

Integrating Social-Emotional Learning with Related Prevention and Youth-Development Approaches

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Chapter Take-Away Points

Educators now understand that for students to build their SEL competencies, it is necessary for what happens within a school to be coordinated but also to be synergistically connected to efforts in other schools in the district and the efforts of parents, after-school program providers, and community support resources.

For successful school-wide SEL implementation, schools must develop an infrastructure that can integrate and support SEL and positive school culture and climate development and ongoing implementation into all aspects of school goals, priorities, programs, strategies, and initiatives.

Schools must unjumble their current inventory of SEL and related programs and organize them to create synergy and continuity. This requires systematic and ongoing assessment of school climate and culture.

Much can be learned about the challenges of creating the synergized schoolhouse by looking at the literature and experience of Positive Youth Development, an approach consistent with SEL that seeks to foster positive life skills, and to enhance resiliency by consistently offering an environment where youth's strengths are emphasized in program design, implementation, and adaptation.

Fitting SEL initiatives into an already packed school day is a common challenge to schools, whether urban, suburban or rural. Those seeking to bring in SEL have to analyze how structures, processes, systems, rituals and routines must be changed to reduce resistance associated with adding another mandated intrusion on long standing commitments to organizational routines and resources.

Schools need ways to gauge the extent to which SEL outcomes are being achieved. Current work suggests that the report card process may be a feasible vehicle for assessing students' social-emotional and character development.

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Successful schools ensure that all students master reading, writing, math, and science. They also foster a good understanding of history, literature, arts, foreign languages, and diverse cultures. However, most educators, parents, students, and the public support a broader educational agenda that also involves enhancing students' social– emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement ... In addition to producing students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and committed to lifelong learning, high-quality education should teach young people to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways; to practice positive, safe, and healthy behaviors; to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and to possess basic competencies, work habits, and values as a foundation for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship. (Greenberg et al., 2003, pp. 466-467)

Every school in the United States, and indeed, every school in the world, addresses the social-emotional and character development of the students who pass through its doors. Indeed, it is impossible to bring adults and children together for long periods of time over multiple weeks, months, and years and not influence children's competencies and the kind of person they will become when putting those competencies to use.

These processes, for many years, have been informal and haphazard. Figure 1 shows two pictures. One is the kind of schoolhouse that is most prevalent, filled with evidence-based social-emotional learning (SEL) and character development, prevention, service learning, and related programs that are disconnected and uncoordinated. When presented to educators, this schoolhouse strikes many as similar to the schools in which they work, and they resonate with the negative effects of fragmentation on staff morale and student engagement and learning (Elias, 2009). The second

picture shows a schoolhouse where various SEL and related efforts are comprehensive and 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 a person of sound character and health. Correspondingly, the educators in those schools understand that for students to build their SEL competencies, it is necessary for what happens within a school to be coordinated but also to be synergistically connected to efforts in other schools in the district and the efforts of parents, after-school program providers, and community support resources. Other chapters in this volume focus on coordinating SEL policies and practices at the district level (Mart et al., this volume) and linking to parents and the community (...). Here, the focus is on coordination within schools, a necessary first step toward more systemic efforts.

The cornerstone of SEL efforts is the delivery of essential skills and competencies to students, without which children are at a distinct disadvantage when navigating classrooms, school, workplace, civic, and even family settings. Some children are fortunate enough to go through experiences with parents and other loved ones, educators, and communities that afford them the opportunity to have these competencies nurtured and refined. However, it is evident that too many children do not have these experiences, or at least do not have them consistently, and as a result, struggle academically and socially, and find themselves on a path toward problem behaviors and academic underachievement relative to their abilities.

The skills students need have been elaborated elsewhere, but in summary, they are represented by these domains (www.CASEL.org):

- **Self-awareness:** especially recognition and labeling of one's feelings and accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations;

- **Self-management:** including emotion regulation, delaying gratification, managing stress, motivating oneself, and setting and working towards achieving goals;
- **Social awareness:** involving the ability to empathize and take others' perspectives and recognize and mobilize diverse and available supports;
- **Relationship skills:** among which are clear communication, accurate listening, cooperation, nonviolent and constructive conflict resolution, and knowing when and how to be a good team player and a leader; and
- **Responsible decision-making:** defined as making ethical choices based on consideration of feelings, goals, alternatives and outcomes, and planning and enacting solutions with potential obstacles anticipated.

In the nearly two decades since these skills were articulated (Elias et al., 1997), much has been learned about the ecological context within which SEL skills are developed and internalized, perhaps best characterized as a “maelstrom of many competing forces” (Elias, Kranzler, Parker, Kash, & Weissberg, in press). Hence, the presentation of SEL skills in programs may be seen, at best, as a necessary but not sufficient condition for skills acquisition. Incorporating these skills into a framework that becomes part of children’s identities requires coordination of emotion, cognition, and behavior, over time. For skills to become part of children’s regular social performance, they need to be learned, supported, and valued in a range of contexts. When schools function successfully as one of those contexts, they tend to share five main characteristics (Elias et al., in press; Elias et al., 1997):

1. A school climate that articulates specific themes, character elements, or values, such as respect, responsibility, fairness, and honesty, and conveys an overall sense of purpose for attending school;
2. Explicit instruction and practice in skills for participatory competence;
3. Developmentally appropriate instruction in ways to promote health and prevent specific problems;

4. Services and systems that enhance students' coping skills and provide social support for handling transitions, crises, and conflicts; and

