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**FROM COMPLIANCE TO RESPONSIBILITY:  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND  
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

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Marzano and Marzano's (2003) meta-analytic study suggests that classroom management is the single variable with the largest impact on student achievement. Why is that? Shouldn't the quality of math or language arts instruction make the biggest difference in terms of achievement? The most obvious reason for this influence is that effective classroom management sets the stage for learning. Without it, classrooms are disorganized and chaotic, and very little academic learning can happen. Less obvious is that a teacher's classroom management practices are socializing influences on students. They communicate—subtly and not so subtly—messages about social norms and emotional behavior. Whether or not teachers are aware of it, students are constantly developing social and emotional skills (both good and bad) through modeling, experimentation, and reinforcement. Teachers' activities in the broad category called "classroom management" can help students to develop healthy habits. This chapter presents guidelines for integrating proactive social-emotional learning into classroom management so that both are effective because ultimately they are mutually dependent and inseparable.

**A STUDENT-CENTERED GOAL FOR CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

Classroom management refers to all of the teacher's practices related to establishing the physical and social environment of the classroom, regulating routines and daily activities, and preventing and correcting problems. Nearly everything a

teacher does, aside from communicating the content of the academic curriculum, is part of classroom management. Indeed, even the mode of instruction (e.g., frontal lecturing, worksheets, creative group work projects) is a component of classroom management.

The traditional goal of classroom management has been for the teacher to maintain and enforce discipline so that academic instruction can proceed without distractions. The control goal of classroom management is an important, probably necessary, condition for a classroom to function effectively. However, this goal does not take into account that some discipline strategies may maintain control but may *not* foster learning. We define learning broadly here. Schools are increasingly focused on social and emotional learning, as well as academic learning. Therefore, we propose a more holistic and student-centered goal for classroom management: to create a classroom environment that fosters students' learning of academic, social, and emotional skills and the ability to put them to positive use in the world around them. Although order is necessary for this goal, it is not sufficient. Classroom management strategies must both maintain order and foster learning.

Furthermore, managing for compliance, as opposed to fostering internalized motivation, is shortsighted and often ineffective for the independent tasks required in most classrooms (McCaslin & Good, 1992, 1998). Behaviors that are reinforced through control tactics alone do not generalize well (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999), so they can be difficult to maintain in large classrooms where teachers cannot invest the time needed to constantly monitor all students, often while they work independently. And if control alone makes it difficult to maintain positive behavior within the classroom, it is even more unlikely to generalize that behavior outside the classroom and into the future. If schools are truly concerned with students becoming good citizens, successful workers, and lifelong learners, then their behavior management practices need to be consistent with and carefully calibrated to support a student-centered, skill-building instructional approach.

The converging goals of fostering academic, social, and emotional learning simultaneously have become the focus of the emerging area of social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL is aligned with research showing the inextricable interconnection between cognitive-academic, emotional, and social competencies. Therefore, SEL makes monitoring emotions the first step in solving problems and achieving self-control (see Elias & Bruene, 2005). This is one example of an insight that SEL can bring to the field of classroom management.

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Social-emotional learning is the process of gaining competencies and intrinsic motivation for emotional self-awareness and self-regulation, for safe and responsible behavior and for assertive, empathic, and skillful social interaction. SEL skills include identifying feelings in oneself and others, managing one's emotions, being responsible for one's actions and commitments, showing empathy and respect, communicating effectively, and many other challenging but necessary skills for functioning adaptively in a free society (Elias, 2003; Elias et al., 1997). (The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and

**Table 6.1** CASEL's five essential SEL skills and competencies.

**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 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.

Emotional Learning [CASEL] has identified five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective and behavioral competencies [CASEL, n.d.]; see Table 6.1.)

It was once thought that social and emotional skills were learned strictly by experience and that they had no place in the curriculum. Math can also be learned by experience, but it is doubtful that students would “naturally” learn math with the same level of sophistication as they do with years of instruction and practice. The same is true of social and emotional skills.

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 studies of school-based, universal SEL programs. They found that teaching social and emotional skills in school has significant impacts across all of the domains they tested. Participation in SEL programs leads to improved SEL skill performance, more positive attitudes toward oneself and others, more positive daily social behavior, and better grades and achievement test scores. The magnitude of academic achievement gains was equivalent to an increase of 11 percentile points. SEL programs also led to fewer conduct problems and reduced emotional distress and internalizing problems (e.g., depression and anxiety). Better outcomes were achieved by programs that empowered classroom teachers to deliver the SEL instruction as compared with programs in which skills were taught by nonschool personnel (e.g., research assistants). Thirty-three of the studies in the meta-analysis collected follow-up data at least six months after the program ended. Positive effects across all six domains remained significant.

Durlak and colleagues (2011) recommend that programs provide *sequenced*, step-by-step training in specific skills and use *active* forms of learning. They must *focus* sufficient time in order to target *explicit* skills rather than positive development in general. Though many SEL programs have been marketed, many do not follow these criteria, and only a handful of them have been empirically tested and supported. For a more complete review of programs and their research support, see Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (2012) and Greenberg, Domitrovich, and Bumbarger (2001).

## INTEGRATING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Even though not every classroom can incorporate a systematic, multiyear, evidence-based SEL program, the research on SEL reinforces the need for classroom management practices that support the development of students' academic, social, and emotional skills. SEL pedagogy and classroom management are overlapping tasks, and classroom management practices can have a significant impact (positive or negative) on students' social and emotional development.

