

# Advances in SEL Research

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## Inside this Edition

The Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Special Interest Group of AERA is only two years old. During that time, the SEL SIG has harnessed its resources and strengthened connections to build a network of individuals who are dedicated to educating the whole child. This issue of the newsletter represents the breath and depth of SEL research and influence throughout the community.

Marc Brackett, the Chair of the SIG, proposes key questions that could drive research interest in the field in the coming few years. Central to his view is the notion that school-wide SEL programs work. His questions are meant to help researchers design research protocols that stabilize SEL programs in an ever-changing environment.

Dr. Brackett's introduction provides an appropriate framework for the other articles in this issue. Reports from the 2009 AERA meeting in San Diego, California, the state of Washington, and from abroad indicate that important steps are being taken to ensure that SEL competencies are integrated into schools. Furthermore, Jennifer Loudon writes that the new Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, indirectly advocated for SEL competencies during his tenure as the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools. To what extent he will incorporate SEL into his overall school reform plan is yet to be determined.

Research reports included in this issue indicate that school culture based on SEL competencies can improve teacher and student performance. In addition, coaching strategies used with teachers improves their overall confidence in implementing SEL in their classrooms.

This issue concludes with an interview with Dr. Janet Patti in a new section entitled *Living the Vision*. So often in academia we read the works of wonderful scholars, but rarely hear about how they work and how their research influences their lives. I selected Dr. Patti to interview because I worked with her at Hunter College and admire her work and how she has incorporated

SEL into her own life. As many of you already know, she is a prolific scholar, who is driven by a desire to improve the lives of children. My hope is that you learn more about her as a person and appreciate the ways that she enacts the principles of SEL in her own life.

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## From the Chair Questions for SEL Program Developers and Researchers to Ponder

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Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process in which both children and adults engage to develop competencies necessary to function effectively at home, school, and the workplace. These competencies include recognizing and managing emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations.

Research shows that well-designed SEL programs foster academic performance, standardized test scores, bonds with school, positive behavior, health and well-being in students, and job satisfaction and emotional health in adults. While providing these benefits, SEL programs also can reduce emotional distress, disruptive and aggressive behavior, violence, truancy, bullying, and alcohol/drug use.

The most effective SEL programs are based on theory, field tested extensively, validated empirically, and implemented school wide. Well-designed SEL programming can be integrated into existing school curricula and routines. Model SEL programs are consistent in their language, employ a sequential approach, and are tailored to the developmental level and cultural background of the group targeted. Programs that include training for administrators, teachers, and students and involve the family, community, and school support personnel (e.g., mental health professionals, etc.) are likely to be the most effective. Long-term effectiveness of SEL programming requires a detailed plan for sustainability, including efforts to evaluate and adapt the program over time. Children change. Adults change. Schools change. Times change. Thus, designing programs that can survive these changes and conducting research to evaluate them is challenging.

As the new Chair of the SEL SIG, I'd like to pose a number of questions for researchers developing and testing SEL programs to consider when examining a particular program's ability to withstand an ever-changing field and ever-changing times.

- ☀ **What is the theory/philosophy behind your SEL intervention?** The philosophical/ theoretical framework underlying your program is critical because it will guide your thinking about multiple aspects of your program. Your philosophy/theory

regarding how skills develop (e.g., are they genetic or acquired; do they progress naturally over time or require constant attention and practice to sustain and enhance them; etc.) and whether they can be taught should be clear from the beginning.

- ☀ **What is your intervention strategy?** Put simply, how does your SEL program get infused into a school? Your intervention strategy will be a key determinant in whether schools will decide to adopt your program and whether it will succeed in a particular school or district. Some specific questions to consider are: Who gets trained? How is the program integrated into existing school policies and practices? What resources (e.g., funds, staff, time, etc.) does the school need to implement the program effectively? What tools will you provide to them?

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## San Diego Annual Meeting a Powerhouse

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- **What is your theory of change?** This pertains to the exact mechanisms by which the intervention will produce change. What exactly will your intervention change? There are a number of variables within the school that could be improved, but until you hone in on a specific set of these, it will be difficult to determine the best means of improvement. Once you've determined what your program will impact, you must ask: How will it achieve these outcomes of interest? What are the individual and contextual factors that will facilitate or impede the intervention from achieving its desired outcomes?
- **What is your sustainability plan?** How do you go from getting all stakeholders involved to a long-lasting sustainable program that will be embraced by all staff and students and will continue to have a positive impact for decades to come? While this may sound ambitious, this type of planning is essential to incorporate into the design of your programs. Some questions to consider are: How will the program information be reinforced over time after initial trainings? How will new staff implementing the program be trained? What type of system will be in place to monitor the progress of the program and ensure problems are solved and questions are answered? What types of information sharing (e.g., so that teachers can learn from each other) should happen over the course of the program?
- **What is your evaluation and assessment plan?** Can you measure your constructs? Which methods will you use? How will you assess the impact of your program? Monitoring the progress and impact of your program will provide you with ongoing information to assess the quality of the program and to guide you in modifying it to ensure its continuous improvement and increase the likelihood that positive effects will be obtained and sustained.

In this brief article, I have provided five sets of questions for SEL program developers and researchers to ponder. Surely there are others. The future of SEL is in the hands of talented practitioners and researchers who have additional ideas to improve the field. As our field grows, we will be challenged with the tasks of advancing theories, assessment tools, programs, implementation models, and evaluation plans to ensure that SEL becomes a permanent part of each child's education.