5. Widespread, systematic opportunities for positive contributory service.

Embedded within #4 above is the way in which so-called tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions must be coordinated within schools as part of comprehensive SEL. These tiers can be viewed respectively as representing universal interventions given to all students, interventions being given to students showing early signs of difficulty or failure to acquire the skills being taught in universal interventions, and students with significant behavior-emotional difficulties. Synergy is created in the schoolhouse when the same focal skills from the universal programs are also the focus of tier 2 and 3 interventions. This runs counter to the standard practice of keeping these levels, and often the implementing personnel and systems, separate. The Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving program provides examples of how this can work well. All students in a school (grades k-8) get the SDM/SPS curriculum; those having difficulty are provided with supplemental modules included in the curriculum or use a computer-based tutorial program, Ripple Effects, modified to be in alignment with the SDM/SPS curriculum. Students involve in special education or anticipatory guidance for transitions, crises, and conflicts are provided with SDM/SPS based skill-building activities, including an SDM Lab, pedagogically adjusted for their context (Elias, 2004; Elias & Bruene, 2005).

As reviewed elsewhere in this volume (see xxx), there is extensive research showing a positive and powerful impact of well-implemented, skill-focused, pedagogically sound SEL programs. Among the areas of impact are improved social and emotional skills, more positive attitudes toward self and others, improved social behavior, reduced conduct and emotional difficulties, and meaningfully higher levels of academic performance (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger, 2011). This is complemented by evidence that schools characterized by the characteristics noted above create the

most hospitable contexts for student growth and learning (Berkowitz, 2011; Berman, Chang, & Barnes, 2012; Leverett, 2008; Lickona & Davidson, 2005; Pasi, 2001; Reeves, 2009).

Despite the impressive evidence for the kinds of schools in which children thrive academically and socially, there is not broad consensus about the need to change our education system in this direction. Even among those who do agree about this goal, there are differences in how to go about it. The stakes are truly high: education has emerged as a lead institution in preparing learners to achieve success in a world that requires them to know more, solve complex problems working with others, manage diversity, resolve conflict, and maintain a sense of efficacy needed for setting and achieving personal goals and wellness (Cowen, 1994; Elias et al., 1997). Because of social inequities, as well as the challenges of a globalized society characterized by a rapid pace of change, there are no school districts in America that can justifiably ignore the urgency for all students to be equipped with the skills, knowledge, and disposition necessary to negotiate the many challenges related to productive living in the 21st Century. The answer is not to prepare students for a life of tests, but rather to prepare them for the tests of life. For this to happen, schoolhouses cannot afford to be jumbled, and they must meet the challenge of preparing students with the full array of skills and perspectives needed for college and career success and a life of contribution and caring. SEL is an essential aspect of this.

As the number of schools and districts concerned with academic success of all learners steadily increases, there will be growing recognition of SEL's essential role. Therefore, as districts and schools embrace SEL as a core component of the mission to prepare learners to succeed academically and socially, the technology for sustained implementation of school-wide SEL must also scale up. This scaling up inevitably requires a coordinated effort so that students, and educators, are not beset with a jumble of well-meaning but fragmented programs and school can become places where, in James Comer's words, all children can "catch" character and SEL from those around them in ways that

become integral to their lives. We use the word “all” intentionally because unlike in experimental studies, where hypotheses can be “proven” despite many participants not conforming to the predicted pattern, schools in practice need all students to thrive. “All” means “all.”

This chapter provides guidance to those seeking to understand and navigate the long road of creating the synergized schoolhouse in Figure 2. Other chapters in this volume will provide information to consider the district-level context, parent and community involvement, and specific elements within the schoolhouse. Our focus is:

- 1) What are important considerations in bringing SEL into schools with other SEL or related programs directed toward similar goals, such as Positive Youth Development, so that coherent school-wide integration can take place?
- 2) What are the challenges and pitfalls that will be faced by virtually everyone seeking to bring comprehensive SEL into their schools, and what is the best guidance available for understanding and addressing these challenges? Included in this are the areas, such as urban education, where future progress will be of greatest importance for those interested in advancing the field of SEL and creating positive school cultures and climates for learning.

Seven Activities to Guide Coordinated School-Level SEL Implementation with Sustainability

We begin with the process of unjumbling the jumbled schoolhouse in Figure 1. In our view, which is based on a synthesis of literature and our collective experience of over a century of implementation in thousands of schools across literally all parts of the world, moving from the jumbled schoolhouse to the synergized schoolhouse requires a series of seven interrelated activities best organized within 8-week planning cycles that will most likely require three years to bring to fruition, depending on the starting point. There is no blueprint for the order in which these activities should be carried out, which is why the seventh of these activities- learning from others- is so important. Such

factors as the history and present status of SEL-related programming, staff knowledge of SEL, school climate, sociodemographic factors, leadership style and history, and current mandates and priorities, as well as the school's capacities, will determine the timing and sequencing of these activities.

Activity #1: Develop a school infrastructure that can integrate and support SEL and positive school culture and climate development and ongoing implementation into all aspects of school goals, priorities, programs, strategies, and initiatives.

Some entity- a committee, work group, or team—must have responsibility for the long-term implementation of SEL-related approaches and for unjumbling the schoolhouse. This entity itself must grow in effectiveness and needs time and support to learn how to work and problem-solve, obtain administrative support, and achieve and celebrate success. For this to happen, distributed leadership is essential, but with clear responsibilities to avoid fragmentation and ensure accountability.

Consolidating infrastructures is also helpful. One school with which we worked put their SEL, discipline, morale, and anti-bullying committees under an encompassing umbrella of a School Culture and Climate Committee. Finally, we have found it helpful for such teams to not overreach (especially early in their formation), and instead use planning cycles that identify one primary goal and an action plan to accomplish it, in successive eight-week periods of time, to structure activities, keep efforts focused, and promote accountability.