### *Self-Control, Self-Discipline, and Emotional Competence*

Schools have traditionally relied on external control because of its expediency. However, numerous classroom management theorists and researchers have attempted to differentiate between management models that stress external control or obedience, on the one hand, and self-control, self-discipline, and responsibility, on the other (e.g., Bear, 1998, 2010; Brophy, 1999; Curwin & Mendler, 1988; Dreikurs, 1968; Elias & Trusheim, 2013; Freiberg, 1999; Glasser, 1992; Gordon, 1974, 2003; Kohn, 1996; Weinstein, 1999).

SEL theory makes an important contribution to the goal of promoting self-control and self-discipline by stressing the primacy of emotional competence for social and academic learning. "Emotional competence is the demonstration of self-efficacy in emotion-eliciting social transactions. *Self-efficacy* is used here to mean that the individual believes that he or she has the capacity and skills to achieve a desired outcome" (Saarni, 2000, p. 68, emphasis in the original). Saarni's (2000) model can be illustrated through an example.

Imagine someone tells a sixth-grade girl that her friends have been spreading rumors about her. Her ability to exert self-control relies on her emotional competence. If she does not attend to her emotional reaction or the emotions of her friends, then she may react in an unacceptable way (e.g., spreading counterrumors, physically attacking) before finding out more information. If she does attend to her emotions and label them accurately (e.g., anger, hurt, puzzlement), she may be able to regulate them until she finds out more information and decides on a plan. That gives her an opportunity to evaluate the source of the disclosure and/or to speak to her friends in a calm way to see whether they have a benign explanation. Based on her conclusions to such inquiries, she can identify her emotions and use them to choose a course of action that fits her sense of morality. For example, instead of starting a fight with her friends and getting into trouble, she may choose to suspend or end the friendships and channel her emotional energy toward strengthening her other relationships. It is clear how many times during the school day this kind of process is replicated with each and every student.

### *The Pedagogy of SEL and Classroom Management*

This section describes four areas of action that characterize a converging pedagogy for SEL, classroom management, and academic learning:

Action 1: Teach SEL skills.

Action 2: Build caring relationships.

Action 3: Set firm and fair boundaries.

Action 4: Share responsibility with students.

Though presented sequentially, these actions overlap and are mutually reinforcing, so they are carried out simultaneously and with consistent language. SEL pedagogy is convergent with many state-of-the-art instructional practices that teachers apply to academic teaching. The most widely used framework for teacher professional development and evaluation, the Danielson Framework, devotes the second of its four domains to creating the classroom conditions for critical thinking, inquiry, problem solving, and group work (Danielson, 2008). SEL pedagogy is also highly consistent with Gardner's multiple intelligences theory (1985, 1993), Levine's "A Mind at a Time" approach (2002), McCarthy's 4MAT instructional method (1987), and principles of differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 1999).

### **ACTION 1: TEACH SEL SKILLS**

The first step in bringing SEL to the classroom is to plan how one will incorporate explicit SEL skill building into the curriculum and classroom management agenda. Based on the SEL approach chosen, a matching full-scale classroom management plan can then be designed. For example, if an SEL program teaches a problem-solving technique, the teacher should use the same one to address day-to-day problems that arise in the classroom.

Skills necessary for optimal functioning in the classroom can and must be taught, modeled, and practiced proactively and explicitly. When they are not, skill development is spotty (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995) and eroded by students' pervasive exposure to an array of media messages that urge them to act in ways that support neither academic excellence nor self-control (Comer, 2003).

Before, during, and after teaching individual social skills, teachers must also work to "change values and basic assumptions, particularly about the value of prosocial rather than aggressive and antisocial behaviors in problem situations" (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995, p. xi). In other words, social skills instruction is a two-component process. First, teachers help students to develop specific skills and competencies to enable students to act in prosocial ways. Second, teachers must work over the long term to foster motivation for responsible behavior and ethical growth, which bridge the gap between students' learning social-emotional skills and choosing to apply them. At first, students will not use their newly acquired skills spontaneously. Repetition, cuing, and coaching are necessary to transform discrete skills into socially competent and responsible behavior across many different situations (Elias et al., 1997). The goal is for students to be able to act responsibly and ethically without cuing or any kind of external reinforcement. These are the kinds of citizens that any democracy hopes for.

#### *The Three Phases of Social-Emotional Skill Instruction*

Cartledge and Milburn (1995) break down the process of teaching social and emotional skills into three phases: (1) instruction, (2) skill performance and feedback, and (3) practice and generalization. The evaluation of students' competence with the



specific behaviors should occur frequently in order to measure the effectiveness of instruction. (CASEL [2012] contains guidelines for evaluation and links to evaluation tools used by various SEL programs.)

The instruction phase begins with providing a rationale for learning and performing the SEL skill being taught. This is best done by challenging the students to analyze the value of the skill or even to identify the behavior themselves by figuring out the best response to a hypothetical scenario. Once the value of the skill has been addressed, it is important to break down the skill into its component behaviors (Elias & Bruene, 2005). Finally, the students are presented with a model of the skill, which could be a character in literature, an actor on a videotape, a peer who role-plays the skill, and so on (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995).

The second phase of teaching SEL skills is skill performance and feedback. Like seatwork during a lesson, guided rehearsal gives the students an opportunity to perform the focal skill individually for the first time in a secure environment. Rehearsal can be covert (i.e., cognitive or imaginal), verbal, or physical. Of course, physical performance of the skill, if possible, is superior to either thinking or talking about it. Feedback is provided in order to correct mistakes, address problems, and recognize when the skill is being done properly. Feedback can be verbal, reinforcement-based, or self-evaluative (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995). Table 6.2 is a sample lesson plan that gives a classroom-based example of phases 1 and 2.