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The annual SEL SIG business meeting, held on Thursday evening, April 16, was a celebratory climax to a week packed with sessions sponsored by the SIG. Program Chair, Patricia Jennings, and Program Chair Elect, Susan Stillman, and their committee, put together five symposia and two paper sessions in addition to the SIG business meeting. Symposia addressed a broad range of topics, including cognitive behavioral interventions, assessment, mindfulness in teacher education, the relevance of learning climate to academic success, and the global classroom.

At the business meeting, those giving reports kept them brief so that the 100+ people in attendance could enjoy the awards presentations and the panel on educator preparation by Linda Darling-Hammond and Linda Lantieri. Patricia Jennings thanked all who had submitted or reviewed proposals for this year's program and introduced Susan Stillman, the incoming Program Chair.

Membership Chair, Kim Schonert-Reichl, reported that our SIG membership of 147 was up from last year. John Payton, Communications Chair, reported that the SIG listserv had been actively used this past year to keep members informed, that we published two well received issues of our newsletter, *Advances in SEL Research*, and that this year we will post as many of the



Linda Lantieri, Linda Darling-Hammond, and Roger Weissberg at annual business meeting.

annual meeting session presentations on the SIG website as we can obtain. The new editor of the newsletter, David Carlson, had to leave before being introduced. Our Secretary-Treasurer, Vickie Blakeney, reported that our financial health was good; we had about \$1,000 in our AERA account. During the meeting, sign-in sheets were circulated throughout the room, giving attendees an opportunity to express their interest in participating in SIG committee and leadership work.

Prior to presentation of CASEL's Joseph E. Zins Awards, Mary O'Brien, Vice-President for Strategic Affairs of CASEL, described the origin and purpose of these awards. The Zins Awards were established in 2007 in memory of our beloved colleague, Joe Zins, whose integration of rigorous scientific research and effective practice exemplified the standard that CASEL seeks to uphold. The Awards are presented each year to two outstanding SEL professionals, 40 years old or younger—one each in research and practice. Roger Weissberg then presented the awards to this year's recipients.

The Zins Research Award was presented to Marc Brackett, Research Scientist in Psychology and Deputy Director of the Health, Emotion, and Behavior Laboratory at Yale University, where his research has focused on the measurement of emotion-related skills, links between these skills and important life outcomes for students and teachers, and testing how SEL training can improve the lives of students and educators. Marc's work has demonstrated that the development of emotional literacy promotes a wide-range of positive outcomes for students and adults.



Roger Weissberg presents Allison Dymnicki with Graduate Student Award for Excellence in SEL Research.

AERA-sanctioned Graduate Student Award for Excellence in SEL Research for her research on the impact of school-based social and emotional development programs on school performance. Robin LaSota was recognized for her exemplary leadership as editor of the SIG newsletter, and John Payton was recognized for his instrumental role in getting the SEL SIG up and running. Before the meeting adjourned for socializing in the hotel bar, Roger Weissberg thanked everyone for their contributions to the SIG, urged them to get involved, and reminded them that it will soon be time to begin preparing for next year's annual meeting in Denver.

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Roger Weissberg presents Zins Practice Award to Jennifer Loudon.

Roger presented this year's Zins Practice Award to Jennifer Loudon, a manager in the Office of Specialized Services in the Chicago Schools (CPS), the third largest public school system in the country. In 2004, Jennifer developed a proposal to pilot a project to build the social and emotional skills of students in 30 CPS schools through partnerships with community-based organizations. She subsequently authored grants totaling \$14.2m to implement and integrate universal SEL and coordinate it with more intensive services for higher-needs students.

Roger also presented three other awards to recognize outstanding contributions to the field of SEL and the SIG. Allison Dymnicki was the first recipient of the

## International News

It was a most successful 2009 AERA meeting in San Diego. Participants included colleagues from Spain, Italy, Iceland, New Zealand, and the United States to name a few. There was considerable interest in international perspectives on SEL. Areas of work at the meeting included:

- the intersection of the student experience and policy implementation, with special focus on family and community engagement of international students in the U.S;
- Emotional Intelligence (EI), its relationship with teaching, social development, academic achievement, family context;
- validation of different SEL school programs in Spain;
- understanding the role of attachment, peer and student-teacher relationships;

- cultural contexts in relationship to children and adolescents' social-emotional development;
- interventions that foster constructive emotion regulation strategies, particularly those that help young people pursue meaningful activities;
- teachers' social and emotional competence (e.g., EI), its impact on the students' development and achievement, as well as on the school and class climate and organization;
- validity of several SEL and EI programs;
- design, development, and validation of a new EI objective measure for adults and youth;
- validation of this new EI instrument in other countries/languages;
- role of attachment, peer and student-teacher relationships and cultural contexts on children's and adolescents' social-emotional development; and
- measurement issues, cultural influences on social-emotional development.

The informal meetings in San Diego were productive. We decided to:

- create a data base of email addresses so that people could contact each other;
- have regular international activity information in the SEL SIG newsletter;
- organize a forum at the 2010 AERA meeting in Denver, Colorado to discuss international SEL activities; and
- develop a poster/discussion session focused on international activities and collaborations.

