The Science and Practice of Social and Emotional Learning in Schools

The Annual Conference
Yozma Center for Knowledge and Research in Education
January 8, 2020

Stephanie M. Jones
Graduate School of Education
Harvard University
In the next 45ish minutes...

1. Backdrop: EASEL Lab

2. What we know (the science)

3. What we do (the practice)

4. Innovations to drive (more?) effective work
   - Implementation and new approaches to practice
   - Bringing coherence and alignment to the lexicon
   - Contextualizing SEL
Prevention Science: Knowledge $\longleftrightarrow$ Action

- **What we know:**
  - Research

- **What did we learn?**

- **What we expect to change:**
  - Assessment and Evaluation

- **What we do:**
  - Strategies and Programs

- **Did it have an effect?**

- **What should we focus on, and how?**
THE SCIENCE
Social and emotional learning is...

Focus thinking

Understand and deal with feelings

Manage behavior

Build positive relationships
As schools adopt social-emotional programs, a new guide offers help.

Why it’s (long past) time for social-emotional learning.

The Benefits of Character Education

The Psychological Approach to Teaching Kids

Increased focus on kids’ psychological needs as education world’s flavor of the day, but

The problem with today’s character education model!

The Washington Post

Social-Emotional Learning: States Collaborate to Craft Standards, Policies

What if the Secret is Not a Secret?

Stay focused

Social! It's Time for a Revolution!

New research on Jan 19th, 2013

Encouraging Social and Emotional Learning In the Context of New Accountability

7 traits kids need to succeed

Character traits include grit, self-control and social intelligence

By Janet Thomson and Manmeet Ahluwalia, CBC News

Can Emotional Intelligence Be Taught?
What are the skills and competencies?

Skills/Competencies

Cognitive
- E.g., managing & shifting attention, controlling impulses, planning & goal setting, critical thinking.

Emotion
- E.g., emotion knowledge and expression, emotion & behavioral regulation, empathy
- E.g., understanding social cues, social perspective taking, prosocial behavior, conflict resolution, social problem solving

Social
- E.g., understanding social cues, social perspective taking, prosocial behavior, conflict resolution, social problem solving
and...

**Skills/Competencies**
- Cognitive
- Emotion
- Social

**Belief Ecology (attitudes, habits of mind)**
- Beliefs/Knowledge of Self & Identity
- Character/Values
- Personality

- E.g., self-efficacy, growth mindset, agency, self-esteem, self-knowledge, purpose
- E.g., ethical, performance, intellectual, and civic values
- E.g., optimism, gratitude, openness, enthusiasm/zest
An Integrated View

From:
National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, 2019
A developmental progression...

**EMERGE FIRST and GROW SIGNIFICANTLY** – provide foundation for cognitive, emotion and social skills and behavior; continue to grow throughout childhood and adolescence.

1. **Cognitive Domain**
   - Cognitive Flexibility
   - Response Inhibition
   - Attention Control
   - Working Memory

2. **Emotion Domain**
   - Emotion & Behavior Management
   - Emotion Knowledge & Expression

3. **Social Domain**
   - Basic Social Engagement
   - Pro-social & Cooperation
   - Conflict Resolution

**EMERGE NEXT** – these skills build upon earlier skills as children get better at using them in new ways; increasingly used to support academic and social goals.

- Planning, Organizing, Setting Goals
- Empathy & Perspective-Taking
- Understanding Social Cues

Jones & Bailey, 2012
1. Long-term correlational studies
The Payoff of People Skills

In a mechanized world, wages and employment are growing fastest in jobs where social skills and teamwork are primary.

(David Deming, NBER, 2015)

In childhood...

- Academic Skills
- “Non-Academic” Skills
  - “People Skills”
  - Social Competence
  - Self-Control

20-30 years later...

- Labor Market Success
- Higher Education
- Physical Health
- Low Substance Use
- Personal Finances
- Low Criminal Offending
What’s the evidence?

1. Long-term correlational studies
2. Large multi-program studies & trials of specific interventions in preschool, school, and afterschool contexts

Tell us about critical life outcomes.