The third phase is practice. As with any other skill taught in a classroom, practice—even overlearning—is necessary to maintain the behavior. In addition to practice for maintenance, generalization to various real-world situations is a critical part of teaching social-emotional skills. Cartledge and Milburn (1995) identify key strategies for generalization based on behavioral and cognitive research: (1) Training should occur in a variety of settings, particularly settings that match “target” situations for the behavior. (2) Practice should be done in real-life conditions or under conditions that approximate real life as much as possible. (3) Training should occur with different people to show consistency across social situations, and cuing and reminding must be done frequently over time (Shure & Glaser, 2001). For the best outcomes, all school personnel should model, cue, and reinforce social skills consistently and use the same language to refer to them. This requires that school-wide policies concerning rules and behavior be established. To generalize beyond school, parents and community members should be taught to use the same social skill language, and peers can also be empowered to cue and reinforce school- or community-wide SEL skills. (4) Contingencies of reinforcement for SEL behaviors should remain consistent across different settings, both in school and, if possible, out of school. External reinforcement, however, should be tapered in order to encourage generalization to settings where reinforcement is unavailable. (5) Students should be encouraged to develop self-management for their social behaviors. Ultimately, the goal of social-emotional skill building is to make the transition from external control and reinforcement to internal motivation, responsibility, and self-control. This is perhaps the most valuable principle that the field of classroom management can learn from SEL.

Almost no students remember when and how to apply new skills until they have had many opportunities to practice them in the real world. Cuing can take many

**Table 6.2** Sample lesson plan for third-grade language arts: An example of integrating academics and social-emotional skill building (based on Cartledge & Milburn, 1995).*Objectives*

- Students will read and analyze literature through the lens of social and emotional skills.
- Students will become familiar with the concept of body language and its importance in social interactions.
- Students will recognize specific examples of emotional body language.
- Students will practice demonstrating emotions through body language.

*Materials*

- *Buffalo Before Breakfast* by Mary Pope Osborne (1999). (This lesson can be adapted for any piece of children's literature that has an example of reading body language.)

*Motivation*

As part of a regular reading/language arts lesson, the teacher begins by reading a passage from *Buffalo Before Breakfast* by Mary Pope Osborne (1999) in which the protagonists, Jack and Annie, first meet the Lakota people. In the passage, Jack and Annie report that even though the Lakota people are not saying anything, they do not appear to be angry.

*Procedure*

1. Providing a rationale:
  - a. Using this passage as a jumping-off point, the teacher poses the following questions:
    - “How do the characters know the Lakota people are not angry?”
    - “Can you show me what the Lakota people might have looked like if they were angry?”
    - “What do you look like when you are angry?”
 (Students respond by saying that there are various signs of anger in the face, arms, and shoulders of the person.)
  - b. The teacher introduces the term “body language” and encourages students to make text-to-self connections:
    - “Why is reading body language helpful?”
    - “When Jack and Annie read body language, how does that help them?”
    - “Can you give me examples of times when reading body language has helped you?”
2. Breaking down the skill into its components
 

The teacher asks students to suggest different parts of the body that display anger and writes the ideas on the board: “Which parts of your face or body change when you are angry?” (e.g., clenched teeth, a furrowed brow, raised shoulders)
3. Modeling
 

As they suggest angry body signs, students model the actions for their peers. The teacher also asks students to model other emotions so that their peers can guess what they are “feeling.” With each example of a new emotion, the teacher uses the student model to help the class break down the body language into its components.
4. Skill performance and feedback: Guess My Emotion Game
  - a. The teacher divides the students into groups and asks them to write down components of body language for fear and happy. They share these lists with their groups and then practice acting out these emotions for the other members of their group.
  - b. Each group is assigned an emotion to present to the class. The class practices reading body language by guessing the other groups' emotions.

*Feedback and Assessment*

- The teacher circulates during group work to monitor progress and understanding.
- With each group presentation, the teacher gives specific feedback on the display of the emotion and on the class's interpretation, in addition to encouraging students to give appropriate and constructive feedback to one other.

*Follow-up*

- The teacher assigns students to practice reading their siblings' and friends' body language after school and report back the next day.
- The teacher will reinforce the skill of reading social and emotional cues in another two reading lessons as soon as is feasible, as well as in future lessons involving literature and other media.
- The teacher will remind students about this skill when it comes up in real-world social interactions in the classroom and throughout the school.

For a skill as complex as recognizing others' emotions through body language to be fully integrated into the students' social skill repertoire, multiple lessons along these lines would be necessary, as well as cuing and practice in real-world situations.

forms, verbal and nonverbal, all of which should be positive, brief, private, and designed to encourage rather than criticize the child. It can be helpful to have a code word or acronym for a particular skill.

Let's take an example of an SEL skill from the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) curriculum that applies to classroom management directly (Elias & Bruene, 2005). If a student is not paying attention to a peer who is speaking, a teacher might be tempted to shout from across the room: "Kim, stop fiddling around with the papers in your desk. Sit up straight, turn and look at Michael, and listen to what he's trying to say." This might stop her from fiddling with the papers, but it would likely make Kim feel embarrassed and discouraged, and, because of those feelings, she would probably not hear what Michael has to say. The SDM/SPS program calls that set of listening skills "Listening Position." Saying "Use good Listening Position" in a positive tone of voice helps everyone to self-monitor and self-correct. A need for further reminders suggests that perhaps the child does not know the skill and/or has a learning or attentional impairment that should be watched more closely. Educators routinely underestimate the time needed before cues are faded. One should think in terms of months, not weeks.

### *Social Problem-Solving Strategies*

The three building blocks of SEL competency and responsible behavior are basic/readiness skills, problem-solving strategies, and internal motivation and self-discipline. Readiness skills include turn taking, following directions, keeping calm, communicating effectively, and reading social cues. Social problem solving relies on readiness skills related to choosing and organizing actions in almost any situation. Consequently, it is at the heart of all of the empirically supported SEL programs previously discussed. Internal motivation, the third building block, drives the choice to use one's problem-solving competencies and exert self-control in a situation.

