development, incorporating approaches that demonstrate beneficial effects on children’s attitudes and behavior through scientific research.

2. Teaches children to apply SEL skills and ethical values in daily life. Through systematic instruction and application of learning to everyday situations, it enhances children’s social, emotional, and ethical behavior. Children learn to recognize and manage their emotions, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively. They also develop responsible and respectful attitudes and values about self, others, work, health, and citizenship.

3. Builds connection to school through caring, engaging classroom and school practices. It uses diverse teaching methods to engage students in creating a classroom atmosphere where caring, responsibility, and a commitment to learning thrive. It nurtures students’ sense of emotional security and safety, and it strengthens relationships among students, teachers, other school personnel, and families.

4. Provides developmentally and culturally appropriate instruction. It offers developmentally appropriate SEL classroom instruction, including clearly specified learning objectives, for each grade level from preschool through high school. It also emphasizes cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity.

5. Helps schools coordinate and unify programs that are often fragmented. It offers schools a coherent, unifying framework to promote the positive social, emotional, and academic growth of all students. It coordinates school programs that address positive youth de-

velopment, problem prevention, health, character, service-learning, and citizenship.

6. Enhances school performance by addressing the affective and social dimensions of academic learning. It teaches students social and emotional competencies that encourage classroom participation, positive interactions with teachers, and good study habits. It introduces engaging teaching and learning methods, such as problem-solving approaches and cooperative learning, that motivate students to learn and to succeed academically.

7. Involves families and communities as partners. It involves school staff, peers, parents, and community members in applying and modeling SEL-related skills and attitudes at school, at home, and in the community.

8. Establishes organizational supports and policies that foster success. It ensures high-quality program implementation by addressing factors that determine the long-term success or failure of school-based programs. These include leadership, active participation in program planning by everyone involved, adequate time and resources, and alignment with school, district, and state policies.

9. Provides high-quality staff development and support. It offers well-planned professional development for all school personnel. This includes basic theoretical knowledge, modeling and practice of effective teaching methods, regular coaching, and constructive feedback from colleagues.

10. Incorporates continuing evaluation and improvement. It begins with an assessment of needs to establish a good fit between the school’s concerns and SEL programs. It continues gathering data to assess progress, ensure accountability, and shape program improvement.



Background on Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): A Key to Children's Success in School and Life

Our national commitment to public education means we as a nation believe every child deserves the opportunity to learn to his or her fullest capacity. To succeed in school, students need to be engaged, interested, and excited to be there. They need to know how to focus their attention on their work, keep trying even when they get discouraged or face setbacks, work effectively with other students and adults, and be good communicators and problem-solvers. These skills form a foundation for young people's success not just in school, but in their adult lives as members of the community, as productive workers, and as parents.

Reliable research now tells us that not only can these skills be taught; they can be taught by regular classroom teachers in schools of every type to students of every background. Programs that teach these skills are increasingly referred to as “**Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)**” programs.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a not-for-profit organization based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, has recently completed studies that clearly show that students who receive SEL programming academically outperform their peers, compared to those who do not receive SEL. Those students also get better grades and graduate at higher rates. Effective SEL programming drives academic learning, and it also drives social outcomes such as positive peer relationships, caring and empathy, and social engagement. Social and emotional instruction also leads to reductions in problem behavior such as drug use, violence, and delinquency.

The research is clear: attending to the social and emotional learning of children is a hugely profitable investment in their success in school and their future success as adults. It is also an investment in the well-being of our schools. The research

on effective schools makes clear that schools where faculty are guided by a Big Idea—where they share a vision of what they are trying to accomplish for their students, how they will get there, and how everything they do contributes to that end—are the most successful. SEL is exactly this kind of Big Idea.

What is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)?

