
Social and Emotional Learning: Role of School Psychologists in Australia

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Introduction

The important role of social and emotional learning skills (SELS) in student learning and well-being has been well documented (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a leading international organization promoting theory,

research, intervention, and policy advocacy related to SEL, identifies SEL as encompassing the following five sets of competencies (“SEL Competencies,” n.d.):

- **Self-awareness:** The ability to accurately recognize one’s emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.
- **Self-management:** The ability to regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness:** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision-making:** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices

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about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

CASEL further defines SEL as encompassing a set of interventions at all levels of a school, designed to promote the development of those skills in continuous and coordinated ways (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013). Today, throughout many states in the United States and in many countries (e.g., Singapore, Scotland, Australia), school-based programs teach all students that learning and acting with SEL is the norm rather than the exception (“State Standards,” n.d.; <http://enseceurope.org/>).

In Australia, it is the case that, due in part to Australian SEL-oriented, mental health research (e.g., Bernard, 2008; Goodman, 2001) as well as international scholarship in SEL (e.g., Elias et al., 1997), both the fields of psychology and education now accept that the development of social and emotional skills of young people is central to their mental health and school achievement. It is also now generally accepted that the responsibility for social and emotional education is not as it has historically been the case a home responsibility, but rather one of school–home/community collaboration (Bernard, 2006). Indeed, in schools today, with the advent of Australia’s new national curriculum, the personal and social up-skilling of young people has been taken out of the exclusive province of health and physical education and moved into the mainstream responsibilities of all teachers (e.g., Bernard, 2006) (for background, see “Personal and Social Capability,” n.d.).

In this chapter, we review the history of SEL and the role of psychologists in Australia, some background on social and emotional learning in schools, examples of its implementation in Tier 1 (i.e., preventive or universal interventions directed at entire populations without regard for risk status) with a focus on Australian examples, and then look at three areas in the social and emotional field with a potential for strong growth and

influence by Australian school psychologists: Tier 2 interventions (i.e., those targeting students who possess risk factors or who are exhibiting early signs of difficulty), assessment, and work with parents.

Historical Contributions of Psychologists in Australia to the SEL Agenda

A signature accomplishment of psychologists in Australia has been their role in shifting the priority of schooling from the academic to the academic and social-emotional. Since the late 1980s, Australian psychologists have developed SEL preventive mental health programs (e.g., You Can Do It! Education, Bernard & Hajzler, 1987) (see Table 1) that have been adopted by primary and secondary schools for all children and adolescents. Australian SEL program development efforts predated CASEL and grew from psychologists’ positive experiences in teaching CBT and coping skills (e.g., the ABCs of resilience, confidence, social skills) to children referred for emotional and behavioral difficulties. Some of these programs focus on the early years while others have been developed for primary or secondary age students. Today, SEL programs in Australia are closely aligned with CASEL guidelines (www.CASEL.org). Without direct support or funding from federal or state governments, different SEL programs have been published over several decades largely by psychologists working at Australian universities. However, in the past decade, government research support for evaluation of SEL programs has expanded greatly.

A number of websites published by federal and state education departments provide lists of SEL programs (e.g., see www.kidsmatter.edu.au), which, as a result of the published research base, are considered “best practice” programs. Most of these programs are domestically grown. Especially in the early days, it has not been the Australian experience to import SEL programs developed in the USA or elsewhere (see Table 1).

For over 20 years, SEL primary prevention programs have been extensively used by teachers

Table 1 Sample of “best practice” social and emotional learning programs

<i>Aussie Optimism Program</i> (Roberts, Kane, Thomson, Bishop, & Hart, 2003; Roberts et al., 2011)
Aussie Optimism provides teachers, practitioners, and parents with practical strategies and resources for developing children’s social competence, self-management, and positive thinking in everyday life, during times of stress, and across transitions, like the move to high school. The programs are developmentally appropriate for children in middle and upper primary, and lower secondary school
<i>You Can Do It! Education</i> (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; Bernard, 2011, 2013)
YCDI is a school–home collaborative approach for developing the social and emotional capabilities of students of all ages. The five social and emotional skills taught are confidence, persistence, organization, getting along, and resilience. YCDI helps students develop 12 positive Habits of the Mind (e.g., self-acceptance, high frustration tolerance, acceptance of others) and eliminate negative Habits of the Mind (e.g., self-depreciation, low frustration tolerance, lack of other acceptance) as well as teaches students how by changing their thinking, they can influence their emotions and behaviors. YCDI consists of p-Year 12 social and emotional learning curricula (“YCDI Early Childhood Program”; “Program Achieve”)
<i>Bounce Back</i> (McGrath & Noble, 2012)
The program is written for teachers in primary and secondary schools or psychologists/counsellors in schools and mental health settings who want to enhance student well-being and teach resilience skills. The three Bounce Back books are lower primary (K-2), middle primary (years 3–4), and upper primary/junior secondary (years 5–9). The BOUNCE BACK! Wellbeing & Resilience Program addresses the environmental building blocks and the personal skills for fostering resilience in children and young people
<i>Friendly Schools and Families Program</i> (Cross et al., 2003, 2012)
This program is aimed at the individual, group, family, and/or school community level. It aims to prevent bullying in its social context. The program assists with the design, development, implementation, dissemination, and evaluation of a social skill building and comprehensive anti-bullying program. The program provides strategies for a whole-school program (including ethos, policy and practice, physical environment, social environment, engaging families, learning environments, and behavior management)
<i>FRIENDS for Life: FRIENDS for Children</i> (Barrett & Sonderegger, 2005; Iizuka et al., 2014)

