Chapter 9
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

The Impact on Achievement

Research since the 1990s identifies the need to address both academic performance and social-emotional and personal well-being to advance student achievement. In particular, as they transition to adolescence, students in their middle-school years exhibit development needs beyond those related to academics. Researchers have found that students' adjustment to school during this period requires a renegotiation of roles and rules for successful adaptation to the classroom environment.

Eccles, J. S. and R. D. Harold, "Parent-School Involvement during the Early Adolescent Years," *Teachers College Record* 94 (1993): 568-587.

Paikoff, R. L. and J. Brooks-Gunn, "Do Parent–Child Relationships Change during Puberty?" *Psychological Bulletin* 110 (1991): 47–66.

Steinberg, L., "Autonomy, Conflict, and Harmony in the Family Relationship," in *At the Threshold: The Developing Adolescent*, ed. S. Feldman and G. Elliot (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 255–276.

Weissberg, Roger P., Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, and Thomas P. Gullotta, "Social and Emotional Learning Past, Present, and Future," in *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice*, ed. Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, Roger P. Weissberg, and Thomas P. Gullotta (New York: Guilford Publications, 2015), 3-19. Article accessed March 16, 2017 at https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Social-and-emotional-learning-Past-present-and-future.pdf.

Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D., professor of psychology and director of the Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Laboratory, is an internationally recognized authority on character education and social-emotional learning (SEL). In a 2006 article, Dr. Elias and the late Joseph E. Zins, a pioneer in SEL, linked the integration of social emotional competence into the school program with students' academic success.

> …genuinely effective schools—those that prepare students not only to pass tests at school but also to pass the tests of life—are finding that social-emotional competence and academic achievement are interwoven and that integrated, coordinated instruction in both areas maximizes students' potential to succeed in school and throughout their lives.

Zins, Joseph E. and Maurice J. Elias, "Social and Emotional Learning: Promoting the Development of All Students," *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, 17, no. 2-3 (2006): 233.

A Definition of SEL

In a presentation to a previous NJSBA study group, Dr. Elias explained the components of Social Emotional Learning and Character Development:

> What is Social Emotional Learning/Character Development?
> It's a set of skills and dispositions/essential life habits that can be built developmentally if we do so with intentionality, focus, and continuity. Schools are the place where most

children can be reached systematically because the same set of skills and habits ultimately mediate academic, civic, and workplace success…

Maurice, J. Elias, Ph.D., "Proven and Practical Approaches to Understanding and Improving Your School Climate and Culture for School Safety and Achievement" (presentation to the NJSBA School Security Task Force, Trenton, N.J., July 18, 2013).

A 2016 article by published on *Edutopia*, a website dedicated to effective educational practices, provides additional definition of SEL.

> Ideally…SEL is comprehensive, coordinated, and linked to academics, parents, and community involvement (including after-school programming). In such schools, students understand that they need academic and SEL competencies to accomplish valued goals; to contribute to the greater good, as well as their own good; and to strive to be persons of sound character and health. Correspondingly, the educators in those schools understand that for students to build their SEL skills, it is necessary not only to coordinate what happens within that school, but also to connect with the efforts of other schools in the district and of parents, after-school programs, and community partners.

Elias, Maurice J., Larry Leverett, Joan Cole Duffell, Neil Humphrey, Cesalie Stepney and Joseph Ferrito, "How to Implement Social and Emotional Learning at Your School," *Edutopia* (March 24, 2016). Accessed March 16, 2017 at https://www.edutopia.org/blog/implement-sel-at-your-school-elias-leverett-duffell-humphrey-stepney-ferrito. Adapted from the *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning: Research and Practice*, ed. Joseph A. Durlak, Celene E. Domitrovich, Roger P. Weissberg, and Thomas P. Gullotta (New York: Guilford Publications, 2015).

The Effectiveness of SEL

A number of investigations, including large-scale experiments, support the notion that targeted SEL interventions can improve social-emotional attributes of classrooms and facilitate students' social-emotional and academic well-being.

Brackett, Mark A., Susan E. Rivers, Maria R. Reyes and Peter Salovey, "Enhancing Academic Performance and Social and Emotional Competence with the RULER Feeling Words Curriculum," *Learning and Individual Differences* 22 (2012): 218–224.

Brown, Joshua L., Stephanie M. Jones, Maria D. LaRusso and J. Lawrence Aber, "Improving Classroom Quality: Teacher Influences and Experimental Impacts of the 4Rs Program," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 102 (2010): 153-167.