At the 2008 AERA meeting in New York, we decided to develop a network of SEL SIG members who are interested in working with international colleagues. Once the data base for this group is established, we will find a mechanism to make it available to SIG members through the SIG website. Members of the SIG are already working on some of the suggestions for the 2010 meeting in Denver. We look forward to sharing them with you then.

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## Finding a Home at AERA

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I am so happy to have attended the SEL business meeting and found this SIG. After being a life-long educator and parent involved in my children's school, I recently returned to school to get my Ph.D. This year at AERA, I attended several division and special interest group business meetings to find a "home."

While I am in educational leadership and will participate as a part of Division A, I feel very at home in the SEL SIG, especially with the international aspects of SEL.

It is imperative for those who want to develop social and emotional intelligence in children to work closely with school leadership. My own children went to a school whose mission was to develop the social and emotional intelligence of children. Parents were an important part of the school. (For more information on a school that is vibrant and has developed social and emotional intelligence over its thirty years of existence as a public, parental choice school, look at [www.mcauliffek8.com/](http://www.mcauliffek8.com/), Christa McAuliffe K-8 School in Saratoga, California.)

Since the AERA meeting, I have discovered that James Comer and the Comer schools have examined the relationship between parents and the social and emotional intelligence of children. Furthermore, I have found Joyce Epstein's work on parental involvement useful. She asserts that parents can assist schools, work in a decision-making capacity, and form partnerships with the community. Parental involvement and parental choice are sometimes forgotten pillars of NCLB.

Finally, I plan to add this global perspective to social and emotional intelligence in my work with international students and international programs. This perspective will help us participate more as world citizens embracing the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In closing, I want to work to bring these varied strands together in educational leadership conversations. It is not enough for us to think of social and emotional intelligence as something that only a few can hope to attain. If all students are to perform well, their communities must be attuned to meeting their social-emotional needs.

Thank you, Erica Frydenberg, for inviting me to come to the SEL meeting!

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## Social and Emotional Learning: Legislation and Leadership in Washington State

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Washington State has taken significant steps toward assuring that every student in our public schools receives the benefits of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as part of their basic education. Following the lead of Illinois, New York, and other forward thinking states, there is growing support in Washington for addressing evidence-based SEL through both policy and best practices. Significantly, proposed legislation during the January-April 2009 legislative session targeted the development of K-12 SEL standards to be advanced through the leadership of a public-private partnership and grounded in results gained from a three-year pilot.



**Rhododendron:** The state flower of Washington

State Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, a long-time champion of children's development through her chair position of the Human Services Committee and her deep interest in education, drafted and submitted HB 1162 for consideration. This bill calls for a fundamental expansion of the definition of a Basic Education that includes SEL. The following elements were part of the proposed legislation:

**Pilot.** A three-year multi-district pilot to articulate SEL Guidelines, establish an implementation model, create a framework for state-wide sustainability, and provide evidence of effectiveness against targeted outcomes.

**Standards.** Expansion of the Basic Education Goals to include SEL competencies. Development of Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs), Grade Level Expectations (GLEs), and appropriate Classroom-Based Assessments.

**Curriculum.** The state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction would provide technical assistance and guidance to refer school districts to evidence-based SEL curricula and programs.

**Professional Development.** Training would be available to equip teachers to deliver effective instruction within SEL learning environments and through implementation of the district's chosen curriculum.

**Support.** SEL specialists, offering school-wide coordination, teacher support, and student coaching, would be available for each school building.

**Resources.** Financial resources for the necessary curricula, professional development, and staff support to make SEL a part of Basic Education would be provided to school districts through the basic education funding formulas and supported through matching commitments from the private sector during the pilot phase.

HB 1162 proposed a comprehensive shift in how Washington State addresses the basic educational needs and the academic performance of all its students. Unfortunately, due to the serious economic constraints that Washington State is experiencing—along with the rest of the nation—HB 1162 did not advance through the House Appropriations Committee this session. However, through hearings before the Basic Education Finance Joint Task Force and the House Education Committee—as well as numerous meetings with state legislators and key stakeholders—a deeper understanding of the issues and benefits of SEL for all students was provided. A compelling case for SEL as a critical component of academic performance was presented—as documented in a recent meta-analysis report from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Payton, J., et al. 2008). As a result, a solid foundation of support has been established and continues to grow. Representative Dickerson intends to resubmit the bill in a future session as the financial picture improves.

In the meantime, other efforts continue to drive momentum forward. For example, Washington State's Early Learning community and related advocacy is robust, cross-sector, and effective in shaping public thinking and policy action. Embedded within the Early Learning work is a strong—and explicit—strand of social and emotional learning that is paving the way for a framework of strategies, language, and cross-sector champions. Those efforts provide a platform for the K-12 learning community to build upon.

In addition, the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has various initiatives in place (e.g., Compassionate Schools, Readiness to Learn) that provide incentives for schools to support high needs students through social and emotional learning. Professional certification standards are being developed for teachers, support personnel, and school and district administrators that will provide a framework for professional development aligned with SEL. Operating in parallel and complementing the education agenda are state prevention efforts related to mental health that call for a universal approach to SEL.

in schools. Finally, the internationally recognized leadership of individuals and organizations in SEL research and program development within our state provides a wealth of “local” expertise and skill that continues to inform future public, private—and legislative—efforts. The overall vision gaining momentum in Washington State is an integrated system for a continuum of SEL excellence from birth to early childhood and throughout all K-12 public schools that is supported by cross-sector grassroots initiatives, public-private leadership, university and community college professional development, evidence-based practices, clear policy expectations, and well articulated social and emotional learning standards.