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

FRIENDS for Children is a program designed for use in schools as an anxiety prevention program and resiliency building tool. It is aimed at young people aged 7–11 years. FRIENDS for Children helps children cope with feelings of fear, worry, and depression by building resilience and self-esteem and teaching cognitive and emotional skills. FRIENDS for Children promotes important self-development concepts such as self-esteem, problem-solving, self-expression, and building positive relationships with peers and adults

in Australian early childhood settings, primary and secondary schools. For example, The You Can Do It! Early Childhood Education Program (Bernard, 2004) has been taught in over 2500 preparatory/kindergarten settings. Furthermore, over 1,000,000 primary and secondary students in over 4000 schools have been taught SEL lessons from Program Achieve, which is a Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum (Bernard, 2007a, 2007b). Research evaluating these programs has shown a positive impact on student well-being (Bernard & Walton, 2011) and the well-being, externalizing problems and reading achievement of younger children (Ashdown & Bernard, 2012; see Table 1).

Current Context for SEL Programs in Australia

Currently, in Australian education, there are two main catalysts for the implementation of SEL programs, the best of which is summarized in Table 1. The extent to which these two initiatives stimulate or permit involvement of school psychologists in the SEL agenda is discussed below.

KidsMatter and MindMatters

KidsMatter Primary (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010a) is the first national mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention initiative specifically developed for primary schools

in Australia. It has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, beyondblue: the national depression initiative, the Australian Psychological Society, and Principals Australia.

Distinct from a SEL program, KidsMatter Primary offers schools a framework to implement evidence-based strategies to ensure students are taught social and emotional skills to manage ongoing challenges and to relate well to others. Schools voluntarily participate in the initiative work towards implementing four foundational components: positive school community, working with parents and carers, helping children with mental health difficulties, and social-emotional learning for all students.

In 2006–2008, KidsMatter Primary was piloted nationally in 101 schools across all States and Territories of Australia; all three education systems (Government, Catholic, and Independent); and metropolitan, rural, and remote communities. A comprehensive evaluation was conducted by Flinders University, with findings showing that the KidsMatter Early Childhood initiative has a positive impact on schools, children, parents, and carers (Slee et al., 2012), including improved staff–child closeness, improved child temperament, and reduced mental health difficulties.

MindMatters (Department of Health and Ageing, 2010b) is a secondary school's framework supported by the Australian Department of Health that specifies practices aimed to promote mental health, prevent mental health problems, and enable early intervention. MindMatters provides useful resources and links for young people, families, teachers, and schools (www.mindmatters.edu.au/).

New Australian National Curriculum

Based on Gardner's work with intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences within his multiple intelligences framework (e.g., Gardner, 1983), Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence, and the CASEL framework of social-emotional skills, the new national curriculum identifies the need for all teachers to support students' acquisi-

tion of personal and social skills (self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, social management) with a scope and sequence of personal and social skills students need to be taught (and assessed on) every second year provided (see Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority [ACARA], 2015a). Assessment methods and measures have not as yet been addressed by ACARA.

The new, proposed Health and Physical Education curriculum (see ACARA, 2015b) spells out a wide variety of personal and social skills to be taught across the year levels (self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, social management).

The Role of School Psychologists in Advancing the SEL Agenda

Recent Australian research reported by Bell and McKenzie (2013), building on the work of Thielking and Jimerson (2006) and Thielking, Moore, and Jimerson (2006), continues to show extensive differences in the roles and functions of school psychologists. Specifically, it appears as if the more experienced and senior psychologists working in independent and Catholic schools are more involved in the SEL agenda than recent graduates—especially those working in public state school settings whose role specifications do not often involve systemic consultation. These psychologists may well be less crisis-driven and as a consequence have more time to devote to prevention. Those psychologists who employ a systemic framework of service provision are more likely to be involved than those who practice using a client-centered, assess and intervene framework. Additionally, there are likely differences in practices of psychologists working in different states. For example, informal discussion reveals a more proactive SEL involvement of psychologists working in Western Australia than in other states. (Systematic data are not available on the number of psychologists working in schools who are involved in the SEL agenda.)

