

The Blue Dot

Exploring new ideas for a shared future



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Exploring new ideas for a shared future

ISSUE 10, 2019

THE Blue DOT features articles showcasing UNESCO MGIEP's activities and areas of interest. The magazine's overarching theme is the relationship between education, peace, sustainable development and global citizenship. THE Blue DOT's role is to engage with readers on these issues in a fun and interactive manner. The magazine is designed to address audiences across generations and walks of life, thereby taking the discourse on education for peace, sustainable development and global citizenship beyond academia, civil society organisations and governments, to the actual stakeholders.

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MANAGING EDITOR

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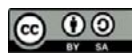
CONTRIBUTORS

Anurati Srivastva, UNESCO MGIEP

Keerthi Ramanujan, UNESCO MGIEP

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EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

ANANTHA K. DURAIAPPAH

Director



NANDINI CHATTERJEE SINGH

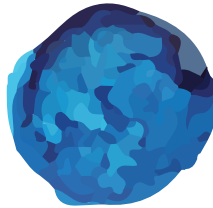
Programme Specialist - Science of Learning



AKRITI MEHRA

Communications Specialist





**“Look again at that dot.
That’s here. That’s home. That’s us.**

On it, everyone you love,
everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of,
every human being who ever was,
lived out their lives.

The aggregate of our joy and suffering
thousands of confident religions,
ideologies, and economic doctrines,
every hunter and forager, every hero and coward,
every creator and destroyer of civilization,
every king and peasant, every young couple in love,
every mother and father, hopeful child,
inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals,
every corrupt politician, every superstar,
every supreme leader, every saint
and sinner in the history of our species lived there-
on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.”

CARL SAGAN

PALE BLUE DOT: A VISION OF THE HUMAN FUTURE IN SPACE



21st Century Skills: *The need for Social and Emotional Learning*

DR. ANANTHA K. DURAIAPPAH

Nursing defines human flourishing as the effort to achieve self-actualization and fulfillment within the context of a larger community of individuals, each with the right to pursue his or her own such efforts².

In the tenth edition of The Blue DOT, we focus on different aspects of social and emotional learning, including the neurosciences, teacher training, frameworks such as CASEL and SEE Learning and systemic SEL, amongst others. The issue includes a Foreword by Dr. Richard Davidson, William James and Vilas Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and the Founder and Director of the Center for Healthy Minds, and our Cover Story that focuses on how SEL can help to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Additionally, we feature interviews and opinions from some of the world's most prominent SEL experts on the importance of integrating SEL in our education systems. Amongst various experts, we hear from Kimberly Schonert-Reichl on her journey in SEL, Robert W. Roeser on “Educating the Head, the Heart and the Hand in the 21st Century” as well as Roger P. Weissberg and Joseph L. Mahoney on “What is Systemic Social and Emotional Learning and Why Does it Matter”?

Further, we present a featured article with responses to a survey by teachers from 4 countries (Bhutan, India, South Africa and Sri Lanka), following the launch of the Institute's SEL modules on Global Citizenship in a workshop

conducted in New Delhi, India in April 2019. The modules have been rendered on MGIEP's in house Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven digital platform now called FramerSpace (formerly CHI) and allow the student to have an interactive, instantaneous feedback and immersive experience while addressing contemporary issues such as migration, nationalism and violence. I believe it is the start of a new education for the future.

We also present youth voices on SEL as well as some of the stories we have collected from our youth campaign titled #KindnessMatters for the SDGs, for which over 2,500 stories have been collected from over 50 countries. Reading some of the stories has confirmed our belief that positive experiences can have a profound effect on societal wellbeing and can generate hope. We hope these stories can provide a counter narrative to the constant barrage of negative and often violent acts that we see daily in the media outlets.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of The Blue DOT and, as always, look forward to your feedback in order to improvise future editions of the magazine. Digital versions of all issues are available for download here: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/the-bluedot>

ANANTHA KUMAR DURAIAPPAH
Director, UNESCO MGIEP

The 21st century will pose many new challenges to the younger generation. In the face of these challenges, the WHO 2015 report on mental health states that the incidence of mental health problems with the younger generation is increasing rapidly. There are many factors behind this trend but the increasing pressure to “excel” in academics to secure a stable job is definitely high on this list of such causes. IndiaSpend reported in 2018 that about 75,000 students committed suicide in India between 2007 and 2016¹.

The good news is that research is increasingly demonstrating how Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) interventions have had positive impacts on success in school and subsequently even in wage earnings. However, we must not make the wrong decision to pursue SEL for the wrong reasons.

Academic success is important but it cannot be the end goal of any education system. Education must pursue a grander goal; an education for human flourishing. Such an education will ideally give equal weightage to not only knowledge acquisition and use but also pay attention to developing pro-social aptitudes with an end goal of giving the individual the opportunity to lead a life they have reason to value and cherish. The National League for

¹ https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/75-000-students-committed-suicides-in-india-between-2007-and-2016-study-118031100877_1.html

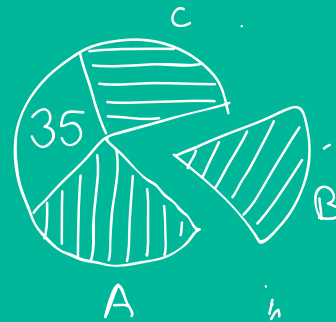
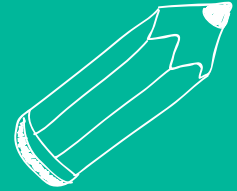
² <http://www.nln.org/docs/default-source/default-document-library/human-flourishing-final.pdf?sfvrsn=0>