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## Comments on the New Secretary of Education

Although Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has not been a traditional fixture in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) circles, he has demonstrated a commitment to the prevention strategies that underpin much of our day-to-day SEL work in schools. In his tenure as CEO of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Duncan supported prevention programming as an effective response to parent, school, and media pressure to “do something” in response to student violence in an era when public sentiment and federal funding would have preferred a more punitive, security-focused approach.

Throughout his tenure in Chicago, Duncan was a frequent advocate for the types of skill-building strategies and programs that make up the meat of SEL at a school building. He occasionally spent entire days (unheard of for his predecessors) in planning and training sessions with CPS staff, university, and community advocates, determining how to best support schools in comprehensively addressing student needs. He repeatedly offered to



support any CPS school that wanted to use “security” funding for social workers instead of metal detectors. Many may have been disappointed with the recent focus on “innovation and excellence” and “better standards and assessments,” rather than on the social and emotional skills and competencies necessary to develop the next generation of leaders. I believe, however, that it is incumbent upon us, the SEL research and practice community, to demonstrate that we represent some of what “innovation and excellence” must be in order for education to deliver 21st century citizens.

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## RESEARCH

### Positive School Culture: The Linchpin to Student Achievement

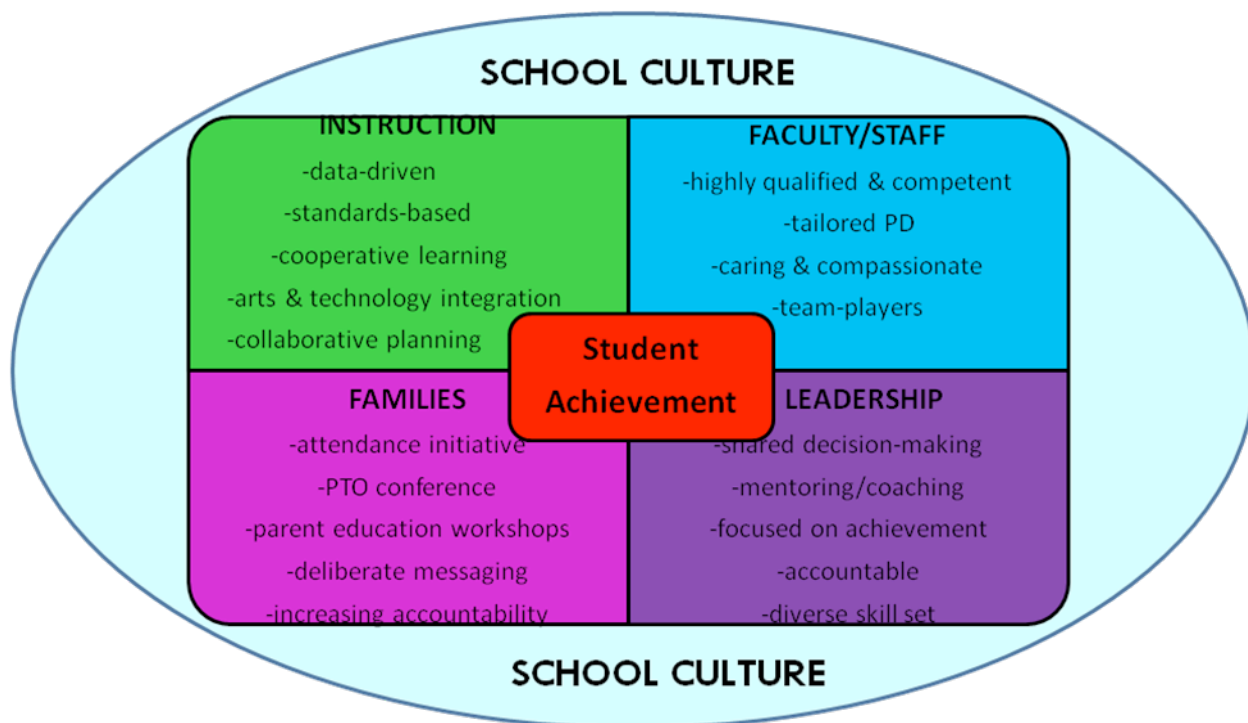
Urban schools are often faced with the challenge of educating children who, due to the cumulative effects of violence, abuse, and poverty, come to school unprepared to learn. Faced with daily environmental and domestic stressors, many children enter our school buildings angry, hungry, scared, tired, or lonely. These often manifest as academic failure, aggression, or depression, which hinder success in school. The Arts & Technology Academy (ATA) Public Charter School is an elementary school that serves such children in an urban neighborhood in Washington DC.

Refusing to fall back on excuses for failure, the administration at the school faced the many social/emotional barriers to academic achievement directly. They did so through a comprehensive, purposeful, and sustainable Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) initiative that began three years ago with dedicated funding and personnel. Back in 2005, we were struggling to make AYP, there was a climate of disrespect overall, there was poor staff and student attendance, there were severe behavior management concerns, low staff morale and high teacher turnover. Since then, we have made AYP twice, there has been a 42% decrease in suspensions, teacher turnover has stabilized, attendance for staff and students has improved, and we have made huge strides in student achievement. The proportion of students scoring proficient in math went from 20% in 2007 to 38% in 2008 and the proportion of students scoring

proficient in reading went from 26% in 2007 to 41% in 2008. Scores for 2009 are not available at this time.