- SEL is a process for helping children and even adults develop the fundamental skills for life effectiveness. SEL teaches the skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work, effectively and ethically.
- These skills include recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically. They are the skills that allow children to calm themselves when angry, make friends, resolve conflicts respectfully, and make ethical and safe choices.
- Many of the programs that teach SEL skills have now been rigorously evaluated and found to have positive impacts. According to reliable research, schools are a highly effective setting for teaching SEL skills.
- SEL is also a framework for school improvement. Teaching SEL skills helps create and maintain safe, caring learning environments. The most beneficial programs provide sequential and developmentally appropriate instruction in SEL skills. They are implemented in a coordinated manner, schoolwide, from preschool through high school. Lessons are reinforced in the classroom, during out-of-school activities, and at home. Educators receive ongoing professional development in SEL. And families and schools work together to promote children's social, emotional, and academic success.



Why Is Social and Emotional Learning Important? What the Research Says

SEL is based on rigorous research in multiple fields clearly indicating that our emotions and relationships affect how and what we learn. A growing body of research findings has demonstrated that:

- SEL promotes positive development among children and youth, reduces problem behaviors, and improves academic performance, citizenship, and health-related behaviors.
- Academic outcomes promoted by SEL include greater motivation to learn and commitment to school, increased time devoted to schoolwork and mastery of subject matter, improved attendance and graduation rates, and improved grades and test scores.
- Students in schools that use an evidence-based SEL curriculum (one that has been scientifically evaluated and found effective) significantly improve in their attitudes toward school, their behaviors, and their academic performance. A recent review of 30 studies found that SEL results in improvements in students' achievement test scores—by an average of 11 percentile points over students who are not involved in SEL programming.¹
- Early investments in SEL yield long-term dividends. One major multi-year study found that by the time they were adults, students who received SEL in grades 1-6 had an 11 percent higher grade-point average and significantly greater levels of school commitment and attachment to school at age 18.
- The same research showed that even as SEL programs produce positive effects in students, they also prevent negative outcomes. The retention (hold-back) rate of students who received SEL in grades 1-6 was 14 percent, versus 23 percent of students in a control group. The same students at age 18 showed a 30 percent lower incidence of school behavior problems, a 20 percent lower rate of violent delinquency, and a 40 percent lower rate of heavy alcohol use.²
- The effectiveness of SEL is broad-based. Several hundred studies have documented the positive effects of SEL programming on children of diverse backgrounds from preschool through high school in a wide variety of settings.³

¹ From a forthcoming report by Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Taylor, R.D., Dymnicki, A.B., & Schellinger, K. (2008).

² Source: Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.F., Kosterman, R., Abbott, R., & Hill, K.G. (1999) Preventing adolescent health-risk behaviors by strengthening protection during childhood. *Arch. Pediatr. Adolesc. Med.*, 153, 226-234.

³ Greenberg, M. T., Weissberg, R. P., O'Brien, M. U., Zins, J. E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., and Elias, M.J. (2003). *School-*

- SEL programming is supported by a growing body of rigorous social science research. Joseph A. Durlak of Loyola University Chicago and Roger P. Weissberg of the University of Illinois at Chicago recently analyzed 207 studies of SEL programs. Their findings confirm the positive effects of SEL programming on students participating in school-based SEL programs and provide the best overview of the positive effects of SEL available to date. In previous studies they also found that SEL programs with the best outcomes are multi-year in duration, use interactive rather than purely knowledge-based instructional methods, and are integrated into the life of the school rather than being implemented as marginal add-ons.⁴
- SEL is related to other national youth development and prevention initiatives, such as character education and school-based health promotion programs. But SEL is significantly different because it systematically addresses the numerous social and emotional variables that place youth at risk for school failure, such as a lack of attachment to a significant adult or the inability to manage emotions. SEL provides educators with a common language and framework to organize their activities. Many programs related to children's social and emotional development focus on a single problem or issue such as preventing substance use. SEL, however, is an inclusive approach that covers the entire spectrum of social and emotional competencies that help children to be resilient and successful learners.