Social and emotional learning and neuroplasticity: Why it matters

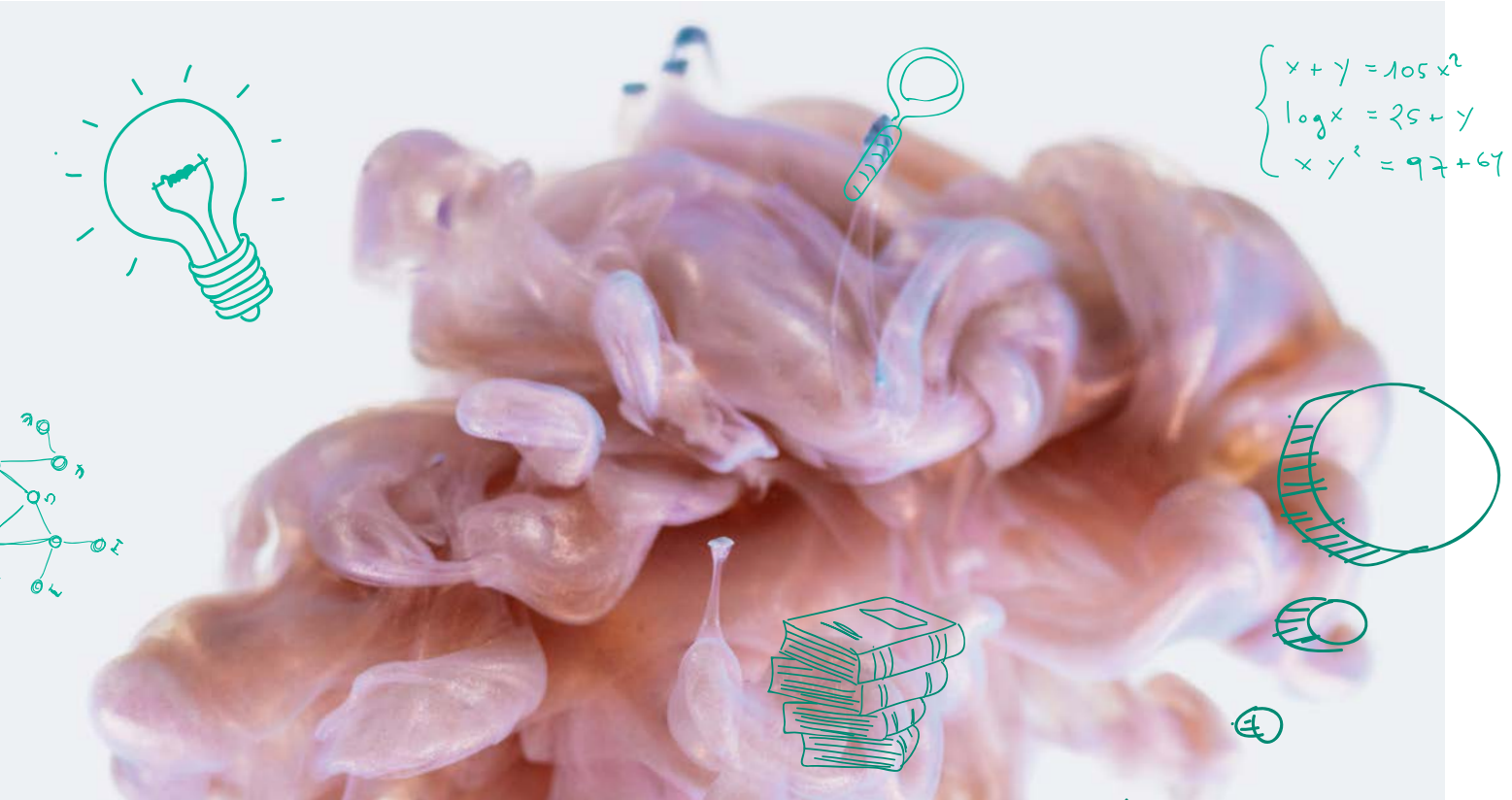
RICHARD J. DAVIDSON

CENTER FOR HEALTHY MINDS, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON, USA



A growing corpus of scientific evidence reveals that social and emotional competencies in children and teens are far more consequential for major adult outcomes than traditional metrics of academic success. For example, rigorous research has established that social and emotional competencies early in life—such as self-management skills in children five years of age—are better predictors of major young adult life outcomes such as health and financial success, than traditional academic metrics of grades and standardized test scores. These key insights have spawned the movement that is frequently called Social and Emotional Learning (SEL).

Interventions designed to promote SEL have been empirically studied and the scientific findings clearly show gains on various proximal measures of social and emotional competencies. The evidence also demonstrates improvements on distal measures such as traditional academic metrics and even on standardized test scores. The available body of evidence strongly suggests that interventions focused on social and emotional learning are helpful in promoting effective emotion regulation, the setting and maintaining of positive goals, empathy toward others, establishing and maintaining positive social relationships and making responsible decisions. Moreover, SEL programs can act preventatively to minimize the likelihood of bullying, antisocial behavior, excessive risk taking, anxiety



and depression. Investment in early interventions to promote SEL clearly provide a return on investment that far exceeds by several-fold the cost of such programs. It is for all of these reasons that widespread dissemination of SEL programs globally is so important.

In parallel with the development and promotion of SEL is the neuroscience evidence that establishes some of the key circuits that underlie the core competencies in popular models of SEL. For example there is a large body of neuroscientific evidence on self-management that includes the growing understanding of the circuits critical for emotion regulation and delay of gratification. In the domain of social awareness, neuroscientific evidence has provided an understanding of both cognitive and affective circuits that underlie different aspects of empathy. Responsible decision making, another core competency of SEL, requires the integration of both affective and cognitive features that depend upon the ventromedial prefrontal cortex and structures with which it is interconnected. Of particular importance is the recognition that these circuits all exhibit plasticity. They are often shaped by forces around the individual of which they have little awareness and often no control. These external influences that shape the brain over the lifetime can be the cause of much suffering. However, these same neural circuits can be transformed to promote flourishing and well-being by the systematic practice of the skills of social and emotional learning.

This is the great promise and opportunity.

I believe that today we have a moral obligation to incorporate SEL into our educational systems at all levels. We can view this as a form of mental hygiene or mental exercise, akin to taking care of our bodies. When humans first evolved on this planet, we were not brushing our teeth at the beginning, yet virtually every human being on the planet today has learned this skill and incorporates it into their daily routine. If we nurtured positive qualities of our mind—the sort of competencies featured in typical SEL programs—even for the short amount of time each day that we spend brushing our teeth, I have the strong conviction that this world would be a very different place.

The UNESCO MGIEP is poised to widely disseminate programs for SEL that will have the potential to influence the development of the next generation of global citizens. The MGIEP is exploring different modes of dissemination including digital platforms that show great promise for massive scaling. This work is critical to the future of our species and our planet and is based upon fundamentally sound scientific insights about the emotional brain and neuroplasticity. The work of the MGIEP provides some glimmer of optimism in the troubled world we inhabit in this first half of the 21st century.



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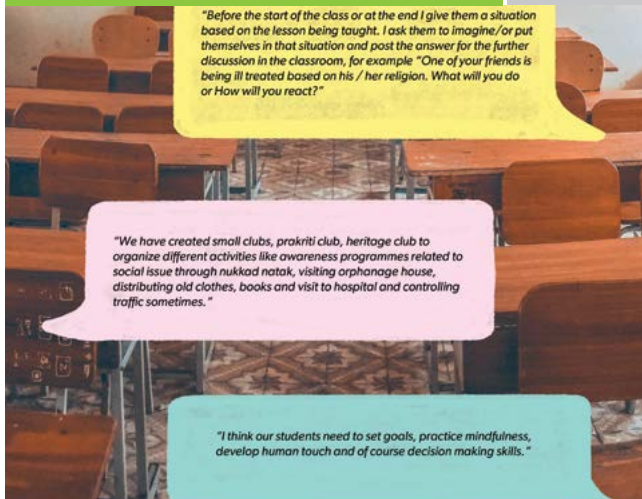
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"Before the start of the class or at the end I give them a situation based on the lesson being taught. I ask them to imagine/or put themselves in that situation and post the answer for the further discussion in the classroom, for example "One of your friends is being ill treated based on his / her religion. What will you do or How will you react?"

"We have created small clubs, prakriti club, heritage club to organize different activities like awareness programmes related to social issue through nukkad natak, visiting orphanage house, distributing old clothes, books and visit to hospital and controlling traffic sometimes."

"I think our students need to set goals, practice mindfulness, develop human touch and of course decision making skills."

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TECH 2019

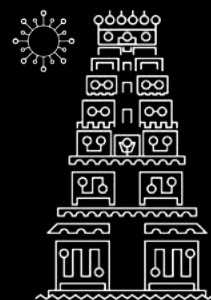
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Transforming Education Conference for Humanity

2019

VISAKHAPATNAM



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Expert Perspectives

Social and Emotional Learning

The need for resilient and adaptive individuals for rapidly changing environments is becoming increasingly important. Recent research has demonstrated that students need to be “socially aware” and “emotionally-connected” in order to learn effectively and for societies to flourish.

Social and emotional learning is key to building both emotional and intellectual intelligence in learners and can also play a pivotal role in achieving peaceful and sustainable societies.