Activity #2: Assess Your Schoolhouse.

Education exists in an environment too often characterized by adding new programs and initiatives without explicit articulation with what already exists. This additive approach results in increased pressure and competition for time, resources, and focus within a school. Teachers and other educators experience frustration from the “flavor of the day” changes that are seldom integrated into an

array of coordinated efforts to achieve instructional aims. Ultimately, there should be harmony across the five characteristics of effective schools noted earlier, with SEL as the integrative glue.

Assessing the schoolhouse requires careful examination of all SEL-related efforts taking place in a school, such as those related to culture and climate, character, anti-bullying, prevention, discipline, classroom management, PBIS, or even multiple SEL programs. Also included are the approaches being used at Tiers 1, 2, and 3 of intervention. Consider also the expected/mandated behaviors of school professionals and their accountability systems. Examine informal routines including those in the playground, cafeteria, hallways, and on busses. The goal is to examine how SEL skills and values are, and can better be, integrated across various school-wide programs, procedures, policies, and routines. We have found it helpful to organize these by grade level, look at how transitions are articulated, and look for gaps, discontinuities, or inconsistencies. The SEL leadership committee plays a lead role in identifying ways to resolve discontinuities and harmonize discrepancies, even if this means making some modifications in existing, structured, evidence-based programs. This is a multiyear task, and local factors will determine whether it is best to begin comprehensively within one or more grade levels, or school wide in a particular area (such as SEL programming or disciplinary procedures). Tools to assist in the process are available (et al., 2006), and it can be helpful to compare with CASEL's scope and sequence chart of SEL activities across grade levels (Elias et al., 1997, Appendix C) and comprehensive frameworks that have resulted from such an assessment process (e.g., <http://www.asdk12.org/depts/SEL/>) in orienting one's efforts.

Activity #3: Assess Your School's Culture and Climate.

There are a variety of tools that can be used for assessing a school's culture and climate, from the perspective of students, staff, and/or parents. These can include surveys, walkthroughs, focus groups, and analysis of artifacts. Reports generated from culture and climate assessment can be shared

with school leaders, staff members, and student leaders and priorities can be set for addressing school needs. Data should be presented by gender and ethnicity, as well as by grade level within school and by staff position, so that differential perceptions of the school culture and climate can be uncovered.

Activity #4: Articulate Shared Values, Themes, and Essential Life Habits.

Schools must stand for something. Skills unaligned with values (or, as some schools prefer to call them, themes or essential life habits) risk developing skills that may be used for antisocial ends. Examples of values that schools emphasize include responsibility, integrity, service, justice, respect, leadership, exploration, and organization. Often, schools have mottos or mission statements that are not enacted as part of the life of the school. In our experience, articulating school-wide focal values and bringing them into alignment so that students are learning them within and across grade levels plays an essential role in reducing fragmentation and increasing the likelihood that students will become inspired. One conceptualization of this is the need to complement moral character with performance character, i.e., the competencies to live according to cherished ideals (Lickona & Davidson, 2005). Shared values also become points of access for parents and community stakeholders.

When done properly, this is far more than slogans or posters on walls or brief lessons covering core values. The field of Character Education has had a long and sustained focus on the school as the level of implementation. The Character Education Partnership designates what it refers to as “national schools of character,” based on these schools’ adhering to its 11 principles of character education (<http://www.character.org/schools-of-character/>). Among these principles is a clear set of values and empirical evidence that these values are carried through in all aspects of school organization, structure, social and academic programming, and relationships. Schools take multiple years to achieve this status and they are not awarded without a site visit, complementing an extensive self-study with documentation. The site visitors are not only verifying the specific claims made by the schools but

they are also looking for the pervasive sense of coherence within them, based on the themes/values/essential life habits that characterize those schools. Notably, in recent years, schools implementing SEL programs have been recognized as NSOC's but only in such cases where the SEL programs were in all grade levels and the language and focus of the SEL program was adopted school-wide, including integration into academics and classroom routines and the discipline system.

Because Activity #4 is perhaps least emphasized in the SEL world, we provide an example from Berkowitz (2011), drawing largely from his extensive work over two decades as the director of the Leadership Academy in Character Education (LACE), which has functioned for two decades to train, support, and network educational leaders seeking to bring SEL-related approaches into their school culture. In Berkowitz's analysis of many case examples, success requires a set of core beliefs and linked actions. These core beliefs (or values), noted below, can be accompanied by a variety of actions driven directed toward creating a school culture and skills focus that exemplifies them:

- The best way to make a more just and caring world is to make more just and caring people.
- The mandate of schools is fundamentally and broadly developmental and cannot be limited to the intellectual and academic; it must encompass the moral and civic development of students.
- For schools to optimally impact the development of student character (both moral and civic), they must be moral and democratic institutions and this requires leaders who understand, prioritize, and have the leadership competencies to nurture such institutional growth.
- Schools must intentionally and relentlessly promote healthy relationships among all school community members, foster internalization of social and moral values through encouraging adults to model the kind of person they wish students to become, and use pedagogical and organizational strategies so all school community members are partners in the school.

Activity #5: Unify Problem-Solving Strategies and Other Skills to be Imparted.