Tell us about social-emotional (.57), behavioral (.22), academic outcomes (.27); variation by groups; classroom and school-level.
Two Decades of RCTs: Child Outcomes

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger (2011)

Meta-analysis: Core Questions and Answers

1. Does school-based SEL programming positively affect students? – YES
2. Are SEL programs conducted by existing school staff effective? – YES
3. Does the quality of implementation affect student outcomes? – YES

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger (2011)

Outcomes

- Social-emotional 22 (.57)
- Attitudes 9 (.23)
- Positive social behavior 9 (.24)
- Conduct problems 9 (.22)
- Emotional distress 10 (.24)
- Academic performance 11 (.27)

Wigelsworth et al., 2016 confirms post findings.
Sklad et al., 2012 & Taylor et al., 2017 document follow-up outcomes.
Two Decades of RCTs: Child Outcomes

4Rs...variation by baseline characteristics

Year 2 Math Achievement Scaled Score, BR=Behavioral Risk

Wave 4 Teacher-Reported Academic Skills, BR=Behavioral Risk

ES=\sim 0.55

Jones, Brown & Aber, 2011
Two Decades of RCTs: **Classrooms**

- Effects are consistent and tend to be larger (.5-.6)
- Everyone is using the same tool... **CLASS**

**Similar for:**
- 4Rs, RULER, FOL, SECURe, MTP...
- there are more

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**SOURCE:** Raver, Jones, Li-Grining, Metzger, Champion, & Sardin (2008), *Early Childhood Research Quarterly.*

**NOTES:** Significance levels are indicated as * p < 0.10; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01.

Raver, Jones et al., 2008; Jones, Barnes & Doolittle, 2017
Across studies, findings are mixed:

- Lumping:
  - Large, multi-program studies with general measurement battery (e.g., SACD) = Null effects
  - Meta-analyses (Durlak et al., Sklad et al.) = Great! But where do we focus?

- Splitting:
  - Individual program evaluation with “close” measurement = Great! More precise, but the measures are different across studies and findings are hard to track (i.e., inconsistent)

Implementation varies; Components/mechanisms haven’t been tested

e.g., Jones, McGarrah & Kahn, 2019
What’s the evidence?

1. Long-term correlational studies
2. Large multi-program studies & trials of specific interventions in preschool, school, and afterschool contexts
3. Meta-analyses; cost-benefit analyses
4. A new science of stress $\rightarrow$ the brain $\rightarrow$ behavior

Skills and competencies develop in a complex system of contexts, interactions, and relationships and are particularly vulnerable to stress and adversity. Stress and exposure to trauma influence EF/SR, cascading into behavior. SEL interventions are a key response.
See: Navigating SEL From the Inside Out

THE PRACTICE
What’s effective?

Two coordinated strategies:

1. Instruction in social and emotional skills (modeled, taught, practiced, discussed) → students have sense of engagement, agency.

2. Establishing safe, caring learning environments with effective classroom management.
Examples

Model
- Adults and peers who model the language and behaviors, across environments

Teach
- Children’s books & literature
- Lessons, Skill-based activities

Practice and Discuss
- Routines and games
- Prepared role-play; paired learning
- Real-world experiences as they arise – key context for learning and applying skills

Think Aloud
I can see it is hard to be quiet during church. When I need to sit still for a long time, I sing a favorite song silently in my head, or I doodle on a piece of paper.

Model
I feel ________ because ________
(My silent...) (...people...)

Think Aloud
I can see it is hard to be quiet during church. When I need to sit still for a long time, I sing a favorite song silently in my head, or I doodle on a piece of paper.
Features of Effective Practice

- Define expectations for students, students, and classroom/school environment
- Align goals with approach
- Clear about which skills are being taught
- Understand what it looks like when are or are not successfully using skills

**Effective SEL Programs**

- Taught, modeled, practiced, discussed
- Set reasonable goals
- Target specific behaviors & skills

- Occur within supportive contexts

- Build adult skills

- Consider Broader Context

- Partnerships with family & community
- Culturally relevant/responsive practices

- Clear, explicit instruction
- Adults model and live skills
- Real life practice
- Reflection to facilitate understanding and transfer

- Positive culture and climate
- Integration into school structures and classroom practices

- Adult SEL competencies
- Teacher/staff training
- Supports (coaching, planning time, etc.)
What does it take?

1. **Integration** into the structures and practices of schools and schooling (e.g., leveraging academic content, addressing discipline practices).