Raver, C. Cybele, Stephanie M. Jones, Christine Li-Grining, Fuhua Zhai, Kristen Bub and Emily Pressler, "CSRP's Impact on Low-Income Preschoolers' Pre-Academic Skills: Self-Regulation as a Mediating Mechanism," *Child Development* 82 (2011): 362–378. Accessed March 16, 2017 at https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/scmsAdmin/uploads/006/448/Raver%20Jones%20Li-Grining%20Zhai%20Bub%20Pressler%202011.pdf.

A meta-analysis of 213 studies evaluating SEL programming efforts demonstrates its benefits to youth from elementary through high school and across urban, suburban, and rural schools in the U.S. Almost half (47%) of the reviewed interventions were tested by randomly assigning students or classrooms to either the SEL program or to a control group. Primary outcomes were increases in students' social and emotional skills, improvements in students' prosocial attitudes and behavior, better mental health, and improved academic

performance, including an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement assessed through report card grades and test scores. SEL programs may have cost benefits as well.

Durlak, Joseph A., Roger P. Weissberg, Allison B. Dymnicki, Rebecca D. Taylor and Krison B. Schellinger, "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Intervention," *Child Development* 82 (2011): 405-432..

Belfield, Clive, Brooks Bowden, Alli Klapp, Henry Levin, Robert Shand and Sabine Zander, *The Economic Value of Social and Emotional Learning*, revised edition (Center for Benefit-Cost Studies in Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2015). Accessed March 16, 2017 at http://cbcse.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/SEL-Revised.pdf.

SEL/Character Development: Resources and Models

The Task Force on Student Achievement found many SEL models and resources. School districts have wide flexibility regarding the extent to which they adopt a model, the amount of resources they need, and the timing of the implementation of various phases.

CASEL: The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
Website: www.casel.org/

This nonprofit organization provides leadership for high quality social-emotional learning programming. CASEL advocates making evidence-based SEL a core part of the K-12 educational experience. The model identifies five core competencies associated with SEL: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. By infusing these concepts in daily routine, CASEL seeks to help students become more aware of their emotions and their relationship to their everyday lives and channel that awareness into enhanced control and better decision-making.

Research shows that students can learn how to use their emotions to make healthy decisions and to manage behavior effectively.

Durlak, Joseph A., Roger P. Weissberg, Allison B. Dymnicki, Rebecca D. Taylor, and Kriston B. Schellinger, "The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Intervention," *Child Development* 82 (2011): 405-432. Accessed March 16, 2017 at http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/sites/default/files/news/Durlak%20et%20al.%20(2011)%20meta%20analysis%20SEL.pdf.

Self-management, which includes controlling impulses, is a critical component of success in school and in life. Children who are better able to self-regulate have greater impulse control and pay more attention in school.

Lane, Katherine L., Melina Pierson and Christine C. Givner, "Teacher Expectations of Student Behavior: Which Skills Do Elementary and Secondary Teachers Deem Necessary for Success in the Classroom?" *Education and Treatment of Children* 26 (2003): 413-430

McClelland, Megan, Claire E. Cameron, Carol M. Connor, Carrie L. Farris, Abigail M. Jewkes and Frederick J. Morrison, "Links Between Behavioral Regulation and Preschoolers' Literacy, Vocabulary, and Math Skills," *Developmental Psychology* 43, (2007): 947–959.

The Center for Supportive Schools
Website: http://supportiveschools.org

Founded in 1979, the Center provides training and programs to engage students in learning and enable them to develop positive social, emotional, and health behaviors. The organization, which is located in Princeton, focuses on social and emotional learning and, according to its website, "has a proven track record, spanning over three decades, of significant academic impact on students, educators, and schools."

Its programs are designed to increase high school graduation rates; improve academic achievement, attendance, and behavior; improve students' social and emotional skills; and help students avoid high-risk behavior.

The Center's website references research on the effectiveness of its programs:

- "Peer Group Connection-High School: Summary of Evaluation Results that Show the Effect of Enlisting Students to Improve Schools" See: http://supportiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Summary-of-PGC-HS-Evidence_REV_2015-09-28.pdf.

- "Peer Group Connection-High School: High School Transition Program Improves Student Graduation Rates (*A Report on Study Findings*) See: http://supportiveschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PGC_Program_Improves_Student_Grad_Rates-Report_of_Findings_2014-03-14.pdf.