As illustrated in the diagram below, our recipe for success combines four very obvious areas that impact student achievement in all schools—instruction, staff, families, and leadership—but ties them all together with an often ignored yet extremely powerful glue: school culture. Developing a positive school culture has been the primary goal of our SEL initiative for the past three years.

Arts and Technology Academy (ATA) has committed to making the development of a positive school culture purposeful rather than accidental and making the “hidden curriculum” (Jerald, 2006), explicit. We have chosen to use elements of *The Responsive Classroom* (The Northeast Foundation for Children) approach to teaching and learning as the theoretical and practical foundation of our SEL initiative. This approach demonstrates how the social curriculum is as important as the academic one.



School culture is defined by the National School Climate Council and the Center for Social and Emotional Education (2008) as being “the quality and character of school life” (p.5). They identify seven dimensions of school culture that can contribute to the development of a positive or a negative culture in a building: relationships, communication, teaching and learning practices, leadership practices, organizational structure, environment and norms, values & expectations.

Research shows that school culture can positively impact self-esteem (Hoge, et. al, 1990), student absenteeism (deJuhg& Duckworth, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Reid, 1983; Rumberger, 1987; Sommer, 1985); rate of suspensions (Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982); risky behaviors (Catalano, et. al, 2004; Kirby, 2001); and student achievement (Griffith, 1995; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1989) as well as promoting teacher retention (Chauncey, 2005; Fulton & Lee, 2005).

Through a process of assessment (using the Comprehensive School Climate Inventory developed by the Center for Social/Emotional Education), target area identification and action-planning, every year the SEL committee develops and implements SEL projects for adults and students that contribute to the development of a positive school culture. We strongly believe that there is a parallel process that occurs between the adults and students in the building, that one reinforces the other, and that both are integral to positive school culture development.

Projects such as community morning meeting and staff mural are designed to build a strong community and improve communication. In addition, cross-age peer mentoring, morning meeting, buddies, and class hopes and dreams for the cafeteria, address relationships. Our wall of PRIDE (student recognition program), our ROC STARS program (Respecting Our Community recognition program), and our positive language campaign target norms, values, and expectations. While



discrete in their development and implementation, they align with the common goal of developing a positive school culture.

In addition, teachers are expected every year to develop a classroom discipline and responsibility plan that outlines their proactive and reactive behavior management approaches. This past year, during summer training, teachers were given time to learn about and develop approaches to communication and community, building relationships, and developing and implementing norms, values and expectations (the target areas for 2008-2009) so that they could develop a plan that would contribute to overall positive school culture. Teachers were also given time during August training to review SEL standards for students and grade-level benchmarks to ensure that they would be integrated into teaching and learning. Students are assessed on quarterly report cards on the SEL standards.

Over time, our SEL initiative and our emphasis on the development of positive school culture have begun to impact administrative decisions and management approaches. The administrative team has seen the results of positive communication, respect of time, and building relationships, and has selected SEL and staff morale as the top two initiatives to tackle next year. Other management decisions that were the direct result of SEL recommendations include the modification of schedules to allow for daily morning meetings, having recess before lunch, and providing weekly common planning time for two grades at the same time (for example all 5th and 6th grade teachers can plan together). We have also initiated flexible hours to allow for graduate studies and now begin each staff meeting with a team-building activity. In addition, SEL competencies have become part of our hiring, retention, and teacher evaluation processes.

Making SEL an integral part of our functioning and expectations has raised the bar not only on student performance, but on teacher performance as well. We believe that a commitment to developing a positive school culture enables us to provide an optimal teaching and learning environment where professional, academic, social, and emotional needs can be met.

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## Using Coaching to Support the Implementation of SEL Programs

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Imagine a group of one hundred fifth graders sitting in a gymnasium listening to a three-hour PowerPoint presentation on how to use effective emotion regulation strategies. Would we expect these fifth graders to return to school the next day able to use the strategies effectively? Researchers and practitioners of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) would argue that students need to practice the new strategies regularly, receive structured feedback, regularly review the content, and learn in active ways (Payton et al., 2008). Although the best practices of teaching children differ in many ways from teaching adults, several concepts do overlap.

Adults, like children, learn best from activities that are active and experiential, when they apply new material directly to their own lives, and when they receive structured feedback over time.

One-shot workshops may be cost-effective options for professional development, but they may not be as effective on their own as they are when coupled with subsequent coaching support (Sanders & Rivers, 1996). In recent years, the *No Child Left Behind* legislation has provided significant funding for “intensive,



classroom-focused” and “high-quality” professional development programs that include coaching as an effective way to improve teachers’ instructional quality and ultimately impact student achievement.

We developed a coaching program to support teachers in their implementation of *RULER for Classrooms*, an evidence-based SEL program that infuses directly into lessons in the English language arts (Brackett et al., 2009; Holzer & Brackett, 2008). Our coaching program is grounded in best-practices from both the coaching and adult education literature and provides teachers with continued support so that they develop confidence in using *RULER for Classrooms*. This added investment of time is a worthy cause, since educators who effectively integrate the teaching of emotional skills into academic curricula have a profound impact on their students’ social, emotional, and academic growth (e.g., Payton et al., 2008).