There are numerous social problem-solving strategies. Many use mnemonics to help children remember the steps. Problem-solving in SDM/SPS is called "*FIG TESPN*" (Elias & Bruene, 2005). Each letter stands for a step in the problem-solving process:

*Feelings*—How do I feel in this situation?

*Identify problem*—What's the problem?

*Goal*—What is my ultimate goal? What do I want to have happen?

*Think*—Brainstorm at least three possible solutions to this problem.

*Envision*—What are the likely consequences of each of my possible solutions?

*Solution*—Choose the best solution I thought of.

*Plan*—Plan how to carry out my solution.

*Notice results*—After I carry out my plan, evaluate it.

Other programs' problem-solving systems are substantially similar; the main differences are the names and memory devices.

### *Integrating SEL and Academics*

SEL instruction is particularly effective when integrated with academics rather than when treated as a separate "subject" (Elias, 2004). As explained, SEL skills are vital to



academic learning. Integrating the two types of learning creates synergies for both. For example, when SEL skill-building is integrated into a literature lesson, the SEL skills are raised to the level of importance of core academics rather than being viewed as a special or add-on subject. SEL is also dramatized in meaningful and complex ways in literature, which improves the learning of both SEL and the literature being studied through text-to-self connections. Table 6.2 shows how SEL gains relevance through a literature lesson and how the literature lesson is enhanced by using SEL as a paradigm for analyzing a particular passage in a read-aloud book. Problem solving can be applied to the dilemmas faced by characters at exciting junctures in stories, bringing students into the authoring process.

History and current events can be presented as a series of problems that various individuals and groups have attempted to solve. Students can try to figure out, based on their readings and other sources of information, what various individuals and groups were feeling and what their goals were. They learn the powerful impact of deficiencies in effective problem solving, empathy, and perspective taking. As students apply their social problem-solving strategies in academic areas, they are broadening and deepening the application of their skills (Elias, 2004).

## **ACTION 2: BUILD CARING RELATIONSHIPS**

Building caring relationships is a tenet of SEL and a necessary factor in fostering students' social and emotional growth. The actions are associated with developing a caring relationships model of competent social skill behavior. Because children are learning all the time, whether we intend to teach them or not, building caring relationships in classrooms may have at least as much influence on their development of social skills as explicit teaching. (Students should be encouraged to do as we say *and* as we do.) Furthermore, a caring atmosphere (which, sadly, many students lack outside the classroom) supports students emotionally and models such emotional skills as emotion identification and regulation. Building caring relationships sets the tone for SEL skill building and provides the first vehicle for practice and improvement. It makes the classroom a living SEL laboratory.

In terms of classroom management, building an atmosphere of caring relationships can make all the difference between a functional and dysfunctional classroom. The persistent demands of academic performance, complying with rules, and interacting positively with peers and teachers can be challenging for students. Developing a supportive community in the classroom helps to impart a sense of each student's belonging, to alleviate students' social anxieties and frustration, and to motivate students to comply with teacher requests and act prosocially with peers. Consequently, as the level of respect for teachers and peers increases, negative or aggressive social behaviors are reduced, and students are more likely to comply with the rules (Elias et al., 1997). As a result, building caring relationships is the first step in the promotion of responsible behavior and prevention of misbehavior. Setting a supportive tone for the class should be the teacher's first task when students enter the classroom on the first day of school. It is worth noting that any early childhood educator reading this will recognize it as an essential tenet of their teaching. However, what SEL theory

has brought into clearer focus is that the link of caring relationships to learning does not cease to become relevant after early childhood. Indeed, its importance continues through the adolescent years and persists into adult education contexts (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997).

### *Teacher–Student Relationships*

Building caring relationships between teachers and students is necessary for many reasons. First, when students sense that a teacher cares about them, they see the teacher as more credible and as an ally rather than a foe. This increases motivation to follow directions, to adhere to rules, and to put effort into classroom activities and academics. Just as adults who feel respected and supported in the workplace are more productive, children have those same needs and respond best in school environments that they perceive as caring and respectful. Weinstein and Mignano (2003) detail nine ways in which successful classroom managers express concern for students. Effective teachers are welcoming, are sensitive to students' concerns, treat students fairly, act like real people (not just as teachers), share responsibility, minimize the use of external controls, include everyone, search for students' strengths, and communicate effectively. To this list, we would add that teachers should also show an interest in their students' lives and pursuits. Many of these ten practices not only express concern for students but are important for other action steps, a fact that highlights the integrated nature of SEL and classroom management. Multiple large meta-analyses have established that building such supportive teacher–student relationships is a reliable and strong predictor of social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011).

### *Student-Student Relationships and the Classroom Community*

Peer-to-peer relationships and the classroom community are just as important as teacher–student relations in maintaining a functional classroom and promoting social and emotional growth. This may seem like an obvious statement on the surface, but Noddings (2003) points out why the classroom community is essential for shaping success in school and life. She observes that a moral life is completely relational and that character and the habits of learning are acquired through strong, nurturant, positive relationships. The classroom as a community must teach caring as the bedrock on which other values, essential for intellectual accomplishment and ethical living, can be built: honesty, courage, responsibility.