Programs vary in the specific skills they wish to emphasize, but often, these differences are not fundamental. For example, students are taught many different steps to take for problem solving, decision-making, self-awareness and self-management strategies, conflict resolution, etc., within SEL and related programs as well as across subject areas within grade levels, and then across grade levels (e.g., ICPS, PATHS Stoplight model, FIG TESPN—cf. Elias et al., 1997). When presented to children without coherent articulation, the impact is likely to be more confusing than illuminating, with the learning less likely to find its way into children’s minds, hearts, and actions. This leads to uncertainty among students as to how to solve real-life problems, especially when they are under stress. Also, many times these steps are simply presented to students, but not actually taught and practiced with continued, reinforced use. Bringing these various steps and processes into alignment allows students to learn a common method within grade levels and build the likelihood of continuity or coordination across grade levels. This is no less true for any of the SEL skills domains—the language of self-regulation, emotional awareness, and the like should be examined and a common vernacular used for SEL-related concepts and lessons. This may require modification of one or more existing, intact, evidence-based program. But the goal is to create a culture of caring, citizenship, and success and language is a key part of defining culture. Only when students are given consistent and ongoing opportunities to practice the skills can they become internalized and used when most needed in real-life peer and classroom situations and when they are faced with ethical/moral dilemmas.

Activity #6: Improve Faculty Readiness to Teach SEL

Time must be taken to show how teaching or using SEL-related approaches aligns with responsibilities and expectations that faculty already have. This only happens when there is a deep understanding of the theory and literature and pedagogy of SEL. There cannot be rote implementation of a manual. The need for adaptation is constant in education and the key to sustainability is the

capacity to bring SEL into whatever standards, rubrics, and mandates come along. Hence, for successful SEL readiness, more time might be placed on conceptual understanding than “training,” since competent educators and school support staff should have the basic skill-set to implement SEL approaches well if they are clearly and fully understood. At the time of this writing, schools were being asked to implement codes of student conduct and other anti-bullying-related procedures, the Common Core Curriculum Standards, and new teacher evaluation frameworks. SEL not only needs to be aligned and integrated with each of these, but their successful implementation ultimately depends on SEL (Elias, 2014). Part of the infrastructure should include a regular review of how the actual language of the SEL approaches being used in the school become part of the code of conduct, discipline system, classroom management so that students literally hear the same words often. There are clear examples of school and district-level alignment of SEL with academic mandates even in the high-pressure context of low-achieving, disadvantaged urban schools (Elias & Leverett, 2011); core content standards emphasize problem solving, decision making, and critical thinking, all part of SEL, across content areas. Hargreaves (2009) believes that sustainability is generated by an inspiring vision and a strong sense of staff investment in and responsibility for maintaining the focus, elements, and pedagogy of an intervention despite contextual changes, with students as true partners in creating and maintaining change. This is why deep understanding of SEL is required on the part of teachers, and, ultimately, why it must become part of the preparation of all educators. Darling-Hammond (2009) concurs: “there are no policies that can improve schools if the people in them are not armed with the knowledge and skills they need” (p. 63). In practice, this understanding will radiate outward from those who are part of core SEL infrastructure groups, to those who quickly grasp the benefits of SEL in their professional activities and student success, to those who see their colleagues being more effective.

Activity #7: Connect to Those Who Are Walking the Walk.

The difficulties that any school or district will encounter in implementation will have been confronted and overcome by many other schools farther along down the road of SEL. While compilations of these obstacles and solutions exist (Elias, 2010; Elias et al., 1997), the greatest success comes from direct consultative mentoring (Kress & Elias, 2013). National organizations that might have locally available resources, or the capacity to triage to local resources, include CASE and the National Association of School Psychologists. Other excellent sources of support can be the central headquarters of SEL programs such as Committee for Children, Lions-Quest International, Northeast Foundation for Children, Open Circle, Social-Decision Making/Social Problem Solving, and PATHS (cf. CASEL, 2006, 2012). The National and State Schools of Character network administered by the Character Education Partnership (<http://www.character.org/schools-of-character/>) are particularly sensitive to school-wide implementation issues and those implementing these approaches locally can become allies even if one's own setting is not implementing an identical approach.

As noted earlier, the seven activities presented above represent an analysis and summation of many implementation efforts by the authors, colleagues, and in the literature, over a range of contexts that literally spans the globe. The SEL world is not lacking for models of change (Berman et al., 2012; CASEL, 2006, 2012; Domitrovich et al., 2010; Novick, Kress, & Elias, 2002; Pasi, 2001; Schaps, Battistich, & Solomon, 2004; Vetter, 2008). Readers will no doubt see omissions among our seven activities, or have their own view of priorities and ordering. Regardless of specifics, successful change efforts follow Reeves (2009): "Complex organizations that create meaningful change in a short period of time are not weighed down by voluminous strategic plans; they have absolute clarity about a few things that have to be done" (p. 243). Hence, we recommend more integrative and selective, rather than expansive, models.

The empirical literature to date in SEL has focused mainly on the impact of programs, more so than the integration of SEL within the fabric of schools. In what may be the largest naturalistic study of the effectiveness of SEL-related programs, Gager and Elias (1997) found that even evidence-based and acclaimed programs were as likely to be on the failure side of the ledger as on the success side, results that were replicated in a sustainability study of many of those same programs (Elias, 2010). Yet this does not reflect the effectiveness of the programs *per se* but more so an underemphasis, within the SEL field, of focusing on the school-wide culture and on implementation and supports, key factors in determining whether or not programs are likely to achieve their goals. For SEL, the challenge is that curricula often have complex structures that ultimately must be integrated with a school's broader efforts to enhance children's positive social, moral, civic, and academic development and prevent problem behaviors. Yet there is no question that SEL skills must be imparted to students in systematic and explicit ways, and this requires some form of curriculum structure, whether explicit or implicit

So it is not surprising that the most common feature encountered in attempts to unjumble and synergize the processes implied in Figure 1 is the presence of pre-existing, or different, SEL-related approaches or programs. As implied above, coordinating with pre-existing programs is not a simple technical matter as outlined in Activity #5, though that certainly must happen correctly. It is also a matter of understanding existing program philosophies, infrastructures, inroads into existing routines, and connections to consultants and other outside resources. In providing an example of alignment considerations, we chose Positive Youth Development, a substantial model with a tradition at least as long as SEL.