As educators debate the best ways to promote student success, they have tended to distinguish between the emotional and the academic aspects of children's learning. Growing evidence now suggests, however, that these two kinds of learning are intimately connected.

Promoting students' social and emotional skills is critical to improving their academic performance and their success in life.

based prevention: Promoting positive social development through social and emotional learning. *American Psychologist*, 58(6/7), 466-474.

⁴ Durlak, J.A., et al., *op.cit.* Also: Zins, J. E., Weissberg, R. P., Wang, M. C., & Walberg, H. J. (Eds.) (2004). *Building academic success on social and emotional learning: What does the research say?* NY: Teachers College Press.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL): At the Forefront of a New Movement

Founded in 1994 by a group that included Daniel Goleman, author of *Social Intelligence* and *Emotional Intelligence*, and educator-philanthropist Eileen Rockefeller Growald, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been a pioneer in the field of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). With the mission of establishing SEL as an essential part of every child's education, CASEL, a not-for-profit organization based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, provides national and international leadership to enhance scientific research on SEL and to expand the effective practice of SEL in schools.

CASEL's early years focused on gathering scientific evidence to demonstrate the contributions of Social and Emotional Learning to school success, health, well-being, peer and family relationships, and student citizenship. CASEL still conducts scientific research and reviews the best available evidence of the effectiveness of SEL programming. In addition, CASEL provides SEL practitioners and school administrators with the guidelines, tools, informational resources, policies, training, and supports they need to improve and expand SEL programming in schools.

CASEL's accomplishments include:

Landmark Research, Publications, and Studies

- The first major book on school-based SEL programming, which identified a research-based framework for implementing effective programs (*Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators*, ASCD, 1997).
- A comprehensive review of 80 scientifically evaluated SEL programs that provides a road map for schools and districts interested in launching, adding, or integrating social, emotional, and academic learning programs (*Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs*, CASEL, 2003).
- An in-depth review of the scientific research linking SEL programming and academic success (*Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?*, Teachers College Press at Columbia University, 2004).
- Publication of a detailed "meta-analysis" of research on 73 after-school programs for young people. The study found that these programs had a positive impact in three major areas: feelings and attitudes, indicators of behavioral adjustment, and school performance (*The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills*, CASEL, 2007).

Support for Effective SEL Program Implementation

- Active involvement as advisers to the State of Illinois in developing the first statewide learning standards in the country for Social and Emotional Learning for grades K-12. These standards were adopted by the state legislature in 2004. CASEL continues to work closely with the Illinois State Board of Education to assist schools throughout the state in effective SEL program implementation.
- Publication of *Implementing Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning: Implementation Guide and Toolkit* (2006), a comprehensive guide and framework for effective school-based SEL programming. The guide serves as the State of Illinois' framework for state-funded SEL implementation and has been distributed to schools worldwide.
- Training and technical support for implementing effective SEL programs through a series of CASEL workshops and direct onsite consultation with participating schools. CASEL currently provides professional development training to nearly 100 schools in Illinois and provides training and technical assistance to national centers that work with schools throughout the country.

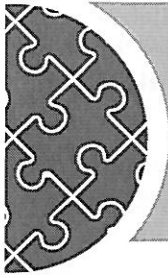
Organizational Partnerships

- One of four organizations constituting the National Training and Technical Assistance Center for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, serving schools and school-based substance abuse prevention coordinators nationwide.
- A partner in the National Center for Mental Health Promotion and Youth Violence Prevention, providing expertise to grantees of the federally funded Safe Schools/Healthy Students program in how to implement and evaluate Social and Emotional Learning programs.

CASEL'S funding has come from a variety of sources. These include the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Institute of Mental Health, and the following foundations: the Fetzer Institute, the Ford Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, the Surdna Foundation, the University of Illinois at Chicago, the Randi and David Zussman Family Foundation, and the William T. Grant Foundation. Donors include: Eileen Rockefeller Growald, Irving B. Harris, the CASEL Board of Directors and staff, and others.