Even though peer relationships do not always directly involve the teacher, the teacher is a vital force in establishing the conditions for social interaction and would benefit greatly from proactively intervening to help caring relationships develop positively. SEL social skill-building practices suggest a number of ways to do this. First, the teacher can begin the year by helping students feel comfortable with one another in the classroom through group-building activities, creative opportunities to share personal experiences and interests, and establishing an ethic of teamwork and helping one another with everyday tasks and problems. Second, teachers should

involve students in deciding what rules should govern social interaction in the classroom and facilitate conversations on specific ways to show respect and caring. In the mode of SEL pedagogy, prosocial interactions should be role-played and modeled so that students learn what abstract values such as caring, inclusion, and respect look like in practice. Third, teachers should discuss, teach, and model a problem-solving approach to understanding and resolving personal dilemmas and mistakes (using personal examples in an appropriate way) to set a personal, supportive tone to the class. The SEL literature provides numerous models to accomplish these tasks (Charney, 2002; Elias et al., 1997).

The capacity for empathy is the keystone to intrinsically motivated prosocial behavior. Empathy and perspective taking are vital—and often absent—in our society. One SDM/SPS skill used to teach empathy is Footsteps. The goal of Footsteps is to enable students to recognize another's feelings and goals when in a conflict. The two participants in the exercise place cutouts in the shape of footsteps on the floor across from each other. They stand in their own "feet" and begin by stating their feelings and concerns using I-statements. Then they switch places, and each acknowledges the other's feelings and concerns and checks for accuracy with an active listening statement (e.g., "I heard you . . ."). They then return to their original places and talk about how it felt to be in the other's "feet." Once they understand their partner's emotions and position, they problem-solve together until a mutually agreeable solution is reached. This is a complex skill that requires adult modeling, specific feedback, and generous amounts of practice. Creative lessons that integrate this skill with academics (particularly literature and social studies) are especially beneficial. In keeping with the SEL skill-building pedagogy previously mentioned, once students have learned and practiced the Footsteps technique, its use should be prompted. This takes place by adults carrying around cutouts and dropping the "feet" when they come upon students having conflicts in hallways, assemblies, lunchrooms, or the playground. Students know that once the feet are dropped, they should "assume the position" required and begin the orderly process of conflict resolution under the adult's (or trained peer mediator's) watchful eye.

### *Communication*

Developing effective communication is a challenging but vital step in building caring, functional relationships throughout the classroom. Effective teacher-to-student communication includes, but is not limited to, clarity and checking for understanding; active listening; facilitative and open-ended questioning; and saying far more positive, complimentary, and encouraging words to all students (even the challenging ones) than negative words.

Numerous SEL skills relate to communication, and a number of SEL skill-building methods have particular utility in classroom functioning. I-messages and active (reflective) listening are tried-and-true techniques. The SDM/SPS listening skill of Listening Position was already mentioned. But how does a student know when it's time to speak instead of listen? SDM/SPS uses a system called "Speaker Power," which involves passing an object from person to person in order to

signify whose turn it is to speak. When Speaker Power is active, no one is allowed to speak without holding the object—including the teacher. The teacher gives the instructions while holding Speaker Power and then passes it to a student who is demonstrating a good Listening Position and has raised his or her hand. After the speaker is finished, the teacher takes the object back and gives it to another student. Once the class masters this procedure, the speaker becomes responsible for choosing who gets Speaker Power next. This not only reduces outbursts and quick responses but also forces students to pause before they speak and process what the previous person said. These are all important skills in the domains of listening and respecting others.

Classrooms dedicated to integrating SEL and effective classroom management should have frequent class meetings, or Share Circles (the SDM/SPS version of a class meeting), to discuss problems and continually build the classroom community. Share Circles are designated times to focus entirely on the social and emotional life of the classroom through discussions, group-building activities, SEL skill development, and group problem solving. They encourage supportive relationships throughout the classroom, set a positive tone for the classroom, help children to process any emotions that they bring to school, and give students an opportunity for input into the daily running of the classroom (Charney, 2002). Providing structured opportunities to share feelings, experiences, and interests makes the classroom the personal and supportive environment that underlies caring relationships. Some programs, notably Responsive Classroom, consider this to be a central *daily* feature of effective classroom management (Charney, 2002), and recent research supports this contention ([www.responsiveclassroom.org](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org)).

### **ACTION 3: SET FIRM AND FAIR BOUNDARIES**

Discipline is probably the first thing that comes to mind when someone mentions classroom management. Unfortunately, many teachers equate discipline with classroom management, neglecting the numerous other components of effective management (many of which have been stressed in this chapter), inevitably leading to disappointing results. For many, discipline implies a reaction to misbehavior. Throughout this chapter, we have emphasized that teachers generate management through specific actions directed toward creating a functional learning environment and preventing misbehavior. Behavior problems are minimized when students are engaged in learning, when they have developed social and emotional skills that enable them to pursue their needs and goals in prosocial ways, when the relationships in the classroom are supportive and caring, and when they feel a sense of autonomy and ownership of the class because they share responsibility for it. That being said, the presence of these conditions does not obviate the need for a clear boundary-setting structure. Students will occasionally make mistakes in their behaviors, just as they do when learning academic skills. In an SEL-infused classroom, these mistakes in judgment highlight social skill deficits. Just like mistakes in solving math problems, they are opportunities for learning and growing—in other words, social-emotional skill building for the next time.

### *Rules*

Rules are necessary for any society or organization to function. Boundaries educate children about what is acceptable and what is not. Learning to act with self-control and respect for others is predicated on having clear rules that define responsible behavior in a particular environment. Therefore, clear rules are necessary for an SEL-oriented classroom.