Read expert perspectives and youth voices on social and emotional learning and the importance of introducing these skills in our education systems.





An Interview with **Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl**

By Keerthi Ramanujan, Former Junior Research Fellow, UNESCO MGIEP
Illustrations by Anurati Srivastva, Illustrator, UNESCO MGIEP

KIMBERLY A. SCHONERT-REICHL

Applied Developmental Psychologist and a Professor in the Human Development, Learning, and Culture area in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Special Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC).



Dr. Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl is the Director of the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP), an interdisciplinary research unit focused on child development in the School of Population and Public Health in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC. Known as a world-renowned expert in the area of social and emotional learning (SEL), her research focuses on identification of the processes and mechanisms that foster positive human qualities such as empathy, compassion, altruism, and resiliency in children and adolescents. She has over 130 publications in scholarly journals, book chapters, and reports and has edited two books on mindfulness in education. Dr. Schonert-Reichl's research has been highlighted in several magazines and newspapers across Canada, the US, and internationally, including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Le Monde, The Wall Street Journal and the Time Magazine, amongst various others. She has also appeared on numerous radio and television programs.

Editor's Notes



- The interview starts off describing Dr. Schonert Reichl's journey towards social and emotional learning and the importance of social relationships in classrooms with children
- The interviewer continues to discuss the importance of SEL in classrooms and how it helps
- Dr. Schonert Reichl describes some myths of SEL and challenges of SEL and proposes how we can change the system to make SEL a part of our education systems

Key Words



Social and emotional development, Classrooms, Engagement, Connection, Social relationships, Challenges, Myths, System change.

Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl was in New Delhi, India recently for UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP)'s ninth Distinguished Lecture. During her lecture, Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl discussed how children's social and emotional well-being can be cultivated through evidence-based programs and practical approaches. Our Research Fellow, Dr. Keerthi Ramanujan, caught up with her just after her lecture for some more insights in her work on social and emotional learning (SEL).

1. Dr. Schonert-Reichl; let's start with asking you about how you began your journey with SEL and how you got into SEL?

That's a great question. I have thought about it a lot in the last 30 years of my career focused on trying to understand how we can support children's social and emotional development in classrooms and schools.

I started my teaching career, teaching French to a class of 7th and 8th grade students. I was so excited to get the job; I was substituting for another colleague for six months. One day, during class, I decided to try something different. We were all learning French words for different types of food, for which students usually study for exams at the end of a unit or a chapter. The students would usually write the words and sentences and one day I said to them "Do you really want to study that way or should we try something different?"

We decided to brainstorm all the different approaches in which we could better learn the vocabulary for French food. One of the ideas that came up, which was very interesting, was to set up a French café during class and bring real food.

Soon I saw the students very engaged in the discussion as they planned who would bring what. We didn't finish all the menus during class, so they offered to come after class and finish the outstanding work on the menus.

On the day of the French Café, the students set up the entire class like an authentic café with a maitre d' and small units of people sitting together. We had the menus, the servers – they had organised it all and taken control of the situation. The entire exercise was so much fun. The students also defined their own rules of how we could only order in French and that we had to use all the vocabulary words.

When the students took the exam the next Monday, they all did so well. I realized then the importance of engaging students, about being connected, building social relationships in the classrooms. I became much more interested in not only how they understand math and science, but also how they understand

themselves and others. I became interested in how learning in its very essence is relational.

Thereafter I worked at the alternative high school and I learnt very quickly with all the kids that had learning disabilities, if they didn't feel a connection with me, they wouldn't come to school. It was all about how I got those kids engaged. So the first thing I asked them was to help me decorate the classroom. I just became so interested in how they develop a sense of empathy.

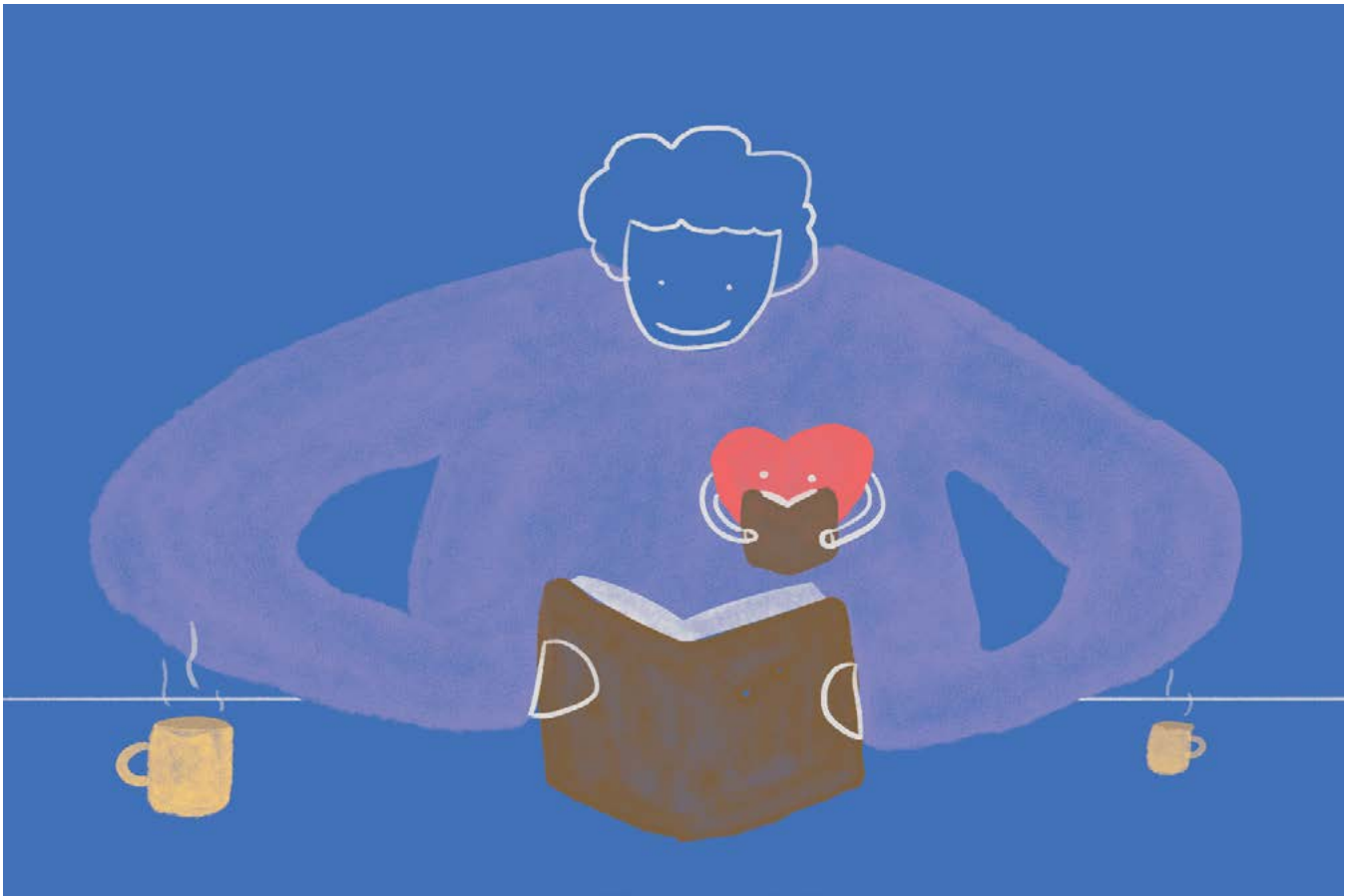
2. So you clearly realized at that point that it isn't just about academics – there's a bigger connection with the kids?