There are differences in the ways in which psychologists offer SEL-oriented services to schools. The types of availability of SEL practice

depend on whether a psychologist is employed by/centered at one or more schools or whether they are employed at a center where they offer different services requested by a school. It is certainly the case that many psychologists in schools offer SEL programs self-initiated or requested as primary prevention (e.g., social skills). It is unclear whether 1:1 treatment services provided by school psychologists for referred students include an SEL component.

Whereas two decades ago, primary prevention SEL programs were more likely to be delivered by mental health practitioners (psychologists, counsellors), it appears today that the picture is quite different. In classrooms today—especially at the primary level—the vast majority of SEL programs are “delivered” by the classroom teacher. School psychologists are more likely to conduct smaller SEL group work with “at risk” students and be involved in the decision-making on the type of program to introduce to a particular school.

In summary, school psychologists in Australia are more able to be involved in the SEL agenda in the following ways:

1. Advocacy/consulting with school administrators at school level for SEL programs for all students (especially at secondary level)
2. Program planning and evaluation of SEL programs
3. Delivery of SEL programs to referred students (and in independent and nongovernment schools to classroom groups of students)
4. Incorporation of SEL training in treatment plans and delivery
5. Teacher training in the delivery of SEL intervention programs

The Role of School Psychologists in Tier 1 SEL Interventions

School psychologists tasked with improving student well-being are in unique positions to advocate for, develop, and implement SEL programming. Too often, however, finding sufficient time to do so eludes school staff members—psychologists,

counsellors, teachers, others—embedded in school contexts. In the United States, for example, school psychologists spend most of their school days engaged in psychoeducational related activities including cognitive testing and report writing, leaving little time to focus on SEL (Reschly, 2000). Given the importance of targeting these skills, and the paucity of time afforded for them, it is important to explore the ways in which school psychologists can understand and utilize their unique school contexts to implement effective and worthwhile SEL interventions.

The concept of multiple tiers of intervention has become widespread in American school psychology and we will use that distinction here (National Association of School Psychologists, 2009). Tier 1 interventions are considered universal because they reach all children in a school; Tier 2 interventions reach students who are identified, often by assessment, as being at greater risk for problem behaviors or who are not responding adequately to Tier 1 interventions. Tier 3 is the most intensive and most removed from the mainstream, typically involving specialized programs, services or even schools and often encompassing what is referred to as “special education.” We begin with considering SEL as reaching all students, i.e., Tier 1. Because schools are complex systems, it is the unique composition of stakeholders, attitudes, and personnel, to name a few factors that dynamically affect the ways in which SEL interventions are implemented in schools. This challenge creates a potential role for the school psychologist as one of the organizational leaders of student well-being intervention efforts. The complexity also calls for a scientist–practitioner, accountability mentality common to the practice of many school psychologists. When a SEL intervention is implemented and doesn’t yield the desired program results—even if “evidence-based”—this outcome is not necessarily a setback. Rather, it provides valuable data points that can help guide more contextually relevant and sustainable interventions.

An illustrative example of this process is seen in a public school in New Jersey (USA) in which three of the authors worked over a period of 4 years. The school had high numbers of discipline

incidents, poor levels of academic achievement, and low staff morale, as evidenced by school climate data. From these data, school psychology-trained consultants brought teacher discussion groups together to consider systematically implementing an SEL-based intervention in the school as a way to address discipline, build learning-to-learn skills, and improve morale by improving student engagement in learning and school life. Initial efforts at SEL skill building in the students were not successful because existing evidence-based interventions were not culturally and contextually sensitive to this largely Latino/Black population. Staff were hesitant to persist, having seen so many efforts come and go in their school. By recognizing these attitudes and empowering staff to create a tailored version of SEL interventions that they felt would work with their students, and embedding ongoing formative evaluation into the process, the consultants learned from an initial setback, allowing for more meaningful intervention.

In advocating for the importance of SEL programs to school decision makers, school psychologists must be mindful of prevailing school community attitudes towards SEL and related intervention histories. Community attitudes may shape the receptivity of administrators, staff, and students to integrating SEL or other noncognitive interventions. In some schools, community members may not perceive such approaches as a valuable use of already limited teaching and learning time. If key stakeholders and players have not “bought-in” to an intervention, an SEL program may not be effective (Haynes, 2007; Pasi, 2001).

If a school setting isn't sufficiently primed for a fully integrated program, because of non-receptive attitudes, lack of resources or otherwise, school psychologists have options in helping a school move towards the integration of SEL at the universal level. Rather than an “all-or-nothing” approach, it may be a helpful perspective for school psychologists to conceptualize SEL interventions on an *intervention continuum*.