CASEL is unique in education today. It is an organization devoted to improving education by bridging theory, research, and practice—and to pursuing the goals of school improvement and student success through continuing dialog and collaboration with educators. ■





Youth and Schools Today: Why SEL Is Needed

Society and the life experiences of children and youth changed considerably during the last century. The changes include:

- Increased economic and social pressures on families.
- Weakening of community institutions that nurture children's social, emotional, and moral development.
- Fewer opportunities for children to engage in unstructured, undirected play with parents, friends, and classmates.¹
- Fewer children living in two-parent households—in 2006, 67 percent of children ages 0–17 lived with two married parents, down from 77 percent in 1980.²
- More children living in households with both parents working full-time, with a corresponding increase in the amount of time children spend in the care of someone other than their primary caregivers.
- Easier access by children to media messages that encourage health-damaging behavior.

All of these factors require schools to make a greater effort to nurture and support the healthy social, emotional, and physical development of children.

Today, schools are expected to do more than they have ever done in the past, often with diminishing resources.

- In 1900, the average public school enrolled 40 students, and the size of the average school district was 120 students. Today, an average elementary school enrolls more than 400 pupils, and a typical high school enrolls more than 2,000 pupils.³

¹ Jarrett, O.S. (2003). Recess in Elementary School: What Does the Research Say? *ERIC Digest*.

² Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2007). *America's Children: Key National Indicators of Well-Being*.

³ Learning First Alliance (2001). *Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools*.

- In 1900, schools were more economically, racially, and ethnically homogeneous. Today's schools face unprecedented challenges to educate an increasingly multicultural and multilingual student body and to address the widening social and economic disparities in U.S. society.
- A 2006 national poll conducted by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills found that 80 percent of respondents believe the things students need to learn in school today are different from what they were 20 years ago. In addition to the traditional academic skills, the respondents listed the following skills as critically important for schools to teach: critical thinking and problem solving, ethics and social responsibility, teamwork and collaboration, lifelong learning and self-direction, leadership, creativity and innovation, and global awareness.⁴

Here are some other realities schools are dealing with today:

- According to the U.S. Department of Education, the number of children with developmental delay being served in schools under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) increased 633 percent between 1997 and 2001.
- Kindergarten teachers say that about 20 percent of children entering kindergarten do not yet have the necessary social and emotional skills to be "ready" for school. Of very low-income children, as many as 30 percent may not have the necessary skills.⁵
- The 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), the most current year available, revealed that large percentages of American high school students are involved with substance

⁴ Partnership for 21st Century Skills (2007). *A presentation of key findings from a national survey of 800 registered voters conducted September 10-12, 2007*.

⁵ Child Trends. (2003). *Kindergarteners' social interaction skills*, from www.childtrendsdatabank.org.



use, risky sexual behavior, violence, and mental health difficulties. For example, 16.9 percent of high school students seriously considered attempting suicide; over 40 percent used alcohol, and close to 30 percent had ridden in a car with someone who had been drinking within 30 days of the survey; almost half had sexual intercourse, and almost 40 percent of those students did not use a condom during their last sexual intercourse; and almost 20 percent carried a weapon some time during the past month.⁶

- According to the 2006 Indicators of School Crime and Safety report from the National Center for Education Statistics, 27 percent of schools report daily or weekly bullying incidents. In 2005, more than a quarter of students ages 12-18 reported being bullied within the past six months, with 58 percent of these students bullied once or twice during that period, 25 percent bullied once or twice a month, 11 percent bullied once or twice a week, and 8 percent of students bullied almost every day.
- Students who are supported by caring, qualified adults succeed at high levels, yet 24 percent of students who have considered dropping out of high school feel that no adult in the school cares for them. The current average ratio of school counselors to students is 1 to 476.⁷

Given this context, the demands on schools to implement effective educational approaches that promote academic success, enhance health, and prevent problem behaviors have grown significantly.