The Center for Supportive Schools has worked with school districts throughout the nation, including Newark, Princeton and Trenton.

New Jersey Alliance for Social Emotional and Character Development
Website: http://njasecd.org/

The alliance assists educators and all other stakeholders in fostering ethical, responsible and caring behavior and teaching social-emotional skills and core ethical values that lead to good character. In addition, the alliance educates its members regarding pertinent research and best practices, facilitates the exchange of resources and ideas, and advocates for the importance of a collaborative and caring organizational climate, and a healthy school culture.

Each year, the organization conducts an annual statewide conference, recognizes New Jersey's Schools of Character, and participates in the National Schools of Character program, conducted by Character.org.

New Jersey Department of Education
Website: www.nj.gov/education/students/safety/sandp/sel/

The Department of Education provides an online resource, "Keeping Our Kids Safe, Health & In School," which offers lesson plans and activities; information and research; and resources for families.

"Students in SEL programs are more likely to attend school and receive better grades, and are less likely to have conduct problems. Successful infusion of SEL can result in positive behaviors, increased academic success, and caring communities," states the website.

PATHS
Website: www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/introducing-paths.html

PATHS is a preschool and elementary school SEL program, offered by the Channing-Bete Company, a Massachusetts-based firm that develops and distributes a variety of educational and training materials to schools, health organizations, community service and public safety organizations, and businesses.

The PATHS program is designed to increase social and emotional competence by improving critical thinking skills and decreasing student aggression. It is based on the affective-behavioral-cognitive dynamic (ABCD) model of development, which theorizes that the effectiveness of the SEL program extends beyond behavior adaptations and influences neurocognitive and personality maturation.

With full implementation of SEL principles, PATHS aims to enhance students' ability to regulate strong emotions, such as anger, anxiety, and sadness, and to build self–awareness, which in turn will have a direct impact on student performance, whether social or academic.

Greenberg, Mark T., Carol A. Kusché and Nathaniel Riggs, "The PATHS Curriculum: Theory and Research on Neuro-Cognitive Development and School Success," in *Building School Success on Social and Emotional Learning,* ed. J. Zins, R. Weissberg, and H. Walber (New York: Teachers College Press 2004), 170-188.

At the elementary level, PATHS has been shown to improve children's feelings, vocabulary, and understanding of their own and others' feelings, increase inhibitory control and verbal fluency, and reduce behavioral problems.

Greenberg, Mark T., Carol A. Kusché, Elizabeth T. Cook and Julie P. Quamma, "Promoting Emotional Competence in School-Aged Children: The Effects of the PATHS Curriculum," *Development and Psychopathology* 7 (1995): 117–36.

Riggs, Nathaniel R., Mark T. Greenberg, Carol A. Kusche, and Mary Ann Pentz, "The Mediational Role of Neurocognition in the Behavioral Outcomes of a Social-Emotional Prevention Program in Elementary School Students: Effects of the PATHS Curriculum," *Prevention Science* 7 (2006): 91-102. Accessed March 16, 2017 at http://www.prevention.psu.edu/projects/documents/Riggsetal._PrevSci_2006.pdf.

The Reading, Writing, Respect and Resolution (4Rs) Program
Website: http://www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-program

The 4Rs Program is provided through the Morningside Center, a New York City-based non-profit organization. Morningside works with districts, schools and after-school programs to build students' social and emotional skills and create safe, collaborative, and equitable classrooms and schools.

The program trains teachers to use a literacy-based curriculum that includes lessons on conflict resolution, cultural difference, and cooperation.

Jones, Stephanie M., Joshua L. Brown, and J. Lawrence Aber, "Classroom Settings as Targets of Intervention and Research," in *Toward Positive Youth Development: Transforming Schools and Community Programs*, ed. M. Shinn & H. Yoshikawa (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 58-77

4Rs is designed to combine specific instructional, skill-building techniques and to model positive social norms. A randomized control trial of 18 schools with 82 third-grade classrooms showed evidence that 4Rs impacts the social and emotional climate of the classroom. This reflects the extent to which interactions between teachers and students reflect warmth and support, a lack of anger and hostility, consistent response from teachers to the needs of students, and teacher integration of students' ideas and interests into learning activities.

Brown, Joshua L., Stephanie M. Jones, Maria D. LaRusso, and J. Lawrence Aber, "Improving Classroom Quality: Teacher Influences and Experimental Impacts of the 4Rs Program," *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102 (2010): 153-167. Accessed March 16, 2017 at http://www.morningsidecenter.org/sites/default/files/documents-pdfs/JournalEdPsych2010.pdf.