2. Focus on **adults** (e.g., teacher well-being, training, professional coaching, etc.).

3. Maintaining the **quality** and **sustainability** of practices on the ground and in systems (i.e., implementation).
INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE (MORE?) EFFECTIVE WORK

1. Implementation and New Approaches to Practice: SEL Kernels
What does SEL work typically look like?

1. Programs: multi-component, complex, largely inflexible
2. They are “effective”
   • classical treatment package approach, little theory about components
3. Buy-in is limited, resources are constrained → implementation varies
Improving SEL Interventions

1. Strategies/practices common to effective programs; active ingredients?
2. Targeted to specific skills
3. Designed to be doable, integrate-able, efficient, scalable; tied to choice
4. “Rigid” structure that allows for adaptation
5. Hypothesis = greater uptake and implementation & => impact

High FLEXIBILITY

Low RESOURCES (time, cost, staff, etc.)
Example and Prototype

~31 quick games designed to build core EFs (working memory, attention control, inhibition)
Timeline

- Teachers provided feedback on the cards and games.
- Teachers were able to implement BGs in their classrooms many times a week and found them useful and fun to play.
- Across the school year, teachers played 4,790 Brain Games.

- With a delayed implementation design, students showed steeper improvements in RRS and classroom practices improved during implementation phases.

SECURe trial in AZ. (K-3)
- BG Redesign w/ HopeLab
- 2012-2013

SECURe K-3:
- SECURe group higher average attention skills, lower impulsivity, steeper growth in literacy skills across the year, especially among the lowest-achieving students in the sample.
- Over 75% of the teachers reported playing BGs at least 2x week; Over 25% played 4 or more times a week.

BG Pilot in SC
- 2015-2016

Classroom RCT in Lawrence, MA & Adaptations + RCT for EiE/Brazil
- 2017-2018

BG Redesign w/ HopeLab
- 2014-2015

BG Pilot in SC
- 2015-2016

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- 2014-2015

Classroom RCT in Lawrence, MA & Adaptations + RCT for EiE/Brazil
- 2017-2018
Brain Games RCT in Lawrence MA.

6 Schools

Each school:
- 3 Int. classrooms
- 3 Control classrooms

- Intervention Classrooms: 18
- Intervention Students: 322

- Control Classrooms: 18
- Control Students: 304

Implementation

Mean: 3.06/week
SD: 1.26
## BG Impacts on Key Outcomes

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Jones & Barnes, SRCD 2019; Jones et al., EF Mapping OPRE
Identifying Kernels

• Code programs; identify common elements/strategies
• Make decisions about what gets designed
• Design with rigid--adaptable structure
• Pilot, redesign
• Test...
## Code Programs: What do they do and how do they do it?

**Cognitive Regulation**
- Attention Control
- Working Memory/Planning
- Inhibitory Control
- Cognitive Flexibility

**Emotional Processes**
- Emotion Knowledge/Expression
- Emotion Regulation
- Empathy/Perspective-taking

**Interpersonal Skills**
- Understands Social Cues
- Conflict Resolution
- Prosocial Behavior

**Character**

**Mindset**

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<th>Program</th>
<th>Cognitive Reg.</th>
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**KEY**
- **▲** = High relative focus
- **▼** = Low relative focus

**Code “what” and “how”**
E.g., Routines to support physiological/behavioral regulation....
## Generating a Set for Evaluation: 35ish (5 core, ~30 others)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Core Kernels</th>
<th>Additional</th>
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</table>
| **Brain** | • Brain Games  
• + bookmark | • Steps to Success  
• Response Remix  
• Magic 8-Ball/What might the future be? |
| **Feelings** | • Feelings Circle  
• + bookmark | • Feelings Tree  
• I Messages/Say It Back  
• Belly Breathing  
• Feelings Thermometer  
• Stand Up/Sit Down  
• Cool Down Process  
• Feelings Charades  
• Yoga |
| **People** | • Cool Kid  
• + bookmark | • Looks Like/Sound Like/Feels Like Chart  
• Steps to Resolution/My Fault Making Amends  
• Conflict Solvers  
• Classroom Community Celebration  
• Thought Box  
• People Power Games (3) |
| **Citizen** | • Dear Abby  
• + bookmark | • Friday Feedback  
• Weekly Job Board |
| **Attitude** | • Notes to self  
• + bookmark | • Thankful Thoughts  
• Mindfulness/Thinking about Thinking  
• My Ideal Year  
• Self-Talk Superhero |
Kernel Design and Structure

SEL KERNELS
Building Skills for Learning and Life
FEELINGS CIRCLE

WHAT IS IT? A group meeting to share feelings.