Yet too many child advocates and researchers, despite their good intentions, have proposed fragmented initiatives to address problems without an adequate understanding of the mission, priorities, and culture of schools.⁸ Schools have been inundated with well-intentioned prevention and promotion programs that address such diverse issues as HIV/AIDS, alcohol, careers, character, civics, conflict resolution, delinquency, dropout, family life, health, morals, multiculturalism, pregnancy, service-learning, truancy, and violence.

For a number of reasons, these uncoordinated efforts often are disruptive.

- First, they typically are introduced as a series of short-term, fragmented initiatives. Such programs and the

⁶ *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2005.*

⁷ *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD), Whole Child Initiative online newsletter, November 12, 2007.*

⁸ *Sarason, S. (1996). The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change, NY: Teachers College Press.*

needs they address are not sufficiently linked to the central mission of schools or to the issues for which teachers and other school personnel are held accountable, primarily academic performance.

- Second, without strong leadership and support from school administrators, there is rarely adequate staff development and support for program implementation. Programs that are insufficiently coordinated, monitored, evaluated, and improved over time will have reduced impact on student behavior and are unlikely to be sustained.

Well-planned and effectively implemented Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programming addresses these problems by providing a coordinated and coherent approach to helping children recognize and manage their emotions, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively. It also enhances students' connection to school through caring, engaging classroom and school practices.

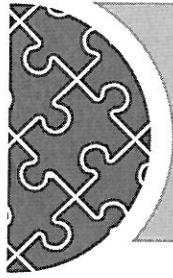
Broad-based, schoolwide implementation of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programming has been found to be highly effective in addressing the kinds of problems that are facing today's young people, their families, and their schools. SEL programming is supported by a growing body of rigorous social science research. Joseph A. Durlak of Loyola University Chicago and Roger P. Weissberg of the University of Illinois at Chicago recently analyzed 207 studies of SEL programs. Their findings confirm the positive effects of SEL programming on students participating in school-based SEL programs and provide the best overview of the positive effects of SEL available to date.⁹

Ideally, planned, ongoing, systematic, and coordinated SEL instruction should begin in preschool and continue through high school.¹⁰ Learning social and emotional skills is similar to learning other academic skills in that the effect of initial learning is enhanced over time to address the increasingly complex situations children face regarding academics, social relationships, citizenship, and health. And learning social and emotional skills is best accomplished through effective classroom instruction; student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom; and broad student, parent, and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation.

For more information see www.CASEL.org.

⁹ *From a forthcoming report by Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Taylor, R.D., Dymnicki, A.B., & Schellinger, K. (2008).*

¹⁰ *Greenberg, M.T., Weissberg, R.P., O'Brien, M.U., Zins, J.E., Fredericks, L., Resnik, H., and Elias, M.J. (2003). School-based prevention: Promoting positive social development through social and emotional learning. American Psychologist, 58(6/7), 466-474.*



CASEL *briefs*

December 2007

Illinois Social and Emotional Learning Standards

Goal 1: Develop self-awareness and self-management skills to achieve school and life success.

- A. Identify and manage one's emotions and behavior.
- B. Recognize personal qualities and external supports.
- C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals.

Goal 2: Use social-awareness and interpersonal skills to establish and maintain positive relationships.

- A. Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.
- B. Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.
- C. Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.
- D. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.

Goal 3: Demonstrate decision-making skills and responsible behaviors in personal, school, and community contexts.

- A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.
- B. Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.
- C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.





CASEL Update

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
December 2007

The Benefits of School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Highlights from a Forthcoming CASEL Report

A major new study reveals that students who participate in school-based programs focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) profit in multiple ways. Compared to students who do not experience SEL programming, they improve significantly with respect to:

1. Social and emotional skills
2. Attitudes about themselves, others, and school
3. Social and classroom behavior
4. Conduct problems such as classroom misbehavior and aggression
5. Emotional distress such as stress and depression
6. Achievement test scores and school grades

These positive results do not come at the expense of performance in core academic skills, but rather enhance academic achievement. Moreover, among those studies that collected follow-up data in each of the above categories, the positive benefits to students were found to persist over time.