The Responsive Classroom Approach
Website: www.responsiveclassroom.org

The Responsive Classroom is based on ten practices designed for optimal learning. It seeks to create a classroom where children feel "safe, challenged, and joyful." Examples of classroom practices include morning meetings, where children and teachers greet each other, share the day's news, and prepare for the day ahead, and teacher-led collaborative problem-solving strategies, such as role-playing and conferencing. At the core of these classroom practices are a balanced integration of children's academic and social learning.

Results from quasi-experimental studies have shown increases in reading and math scores, closer relationships with teachers, more pro-social skills, more assertive behavior, and less fear among children who were exposed to the Responsive Classroom approach for multiple years.

Rimm-Kaufman, Sara E., Xitao Fan, Yu-Jen Chiu, and Wenyi You, "The Contribution of the Responsive Classroom Approach on Children's Academic Achievement: Results from a Three Year Longitudinal Study," *Journal of School Psychology* 45 (2007): 401-421

Rimm-Kaufman, Sara E. and Yu-Jen Chiu, "Promoting Social and Academic Competence in the Classroom: An Intervention Study Examining the Contribution of the Responsive Classroom Approach," *Psychology in the Schools* 44 (2007): 397-413.

Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab
Website: www.secdlab.org/

The SECD Lab is dedicated to conducting action-research in public, private, and religious school settings for the purpose of building children's skills for facing the tests of life, and not a life of tests. Originally called the Rutgers Social Emotional Learning Laboratory, the unit's new name reflects its view that SEL and character development must be integrated for the optimal development of children and youth.

Current SECD Lab projects include the following:

- **The MOSAIC Project** (Mastering Our Skills and Inspiring Character) in six Jersey City Middle Schools. The program includes a three-year curriculum to build students' social-emotional skills and virtues, create opportunities for youth voice in schools, and promote a respectful and caring school climate. The program's principles follow through to all classes, school routines and the community at large. See: www.secdlab.org/mosaic/.

- **Developing Schools of Social-Emotional Competence and Character** in New Brunswick.

- The **Development, Implementation, and Dissemination of Laws of Life** and Related Empowerment-Oriented Interventions around Promoting Youth Competence, Purpose, and Voice, including The Youth Ambassadors Project.

- The Social-Emotional Learning and Character Development **Certificate Program** for classroom teachers, school leaders and other professionals. See: http://psych.rutgers.edu/sel.

Previous NJSBA Reports
In its October 2014 report, the NJSBA School Security Task Force addressed the critical role of school climate in providing a safe environment that fosters learning and personal growth. The School Security Task Force made seven recommendations in the area of school climate, including the following, which address social-emotional learning and character development:

- Local school districts should engage in school climate assessments and develop and implement plans to ensure that students have safe, secure and supportive learning environments that provide meaningful communication and involvement with caring adults on the school staff.

- Not all student groups experience school safety and the school climate in the same manner. To enable students to learn in supportive environments at each grade level, local school boards should adopt policies that recognize the importance of social-emotional learning, character development, restorative practices and community building.

- To build a respectful school climate that enables the advancement of student achievement, local boards of education and school administrators should ensure that the principles of social-emotional learning and character development skill-building are infused into academic instruction in a coordinated manner and that there is a consistent application of discipline.

RECOMMENDATIONS
Chapter 9 – Social–Emotional Learning

FOR LOCAL BOARDS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS

65. Review current activities that address the social-emotional learning needs of their students and staff and strive to ensure that an optimum climate is being nurtured throughout the district.

66. Ensure that the student performance data are disaggregated.

67. Commit to addressing achievement gaps within the district.

68. Create policies that require monitoring of school climate and encourage higher teacher expectations of students.

69. Provide teachers with professional development in the importance of social climate in schools.

70. Review common social and community problems impacting disadvantaged students in district schools and design solutions that affect significant numbers of them.

71. Commit to finding ways to personalize learning approaches for students.

72. Pay special attention to middle school practices that fall short of supporting students' social and emotional needs.

73. Augment district curriculum to enhance the importance of increased expectations from teachers, teacher-student relationships, school-to-student connectivity, and student-to-student relationships and respect.

74. Review the social emotional learning models available through the organizations listed in the "SEL/Character Development: Resources and Models" section of this chapter to gain insight about various approaches to integrating social-emotional learning into the education program.