WHAT IS IT ABOUT? Building feelings vocabulary and emotion knowledge.

WHY DO THIS?

IF WE...
talk about feelings...

THEN WE...
can better understand ourselves and others...

SO WE...
can regulate and use our emotions to learn and play with others.

THE BIG IDEA

Coming together to talk about our feelings helps us learn about emotions and build our feelings vocabulary. Talking about feelings helps us to better understand ourselves and build stronger relationships.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Choose a time to do this 15-minute routine (suggested: morning meeting, pre-academics, after recess).
2. Gather students to sit or stand in a circle and greet them as they join. You might begin the circle with a song the class likes to sing together.
3. Start by saying THE BIG IDEA and then take a few minutes to discuss the following: “What are feelings? How do you know how you’re feeling? What do feelings feel like in your body?”
4. After some discussion, ask, “How are you feeling today?” Ask volunteers to share why.

**MUST DO:** Go around the circle and give everyone the opportunity to share.

**CAN ADAPT:** Use basic emotion words (e.g., happy, sad, scared, mad), or metaphoric expressions (e.g., weather metaphor: sunny, cloudy, partly cloudy, etc.), or rate your mood on your fingers (5 fingers = excellent mood; 1 finger = terrible mood).

MATERIALS

Feelings Face Cards
AFTER THE ACTIVITY, DEBRIEF:

- What was it like to share your feelings?
- Are there times you don’t want to share your feelings?
- Can you tell what another person is feeling? How can you tell?
- Do animals have feelings? How do you know?
- What times at school or home do you need to share how you’re feeling?

OVER THE YEAR...

Kindergarten is a time to build awareness of basic emotions and the words we use to describe them. A learning objective for the kindergarten year is to begin to help kids think about what they feel and why they feel that way (i.e., what causes specific feelings). There are no right or wrong answers; students should explore these ideas in an open-ended way.

To start, focus on building familiarity with different feelings words. Use the Feelings Face Cards to support learning. Focus on the basic emotions first: happy, sad, mad, and scared. Show the Feelings Face cards and discuss how each emotion looks, sounds, and feels.

As students become familiar with feelings words, begin to encourage students to think about and describe why they feel the way they feel (i.e., what happened to make you feel that way?).

When students are ready for more, begin to explore how we respond to feelings. Add into your circle time a discussion about how we can respond to others’ emotions in familiar classroom situations. Have the group brainstorm different ways to respond when others share their feelings (e.g., offer a hug, offer a listening ear, offer to play together, ask for help, etc.).

How did it go? Tell us how it went and find resources at: www.kernelslink.com
2015-2019
Partners: HGFA, Lawrence Public Schools, TRUSD

2020-2021
- Sacramento ➔ Training modalities/Implementation
- Vancouver & Abbotsford ➔ Quasi-experimental: TR, Observations, DA, school data, 2X (Jan, June), Implementation

Phase 1: Development
Define, identify, and make ready a set of kernels

Phase 2: Pilot Test
Pilot, refine, and expand kernels with partners

Phase 3: Large RTC
Test kernels in a large, randomized study

Phase 4: Dissemination
Make kernels widely accessible to educators

Tracking implementation, responding to challenges:
https://harvard.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uNDglYpGfEx0Gx
Data Informs Implementation & Feedback

1. Select school, grade, and role
2. Did you try SEL Kernels this week? Which?
3. Did you try any additional SEL Kernels this week? Which?

Use this page to select SEL Kernels and tips that address your students' challenges/areas of growth. The strategies below correspond to the challenges you identified on the previous page. Choose one SEL Kernel or tip that you will try next week.

SEL Skill Area: Remembers and follows through with tasks, plans, and assignments

SEL Kernels

- Steps to Success
- Brain Games

Tips for Teachers

- Use visual reminders (e.g., post-it notes, checklists, progress maps)
INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE (MORE?) EFFECTIVE WORK

2. Bringing coherence and alignment to the lexicon: Explore SEL
The Challenge

As schools adopt social-emotional programs, a new guide offers help.

The Psychological Approach to Educating Kids
Increased focus on kids' psychological health may seem like the education world's flavor of the day, but it's achieving results.