Starting on the more minimal, but not necessarily less effective, side of the intervention continuum of SEL programs and strategies, school psychologists can advocate for SEL awareness

(targeting administrators, teachers, parents, and students alike) or work towards developing a common SEL language within the school community. Easily accessible resources exist for fostering this awareness (Dunkelblau, 2009; Elias & Berkowitz, *in press*).

Intermediate along the SEL intervention continuum, school psychologists may implement more formal, skill-based or process-oriented classes and trainings for those interested in carrying out SEL curricula in their classrooms. CASEL has been an important source of guidance in selecting such evidence-based curricula (CASEL, 2013; Elias & Arnold, 2006). Individual staff members bring SEL into their classrooms has been a first step in school-wide SEL adoption. Other areas of school strengths can be entry points in the school community that can be used as program scaffolding to support meaningful SEL intervention. There may be opportunities in daily homeroom periods, blocks of time embedded into an existing school day, student government, athletics and arts, and after-school clubs.

Finally, along the intervention continuum, SEL can be integrated into academics, such as language arts, social studies, or math (Elias & Bruene, 2005; Pasi, 2001). An excellent video illustrates how schools in Anchorage, Alaska make mathematics into a cooperative activity, in which students build SEL skills to help one another to learn and work together to understand how to tackle and solve a variety of math problems (<http://www.edutopia.org/math-social-activity-cooperative-learning-video>). Overall, research shows that when SEL is integrated into student learning and development, it is the most sustainable and effective form of intervention (Dreyfoos, 1994; Durlak et al., 2011).

By way of example, an urban public school in New Jersey began using homeroom periods to engage students around school climate issues. The students' SEL skills were built in the context of better enabling them to discuss and reach consensual decisions about school climate improvement plans within each homeroom period. These recommendations were gathered and funneled to a student-led committee that met with school administrators with the goal of creating a more

positive school climate. Given the program's success, other schools in the district have adopted similar approaches. A private high school in New Jersey has used weekly school-wide meetings for brief booster sessions to advocate for positive mental health. This same school now offers once per semester stress management seminars to focus on skill building, which, after one school year, became a stress management/emotion regulation course built into all freshman schedules. Other schools incorporate systematic building of emotion vocabulary into language arts assignments. As these examples show, building on existing strengths can develop momentum towards developing more integrated SEL programming. (Extensive video examples can be found at www.edutopia.org.)

Assessment of SEL in Schools

The use of assessment techniques has grown exponentially in an attempt to meet the demand for objective data on a variety of processes facilitated by schools. Academics remain as the primary focus of assessment at every level, from individual student to the overall achievement of entire nations. However, as systematic research continually identifies a multitude of benefits associated with fostering social and emotional skills, there has been additional focus on identifying methods to accurately and feasibly assess social and emotional skill competency and development (e.g., Haggerty, Elgin, & Woolley, 2011).

The evidence that SEL significantly enhances student success in school and in the community is leading nations, provinces, regions, and states to begin integrating aspects of SEL into enforceable standards on what instruction should entail at various grade levels, as is happening in Australia and the United States. To determine the extent to which SEL skills are being fostered effectively to meet these standards, assessment is necessary. By assessing SEL systematically, best practices for supporting SEL skill development can be more readily identified. These best practices include everything from individual- and group-based methods of intervention to school- and

district-wide programming, to nation-wide systemic emphasis and policy. At the level of the individual in particular, educators equipped with more comprehensive knowledge of students' SEL competencies can foster interventions better tailored to meet areas of particular need.

As we describe later, multiple large-scale reviews have sought to identify which, if any, behavioral, social, emotional, diagnostic, and functional measures are best suited for the assessment of SEL skills. These reviews are likely to continue to emerge, because assessment of SEL is a new field, growing in importance, and is being approached from a range of perspectives. So school psychologists interested in this area must be aware that current knowledge is preliminary, and this will be an area to keep up with, to be able to implement best practice. Also, one must choose instruments based on one's theoretical perspective on SEL or, equally important, the way SEL is operationalized in any interventions being used in the schools. Mismatch of assessment tasks to intervention constructs is a frequent problem in an emerging field, and causes difficulties for school psychologists who want to avoid inaccurate evaluation of programs. Hence, formative evaluation of SEL implementation will continue to be paramount.