Everyone agrees that class rules should be established early in the year, and most advocate that it be done on the first day of school. Brady, Forton, Porter, and Wood (2003) recommend that teachers wait a few days before initiating a collaborative rule-making process, until a sense of order, predictability, and trust in the classroom has been established. They contend that the basic elements of a caring community must be established before students can contribute meaningfully to rule making. Many experts, though not all, encourage teachers to create class rules “democratically” (e.g., Brady, Forton, Porter, & Wood, 2003; Schaps & Solomon, 1990; Weinstein & Mignano, 2003). If the rules are truly a product of the whole class’s effort, the students are far more likely to respect and show a commitment to them. The teacher must manage this process to ensure that all students feel they have contributed and that the final set of rules is reasonable, age appropriate, and fair to the students and the teacher. Establishing democratic rules is a necessity for an SEL-infused classroom because it promotes learning how to self-govern, cooperate, and choose responsible actions in a democratic environment.

Establishing and enforcing rules are necessary but not sufficient. To ensure that students understand them and are able to follow them, rules, like SEL skills, must be discussed, taught, modeled, and practiced. “Respecting oneself and others” or some variation on the theme is found in most classrooms. Respect is an abstract concept, especially to young children. What does respect look like? What types of behaviors does respect imply? Discussing, teaching, modeling, and practicing respectful behavior enable students to learn how to follow the rule. Rules are rarely learned after one lesson or discussion. The more difficult rules require practice and repetition throughout the year or across years.

### *Responses and Feedback*

Though classroom management is primarily a proactive and preventive process, there will always be a need to respond and give feedback about student behavior—both positive and negative. Even though it is inherently a reactive task, the system of responses to problem behavior is an integral component of classroom management and should be planned out in advance.

Marshall and Weisner (2004) elegantly present a theory of discipline that enhances rather than impedes SEL development. They begin by stating a goal for classroom management that is similar to that proposed by this chapter: to promote responsible behavior guided by internal motivation. They propose a hierarchy of social development modeled on Maslow’s (1970) hierarchy of needs and



Kohlberg's (1984) stages of moral development. From lowest to highest, the levels of their hierarchy are:

- A—Anarchy.
- B—Bossing/bullying.
- C—Cooperation/conformity.
- D—Democracy.

Levels A and B lead to socially destructive behaviors that are never acceptable. Level C is acceptable but has some drawbacks. Most teachers and administrators are satisfied when students' actions reflect compliance. In fact, it is often impossible to discern, from a prosocial behavior itself, whether the motivation is cooperation with authority or self-directed responsibility. For example, students may clean up the room at the end of an art lesson because it is the responsible thing to do in order to maintain a healthy, orderly environment or because the teacher will punish them if they don't. In both cases, the behavior is good, but the SEL implications are quite different.

McCaslin and Good (1998) point out the drawbacks of managing for compliance. Compliance depends on constant monitoring; there is little maintenance over time. When compliance is the only means of management, then prosocial behavior is unlikely to generalize to different settings. Further, complex instructional modalities, such as cooperative learning, are very difficult to manage through compliance alone. Students need to self-regulate in order to make cooperative learning work. Raising students' motivation to level D is necessary for the constructivist, problem-solving curriculum. "We believe that the intended modern school curriculum, which is designed to produce self-motivated active learners, is seriously undermined by classroom management policies that encourage, if not demand, simple obedience" (McCaslin & Good, 1992, p. 4). Management systems should go beyond demanding compliance and strive to foster the skills necessary for democratic values and personal responsibility.

Bear (1998, 2010) agrees that in the short term, the goal is managing the class and controlling problems. The long-term goal is developing students' self-discipline. This, he says, is the essence of the authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1966), which is widely regarded as the most effective and is the most compatible with SEL. Like Marshall and Weisner (2004), Bear defines self-discipline as the internalization of democratic ideals. Because it is internally motivated, it is evident only when external regulators are not present. That is why one must move beyond operant strategies to foster self-discipline.

If straightforward operant approaches to reinforcing desirable behavior and punishing undesirable behavior are not the most effective ways to build SEL skills and promote the internalization and generalization of prosocial behavior, what is more effective? Taken together, the actions described in this chapter—teaching SEL skills, building caring relationships, setting firm and fair boundaries, and sharing responsibility with students—serve that goal. This section is devoted to alternatives to traditional operant reinforcement that foster SEL skills, internalization, and generalization.



### Positive Recognition and Feedback

Qualitative and meaningful feedback is absolutely necessary to developing academic, social, and emotional skills, but the way that feedback is delivered can have profound effects on long-term social-emotional growth. Deci, Koestner, and Ryan's (1999) meta-analysis of 128 studies of the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation strongly supported their theory that, although positive feedback often provides useful information to a child about his or her competence, it can also be delivered in a controlling way, which undermines internal motivation. They found that tangible rewards are more likely to undermine internal motivation than verbal praise and that verbal praise can either increase or decrease internal motivation, depending on how and in what context it was delivered. Their meta-analysis demonstrated that the most effective praise is unexpected rather than expected and performance-contingent rather than for just completing a task. In other words, it needs to be given meaningfully—for real effort and good work—rather than for every little task accomplished in the classroom. Different levels of performance should not be praised equally. Substantial praise should be used sparingly, reserved for when it is truly deserved. Too often, students begin to expect praise for the completion of tasks irrespective of quality or effort, which can lead to reductions in intrinsic motivation, self-regulation, and learning (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Such praise may even imply that the student is *not* capable. Why else would the teacher make such a big deal about something so pedestrian (Dweck, 1999; Willingham, 2005)?

One reliable way to avoid communicating too much control is for feedback to take the form of self-evaluation, whenever possible. This can be done by nonjudgmentally pointing out specific aspects of the student's work and teaching the student to self-assess in a productive, realistic way. Furthermore, descriptive specificity conveys genuine recognition of the student's work and directs the positive feedback for the student—which provides the information that the child is seeking—while generally avoiding undue control.