Yes, it was about helping them become people. My job as a teacher wasn't just for them to read math, but more about helping them feel good about themselves and their relationships with others. At that point – I was just testing a 'hypothesis'. I was trying out different things and then I thought I want to go back to graduate school after teaching because I want to see if I can research further on this way of learning. I remember finding a whole set of literature of people studying the social side of education and that made me feel elated. I felt I had discovered a treasure.

3. So, Dr. Kimberly, another thing I want to ask is about how SEL affects children in classrooms and also specifically how it helps kids who are at the fringes or kids who are not academically gifted?

First of all, I would say that all students regardless of how academically able they are need social and emotional skills. Desmond Tutu said "Educating the mind without educating the heart has led to brilliant scientists who use their intelligence for evil". Can you imagine having a brilliant scientist without any empathy or compassion? Or think about the future and all the problems we need to deal with yet i.e. climate change. We need our future generations not only to be those brilliant, creative people who solve our problems but they have to do so with compassion and think about how their new creations will impact society.

My job as a teacher wasn't just for them to read math, but more about helping them feel good about themselves and their relationships with others.



My experience working with troubled kids – or kids with family problems – or those in conflict driven zones, is if they have a really dysfunctional home, coming to school and learning these things really help when they have everything going against them. From all the research on resiliency, we know having one important adult in your life – whether it be a teacher, coach or priest makes a difference for those kids who are vulnerable. The kids may not have the stress right now, but you do not know what is around the corner. And if you have a set of skills to draw from, all kids need to have those skills – of how to manage emotions, resolve conflicts etc.

Thirdly, what we know from the research is when you focus on promoting the social and emotional competencies of students, and you help them learn empathy and kindness and even self-compassion, you increase academic achievement. On the contrary, what we know is interventions that just focus on promoting academic achievements, do nothing for your social and emotional skills.

To add to this, I love these sayings: “When you feel your best, you learn the best”. Think about it, when you feel like you are in

a safe, caring environment and when your friend is next to you, if you drop your pencil, they will pick it up or if you forget your assignment – someone will understand that. Of course you will learn in that positive mood state.

And the other one I love, which is especially true for kids at risk “Students don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care”.

Back in 2005, I was doing research on a programme called MindUp that brings mindfulness and social and emotional learning to classrooms. I was a bit skeptical I have to say; I wasn’t sure – it was brand new and I didn’t know how the kids would take it. The response of the kids was unbelievable. We worked with kids in kindergarten and then fourth and fifth grades. Essentially, they said this “Finally you are teaching us something in schooling that we can use in our life”. We did an entire survey and discovered that over 50% of those who were taught mindfulness and social and emotional learning went and taught their skill to other family members or friends.

“Educating the mind without educating the heart has led to brilliant scientists who use their intelligence for evil”

4. Great, thanks for this wonderful insight. Another question that I have is on the myths of social and emotional learning, given that you have interacted with various stakeholders of SEL – from kids to the policymakers. Can you help us identify some misconceptions or challenges related to SEL curriculum that some stakeholders such as parents, students or policy-makers may have?

The challenge for parents is that they feel that these are skills that should be taught at home or in the church, or in another holy place. So they wonder why we are teaching empathy at school – we should stick to math, science, social studies. That is a challenge and what I argue is that teachers every day are teaching social and emotional learning just by being around.



Can you imagine having a brilliant scientist without any empathy or compassion?

We need our future generations not only to be those brilliant, creative people who solve our problems but they have to do so with compassion and think about how their new creations will impact society.

Kids are watching teachers respond to a situation – they are learning how adults manage social situations; if a child gets upset does a teacher get upset or does the teacher respond empathetically? It has been called the “hidden curriculum”. We are teaching it anyways, so why not do it in a way that we know is informed from science instead of a hit and miss way. I think that’s one fear.

But I do want to say, what I have seen in the past few years, is a hunger by parents to get this information. They see increasing rates of anxiety and depression in their children and as parents there is nothing more stressful than seeing your child in pain. They just want to help their kids be happy and healthy human beings. The time is NOW. There is a shift in society to know how important these skills are.

Kids - let me just say – with kids, I don’t have to do any convincing.

Policymakers – I have been very fortunate to work with policymakers in British Columbia, for which I was an expert advisor for re-doing the curriculum. I think I had the credibility in the teaching community, and because I had done research in British Columbia, – and that’s what helped me get through to the policymakers in British Columbia.

5. Just to follow up on this, given that so many schools around the world are so academically oriented, have you had challenges where teachers say they can’t afford kids to do SEL – as they are seeking defined academic outputs from students?

I see that. It makes me think we need a societal shift. We need a campaign. We need to get the science out there that says for our future generations, we need kind, compassionate kids who are self-regulated. I think one of our biggest challenges in the world today is climate change. When we have reduced resources, think about all the social and emotional skills that are needed to help the planet survive. You need to have individuals across countries who are leaders, who are compassionate, who understand how to negotiate and compromise about reduced values. You need people creating new inventions that will have a benefit to our society. It is for the survival of our planet that we need education where we need academic achievement integrated with social and emotional learning.

The research is clear. There have been four large meta-analysis / studies – showing that social and emotional learning programmes increase academic achievement. So, this is not an additional cost. People have to let go of the idea of if we do this,

The research is clear. There have been four large meta-analysis / studies – showing that social and emotional learning programmes increase academic achievement; social and emotional learning is not just restricted to kids, it goes on to adolescents and adults as well as educators.

we have to let go of that. Additionally, social and emotional learning is not just restricted to kids, it goes on to adolescents and adults as well as educators.

How do we change the system and that’s the moral of my story. It isn’t about targeting one group – it is about targeting a system and identifying the levers of change for the system.

6. So how do we change the system?

You really need to do a top down and bottom up approach. You need policy change, because that provides the space where teachers feel they can teach SEL freely without pressure. You have to do a bottom up approach where you start with teacher preparation and encourage innovation. Teachers need to know what SEL looks like. I almost feel like there should be lab schools – where teachers can go in, learn, and see from other teachers. You have to involve the system – the policymakers, the business leaders and the parents. The parents have to be hand-in-hand. If they are not supporting it, the teachers are putting in all the effort and the effort will go waste. Lastly, the students have to be engaged – we need to listen to the students. Going back to the beginning of our interaction, I’ve seen when you listen to students, and value their opinion, they have so many brilliant things to say. We cannot forget the voices of the kids.



OPINION

What is Systemic Social and Emotional Learning **and** *Why Does it Matter?*

JOSEPH L. MAHONEY AND ROGER P. WEISSBERG

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
Chicago, Illinois – United States

Please direct correspondence to:

Roger P. Weissberg, PhD
Chief Knowledge Officer

Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

815 West Van Buren, Suite 210

Chicago, IL 60607

Ph: 312 965 6395 / email: rpw@uic.edu



Joseph L. Mahoney is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Superior and Senior Research Scientist at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in Chicago. His work focuses on the social, emotional, and educational development of young people. He collaborates with CASEL to make scientific evidence related to social and emotional learning useful for practitioners and used in practice to support high-quality learning environments and positive developmental outcomes.



Roger P. Weissberg is Chief Knowledge Officer of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). He is also UIC Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Psychology at the University of Illinois at Chicago. For the past 40 years, he has trained scholars and practitioners about innovative ways to design, implement and evaluate family, school and community interventions that promote the social and emotional learning of children and adolescents.