For school psychologists, as well as the educators they work with, the lack of consistent terminology and definition of social-emotional skills, as well as disagreement as to what the essential aspects of SEL truly are, can yield confusion. This is reflected in major reviews of SEL-related assessment. Some measures are aimed toward specific skills under such labels as "social and emotional intelligence," "emotional literacy," and "social and emotional competence" (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Wigelsworth, Humphrey, Kalambouka, & Lendrum, 2010). Organizations such as CASEL and the Raikes Foundation have organized compendiums of SEL measures (Denham, Ji, & Hamre, 2010; Haggerty et al., 2011) and listed clearly which of the five core SEL competencies identified by CASEL are covered by each measure reviewed (see also Humphrey et al., 2011; Strive Together, 2013). Similarly, organizations such as the RAND

Corporation and independent researchers have published guidelines (Stecher & Hamilton, 2014) and key considerations (Barblett & Maloney, 2010; Watson & Emery, 2010; Wigelsworth et al., 2010) for the development and investigation of future measures of SEL.

To serve as a jumping-off point for future work in the field, recommended measures compiled from several of the large-scale reviews just cited are included in Table 2. Measures were primarily selected for inclusion based on the extent to which the five core SEL competencies (as defined by CASEL) are addressed. The table provides measures ordered based on number of items to provide educators a sense of the range of options from most brief and potentially feasible, to most comprehensive and detailed. Each of these measures was shown to provide a valid assessment of some SEL skills, but may not fully address all of the dimensions of various skill categories or groupings. Measures in which observers serve as primary raters were prioritized; however, two self-report measures that entail the majority of the CASEL 5 core competencies were additionally included to highlight the potential for such measures as a method of assessing SEL skills. For a more detailed examination of each of the measures produced including aspects such as reliability and validity data, scoring procedures, strengths and weaknesses, other competencies and behaviors assessed and more, educators are encouraged to investigate relevant research including large-scale reviews of measures which are likely to be produced continually in the future (e.g., Denham et al., 2010; Haggerty et al., 2011; Humphrey et al., 2011; Strive Together, 2013).

Unfortunately, these instruments have yet to be normed in Australia. One positive development is The Survey of Social-Emotional Well-being (Bernard, Magnum, & Urbach, 2009a, 2009b), published by the Australian Council for Educational Research. This multiple-choice student and teacher report survey has been completed by over 40,000 students and provides group data on student well-being including their social, emotional, and learning skills that schools use to guide decision-making on well-being and

SEL needs and practices. Australian research reveals student well-being is ecological and can be described in a continuum of levels (high to low). Students with highest levels of well-being are well connected to positive adults, peers and programs in schools, home and the community, as well as possessing well-developed social-emotional and learning skills (Bernard, 2008). Students with lower levels of well-being are increasingly disconnected from positive adults and peers and display progressively less well developed social and emotional literacy.

Australia and the USA, with many schools and varied approaches to SEL, also share a particular need for feasible and scalable measures of SEL for all students that place relatively little additional burden on educators. For example, over the years in both countries, teachers have incorporated within their grading system of students a rating of their SELs (e.g., extent to which students display resilience, confidence, and persistence). Although no particular assessment system has been identified, there is one practice that emerged based on the original intuition from educators that behaviors matter: report card comments. The “Other Side of the Report Card” refers to the behaviorally driven comments included on nearly every report card. At the Social-Emotional Learning Lab at Rutgers University, the paucity of research on styles of feedback and behaviors included in report card comments presented as an opportunity to utilize an existing system to which teachers already allocate time, districts already provide funding, mechanisms for sharing information with students and teachers and parents are already in place, and student progress can readily be tracked to report on meaningful SEL skills. Through work with several school districts in New Jersey, the SEL Lab has developed procedures for modifying report card comment sections in a way that is customized to the specific skills within the core dimensions of SEL that individual districts and schools identify as the most imperative to assess (Elias, Ferrito, & Mocerri, *in press*). School psychologists can play an important role in bringing these kinds of assessment innovations into their schools.

Table 2 Best supported SEL-related assessment approaches

Measure	Number of items	Estimated completion time	Age range	Competencies assessed	Rater
Adapted Report Card Comment Sections (Elias et al., in press)	Variable	Variable	0–18	Customizable	Observer
Devereux Student Strengths Assessment-Mini (DESSA-Mini) (LeBuffe, Shapiro, & Naglieri, 2012)	8	5–10 min	5–13	Self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer
Relationship Questionnaire (Denham et al., 2010)	24	5–15 min	7–18	Self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Self-report
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Haggerty et al., 2011)	25	10–15 min	3–16	Self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer
Social-Emotional Assets and Resilience Scales (SEARS) (Nese et al., 2012)	41	15 min	5–18	Self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer (self-report also available)
Resiliency Inventory (Denham et al., 2010)	44	10–25 min	7–17	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills	Self-report
Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale—Second Edition (BERS-2) (Denham et al., 2010)	52	15 min	5–18	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills	Observer (self-report also available)
Social Skills Rating Scale (SSRS) (Denham et al., 2010)	57	15–20 min	5–17	Self-management, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer (self-report also available)
Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) (Denham et al., 2010)	72	15–20 min	5–13	Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer (self-report also available)
Child Behavior Checklist (ASEBA-CBCL) (Haggerty et al., 2011)	112	20 min	6–18	Social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer (self-report also available)
Social-Skills Improvement System (Haggerty et al., 2011)	140	15–25 min	3–18	Self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Observer (self-report also available)