Integrating SEL with Related Programs: A Positive Youth Development Example

In the course of determining the nature and extent of fragmented SEL-related programming in one's schoolhouse, it is possible to uncover other significant efforts to improve school-wide culture

and climate. One approach, highly akin to SEL, is Positive Youth Development (PYD). Programs created from a PYD perspective typically seek to foster positive life skills, and to enhance resiliency by consistently offering an environment where youth's strengths are emphasized in program design, implementation, and adaptation. Therefore, much can be learned about the challenges of creating the synergized schoolhouse by looking at the literature and experience of PYD. As we will see, this approach is distinctive in that it has had a strong after-school and community presence, and issues of its integration are particularly instructive.

Because PYD is an approach, more than a specific program, it is especially important to grasp the underlying elements likely to be present in its efficacious implementation. "Five C's" are frequently referred to in the PYD literature and include competence, confidence, (positive social) connection, character, and caring (or compassion) (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Eccles & Goodman, 2002). Lerner (2004) added that when all Five C's are present in a setting, a sixth C, contribution to self, family, community, and civil society, emerges.. Much of this was presaged in early PYD work (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Van Bockern, 1990).

In a review of PYD programs, Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (2004) identified 161 PYD program evaluation studies. Of those that had strong empirical designs and provided detailed study methodology, they found 25 programs that demonstrated significant effects on youth behavior, including improvements in interpersonal skills, academic achievement, and quality of peer and adult relationships and reductions in alcohol and drug use, violence and aggression, school misbehavior and truancy, and high-risk sexual behavior. Utilizing a list of 15 youth development and SEL skills and attitude constructs, the authors set out to categorize the focus areas of successful programs. The constructs of competence, self-efficacy, and prosocial norms were addressed in all 25 of

the efficacious programs, and they also addressed at least 2 and often as many as 5 other competencies (Catalano et al., 2004; Greenberg et al., 2003).

Despite the clear consonance of PYD and related approaches, and SEL, an important difference is the emphasis on skills. CASEL's most recent guidelines on the implementation of SEL in preschools and elementary schools (CASEL, 2012), along with an earlier *Safe and Sound* guide published by CASEL in (2003), reviews a number of SEL programs that have been found to be successful in improving student outcomes. They cannot be said uniformly to address all of the CASEL 5 skill domains and this is similarly true of effective PYD programs. Similarly, effective SEL programs join PYD and related programs in having a broader focus than skills training, but not a clearly distinguishable alternative structure. As the CASEL Guide provides a framework for SEL efforts, the 5 C's perform a similar function for PYD efforts (and the 11 Principles for Character Education, etc.). The process of harmonization requires decision making about skills, language, integration into academics and school routines and structures, all tiers of intervention levels, and prioritizing core values and generating clear messaging statements. This happens through a representative group of educators, some knowledgeable about SEL, some about PYD (or whatever programs already exist in the school) making some pragmatic decisions that must be treated as "pilots"—works in progress requiring adjustment as needed. (If the pre-existing program has not penetrated the school culture fully, it does not make the task of doing so with SEL easier; one must uncover why that integration did not occur and grapple with staff expectations that programs are discrete entities that are supposed to transmit their benefits to students through lessons that children hear, grasp, internalize, and act upon.)

Positive Youth Development in After School Programs

One arena in the synergistic schoolhouse where SEL continuity is valued is after-school programming. This is an arena in which PYD is generally more developed than formal SEL programs (Snyder & Flay, 2012). After school programs provide an opportunity to emphasize SEL skills especially when implementation is spotty during the school day due to pressure on teachers and administrators to focus on academic curriculum and test preparation. After school programs (ASPs) can provide a safe and structured environment for children, potentially filling a need to have organized activities for children outside of school hours (Durlak, Mahoney, Bohnert, & Parente, 2010).

The most efficacious after-school PYD programs feature a high degree of youth engagement, provide physical and psychological safety, supportive relationships with adults and peers, support a sense of efficacy, have skill-building opportunities, and integrate school, family, and community efforts (National Research Council, 2002; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Yohalem & Wilson-Ahlstrom, 2010). This has two important implications for SEL efforts. First, for at least some students and sometimes many, the school is not the place where they experience engagement, safety, supportive relationships, and efficacy. Therefore, even when skill-building opportunities are available, they may not benefit from them. Indeed, this has been found within the PYD field as well: otherwise effective programming has less or no impact within after-school centers that have a troubled culture and climate (Hirsch, Deutsch, and DuBois (2011). Nevertheless, after-school programming may provide an essential opportunity for some students to learn SEL skills. .

The second implications follows from research that suggests that in order to work to their greatest potential, ASPs should be integrated with school efforts (Durlak et al., 2010; Greenberg et al., 2003). SEL-related programs that are held after school should aim to complement what is taught during the school day, and therefore after-school program staff (if they are not school staff) should be in communication with school administrators and teachers to use a common vocabulary and emphasize

similar concepts. This makes it more likely that skills taught will generalize into community contexts and reduce the fragmentation experienced by students regarding what skills they should be learning. Overall, then, the PYD example shows the need to consider not only the presence of programs already in the system, not only the need to ally skill-building elements, but also the need to understand how existing programs map into the ecology of the school and the community and how to ensure the SEL initiative being brought in creates synergy and also recognizes and strategically addresses limitations in the existing implementation structure.