Coaches help teachers develop their own unique style of teaching *RULER* lessons by modeling effective teaching techniques, observing lessons, providing concrete feedback on implementation, discussing upcoming lesson plans, sharing resources, and working together to plan lessons (see box). Coaches meet with teachers five times throughout the school year, spaced at regular intervals (4-6 weeks apart) and use commonly employed coaching skills, such as active listening, empathy, constructive feedback, and open-ended

questions. The coaching process scaffolds the content and techniques that teachers acquire during the initial training workshops, and provides them with the necessary support to effectively integrate new knowledge, skills, and perspectives into their teaching.

Teachers who have been coached respond favorably to classroom coaching, most often citing “encouragement,” social support, feedback, and collaborative lesson planning as the most valuable aspects of the process. When asked what aspects of coaching they find most useful, many teachers mention “the personal connection” they feel with their coach. This connection creates a trusting relationship that supports the exchange of honest and open feedback. Since one of the main goals of classroom coaching is to improve implementation quality and confidence, ongoing feedback is essential.

Teachers report on their evaluation surveys that having their coach observe and give them feedback is extremely beneficial. For example, one teacher commented that “the feedback is reassuring and provides motivation” and another said, “I like the positive feedback from my coach, because clearly, at times I wonder if I am doing the assignment correctly.” During an interview, a veteran teacher said that “it was very nice to have

#### Coaching sessions include:

- ☑ Modeling
- ☑ Observation
- ☑ Constructive Feedback
- ☑ Discussion
- ☑ Resource Sharing
- ☑ Collaborative Lesson Planning

someone to bounce off ideas with,” and that she felt the feedback helped her “focus on her goals” and improve the quality of her teaching.

Coaching sessions not only provide an opportunity for constructive feedback on program implementation, but also include a “discussion of what has been most successful and suggestions for the future.” One teacher said that she enjoys “being able to share openly what works and does not work for me and my students” and getting “help on the lessons and what I could try next.” Another teacher said that her coach helped her “iron out” some of her issues with teaching emotion regulation strategies by jumping into a lesson and co-teaching with her. After the lesson, they brainstormed together ways that students could use their academic lesson on General Cornwallis to apply emotion regulation strategies to their own lives. Teachers utilize coaches as

sounding boards, drawing from their coaches' expertise and intensive training on *RULER for Classrooms*.

Our initial evaluation shows significant changes in teachers' confidence in teaching the program over the course of the school year,  $t = 3.75$ ,  $p < .01$ . Furthermore, there is a significant relationship between the quality of coaching session (as rated by coach and teacher) and teachers' overall confidence in teaching the program,  $r = .30$ ,  $p < .05$ . In addition, teachers who perceive coaching as useful both believe they are better at integrating the program into their teaching, and report higher enjoyment in teaching it,  $r = .37$  to  $.47$ ,  $p < .05$ .

Teachers who feel confident and motivated to teach SEL programs will take more ownership over them, likely enhancing the quality and consistency of their approach. With the ultimate goal of SEL programs being to enhance students' social, emotional, and academic growth, coaching provides teachers with the support they need to create classrooms that educate the whole child.

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## How Preschoolers' Social and Emotional Competence Predicts Their School-readiness: Development of Competency-based Assessments

Aspects of social-emotional competence during early childhood are crucial for concurrent and later well-being, mental health, and academic success; children who enter kindergarten with more positive social-emotional profiles have more positive school attitudes and early school adjustment and greater academic success, even controlling for cognitive skills and family backgrounds (e.g., Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999). Further, children's ability to regulate emotion, behavior, and attention has been found to be related to their school adjustment and academic achievement (Bierman et al, 2008; Howse et al, 2003; McClelland et al, 2007). In concert with such emerging evidence, we sought to specify interrelations among social-emotional constructs and use these constructs to predict later school success. Our hypothesized model of preschoolers' social-emotional competence and their school-readiness illustrates latent variables for each construct, and paths from (1) emotion knowledge to self-regulation, observed socio-emotional behaviors, and school-readiness, (2) self-regulation to observed socio-emotional behaviors and school-readiness, and (3) observed socio-emotional behaviors to school-readiness.

Three-hundred twenty-six 3- and 4-year-olds participated in this segment of our larger study focusing on developing a portable assessment tool for social-emotional aspects of school readiness. Children were enrolled in Head Start and private child care. Data regarding children's self-regulation and social-emotional competencies were collected from fall to spring, with teacher measures collected about 3 months later.

Denham's Affective Knowledge Test (AKT, Denham et al., 2003); Preschool Self-Regulation Assessment (PSRA, Smith-Donald, et al., 2007); and Minnesota Preschool Affect Checklist-Revised (MPAC-R, see Denham & Burton, 1996) were used to measure preschoolers' emotion knowledge, self-regulation, and observed socio-emotional behavior, respectively. Teacher report of preschoolers' school-readiness was measured with three teacher reports: Preschool Learning Behaviors Scale (PLBS, McDermott, Leigh, & Perry, 2002); Teacher Rating Scale of School Adjustment (TRSSA, Birch & Ladd, 1997); and Social Competence Behavioral Evaluation (SCBE-30, LaFreniere & Dumas, 1996).