- The authors start off discussing the context in which social and emotional skills are becoming critical for students / learners to deal with global issues
- The authors then define SEL according to the CASEL framework and discuss how various research studies highlight the importance of SEL
- Furthermore, competencies of the CASEL framework are discussed in parts, post which the importance of a systemic approach to SEL is defined

What is Systemic Social and Emotional Learning and Why Does it Matter?

Societies are changing in rapid and profound ways with respect to environmental, economic, technological, and social factors¹. Across the world, education is rising to meet the challenge of preparing young people to succeed in a multicultural, diverse, and interconnected world. Parents, schools, communities, and societies from around the world agree that building social and emotional competencies is important^{2,3,4}. **Accordingly, schools worldwide are working to provide all children with the interrelated and transferable competencies they need to contribute successfully to their classrooms, families, and communities**^{5,6,7,8,9}.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has defined social and emotional learning (SEL) as “...the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions”^{9,10}.

CASEL’s mission has been to help make evidence-based SEL an essential part of the preschool to high school education¹¹. As a collaborative, we have learned a lot from our partners across the United States and around the world. To that end, people from more than 180 countries have visited CASEL’s Webpage at www.casel.org during the last year to attain and share knowledge on SEL.

A growing number of research studies have documented that well-implemented SEL programs can provide many of the tools young people need to be successful at school, at home, at work, in relationships, and in life¹².



- CASEL framework,
- Systemic SEL,
- Managing emotions,
- Evidence-based SEL,
- Five competencies of SEL,
- Classroom,
- School,
- Family and community level factors,
- Whole-child,
- School-wide approach

SEL can also help young people to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to become active, responsible, and engaged citizens able to meet complex demands¹³. These skills can further promote resilience, the ability to cope with adversity, and foster social-emotional well-being for children and adults living in contexts featuring violence and conflict, political crises, and natural disasters¹⁴. As a result, SEL is now a global phenomenon¹⁵ that has become an important part of educational standards for what children should be expected to know and do across development^{16,17}.

A Systemic Approach to SEL

Systemic approaches to SEL are carried out in the context of a consistent, multi-layered educational system of relationships that support, integrate, and sustain social and emotional learning synergistically across contexts and over time^{18,19}.

These skills can further promote resilience, the ability to cope with adversity, and foster social-emotional well-being for children and adults

This approach maintains that it is possible for educators to intentionally create conditions that optimize social and emotional development for all children. These conditions are fostered through the use and continuous improvement of evidence-based practices that actively involve students, reinforce

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social and emotional competencies, and create equitable learning opportunities across school, family, and community partnerships^{20 21 22}.

Figure 1 shows CASEL's framework for systemic SEL. At the center of the figure, CASEL has identified five core social and emotional competence clusters: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making²³.

The CASEL 5 emphasize intrapersonal skills and attitudes (self-awareness and self-management), interpersonal skills and attitudes (social awareness, empathy and other relationship skills), and making ethical and principled choices in personal and social situations. Surrounding the 5 competencies in Figure 1 are three "rings" that identify classroom, school, family, and community level factors. The factors represented in these rings show how SEL programming and policies can be implemented successfully. That

is, the processes and settings that surround the competencies in Figure 1 are where the power and potential for SEL are located. They are the means by which the competencies are achieved^{24 25 26}. CASEL has collaborated with districts and schools to establish, implement, evaluate, and scale systemic SEL models, resources, and trainings focused on four core elements: Build Foundational Support and Plan, Strengthen Adult SEL Competence and Capacity, Promote SEL for Students, and Practice Continuous Improvement^{27 28}.

In a systemic approach, SEL can and does take place across multiple contexts, each day, and all year around. For example, SEL at the classroom level needs to be embedded in coordinated, systemic, whole-child, school-wide approaches²⁹. Beyond the school setting, learning takes place in the home through interactions with family members. Likewise, multiple settings in the community including organized out-of-school activities (e.g., after-school and summer programs

Figure 1
CASEL's framework
for systemic SEL.



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and community-based organizations) provide opportunities for young people to learn and practice social and emotional skills with others as well as to apply these skills to improve their school and community.

In addition to coordinating learning opportunities across settings, a systemic approach to SEL provides an overarching organization under which schools and communities can integrate different learning experiences and organize and coordinate other services and programs (e.g., preventing smoking, drug use, alcohol, pregnancy, violence, and bullying)³⁰.

Benefits of SEL Programming

One common question asked by educators and policy makers involves whether there is research evidence documenting the effectiveness of SEL. In a recent paper³¹, we compare the findings from four large-scale meta-analyses of SEL programs^{32 33 34 35}. Overall, 356 research reports with rigorous designs and outcome data at post or follow-up from hundreds of thousands of K to 12 students conducted within and outside the U.S. on a range of SEL programs are included. The four reports reached the same general conclusion about universal school-based SEL programs: they produce positive benefits in behavioral, attitudinal, emotional, and academic domains for participating students that are evident both immediately following the end of intervention and that persist during various follow-up periods depending on the specific outcome in question.

However, there are different conditions under which SEL programs are most likely to be beneficial. One condition is that an evidence-based program is used. These programs are well-designed, deliver high quality training, and have been rigorously evaluated so that one has confidence the program is effective and, if it is implemented well (i.e., with fidelity), then specific, positive results are likely to occur for the participants³⁶. A study conducted at Columbia University³⁷ found that evidence-based SEL programs are highly cost effective, returning \$11 for every \$1 invested in the programs.

Another condition is that the program contains SAFE features³⁸. SAFE is acronym that stands for (a) sequenced step-by-step training, (b) active forms of learning, (c) a focus on social and emotional skill development, and (d) explicit SEL goals.

Systemic approaches to SEL are carried out in the context of a consistent, multi-layered educational system of relationships

Systemic SEL in Action

CASEL's Collaborating District Initiative (CDI) is a partnership with 20 mostly large, urban school districts to support their efforts to systemically implement high-quality, evidence-based SEL districtwide³⁹. These districts have made SEL part of their strategic plans and budgets. They are engaging in explicit instruction of SEL competencies and integrating SEL into instruction in math, language arts, history, etc.

To assess the impact of the CDI's efforts, CASEL entered into an ongoing data collection and evaluation partnership with the districts and American Institutes for Research (AIR). Data were collected to measure the implementation and resulting outcomes. Since implementation of the CDI in 2011, academic achievement has improved consistently in reading and math. Teachers have become more effective. Attendance and graduation rates are up. Suspensions and expulsions are down. Students feel safer and more connected to school. While the availability of data varied by district, qualitative and quantitative outcomes are promising. External evaluations also showed consistent year-to-year improvements in school culture and climate, as well as student outcomes.

Today's cultural forces (e.g., social media, news media, video games, movies) and education systems are much more geared towards promoting competition, aggression, and violence than peacefulness and cooperation.

Challenges to Systemic SEL

Several challenges arise from questions concerning the universality of SEL across settings and cultures⁴⁰. **Because different cultures have different school, family, and community contexts, and will have different priorities with respect to the competencies they want to promote and problems they want to prevent, SEL may not necessarily be the same in all cultures.**

Thus, one question for our field is the extent to which SEL programs need to be culture specific to fit the range of recipient student populations across societies⁴¹. For example, we are only beginning to research the role of SEL in low-resource contexts affected by armed conflicts⁴². However, available evidence suggests that SEL programs can be adapted to fit a wide range of local realities where young people experience considerable adversity. Another related question is to what extent can SEL programs operate at a universal level rather than being geared toward specific needs of diverse groups of learners within and across societies? We also are continuing to learn more about the ways that schools, families, and communities can best coordinate their efforts to align SEL programs and practices within and across ecologies to address the social and emotional needs of children of different ages and from varied families and communities. Finally, we need to know more about the best ways to prepare educators to implement evidence-based SEL programs effectively and engage in data-driven efforts to continuously improve their programs and SEL outcomes for students and adults.