Problems, Pitfalls, and Defining the Next Frontiers for SEL

Leaders in SEL and related fields share a burning desire to see all children in the world develop the skills they need to make healthy, ethical choices, solve problems peacefully, regulate their emotions appropriately, work collaboratively, and achieve academically. But many questions arise: What should SEL look like in contexts that are very, very different from those in which SEL programs were first developed and evaluated? What should SEL “integration” look like when brought into very different education systems, schoolhouses and teaching practice? How will current SEL approaches fit in contexts where extended families and village members play disparate roles in children’s upbringing? What aspects of existing SEL are portable into entirely new settings and cultures—and which are not? Does the growing proliferation of mobile technology offer new possibilities for delivering teaching and learning tools? All these questions ensure the evolution of entirely new ways of thinking about what a quality, effective, sustainable SEL intervention might look like. Yet how diverse elements come together in schools with existing histories, strengths, and constraints represents a process that is unlikely to change dramatically in the foreseeable future. Thus, we identify below some of the areas that occur to us as challenges, containing pitfalls, obstacles, and opportunities simultaneously. All have been surmounted somewhere; few have been surmounted in most schools. The latter must be

reversed if scaling up of high quality, comprehensive SEL is to characterize schools in the United States and worldwide.

SEL's Role in Achievement of Rigorous Academic Standards

At the time of this writing, the tenor of educational policy and major reform strategies continues to have the impact of narrowing the curriculum to focus on curriculum content evaluated by performance on high stakes accountability tests. This serves to create a perception that there is a competition for time and the time devoted to SEL is time “taken away” from academics.

Unfortunately, this argument is most prevalent in schools that serve poor children in highly stressed urban environments. So, a significant obstacle to comprehensive SEL is the lack of deep understanding of the well-documented connections between SEL and academic performance. The latest school reform in the U. S., the Common Core Curriculum Standards adopted by 47 states, requires students to master social-emotional competencies such as the CASEL 5 (Elias, 2014).

Pressure to persist in tasks and assessments high in cognitive demand and rigor is almost certain to trigger emotions that could result in frustration, anger, and lack of self-efficacy needed for continuous engagement. This is especially true of disadvantaged learners and students with histories of academic failure. Whether for the purpose of college or careers, students require skills to enable them to carry out cooperative work, make sound decisions related to peer pressure, persist in tasks, communicate effectively, and regulate their strong emotions. The need to explicitly and repeatedly make the case for the connection between school and life success and emotional wellness is part of effective SEL implementation despite the convincing empirical, case study, and practice-based evidence available and its common-sense appeal to SEL adherents (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004).

The Challenges of Urban Contexts

Urban schools are disproportionately challenged by conditions of poverty, competing priorities, student histories of failure, educator turnover, and a culture in which there is significant pessimism about the ability of learners and adults to be successful in an environment of rigorous standards and assessment (Rothstein, 2004). Issues of race/ethnicity issues make these challenges even more formidable. In our experience, beyond harmonizing the variety of SEL-related approaches in schools, those working in urban schools must pay particular attention to Activities #1 and #4. A strong infrastructure and committed cadre is essential, and there must be clarity about core values, including the mindset that success is possible for all (Leverett, 2008). Beyond the school level, the greater needs make synergy and district-level coordination even more essential (Mart et al., this volume).

Context Challenges of Systemic Implementation

Fitting SEL initiatives into an already packed school day is a common challenge to schools, whether urban, suburban or rural. Adaptations range from relatively minor adjustment, to major changes in the way schools and classroom instruction and school activities are organized. Those seeking to bring in SEL will have to analyze how structures, processes, systems, rituals and routines will have to be changed to reduce resistance associated with adding another mandated intrusion on long standing commitments to organizational routines and resources. Careful assessments of culture, climate, curriculum, instructional delivery and capacity building activities are necessary to increase chances of achieving sustainable SEL initiatives and activities. An analysis of relationships, programs, resource allocations, and work processes should precede efforts to infuse SEL into ongoing activities and program delivery systems in schools and communities. There is no formula or set of procedures to guide this analysis, and failure to engage in adequate organizational assessment of the current context will likely threaten the system's ability to garner the support and commitment necessary to navigate the fragmentation and complexity that practitioners face in their work in classrooms and schools.

Further, school-wide SEL initiatives should be responsive to the demographics of the student and community population to increase relevance of strategies and activities to the culture, values, and customs. Many combinations of demographics often must be accommodated, requiring a sensitive approach to identifying which SEL approaches are most appropriate and what adaptations are needed.

Communications, Relationships, and Leadership within Schools

Too often, communications are one-way and relationships are superficial, creating obstacles that militate against integrating SEL into the work of schools and thereby providing few opportunities for collaboration among school leaders who are responsible for the successful implementation of a coherent, aligned approach to SEL. Attention is needed to provide ongoing interactions and experiences for school leaders (principals, department heads, instructional coaches, child study team consultants, teacher leaders, program coordinators, etc.) to work together to build a shared sense of purpose, knowledge, role clarity and reinforcement of expectations. A common, deep understanding of the SEL approach being implemented is essential for sustainability (Elias, 2008).

