

Instruction: Developing the skills and dispositions that foster safe, responsible and caring schools:

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What is this? Safe and civil schools are grounded in people being engaged and dedicated social, emotional, ethical and civic as well as intellectual learners. Educators always shape children's developing social, emotional, ethical and intellectual abilities and dispositions: intentionally, helpful or not. Educators can and need to intentionally teach students the social, emotional, civic and intellectual abilities that provide the foundation for violence prevention and academic achievement. There are numerous evidence-based strategies that can be integrated into an academic curriculum and into the culture of the classroom that promote students' social, emotional and ethical competencies and enhance academic performance.

There are four major and overlapping ways that educators can promote these skills and dispositions. First, and perhaps most importantly, our behavior is a model for students. Our behavior is teaching. Second, how we establish a climate for learning and manage the class provides the foundation for all teaching and learning. Third, there are a number of pedagogic strategies that educators often use, like cooperative learning and conflict resolution, that involve developing social, emotional and civic as well as intellectual competencies and dispositions. And, finally, we can infuse social, emotional and ethical (SEE) learning into the actual curriculum of class life. There are two ways that teachers can do this. We can use an evidence-based curriculum (e.g. Second Steps). Or, we can infuse SEE goals and learning activities into existing curriculum.

Adults (parents, school personnel, community partners) as well as students' need to be involved with ongoing, evidence-based social, emotional and ethical learning to most effectively promote positive youth development and foster students capacity to learn. This importantly includes developing collaborative and conflict resolution related capacities.

Why is it important? Evidence-based social, emotional and ethical (SEE) learning prevents violence as it supports students being more able to recognize and manage internal and interpersonal states (e.g. frustration and hurt) that can lead to anger and violence. It also supports positive youth development and learning in general and caring, responsible relationships that promote "upstander" behavior: saying "no" to bully-victim behavior in particular. SEE learning that promotes "upstander" behavior also has important implications for traumatized students: "Up standers" notice when people are "hurting" and (directly or indirectly) respond. This powerfully supports individual healing and caring, responsible school communities. In addition, adult behavior shapes student learning and behavior. How educators and others in the school building listen, collaborate, manage conflict and treat other adults and students matters. SEE also powerfully promotes student learning, achievement and positive youth development.

Given that one of the most important barriers to implementing evidence based SEE programmatic efforts is the pressure educators feel to raise test scores, it is worth underscoring that these efforts do have a significant and positive impact on academic achieving.

Common barriers:

- ✓ Pressure to focus on raising math and language arts scores
- ✓ The pressure upon teachers to focus only on “academics”
- ✓ Teachers do not always appreciate that they are *always* SEE teachers: consciously, intentionally and helpfully or not.
- ✓ Poor understanding on a national, state, local, and building level of the important and helpful ways in which SEE influences academic, ethical, and emotional development.
- ✓ Poor understanding about the nature of evidence-based SEE (e.g. character education and social emotional learning) efforts.
- ✓ Belief by school boards, administrators and staff that SEE learning is “not their job.”
- ✓ Too little time allocated to relevant and sustained (1) professional development and (2) teachers helping and learning from other teachers.
- ✓ Lack of a formal SEE team to teach and oversee SEE in a school and/or district.

Key learning that staff needs to understand and be able to do:

Learning objectives

- To reflect upon and raise awareness about what kind of teacher you want to be and what kind of school you want yours to be.
- To reflect on your schools mission statement and how this is aligned with current practice and how it’s aligned with promoting students’ see development in addition to academics.
- To understand child development and the core social, emotional and ethical milestones are at each grade level.
- To be able to apply developmentally informed thinking to individual students and groups of students to further meaningful and engaged teaching and learning.
- To understand when children of given ages will be able to develop these capacities (scope and sequence).
- To understand the range of ways that we can intentionally promote these capacities, K-12, through direct instruction, infusion into existing curriculum, service learning and community service, athletics and other extracurricular programs, Advisory programs and “moment to moment” interactions and relationships.
- Adult SEE – Developing collaborative and conflict resolution related skills and dispositions.