We used partial least-squares modeling to examine our hypothesized model (see Figure 1). Our results

indicated that constructs of emotion knowledge, self-regulation, socio-emotional behavior (negative affect/aggression, and pro-social/peer skills), as well as teacher-rated school readiness, created latent variables as hypothesized, and showed good discriminate validity. Moreover, significant paths among the latent variables suggested important relations amongst the constructs. First, emotion knowledge predicted aspects of self-regulation. Young children with a foundation of emotion knowledge may be better able to cope with situations requiring composed, focused, even compliant behavior (Raver, Garner, & Smith-Donald, 2007). Surprisingly, emotion knowledge in this analysis did not predict other aspects of social-emotional behavior; these paths were dropped in the reduced model.

Executive function predicted neither social-emotional behavior nor school readiness, but behavioral control and noncompliance did. Thus, behavioral control negatively predicted both MPAC Negative/Aggression and, unexpectedly, MPAC peer skills. This unexpected negative relation between behavior control and MPAC peer skills may have occurred because children high on behavior control may be over-controlled and uneasy/unable to perform the joining, leading, and pro-social behaviors captured by this latent variable. The non-compliance aspect of self-regulation predicted peer skills negatively. Finally, behavioral control, MPAC Negative/Aggression, and MPAC Peer Skills predicted school readiness in expected directions.

In short, we have made progress in showing that certain social-emotional competencies work well as reliable, discriminable constructs, and that they predict, over a short time period, teachers' views of children's positive school-related attitudes, persistence, and cooperation. We are moving toward our goals of creating a developmentally-grounded assessment battery that will help early childhood personnel to know and reflect upon aspects of social-emotional competence that support school readiness. Hopefully, such knowledge can ultimately translate into teacher action—helping children become more knowledgeable about emotions, self-regulated, and behaviorally skilled in social-emotional areas, in order to understand individuals' strengths and weaknesses, promote instruction, and evaluate programming.

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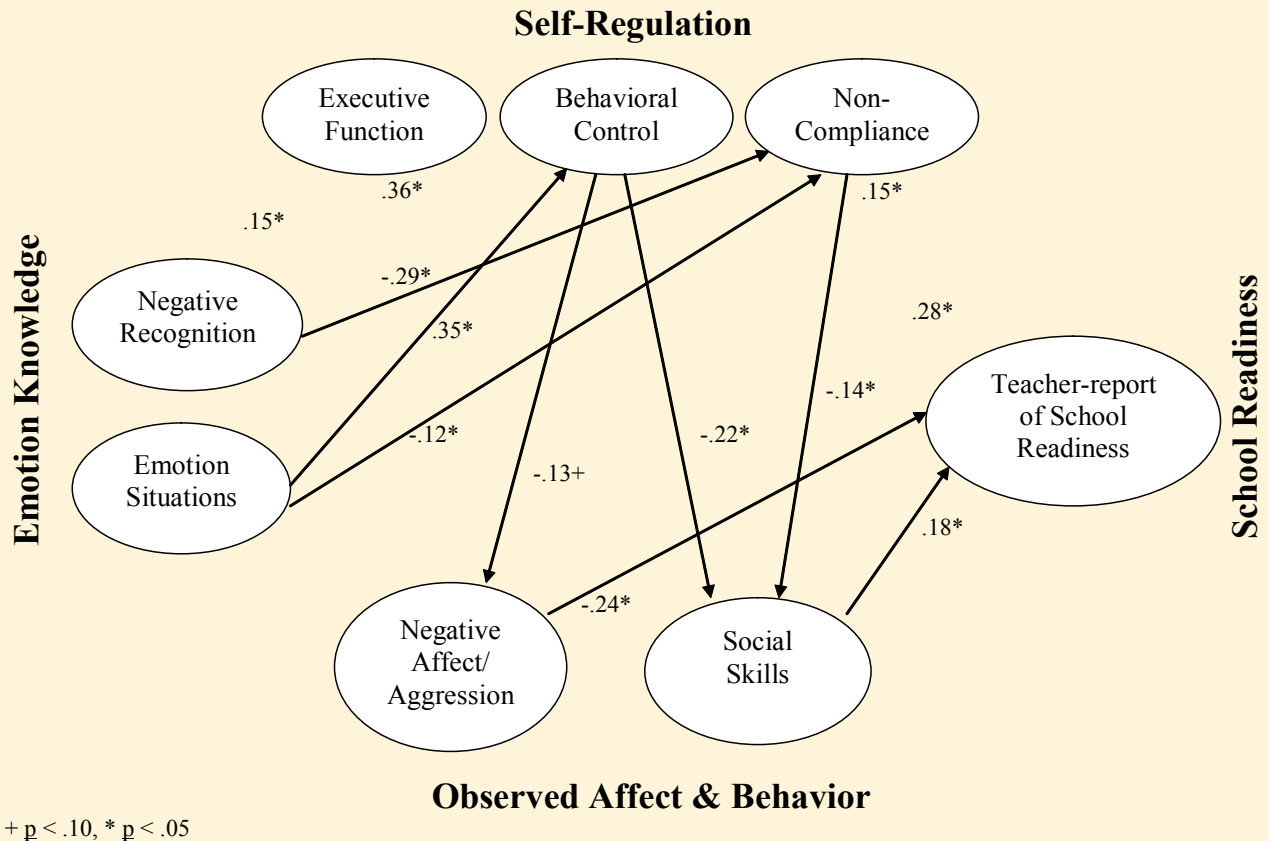
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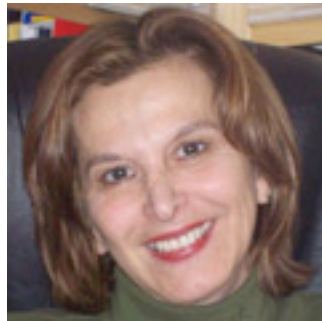
Figure 1: Structural Model of Preschoolers' Social-Emotional Competence/ Self-Regulation and Their School Readiness



Notes. R2's within each latent variable circle. All paths significant at least  $p < .05$ , except that from PSRA Behavioral Control for MPAC Negative Affect/Aggression,  $p < .10$ .