Why it's (long past) time for social-emotional learning

School reform
Stay focused
Social-Emotional Learning Standards, Policies
Collaborate to Craft Standards, Policies

7 traits kids need to succeed
Character traits include grit, self-control and social intelligence

Can Emotional Intelligence Be Taught?
Rupert Murdoch's Tablet Takeover
by CARLO ROTELLA
A disruptive idea for how to educate America.

This Is What Anger Looks Like
by JENNIFER SAINT
Can emotional intelligence be taught?
A System for Navigating the Field

- System for transparently **navigating between and communicating across** different disciplines, perspectives, organizing systems in the field

- Uses a common coding system to look at widely-used frameworks and determine **what skills/competencies they include** and **how they are defined**

- Designed to function as a **Rosetta Stone**, allowing users to:

  - Understand how skills and terms are defined in various frameworks
  - Navigate between frameworks that employ different language
  - Communicate clearly & precisely across disciplines, perspectives & sectors
Explore SEL: Connecting the Field

A set of online tools housed on the Explore SEL Website:

**Framework Profiles**
“Look inside Frameworks”
Learn more about widely-used “nonacademic” frameworks and compare skills and features across them.

**Three Visual Tools**
“Compare Frameworks”
Use a set of interactive visual tools to identify similarities and differences across widely-used frameworks.

**Thesaurus**
“Search for Skills”
Search a thesaurus of 200+ SEL and “nonacademic” terms to identify related skills across frameworks.

http://exploresel.gse.harvard.edu/
INNOVATIONS TO DRIVE (MORE?) EFFECTIVE WORK

3. Contextualizing SEL: Lebanon, Niger, Sierra Leone (Brain Games); Brazil (Brain Games & Kernels); Nigeria; Colombia (Kernels)
Contextualizing SEL Kernels in Brazil

SEL Kernels in Brazil

Kernels were adapted in close collaboration with community health researchers at the University of São Paulo and early learning centers in São Paulo and Paraty.

A large scale RCT will be conducted in São Paulo during the 2020 school year.
Features and Process

1. Development

Kernels are drawn from a content analysis of 25 evidence-based SEL programs in US; adapted and contextualized for Brazil ECE settings.

2. Adaptation

Brazil ECE teachers are co-creators of the materials and provide essential feedback as they test out Kernels in their classrooms.

3. Field Testing

Municipalities and schools can customize a menu of Kernels that are most relevant to their context.

4. Revision
Aligning SEL with Local “Standards”

Social and Emotional Skills
- Cognitive
- Emotional
- Interpersonal (Social)
- Citizenship (Character)
- Attitude (Mindset)

BNCC Fields of Experience
- Myself, the Other, Ourselves
- Body, Gestures, and Movements
- Scribbles, Sounds, Shapes, and Images
- Listening, Speaking, Thinking, and Imagination
- Spaces, Times, Quantities, Relations, and Transformations
Learning About Local Needs

Teacher focus groups in 15 public crèches and additional focus groups with 212 parents in Brazil

Teacher and parent views of:
- Non-academic skills children need to succeed
- Meaning of “good behavior”
- Children’s social emotional strengths and weaknesses

Teacher Concerns

FOCUS: Respond to emotional & behavioral challenges AND build self-regulation

Identify social emotional skills most relevant for Brazilian context

Aggression & Interpersonal Violence
Community Violence
Sustainability
Learning About Local Needs

Teacher focus groups in 15 public crèches and additional focus groups with 212 parents in Brazil.

Teacher and parent views of:
- Non-academic skills children need to succeed
- Meaning of “good behavior”
- Children’s social emotional strengths and weaknesses

Parent Concerns:
- Setting rules at home
- Exposure to interpersonal and community violence

FOCUS: Building and maintaining routines AND build understanding of other

“citizens aware of their rights and duties”

“more social rights and equal conditions!”
Pilot ➔ Revise ➔ Test (2020)
Three Key Ideas

1. Social-emotional skills and competencies are multi-faceted, developmental, and rooted in **connected, supportive relationships** and **settings**.

2. Approaches that work build skills in **targeted** and **relevant ways** -- they cross between adults and children, can be used across settings.

3. The frontier of this work is to build and scale, and to do this we need a **clear focus, new approaches to practice** – targeted, flexible, portable, and engaging, **ways to build local buy-in and approaches** based on evidence.
Thank you!
(jonesst@gse.harvard.edu)