These are the findings of a meta-analysis of 207 studies of SEL programs involving a broadly representative group of more than 288,000 students from urban, suburban, and rural elementary and secondary schools. Funded by the William T. Grant Foundation and the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, the meta-analysis was carried out by Joseph A. Durlak of Loyola University Chicago and Roger P. Weissberg at the University of Illinois at Chicago, with the assistance of graduate students Allison Dymnicki, Rebecca Taylor, and Kriston Schellinger. The project, spearheaded by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a not-for-profit research organization based at the University of Illinois at Chicago, is the first meta-analysis of research on student impacts of school-based social and emotional learning programs. A full report (*The Effects of Social and Emotional Learning on the Behavior and Academic Performance of School Children*), Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., and Schellinger, K.) will be released in early 2008.

Background: Rigorous Criteria for Inclusion

Over the past five years, CASEL has analyzed research on more than 700 SEL programs that promote positive youth development in school, family, or community settings. The common thread in all of them is a focus on developing young people's personal, interpersonal, and problem-solving skills through social and emotional learning (SEL). CASEL defines SEL as the process of acquiring the skills to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively. A growing body of research and literature supports

the premise that effective SEL programming is a key to children's success in school and life (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004).

Earlier in 2007, CASEL released a groundbreaking report from the larger data set, *The Impact of After-School Programs that Promote Personal and Social Skills*. The report documented that youth who participated in structured, active, focused, and explicit (SAFE) after-school programs improved significantly in their feelings and attitudes, behavioral adjustment, and school performance.

The present study, which looks at SEL during the school day, adds significantly to what is known about the impact of SEL programming by evaluating school-based programs carried out by classroom teachers and other school staff. The researchers searched carefully to obtain a representative sample of published and unpublished studies. To be included in the meta-analysis, research studies had to meet the following criteria:

1. A major focus was on the enhancement of students' social and emotional development.
2. The intervention involved students 5-18 years old who did not have any identified problems, i.e., the intervention was directed at the general school population of students, not a specific "problem" group.
3. There was a control group.
4. Data were collected on at least one of six specific outcome areas related to students' (1) social and emotional skills, (2) attitudes toward self, others, and school, (3) positive social behaviors, (4) conduct problems, (5) emotional distress, and (6) academic performance.

The meta-analysis identified three major types of school-based SEL programs:

- *Classroom Programs Conducted by Teachers*. These usually took the form of a specific curriculum or set of lesson plans delivered within the classroom setting only.
- *Classroom Programs Conducted by Researchers*. These were similar to those conducted by teachers, with the major difference that researchers administered the intervention.
- *Multi-Component Programs*. These types of programs added another component to classroom-based strategies that varied depending on the investigation—for example, a component involving parents or a school-wide component that stressed the importance of reorganizing school structures and practices in order to encourage and support students' positive development, e.g., through school climate improvement strategies.

Key Findings: Classroom Teachers and Quality Count

One major finding of the meta-analysis is that the overall group of SEL programs positively affected students in multiple areas. Students demonstrated enhanced skills, attitudes, and positive social behaviors following the intervention, and also demonstrated fewer conduct problems and lower levels of emotional distress. Although the SEL interventions required time in the school day, they did not detract from students' academic performance. **Across the studies evaluating academic outcomes, students scored 11 percentile points higher on standardized achievement tests, a significant improvement, relative to peers not receiving the program.**



**Collaborative for Academic, Social, and
Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

**Promoting Children's Success
in School and Life**

**For more information about CASEL and Social and Emotional
Learning, please visit our website:
www.CASEL.org**