## Living the Vision: An Interview with Janet Patti

Janet Patti, Ed.D., holds a degree in educational leadership from the University of Northern Arizona at Flagstaff. During her 35 plus years in the field of education she has been a teacher, school counselor, school and district administrator, professor and author. She is currently a professor in the Hunter College School of Education at the City University of New York.



**When did you know that you wanted to study Social and Emotional Learning? What intrigued you about it?** I always believed in my heart that we could give children skills to help them manage the extreme stress of their lives. I began teaching in East Harlem, New York in 1974 and felt the pain of children's lives in my early 20's. I knew that building relationships with

young people was key to being able to teach them. When cooperative learning came about in the 70s and 80s, I learned that integrating social skill development into the routines of teaching would maximize their abilities to live as a classroom community and achieve at the same time. In the 90s, as an Assistant Principal, I brought RCCP [the Resolving Conflicts Creatively Program] into my school in Vista, California. Working with Linda Lantieri and completing my dissertation at the same time, I saw the benefits of teaching conflict resolution skills and inter-group relations to young people and adults. I became very active in my middle school and district to bring these skills to all schools. In 1994, I was fortunate to be at the Fetzer Institute when Dan Goleman, Eileen Rockefeller Growald, Dave Slyter, Linda Lantieri and others marked their commitment to making emotional intelligence a part of what we do in schools. The field of SEL was born, and I was ecstatic to be at the forefront of this great movement.

**Describe (briefly) the process you went through in producing one of your published works.** My last book, *Smart School Leaders: Leading with Emotional Intelligence* that I co-wrote with James Tobin was a work created from my core. I was passionate about introducing education to the concept that school leaders must be emotionally smart in order to effectively lead. The field was so new and it was difficult for me to teach what I wanted to teach my aspiring leaders at Hunter College so I needed a textbook/workbook and that's how this was born. Kendall Hunt was the kind of publishing house that allows you to create books that you can use for teaching, and so it was a match. I knew that I could not write this alone, and I needed someone of like mind and heart, so I contacted my dear friend and colleague, Jim Tobin, and asked him if he would be interested in the book. It was a match, and the beginning of many exciting conversations about leadership, schools, and teaching and learning.

**As a scholar, how to you approach your work?** Currently, I am concentrating more on creating research-based studies that are based on multi-method research approaches. I love qualitative work because I believe that the context in which we learn about phenomena is critical to the outcomes that we get. I have learned so much by watching and speaking with the people that I have studied. At the same time, I recognize the importance of empirical research and continue to learn from and with my colleagues about how important it is to use control groups and reliable and valid measures to learn about the effectiveness of methods that I or others may be using. I am collaborating with others (thank you Marc Brackett and the Yale team) who are strong in this arena to find answers to the questions that interest me.

**How do you focus?** Hours straight at a time. Can't have any interruptions. I learned some time ago that I am not good at multitasking. I have struggled with this, because my best work is done when I get chunks of uninterrupted time. I often work late at night when everyone is asleep.

**As a teacher, what are the most important lessons you want students to learn from your classes?** I want my students to walk away with an understanding that they must be the models of the learning.

**Describe your favorite boss:** Vince Jewell, principal at the school where I was an AP—caring, inclusive, light-hearted, collaborative, smart, excellent speaker, creative, shared leadership.

**State your philosophy of education:** Schools are true learning communities that exist to foster the social, emotional, and academic development of young people

by creating the knowledge, skills, and intuitive abilities to make wise choices about creating sustainable needed changes for our planet.

**What concerns do you have about the state of the SEL field?** SEL policy has to provide opportunities for educators to embody the core pre-requisite skills that will create an environment in which children can learn.

**Who has influenced you the most in your scholarly work?** My earlier years were very much influenced by Linda Lantieri. As a teacher and friend, she opened my eyes to the field of conflict resolution and inter-group relations, which changed who I am as a scholar. Nancy Carlsson-Paige has influenced me greatly by deepening my understanding of the critical nature of considering child development in all of my work. My colleague, Robin Stern, helped me to find methods to enhance adult development by integrating coaching skills. Currently, Marc Brackett has deepened my awareness of the emotional skill set that we need to develop in children and adults and increased my learning curve as a researcher.

**Provide a brief example of how you implement SEL in your daily life:** I believe that I am conscious of living the SEL code in every aspect of my life. I have become very reflective about the choices that I make and work hard at modeling expert use of social and emotional skills in my personal and professional life. I have become more patient with my self—knowing that my humanness allows me to make mistakes. I use self-disclosure to acknowledge both my achievements and my discrepancies. My transparency helps others to open to the possibilities of personal and professional growth. As a professor, EI is infused in my teaching and my interactions with students as well as in my areas of research. As a wife, mother, daughter and sister, I work hard at using my skill set to strengthen relationships and self-manage.

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