Additionally, leadership must be evident at all levels of school structure to implement high quality SEL initiatives in school districts (Leverett, 2008). This is not the current situation in most schools. For comprehensive SEL to thrive, there must be an explicit commitment to intended durability of SEL as a “high leverage” commitment that extends beyond the tenure of a principal or other school leaders. Hence, there is a need to root it in the core values/purpose/mission of a school. The possibility of attaining and sustaining the desired SEL visions, goals and outcomes increases when the infrastructure has leadership that is spread across the school or district horizontally and vertically and when people in the organization share the zeal and commitment to make meaningful change happen (Leverett, 2008; Vetter, 2008). From this launching point, leadership can arrange professional development and training, and engagement of parents, students, teachers, administrators, educational

support staff and community resources in ways coordinated with the school's SEL approach, thereby accelerating student competencies that contribute to academic performance in healthy, emotionally and physically safe living environments in which students will flourish.

Particularly in urban and highly diverse contexts, the roots of leadership must be deeply embedded into the soil of every facet of the school. This should include representatives of instructional and non-instructional staff, school social workers, psychologists, nurses, coaches, security personnel, parents, and community and business leaders. Significant student leadership and engagement is also essential; ultimately, the school belongs to the students and their voice must join all others in pursuit of a safe, civil school dedicated to fostering learning and positive contributions in a setting not beset by harassment, intimidation, and bullying (Berman & McCarthy, 2006; Pasi, 2001).

Accountability

Assessment is a common challenge for schools implementing SEL programs. Each must develop indicators that meaningfully define what success looks like and collect, analyze, and use data to inform improvement of efforts at all stages of the implementation process. The adage, "Don't let perfection be the enemy of the good," applies to the development of assessment strategies. The Culture of Excellence and Ethics approach advocates using "good enough" rubrics, reflecting the reality that when assessment tools do not exist in validated ways tailored to the context of application within particular schools, there is value to even a rough set of first generation assessment tools and processes that can be revised, supplemented or replaced as data and information gathering needs become better defined and techniques developed (Davidson, Khmelkov, & Baker, 2011). Forums are needed for sharing a variety of practice-based approaches to formative assessment of SEL. Schools also need ways to gauge the extent to which SEL outcomes are being achieved. Current work suggests that the report card process may be a feasible vehicle for assessing students' social-emotional and character

development (Elias, Ferrito, & Mocerri, 2014) and tools also exist for the systematic and ongoing assessment of school culture and climate (Cohen & Elias, 2011).

External Support from Experts in the SEL Field

The careful selection of external consultants with extensive experience in school implementation is vital to the overall implementation plan (Kress & Elias, 2013; Leverett, 2008). From the beginning, it should be understood that the job of the external consultant is to work toward gradual release of responsibility to result in a much-reduced but ongoing role as the school develops its capacity to sustain SEL implementation. Sustainability is more likely when the consultant has a district-level role, or at least is able to share expertise across multiple schools. Track record in building internal capacity should be a major consideration in the selection of the external consultant.

Some factors to consider in the selection of the external expert are (a) development of an explicit statement of work defining the consultant's role, authority, deliverables, and limitations ; (b) frequent interaction with the consultant to ensure alignment of work to the statement of work; (c) strategy formulation for working directly with school and, where possible, district leadership; (d) on-the scene involvement with school level SEL leaders, SEL coordinating teams, school based SEL-coordinators, department chairs, school improvement teams, professional learning communities, project directors, teacher leaders, principals, school improvement teams or school based SEL coordinating teams; (e) advisement, coaching, and delivery of professional development for school staff; and (f) support and assistance to engage community service internships with graduate or undergraduate students from nearby colleges or universities , parent groups, community volunteers, high school students involved in service learning, community based organizations and other local assets that can build the resolve to develop and sustain a long term commitment to advancing the effectiveness of a system-wide implementation approach. Maintaining a relationship with an expert

consultant, and/or joining with a consortium of implementing schools, is also important to provide ongoing, practice-based troubleshooting of problems and the infusion of refreshing ideas from outside of one's immediate practice context (Kress & Elias, 2013).

External Factors that Influence School Implementation Success

Individual schools exist within a larger ecological context and what happens in that context influences the effectiveness, and shape, of a school's SEL efforts. Most pragmatically, schools must be concerned with the skills and mindsets with which students enter their buildings; hence, elementary schools must be concerned about preschool education and parenting. Middle and high schools must be concerned with what sending schools are doing. This bridges to the topic of district-level coordination, which is beyond the focus of this chapter but addressed fully by Mart et al. (this volume). How districts balance maintaining fidelity to a system-wide set of core values, vision, mission goals, strategic directions, theory of action, and student performance expectations with defining the level of flexibility and adaptation at the school level to accommodate particularized needs, interests, resources and constraints has clear implications for individual schools. Districts may select one or two evidence based SEL programs to be deployed system wide or have a broader portfolio of choices of evidenced-based SEL programs. In either situation, systems of support and integrated organizational infrastructure must be established to allow schools to implement successfully.

The Importance of a Global Perspective

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an authoritative statement about whether and how SEL is integrated into education on a global scale. Perhaps the only generalization we can make is to say that recent years have seen a significant upsurge in interest in SEL across the world (e. g., the European Network for Social and Emotional Competence, <http://enseceurope.org/>) and that readers should seek to determine the situation current to the time of their reading, vs. the time of our writing.

As Torrente et al. (this volume) show, there is great variety in how SEL is thought about and practiced, and there is much that we can learn from these differences.

With regard to the school-wide adoption of comprehensive SEL, some international examples are especially instructive. In England, the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) was a National Strategy launched by the Labour government in the primary (elementary) school sector in 2005 and the secondary (high) school sector in 2007. By 2010, SEAL was in use in almost all primary schools and most secondary schools across the country (Humphrey, Lendrum, & Wigelsworth, 2010).