Dweck's extensive research on the effects of praise on achievement motivation has provided another crucial guideline. Their work suggests that praise should be effort rather than trait oriented. "You did well on this test—you're so smart" (an example of trait praise) can lead to a child's feeling less smart and less motivated after a subsequent failure. Such praise suggests that each task is a referendum on one's innate, static intelligence. If a student does poorly, the only conclusion is that she is not smart. And even if a student succeeds after working very hard, he might reach a similar conclusion. The child's theory on intelligence is that it is inversely related to effort. Someone who has to work hard is not as smart as someone who does not. Therefore, it is safest not to try. That way, if the student succeeds, she can conclude that she is exceedingly bright. If she does not, she can use the lack of effort as an excuse. On the other hand, praising effort (e.g., "You worked really hard on this") can help to increase persistence and resilience when failure inevitably occurs. When teachers give feedback about process rather than ability, they are communicating that success is within the child's control. If he did well, he can conclude that he tried hard or used good strategies. If he did poorly, he did not put in enough effort or did

not learn the right strategies—conditions that seems much easier to change than one's intelligence (Dweck, 1999; Mueller & Dweck, 1998).

Jere Brophy (2004) points out that teachers frequently give feedback that communicates low expectations to low achievers. For example, when compared with their interactions with high achievers, teachers tend to give less time to low achievers to respond to a question before providing the answer or calling on another student, they reinforce low achievers for incorrect responses more frequently, they criticize low achievers more often and praise them less, they give low achievers less interesting and rigorous curricula, and they interact with low achievers less often and in less positive ways. Inasmuch as students' achievement and behavior are deeply influenced by their teachers' expectations, it is crucial for teachers to give feedback to students that communicates high (and reasonable) expectations.

### **Punishment and Natural and Logical Consequences**

No matter how efficient the teacher's prevention efforts, students will test the limits of the rules, and responses will be needed to correct the behavior, control the situation, and teach positive and responsible alternatives. The following guidelines help link a "disciplinary" action constructively with SEL: (1) The response should separate the deed from the doer. The teacher should make clear that the problem is the behavior, not the child. (2) Teachers should teach children they have the power to choose their actions and that they can learn to avoid losing control. (3) Responses should encourage reflection, self-evaluation, and problem solving. Lectures and teacher-centered explaining have the same limited effectiveness for SEL skill building as they do for academic skill development. Students are more likely to own the problem if they are asked rather than told what the problem is and given an opportunity to figure out how to fix it. (4) Responses to a mistaken behavior should involve the child learning the rationale for and practicing prosocial alternatives that can be reasonably used in similar future situations. This basic SEL technique fosters feelings of responsibility for correcting and preventing the problem.

Natural and logical consequences are intended to teach children to understand, anticipate, and make decisions based on the consequences of their actions in the real world (Brady, Forton, Porter, & Wood, 2003; Dreikurs & Loren, 1968; Nelsen, Lynn, & Glenn, 2000). For example, if a child plays too roughly with a toy and it breaks, then the consequence is that the child's toy is now ruined. There is no need for an external, punitive intervention; the child begins to learn from the direct consequences of his or her mistakes, which is the goal of this system. Logical consequences are needed when the misbehavior substantially affects others or when the potential natural consequence is too severe.

Logical consequences have three basic features that are meant to maximize their informational value while minimizing the control aspect, thereby supporting the child's need for autonomy: they must be related, reasonable, and respectful. Being related means that they must be logically related to the misbehavior. For example, if a student writes on his or her desk, a related consequence would be for the student to clean the desk, not for the student to go to detention. Reasonable means

that the severity of the consequence must be mild. If a kindergartener knocks down another student's block tower, it is unreasonable to have the student sit quietly in his or her chair for 45 minutes while the rest of the class is playing. Instead, the student might help rebuild the tower. Finally, consequences must be delivered respectfully. No matter how much a teacher may want to display his or her anger, consequences are most effective when delivered calmly and matter-of-factly (Brady, Forton, Porter, & Wood, 2003; Dreikurs & Loren, 1968; Nelsen, Lynn, & Glenn, 2000).

Natural and logical consequences are solidly aligned with SEL theory. SEL focuses a great deal on students' decision-making, problem-solving, and conflict-resolution processes. A critical reflection point of this process is the anticipation of outcomes. Early research in SDM/SPS showed that problem behaviors were most likely to occur when children anticipated positive consequences from negative actions (Leonard & Elias, 1993). The simplest example: "He was bothering me, so I hit him to make him stop." Indeed, the stoppage is a natural consequence, but it is not the only one, and students need guidance to help them understand how the world around them works so that their view of consequences is realistic and takes into account long- and short-term outcomes both for themselves and for others.

From an SEL point of view, the potential for consequences to foster empathy and perspective taking better than other forms of punishment is critical. Natural and logical consequences must increase compliance in the short term (like punishments), as well as promote long-term maintenance and generalization to situations in which the child is not being monitored. For these techniques to have their desired positive effect, they must be rooted in a caring relationship between teachers and students.

One type of logical consequence that helps to build the SEL skills of caring and perspective taking is what Brady, Forton, Porter, and Wood (2003) call "apology of action." An apology of action is an active way to fix a problem the child has caused interpersonally. It includes but goes beyond a verbal apology. The child is expected at least to repair the damage done (or its equivalent), which is the type of consequence that adults face all the time at work and at home. Optimally, the child suggests a way to fix the problem, which makes a far greater impression than a grudging apology and takes the teacher out of the position of being the enforcer.