Concluding Comment

The field has made many research, practice, and policy advances over the last 25 years since CASEL introduced and defined SEL⁴³⁻⁴⁵. Innovative, evidence-based, systemic SEL approaches with diverse groups of students are underway. With more international collaboration over the next decade, we can develop educational systems and strategies that will improve the lives and life opportunities of many children and adolescents⁴⁶. CASEL looks forward to partnering with colleagues worldwide to make this vision a reality.



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Educating the Head, the Heart and the Hand in the 21st Century:

Notes from India and the United States

ROBERT W. ROESER, PHD

Bennett-Pierce Professor of Caring and Compassion
Department of Human Development and Family Studies
College of Health and Human Development
Pennsylvania State University
rwr15@psu.edu



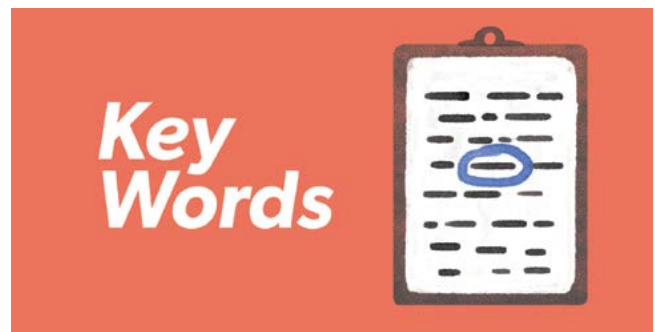
Robert W. Roeser is the Bennett Pierce Professor of Care and Compassion at Pennsylvania State University. He received his Ph.D. from the Combined Program in Education and Psychology at the University of Michigan (1996) and holds master's degrees in religion and psychology, developmental psychology and clinical social work. His research focuses on schooling and its impact on students' academic, social-emotional and ethical development; as well as on the implementation and evaluation of mindfulness and compassion programs for parents, teachers and students.



-In his Opinion Piece, the author discusses various innovative holistic educational approaches in India, under the rubrics of “values education” or “character development” as well as “social and emotional learning” and “mindfulness and compassion in education” in the United States

-As a U.S. Fulbright Scholar in India, the author studied a subset of innovative schools that used contemplative practices such as meditation, chanting, arts, being in nature and yoga amongst others. The author touches upon the effects of some of these contemplative practices

-In the US, the author discusses the research that establishes that schools are most successful in their educational mission when they integrate universal efforts to promote children’s academic, social and emotional learning



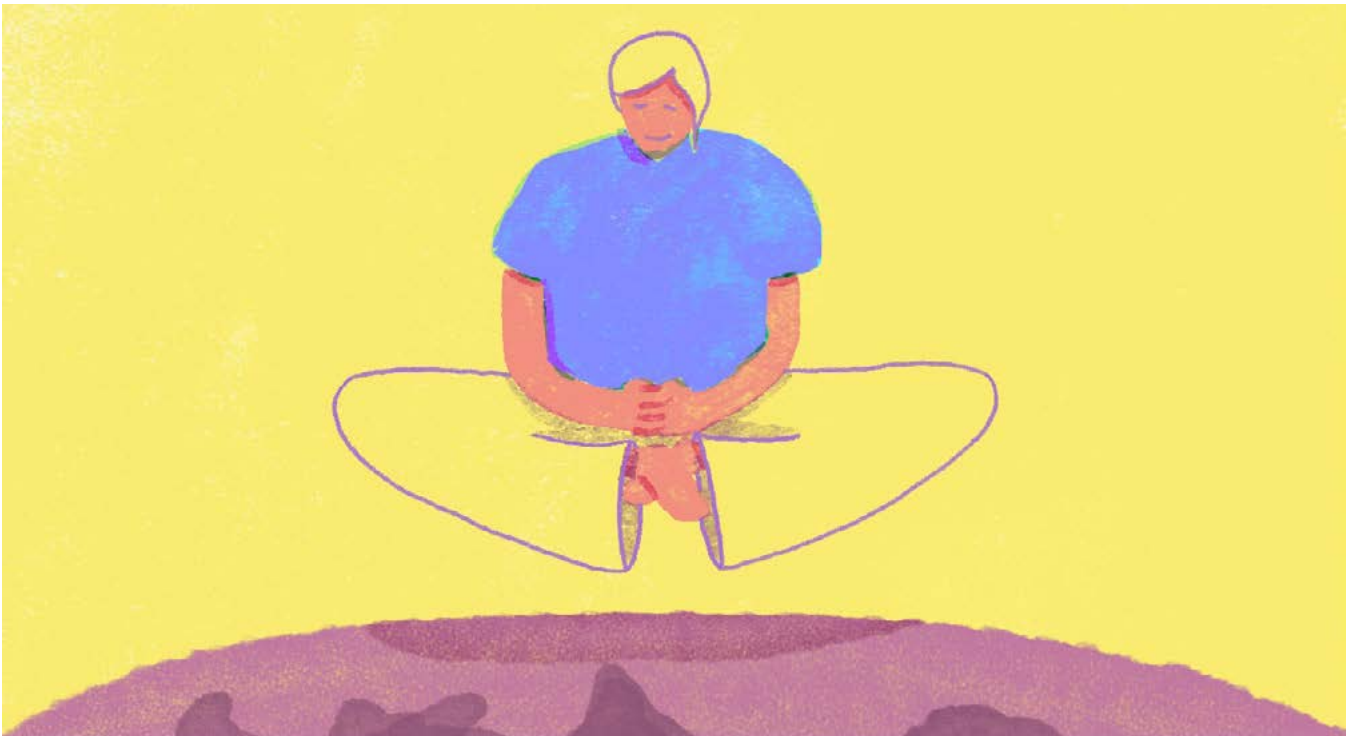
*Values education,
Character development,
Mindfulness and compassion in education,
Contemplative practices,
Holistic education,
Ethical learning.*

The world stands in need of social systems renewal in a global age, and schools represent a key cultural institution that can shape new generations of young people to be forces for good in the world. The question confronting those of us interested in education as a primary means of social change in this regard is this: How can we better educate young people today not only in the academic skills and knowledge they need to succeed as workers in the global economy (e.g., the head), but also in the social-emotional, ethical (e.g., the heart) and practical skills (e.g., the hand) that they need to flourish and to be engaged citizens who can help address the pressing global challenges of our times: social inequality, political corruption and social division, and ecological devastation.

Thus, in an effort to answer this pressing educational question, policy makers, educators and scholars in countries across the world are seeking new approaches to primary and secondary education in the 21st century that have as their aim the holistic (academic, social-emotional, ethical and physical) development of young people¹²³. During the past 20 years, I have been

studying various innovative holistic educational approaches in India, under the rubrics of “values education” or “character development;” and in the United States, under the rubrics of “social-emotional learning (SEL)” and “mindfulness and compassion in education.” These novel educational approaches, and related approaches from various parts of the world, show great promise and represent the kind of innovation we need for societal renewal in these challenging times, an education of the head, the heart and the hand “for one’s own liberation and for the good of the world” as Swami Vivekananda put it.