SEAL broadly comprises four main components: (a) the use of a whole school approach to create a positive school climate and ethos, (b) direct teaching of social and emotional skills in whole class contexts, (c) the use of teaching and learning approaches that support the learning of such skills, and (d) continuing professional development for school staff (Humphrey et al., 2010). It includes both universal and targeted/indicated materials. Implementation of SEAL was designed to be flexible rather than prescriptive, with schools encouraged to explore different approaches to implementation that supported identified school improvement priorities rather than following a single model. This “bottom-up” approach was welcomed by schools, but proved extremely challenging for many; without a clear road map, staff championing SEAL found it difficult to gain traction (Humphrey et al., 2010).

What happened subsequently reflects what has happened in a number of other countries, i.e., a return to a more program-focused approach, such as PATHS and Second Step (Holsen, Smith, & Frey, 2008; Humphrey, 2013). The situation in Scandinavia is particularly instructive. Those seeking to improve skills tend to adopt evidence-based programs; those looking for whole-school models related to bullying prevention and discipline bring in approaches such as those of Olweus and PBIS (Kimber, Sandell, & Bremberg, 2008; Ogden et al., 2012; Salmivalli, Kärnä, & Poskiparta, 2011). To put a positive spin on this, the success stories of international efforts to integrate SEL programs with other

SEL-related efforts in schools are likely to contain important lessons that will transfer to United States efforts, and vice-versa, thus placing a premium on greater international sharing of implementation experiences. Unfortunately, ultimately, there are no short-cuts. Schools must address their culture and climate, explicitly teach skills, support students at all levels of competence/need based on their skills model, provide systemic and district-level coordination so as to create continuity and synergy across grade levels and schools, and involve parents and the wider community.

One excellent example is KidsMatter, the Australian government's main SEL-related initiative for primary schools (www.kidsmatter.edu.au). KidsMatter's four components speak to the integration of elements in the jumbled schoolhouse: 1) *A positive school community*, focuses on developing the school ethos and environment such that it promotes mental health, respectful relationships and a sense of belonging among students and staff; 2) *Social and emotional learning for students*, provides an effective SEL curriculum for all children and allows them opportunities to practice and transfer their skills; 3) *Working with parents and carers*, promotes collaboration between schools and parents/carers, provides support for parents in relation to their children's mental health, and helps to develop parent and carer support networks; 4) *Helping children experiencing mental health difficulties* addresses the need to coordinate tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions by expanding schools' understanding of mental health difficulties, improving help-seeking, and developing appropriate interventions. Materials and resources (e.g. guidance documents, information sheets) are provided to support each of these strands, in addition to professional development/training opportunities for school staff (Slee et al., 2009).

KidsMatter provides a balance between flexibility and rigidity. So, for each component, all schools are provided with the same basic materials and resources; all schools get a guide to over 70 available interventions, with information covering the areas of focus, evidence base, theoretical framework, structure and other factors to enable them to make informed choices that suit their local

context and needs. They also can access professional development and consultative support. For example, a KidsMatter school might choose to implement Steps to Respect to fulfill the positive school community component, the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving programme as their SEL curriculum, the Triple P programme to support the parental strand, and the FRIENDS for Life intervention for targeted support for children experiencing difficulties (Slee et al., 2009). (A similar effort, Mindmatters, operates at the secondary level, www.mindmatters.edu.au).

A repository of well-explicated case studies of all of these implementation examples, of the kind maintained by the Character Education Partnership for its National Schools of Character program (www.character.org), would be of tremendous value for both researchers and practitioners. Such a repository, organized to ensure discussion of the seven implementation activities noted earlier as well as other contextual parameters known to influence implementation outcomes, would allow for a better inductive understanding of the configural ways in which comprehensive SEL does and does not find its way into schools sustainably. The specific details of how diverse program elements are woven together too-often are missing from research reports, journal articles, shorter accounts, and the most generally accessible forms of media. Indeed, much has been learned from similar case study approaches that would not have been derived from more nomothetic means (Elias et al., 1997).

Concluding Thoughts

Implementing SEL school-wide is not a task for those who thrive on order, sequential and logical processes, or predictability. It is a never-ending, configural task that requires constant alignment to changing conditions. It will be rare indeed when the seven activities essential for unjumbling a schoolhouse will unfold in the same way, lead to the same processes, and follow the same path to success in different schools. The process of school-wide implementation has been likened to an ocean voyage or a jazz concert, or any number of related analogies (Dalton et al., 2007;

Elias et al., 2000). The destination is clear, the course is set, but only by successfully adapting to conditions, with a boat that is fundamentally sound and a competent crew and cooperative passengers, can the destination be reached. But September rolls around, and they journey begins again, never to replicate what happened prior. This has implications for how we train and support educational leaders, select and orient school board members, and prepare school support professionals and consultants.

As of this writing, the field of SEL and related approaches is evolving and holds considerable promise for transforming educational practice into a humanizing experience for all those who pass through, work in, support, visit, and relate to our schools. Progress must be made in many areas, beyond those covered in this chapter, and doing so is a developmental imperative for youth across cultures and contexts. Yet, emerging research pointing to SEL's positive effects on behavior and academic outcomes elevates its importance as foundational to a quality education. This represents a sea change from SEL as a non-essential "add on" whose success depended on whether school leaders had the time, money or inclination to focus on it. The future challenge is not "if," but rather, "how."

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Figure 1

Comprehensive Social-Emotional Learning and Related Approaches (SEL): The Jumbled and Synergized Schoolhouses

Comprehensive Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): A Coordinated Framework Provides Synergy