### *SEL-Derived Skills for Preventing and Correcting Misbehavior*

#### **Problem-Solving Strategies**

Problem-solving strategies, such as *FIG TESPN* (previously described), can be enormously useful in responding to behavior mistakes. They can be used to work collaboratively with a child to fix problems, come up with alternative strategies for challenging situations, and devise appropriate logical consequences. *FIG TESPN* teaches the child that he or she has the power to choose different actions and encourages the child to take ownership for the mistake and its outcomes. With copious problem-solving practice, students may begin to envision the likely consequences of their actions before they take them and feel responsible for acting constructively in new situations. Ultimately, when a child gets into "trouble" or

has a conflict with a peer, a constructive, preventively oriented problem-solving strategy should be used. SDM/SPS has examples of worksheets to guide this process (Elias & Bruene, 2005).

### Self-Regulation

A component skill of self-control and self-discipline is self-regulation. Emotional self-regulation involves two steps: self-monitoring and emotion management. Self-monitoring emotions requires that students are able to identify the names of the emotions they are feeling based on their bodily sensations and cognitions. Emotion words can be taught using a number of games, and the student's unique bodily sensations should be discussed in order to help the student identify feelings as they are beginning to take hold. Once students are able to identify and self-monitor their emotions, they need practical strategies to be able to manage them and use them constructively.

### Feelings Fingerprints

One specific example of how these techniques are operationalized within SEL is the SDM/SPS program's Feelings Fingerprints procedure. What follows is how we present the technique to teachers who, in turn, present to their students. For children to self-monitor, they need to understand that their bodies send them signals when they are about to lose control. SDM/SPS calls these signals of anger or stress "Feelings Fingerprints." (At the secondary level, we use the term "Stress Signature" and make the appropriate adjustments in the analogy.) Why? Like fingerprints, everyone has a unique set. Some people get a headache, a nervous stomach, a stiff neck, or sweaty palms. Others get a dry mouth, a quick heartbeat, clenched fists, a flushed face, or itchy skin. Most have more than one such signal. When teachers find themselves in a stressful or difficult choice situation, they can verbalize how they are feeling and what their Feelings Fingerprints are. This bridges naturally into asking students, "You just heard how my body sends me a headache behind my left eye and a red face when I am upset and under stress. How do *your* bodies let *you* know when you are upset?"

When learning Feelings Fingerprints, students take turns generating examples of situations during which they felt upset and what their Feelings Fingerprints were. Those situations are labeled "trigger situations." They learn that being aware of their Feelings Fingerprints and anticipating trigger situations serve as warning systems that they are facing a tough situation and need to use self-control to keep calm. Teachers may use this opportunity to discuss with students what it means to use self-control. They ask students to share different times and situations in which they have to use self-control. Then teachers ask for strategies for maintaining self-control, such as Keep Calm (see the next subsection), and help students make proactive plans to disengage from problem situations.

### Keep Calm

SDM/SPS relies on Keep Calm, which was derived from Lamaze childbirth preparation procedures, to reduce students' anxiety, anger, and frustration. Keep Calm is

simple and short, and it helps students to maintain self-control by reducing physiological arousal. Keep Calm begins with a student identifying the first physical signs of anger and then saying to him or herself, “Stop. Keep calm.” Then the student takes a number of slow breaths, counting to five while breathing in, two while holding one’s breath, and five while breathing out. This so-called 5-2-5 technique is simple to remember, prompt, and apply, and it reduces arousal so that students can respond in productive ways. Self-monitoring worksheets with teacher feedback and guidance can be especially valuable for students who have trouble responding initially to these and other skill-building activities.

#### **ACTION 4: SHARE RESPONSIBILITY WITH STUDENTS**

The final recommended action for bringing together SEL and effective classroom management is sharing responsibility with students. If we want children to learn responsibility, we have to give them many opportunities to experiment with it and grow comfortable, confident, and skilled at taking it. Sharing responsibility with students increases their commitment to the classroom, increases their prosocial motivation and behavior, and reduces behavior mistakes that result from frustration and feeling powerless. Empowering students is the best way to encourage them to take responsibility and contribute—rather than detracting and destroying (Freiberg, Huzinec, & Borders, 2008). Furthermore, it has been directly linked to academic motivation and performance (see McCombs, 2014).

This chapter has already mentioned a number of ways in which responsibility can be shared with students, beginning with developing democratic classroom rules. Students can contribute to the physical environment of the classroom with their artwork and through representations of their individuality. Students also benefit from input in day-to-day classroom decision making. The decisions students participate in can vary from choosing a signal for quiet to requesting a friend to sit with when the class’s seating arrangement changes. Even giving students’ input into small choices, such as the order of the day’s schedule, can increase motivation. Teachers should not and need not give over all classroom governance to the students. However, giving students choices—even between two acceptable options—makes the class more manageable and productive and increases students’ social-emotional competencies (Elias et al., 1997; Weinstein & Mignano, 2003).

#### **CONCLUSION**

The field of SEL provides a pedagogy that aligns classroom management, social-emotional skill building, and academic learning. We reviewed four sets of teacher actions that can be taken with the goal of creating a seamless classroom management system that promotes academic, social, and emotional learning: teaching social-emotional skills, building caring relationships, setting firm and fair boundaries, and sharing responsibility with students.

The challenges of attaining this goal cannot fall on any one teacher. Only by coordinated and continuous application of the principles outlined herein can the desired



impact on students occur. Yet nearly two millennia ago, a Jewish educator recognized that each teacher must do his or her part, with no alibis or excuses: “You are not responsible for completing the work, nor are you free to give up on it” (Pirke Avot 2:21). No teacher can be fully responsible for the growth—academic or otherwise—of his or her students. Students are influenced by so many other factors and spend only a few months in each classroom before moving on. Nevertheless, it is each teacher’s responsibility to provide students with as many useful tools as possible to enable them to build their own futures. And it is the responsibility of all educators to see that all students pass through organized, caring, and skill-enhancing classrooms and school environments so that they can become academically, socially, and emotionally competent as adults.

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