Tier 2 Approaches and Data-Based Decision-Making

Advances in assessment are essential to progress in Tier 2 interventions, which are particularly driven by knowing when students are lagging in specific skill domains. When students who have either presented with social-emotional deficits or are in need of anticipatory guidance due to being in circumstances known to produce difficulties, such as the death of a parent or financial instability as the result of unemployment, targeted Tier 2 interventions are indicated (Anderson & Borgmeier, 2010). The first step in this data-based decision-making model is to conduct a thorough needs assessment to identify students who require, or at risk of requiring, a higher level of care than the universal interventions already being implemented. As discussed in the assessment section and Table 2, there are a variety of ways to assess social-emotional competencies in students, such as the BASC-2 or DESSA-mini. Also valuable are existing data, including absentee records, discipline records, behavior notations on progress reports and report cards, and participation rates in extracurricular activities, which can be analyzed to identify students at risk of emotional, behavioral, and academic difficulties.

Highlighted Tier 2 Interventions

This section will discuss selected salient and feasible Tier 2 social-emotional interventions organized into the two categories previously discussed—interventions for students who have already presented with skill deficits and students who are at risk and could benefit from the development and practice of such skills. While some of the interventions are packaged, small group modules designed for a targeted population, classroom-wide interventions can also be used as Tier 2 interventions when individual classes display a higher need than the general school population. For example, classes with high proportions of students with learning disabilities may implement a program that emphasizes emotion regulation and self-monitoring, a self-contained class

for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder may implement an emotion recognition and/or a social skills program, and a class with particularly high rates of discipline referrals may choose a program emphasizing responsible decision-making and self-awareness.

Reducing problem behavior. The Good Behavior Game, which of course is not new (Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969), can be considered an SEL intervention and implemented in either setting. It is an intervention that has been effectively replicated with many varying populations, such as culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and students presenting with behavioral issues in class (Nolan, Houlihan, Wanzek, & Jenson, 2014). During this game, a short interval of time is selected during which students are broken into groups and have to maintain a certain number of points by adhering to a predetermined list of rules that is shared with the groups. They may compete against other groups or try to earn a particular number of points as a group to earn a reinforcer. Although this intervention can be viewed through a behavioral lens, the Good Behavior Game teaches self-awareness and emotion regulation skill. For students who struggle with monitoring their behaviors, this game makes it easier by asking the groups to simply focus on a small number of behaviors during a short time period (sometimes less than 5 min depending on developmental ability) and the groups help to remind one another to regulate their actions. Moreover, the competitive nature the game can take, along with “losing points” due to a teammate’s behavior challenges students’ ability to tolerate negative emotions and delay gratification as they work towards their reinforcer. All of these skills are critical within the SEL framework.

A second intervention, Coping Power (Lochman & Wells, 2002), is specifically designed to be used with small groups settings for children identified as having difficulty regulating anger or being disruptive. The program is relatively intensive, with thirty-four 50 min group, home, and some individual sessions that focus on skills needed to transfer into middle

school, including goal setting, problem-solving, anger management, and social relationships. Replicated in numerous samples of students with emotional difficulties, Lochman et al. (2009) found that students in Coping Power, when compared to a control, demonstrated positive effects on externalizing behavior in school.

In a climate of increasing pressures and roles for teachers to support the whole child academically, emotionally, and behaviorally, it is promising that evidence supports the use of computer-based interventions with particular populations. Specifically, interventions delivered on the computer were as effective as face-to-face instruction of social skills in groups of students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (Ramdoss et al., 2012). Within this type of intervention are the Mind Reading and Junior Detective social skill programs. Mind Reading is software designed for students at least 5 years old and teaches human emotions while incorporating games (Golan & Baron-Cohen, 2006). Junior Detective Training Program is designed for a narrower age bracket, students 8–11 years old, and teaches self and social awareness by asking students to predict emotions of others and relate to real-life scenarios (Beaumont & Sofronoff, 2008). There is a tremendous proliferation of computer and video games used for SEL skill development, and this is a major growth area for monitoring and contribution by school psychologists (DeRosier, 2014).