Tasks that need to be considered to actualize this process:

Reflecting and raising awareness about:

- ✓ What kind of SEE teacher have you/we been and do you/we want to be?
- ✓ Reflecting on your schools mission statement and the gap and/or alignment between this mission statement and the reality of your school
- ✓ Supporting educators reflecting on the mission of schooling: what do they really want their students to “know and to be” when they graduate.
- ✓ To consider what you do as an educator to promote students feeling emotionally safe in school (e.g. being comfortable “being confused” and making mistakes).

- ✓ To consider to what extent being a ‘reflective educator’ is really valued in your school.

Critically evaluating resources and making recommendations about:

- ✓ Various models/frameworks of core social-emotional skills and ethical dispositions that provide the foundation for life long learning, violence prevention, healthy relationships and civic engagement: Center for Social and Emotional Education (CSEE); Character Education Partnership (CEP); Collaborative for Academic, Social Emotional Learning (CASEL); Search Institute; Comer School Development Program.
- ✓ Resources designed to promote developmentally informed thinking about children and adolescents.
- ✓ “Scope and sequence” related information, including:
 - Illinois State Department of Education’s *Social Emotional Learning* standards (http://isbe.net/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm);
 - Anchorage School Board SEL standards (www.alaskaice.org/material.php?matID=700#anchorageschooldistrict)
- ✓ Evidence-based violence prevention, social emotional learning (SEL) and character education (CE) curriculum: U.S. Department of Education (<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/>); Character Education Partnership (www.character.org/); Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (www.CETAC.org); CASEL (www.casel.org): Blueprints, University of Colorado (www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/).
- ✓ High quality Service Learning guidelines: National Service Learning Clearing House (www.servicelearning.org/) and National Center for Learning and Citizenship (www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=/html/ProjectsPartners/nclc/nclc_main.htm)
- ✓ Examples of best practices (video tapes of others conducting SEE)
- ✓ Developing and sharing lessons plans (www.csee.net/climate/seeae/lessonplans.aspx)
- ✓ Critiquing and helping to develop relevant learning modules

Skill building:

- ✓ Learning how to infuse SEE into existing language arts, social studies, history and math/science curriculum: developing lessons and units (CSEE’s work; Character Education Partnership *Source book booklet # VI* (www.character.org/); The Rutgers Social and Emotional Learning Lab (www.rci.rutgers.edu/~melias/); Developmental Studies Center (www.devstu.org/); Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (www.morningsidecenter.org/).
- ✓ Being able to apply developmentally informed thinking to individual student instructional planning
- ✓ To develop and practice your adult conflict resolution/mediation skills: learning to identify “needs” and basic negotiation strategies
- ✓ Learning to collaborate, learn and teach with others (in person and via the internet): Sharing best practices to systematically discover to what extent “am I being a successful SEE teacher?”

Indicators that a school is successfully focusing on this goal and related methods: We suggest that there are two important indicators of success in this area: (1) teacher reports; (2) School climate assessment revealing a positive change over time as rated by students, parents and educators.

How to measure it – Recommendations: School Climate assessments. Behavioral reports are another important source of data. Research has shown that when these instructional programs are integrated into classroom based teaching and learning, there is a significant decrease in behavioral problems.

Additional Resources: We have listed some resources in the text above. Here are additional resources that may be helpful. Please let us know what other resources you have found helpful and would like us to share with other educators (jonathancohen@csee.net)

Organizations/web sites:

- Blueprints, University of Colorado (www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/)
- CASEL (www.casel.org)
- Center for Social and Emotional Education: www.csee.net
- Character Education Partnership (www.character.org/)
- Character Education and Civic Engagement Technical Assistance Center (www.CETAC.org);
- Facing History and Ourselves: www.facinghistory.org/
- Search Institute: www.search-institute.org

Books and papers:

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