From many quarters today, we see the emergence of the idea that the adaptation of premodern wisdom regarding the education of the whole person is needed in post-modern education if we are to rise to the challenges confronting us as a species and a planet. Such premodern wisdom is centrally about the importance of cultivating attentional skills (e.g., mindfulness), social-emotional skills (e.g., compassion), systems-thinking skills (e.g., seeing interdependence and common humanity) and ethics (e.g., fairness, care). In my own journey, I have found the Sanskrit-based traditions of India to be an indispensable treasure trove of premodern wisdom that can be adapted to post-modern education.



Holistic Education in India

For over 2500 years, the contemplative practice traditions of India have evolved sophisticated theories of mind and corresponding sets of mental and physical training practices by which the empowerment of the individual, the stabilization of attention, the refinement of awareness and insight, the promotion of harmonious relationships, and cultivation of ethical values in everyday behavior (e.g., peace, kindness, fairness) can be realized⁴. The search for how to bring this form of education into the modern era was articulated in the early 20th century by Swami Vivekananda:

We need the kind of education by which character is formed, strength of mind increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet. (Swami Vivekananda, Collected Works, Volume 5, p.342)

The need for an education in our post-modern times was a topic I was keenly interested in as a U.S. Fulbright scholar in India in 2005. I studied a specific subset of innovative schools that were using contemplative practices like meditation, chanting and recitation of prayers, being in nature, the arts, philosophical inquiry, yoga and service as primary experiential modalities of “values education.” These schools were all, in one way or another, seeking to provide a high-quality values education focused on the development of attention, prosocial values, and ethical behavior (e.g., heart and hand) alongside a high-quality academic education (e.g., the head). Through this research,

I learned a great deal about the opportunities and challenges inherent in using these kinds of experiential approaches in schools.

In our research, for instance, we found wide variation in students’ understanding of and self-reported engagement in these various contemplative practices. In fact, only about 50% of the students we surveyed reported engagement in the practices they were asked to do in school. Furthermore, students (ages 12-15) reported a desire to know more about the “why” behind these contemplative practices and values exercises and how doing them might actually transform “personality.” Nonetheless, many students reported receiving benefit from doing the practices despite less than optimal engagement or understanding of them.

These findings led to many new questions. **Scientifically, I began to wonder if we could design more rigorous scientific studies to assess the impact of contemplative practices on students’ attention, emotion and behavior.**

Practically, I wondered: How can we best engage students in experiential exercises meant to train attention, emotion, or values? How can we best explain the purpose of these practices, as well as the processes by which such practices have their intended benefits? How can we frame these practices in ways that matter to the life concerns of students? What are the best pedagogical techniques and ways of doing this in pluralistic societies? Might it be advantageous to develop non-sectarian, secular approaches to “whole person education” that are accessible to those from many different cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds? Could the sciences of the mind and the

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brain, rather than ancient philosophic and spiritual sectarian traditions, be used to motivate and explain the use of such practices in education? These were the kinds of questions that were raised during my time in India and am still exploring today. When I returned home to the US in 2006, I found and joined a new movement that was emerging that aimed to build upon the social-emotional learning movement to bring secularized (and eventually, scientifically-validated) forms of attention (e.g., mindfulness) and emotion (e.g., compassion) training into public education.



Social-Emotional Learning in Schools

In the later decades of the 20th century in the United States, a science-based movement to introduce social-emotional learning in schools to support academic learning was begun. Social and emotional learning has been defined as

“the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaving to achieve important life tasks. Those competent in SEL are able to recognize and manage their emotions, establish healthy relationships, set positive goals, meet personal and social needs, and make responsible and ethical decisions.”²⁵

The pedagogical means of enhancing students’ social-emotional learning is through a competent teacher of SEL skills in a supportive community.

Social and emotional education involves teaching children to be self-aware, socially cognizant, able to make responsible decisions, and competent in self-management and relationship-management skills so as to foster their academic success.⁶

Research has now clearly established that schools are most successful in their educational mission when they integrate universal efforts to promote children’s academic, social, and emotional learning. For instance, a meta-analysis (an analysis of the findings of many studies⁷) examined the outcomes of over 200 school-based social and emotional learning programs involving about 270,000 primary and secondary students. Compared to control students, those who participated in SEL programs showed improved social-emotional skills, academic motivation and behavior (e.g. attendance, rule-following). Of the twenty-seven programs that examined indicators of academic achievement at the post-intervention period, student receiving SEL programs showed significant and meaningful improvements on achievement test performance; the effect was equivalent to an approximately an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement.

A second meta-analysis⁸ examined the longer-term effects of participation in SEL programs. The analysis included 82 school-based SEL programs involving about 98,000 students and looked at effects collected 6-months to 18 years after the program ended. Students who participated in SEL programs were found to do better than control students on social-emotional skills, attitudes and wellbeing. These improvements were shown regardless of the child’s race, socioeconomic background or school location. Thus, there is now good evidence that SEL improves academic and social-emotional outcomes in both the near and longer-terms.

Could the sciences of the mind and the brain, rather than ancient philosophic and spiritual sectarian traditions, be used to motivate and explain the use of such practices in education?

Approaches to SEL have become more focused on teacher preparation for program implementation, as well as on the totality of school and classroom learning environments and whether or not these environments are conducive to learning and well-being, knowledge and ethical conduct, achievement and harmonious and caring social relationships. Mindfulness and compassion training for educators has proven scientifically effective in reducing stress and burnout, improving wellbeing, and even in improving the nature of teachers’ interactions

with students in the classroom. Thus, there is great promise in marrying mindfulness and compassion training for educators with the implementation of school-wide SEL programs for students. Taking such a systems-wide, whole school approach in which the holistic development of adults and students are both seen as important and interdependent represents the next phase in this line of work.

Mindfulness, Compassion and Ethical Learning in Schools

Whereas social-emotional learning approaches have become more widespread, a second movement around the introduction of practices like mindfulness and compassion in education has emerged that both complements and extends the putative impacts of SEL⁹. Since 2000, there has been an explosion of creative curricula that reflect secular (non-religious) mindfulness, compassion and yoga programs aimed at teaching children from ages 4 and up skills related to attention, prosocial values, and ethical behavior.

Based on adaptations of ancient wisdom, these programs involve experiential practices designed to help students develop calm, clear and kind states of awareness in a context of personal growth and ethical values such as curiosity, open-mindedness, open-heartedness, and caring for others. Such practices might involve being in nature, doing art, learning physical sequences of movements (e.g., tai chi, yoga), engaging in guided imagery, contemplating existential questions, or practicing meditation. Furthermore, these programs often take recourse in the science of the mind (psychology) and the brain (neuroscience) to explain concepts like the stress response or, focused attention, as well as how what we practice over and over changes the structure and function of our minds and brains (e.g., MindUp program). Whereas such programs have proliferated in public education in the United States, Europe, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and other countries, the scientific investigation of the effects of these programs on child and adolescent development is still just beginning. Thus, the dictum “do no harm” should be the first principle among practitioners in this regard. Nonetheless, results from the studies that have been done with children, adolescents and early adults are very promising, and scientific research on such programs in schools remains an important priority in this area of scholarship.