Anticipatory guidance. The theory of anticipatory guidance is to develop early warning signs of need for intervention and provide them as soon as possible, ideally to prevent problems from unfolding or at least to minimize secondary effects of potential problems that arise. One approach is based on developing reliable indices of risk for problems in students. Many schools are developing their own data systems to predict signs of academic failure, dropout, and the like. One example is First Step to Success (Walker, Stiller, & Golly, 1998), a Tier 2 intervention that originated for use with preschool students at risk of developing aggressive behavioral patterns, aiming to intervene at the earliest point in a student's educational career by connecting school and families. It has since been expanded in its use

to first and third grade students and incorporates a parent training component with a classroom intervention that emphasize problem-solving, communicating with others, and relationship skills (Walker et al., 2009). For middle school students, providing positive, non-stigmatizing interventions for targeted SEL skill building, such as newspaper clubs documentary making, and a Social Decision-Making Lab (Elias & Bruene, 2005), are especially appealing.

The other approach, less familiar to many practicing school psychologists, involves providing Tier 2 intervention to students experiencing events known to have a high likelihood of behavioral or emotional disruption. These interventions try to build SEL skills as a means of identifying feelings in situations and developing coping strategies and skills. Foremost among these are programs directed at children whose families are undergoing separation or divorce. Empirically shown to be effective, children are given a chance to enter these programs as soon as the school learns about separation or divorce in their families (Pedro-Carroll & Jones, 2005; Wolchik et al., 2009). Data show that even when children are not having coping difficulties, they benefit from being sources of support for their more troubled peers. James Comer also pioneered this approach directed toward children whose parents were incarcerated or who died (Comer, Haynes, Joyner, & Ben-Avie, 1999; Haynes, 2007).

Finally, technological advances have provided an intervention approach that can be used for both types of anticipatory guidance. Students using Ripple Effects software can get SEL skill-building modules as a function of searching for problems they are experiencing (such as bullying, divorce, or abuse) or skills they want to build (such as emotion recognition, self-control, or problem-solving). With strong empirical validation and use in various countries, Ripple Effects is an outstanding resource to supplement universal, Tier 2 and even Tier 3 interventions in ways that appeal to the multiple intelligences strengths of virtually all learners (<http://rippleeffects.com/>).

In general, further work on utilization of the Tier 2 interventions mentioned above within the

context of Australian schools may be warranted. Not surprisingly, it is likely that technology-based approaches, such as Ripple Effects and SEL video/computer games, might be most accessibly transferred and thus might merit prioritizing for application in Australia.

SEL and Parents

Of course, one of the greatest challenges for school psychologists is involving parents, whether in support of specific school interventions or, more generally, in support of the education of their children. A truly international approach to working with parents in the area of SEL is the emotional intelligence paradigm. Popularized by Daniel Goleman’s (1995) international best-selling volume, *Emotional Intelligence*, the concept and practice was applied to parents with *Emotionally Intelligent Parenting* (Elias, Tobias, & Friedlander, 2000). This book has been translated into a dozen languages and has recently been released as an e-book. In Australia, an E-learning SEL-oriented parent education program has been produced (www.youcandoitparents.com.au). One of the earliest exposures of parents to SEL for young people was the best selling book published in 1987, “You Can Do It! What Every Student (and Parent) Should Know About Success in School and Life” (Bernard & Hajzler, 1987), that spelled out specific social and emotional skills and rational attitudes associated with school achievement and well-being (e.g., confidence, persistence, self-acceptance).

The term “Emotional Intelligence” incorporates the same basic set of skills identified now as the CASEL 5. Emotionally intelligent parenting sees these constellations of abilities as essential in harnessing the strong emotions that accompany being a parent and enacting the many profound responsibilities that come with having children. Above all, the approach recognizes that parenting techniques or approaches are built on positive parent–child relationships, on everyday routines that give expression and structure to those relationships, and on parents having control of their emotions to minimize their becoming

emotionally hijacked. When the latter happens, parents are least likely to act in ways they will be proud of and from which children will glean the best interpersonal or relational messages. And of course, building these essential skills in children is accomplished to a meaningful degree by modelling.

School psychologists in Australia, as in most locations worldwide, are rarely in a position to engage in extensive, ongoing parent training and support. So three approaches are more likely to be feasible: evaluating and building the skills needed to support interventions; focusing on building competencies and parent support around key parenting situations, and promoting a sense of fun in the family. What follows are techniques school psychologists can use for each of their purposes.

Parenting Emotional Intelligence (EQ) Skills Assessment (Adapted from Elias et al., 2000)

Ask parents to honestly appraise their own and their spouse’s/partner’s strengths when it comes to using your EQ skills in parenting. For the items below, use the following scale:

Definitely Me	Sort of Me	Definitely Not Me
1	2 3	4 5

- Are Aware of Kids’, Spouse’s Feelings:
- Show a High Degree of Self-control with Children:
- Possess a Strong Sense of Empathy with Children:
- Are Great at Seeing Other Family Members’ Points of View:
- Set Positive Goals for Children, Family:
- Do Organized, Detailed Planning around Parenting Tasks:
- Act in Highly Effective, Comfortable Ways With My Teenagers:
- Resolve Household Conflicts Peacefully:
- Use Creative Problem-Solving Around Parenting Issues:

When it comes to parenting, what is “definitely you”? What is “sort of you”? What is “not you”? Would your kids agree? Even one or two “5” ratings can cause considerable disruption and 4s or 5s become important foci for intervention.

Trigger Situation Monitor

The Trigger Situation Monitor (for which there are adaptations for students) is designed to help parents to identify situations that lead them to lose their cool, get in trouble, or in general engage in parenting behaviors that are ineffective and/or that they are not proud of. As you can see in the outline of the Monitor below, the sheets lead parents through a sophisticated, developmental conversation culminating in the most important part: their creating a plan for how they will handle the “trigger situation” better when it happens again.

The Trigger Situation Monitor worksheet format was developed over several decades of research on the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving SEL program (Elias & Bruene, 2005). In schools, teachers typically keep a stack of these worksheets in their classrooms. After an incident is over, teachers will ask children to complete the worksheets to help them reflect on what happened, what they were trying to accomplish, how their attempt worked, and how they can better handle similar difficulties in the future. Sometimes, teachers use the sheets as an interview format, if children have trouble writing or reading, or while they are getting used to working with them. Otherwise, they will review the sheets with the children at some convenient time. Staff members tasked with the responsibility for monitoring discipline interventions also use the sheets to promote reflection while children are in detention or in-school suspension. When a situation involves the entire class, or many students, teachers can distribute the sheets and have the entire class or small groups go through the sheet and discuss the various steps, toward coming up with a class-wide plan.

The same basic approach can be used with school psychologists working with parents.

Usually, it takes parents several uses of the Trigger Situation Monitor to get a plan they can stick with because the situations that trigger them are, by definition, difficult for them to handle. School psychologists can help by reminding parents (or devising reminders) of their plans when they are about to confront trigger situations, and this helps to avoid situations that otherwise disrupt the parenting process. With repetition comes success, and it only takes a small reduction in trigger situations to lead to large perceived improvements in the atmosphere of the home (Adapted from Elias & Bruene, 2005).

Trigger Situation Monitor

Briefly describe a trigger situation that happened.

1. What happened?
 - (a) Who were you with?
 - (b) When did it happen?
 - (c) Where were you?
2. How did you feel?
3. Did you notice the physical signs of stress in yourself? Where did you feel the signs?
4. What did you say and do?
5. What happened in the end?
6. How calm and under control were you as the situation was taking place?

1	2	3	4	5
Under control	Mostly calm	So-so	Tense and upset	Out of control

7. How satisfied were you with the way you communicated?

	Not at all	Only a little	So-so	Pretty satisfied	Quite satisfied
Body posture	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact	1	2	3	4	5
Spoken words	1	2	3	4	5
Tone of voice	1	2	3	4	5

8. What did you like about what you did?
9. What didn't you like about what you did?
10. What are some other things you could have done to handle the situation? What are some things you might do if the situation comes up again? (use another page to write exactly what you would do and how you would do it)

Family Fun Assessment

Too many households are under pressure for a variety of reasons. School psychologists often are not in a position to eliminate those pressures, but they can offset them by bringing in a key element of emotional intelligence recognized most recently through positive psychology: humor. A key message for parents is this: make your household a place where people have fun, share some laughter, and have some happy times together despite difficulties. Here is an activity school psychologists can use with parents to help them stop the stress and have fun in their hectic and crazy lives (Elias et al., 2000).

Family Fun Plan Worksheet

- Fun Recall—List some times when you have had the most fun as a family
- Fun Things—List some thing that different family members find to be the most fun
- Fun Centers—List where in the house you have the most fun as a family
- Fun Time—When during the week can you schedule some family fun? For how long?
- Fun Activities—What can we do as a family to have fun?
- Make a list of possible places to have fun, including at home, at the mall, in the car, in the park, elsewhere. Be sure to allow for a listing of both parents' and children's ideas.
- Fun Resources—What do we need to have fun (e.g., books, games),
- Videos, toys, supplies, etc.—When can we allocate the time and make sure that time is protected?

In Australia, as in the United States, SEL has become the basis of comprehensive, multilevel interventions in schools and with parents. Methods have been developed and piloted with success. At the very least, school psychologists can play a vital role in beginning the task of helping educators, parents, and guardians to become more aware of SEL and its importance in their own lives and work and those of children. Doing so will help children be well prepared for the joys and challenges of life in an ever-more complex adulthood.

Test Yourself Quiz

1. Why is SEL considered central to students' academic achievement?
2. Name the five sets of SEL competencies identified by CASEL and explain how a school psychologist may support a student who is low on one or more of these components.
3. How might a school psychologist work with parents in order to enhance a child's SEL? What strategies might the school psychologist give to parents to apply at home?

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