In sum, what is emerging today are secular, holistic approaches to education - what Dan Goleman calls SEL 2.0. Such programs involve the integration of attention/mindfulness training, emotion/compassion training, and systems thinking training and extend the basic competencies taught in social-emotional learning programs. A beautiful example of such a framework is the Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning framework developed at Emory University with Dr. Lobsang Tenzin

Negi and colleagues (see <https://seelearning.emory.edu>). The SEE Learning framework is organized into three skill-based dimensions: (1) Awareness, (2) Compassion, and (3) Engagement, each of which can be taught across three domains of experience: (1) the Personal, (2) the Social, and (3) the Level of Social Systems (see Figure 1). The SEE Learning program, like SEL programs, is best delivered within an educational context that is based on care and compassion and with teachers who strive to embody these underlying values. This curriculum is available for free to all to explore, adapt, implement and refine.

Conclusion

The renewal of social systems in societies across the world requires new forms of education. **How can we reshape education today in order to create new generations of citizens who are simultaneously keen of mind, compassionate in heart, and competent in handiwork; and who therefore can address the challenges of our times?** There is currently a worldwide movement aimed at adapting premodern wisdom into post-modern forms of education in an effort to address this question (see Figure 1). At the heart of this nameless movement is a vision of education that sees the formation of “good people” and “engaged citizens” as equally important to the preparation of “good workers.” We hope this vision spreads everywhere, for the flourishing of individuals and for the good of the world.

Figure 1. Social-Emotional and Ethical Learning Curricular Framework

		DIMENSIONS		
		Awareness	Compassion	Engagement
DOMAINS	Personal	Attention and Self-Awareness (1A)	Self-Compassion (1C)	Self Regulation (1E)
	Social	Interpersonal Awareness (2A)	Compassion for others (2C)	Relationship Skills (2E)
	Systemic	Appreciating Inter-Dependence (3A)	Recognizing Common Humanity (3C)	Community and Global Engagement (3E)

Source: <https://seelearning.emory.edu>

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Interview with **Patricia Jennings**

By Akriti Mehra, Communications Specialist, UNESCO MGIEP

PATRICIA JENNINGS

Professor

Dept. of Curriculum, Instruction and Special Education, University of Virginia



Patricia (Tish) Jennings is an internationally recognized leader in the fields of social and emotional learning and mindfulness in education. Her research places a specific emphasis on teacher stress and how it impacts the social and emotional context of the classroom. She is the author of numerous peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters and several books including *Mindfulness for Teachers: Simple Skills for Peace and Productivity in the Classroom*, *The Trauma-Sensitive School: Building Resilience with Compassionate Teaching*.

Editor's Notes



- Patricia Jennings describes the role and importance of teacher training in SEL
- She discusses the similarities and difference in training in SEL for the teacher and training in SEL for the student or the learner as well as some associated frameworks
- Further, she discusses some of the challenges in teacher training and suggests practical ways in which these challenges may be overcome

Key Words



- Living curriculum,*
- Teacher training,*
- Managing stress,*
- Burnout cascade,*
- Self awareness,*
- Self manage,*
- Social awareness,*
- Relationship skills,*
- Decision making skills.*



1. How is social and emotional learning (SEL) taught in classrooms?

This question is very difficult to answer simply. There are a variety of SEL programs available for students of every grade level; however, they require the support of school and district administration in order to be effective in the long run. CASEL has identified efficacious programs and factors that contribute to implementation success. I would refer readers to CASEL.org

2. What is the role of the teacher in teaching SEL?

The teacher plays a unique role in SEL because children learn SEL skills by observing and interacting with adults and peers. To effectively teach SEL, teachers need to understand that with each interaction they have the opportunity to model SEL skills for their students. In this way they are not just providing SEL instruction but are actually a “living curriculum.” To do this well teachers

need very high degrees of social and emotional competence. They need to be able to monitor their emotions and behavior in such a way that they communicate these skills to their students. Otherwise they may inadvertently model behaviors that contradict what the program aims to teach¹.

3. How might SEL training for ‘the teacher’ differ from SEL training for ‘the student’?

My colleagues and I developed the Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE) program to address this issue. Often the stresses of teaching interfere with teachers’ abilities to effectively perform their jobs, especially when it comes to classroom management, modeling and teaching SEL skills, and building supportive relationships with their students². The CARE program combines mindful awareness and compassion practices with emotion skills instruction to help teachers understand and become aware of the stress response so they can proactively manage their stress. This helps them cultivate the attributes of a mindful teacher; calm, clear, and kind³. In our research we have found

that CARE reduces psychological distress and time-related stress and promotes mindfulness and emotion regulation. CARE also improves the emotional supportiveness of classroom interactions. More specifically, teachers who participated in CARE were observed to show greater sensitivity to their students' needs and had classrooms that were more emotionally positive than control classrooms. They also demonstrated better use of time⁴. Students in CARE classrooms were rated as more engaged by their teachers than those in control schools. The impacts of CARE at the end of the school year were even stronger for students and teachers at most risk. Students of CARE teachers with low social skills at baseline showed improvements in reading competence and students of CARE teachers who were low on mindfulness at baseline improved in engagement, motivation for learning, and reading competence⁵.

These findings provide evidence that when teachers manage their stress and develop their social and emotional competencies they are more able to serve as effective models of SEL behaviors.

4. How important is SEL teacher training to effectively achieve learning outcomes for students?

Research has not answered this question. However, our future research plans include testing whether the CARE program can improve the quality of SEL program delivery and subsequent student outcomes.

5. Please elaborate on the Prosocial Classroom Framework. Describe its relevance for the teacher-student relationship.

The Prosocial Classroom Model proposes that teachers' social and emotional competence (SEC) and well-being are critical to their ability to effective classroom management, SEL instruction and modeling and supportive teacher-student relationships⁶. The five domains of SEL as articulated by CASEL can be applied to

The CARE program combines mindful awareness and compassion practices with emotion skills instruction to help teachers understand and become aware of the stress response so they can proactively manage their stress.

understand how teachers SEC is important to building supportive relationships with their students. Teachers need self-awareness so they can recognize their stress and the emotions they are experiencing in the moment, especially while teaching. They need to be aware of their emotional triggers and how emotional reactions can interfere with their percepts and behavior. They also need to learn healthy ways to self-manage strong emotions. Often teachers try to suppress emotions rather than use more healthy approaches such as re-appraisal. When teachers learn mindful awareness practices, they become more aware of how they are feeling, how this is affecting their students, and how to slow down and calm down so they don't over-react to student behaviors. Teachers need the social awareness of their classrooms so they can facilitate strong, supportive peer networks and they need relationship skills including perspective-taking and empathy, so they can understand students' points of view and respond to their needs.

Finally they need strong decision-making skills that take all of these factors into account as they interact with students, their parents, and school colleagues⁷.

6. Tell us a little about the "Cultivating Emotional Balance Project". What impacts has it had on teacher's well-being and did it help teachers cope in classrooms?

CEB was the first program to combine mindful awareness and compassion practices with emotion skills instruction that was tested with a sample of teachers. While it did promote their overall well-being, it did not result in improvements in observed classroom interactions. My colleagues and I created CARE as an adaptation of this approach that was more specifically designed to address teacher stress and SEC.

7. What is the burnout cascade and how are teachers responsible for it? How can the burnout cascade be avoided?

In our review of the teacher burnout literature, Mark Greenberg and I discovered a pattern of burnout that we identified as the burnout cascade⁸. When teachers lack the SEC to manage the demands of the classroom, they may become emotionally exhausted. Often this can occur because they do not have the skills to effectively manage emotions and are resorting to suppression of emotion expression, which is not good for one's health. Over time this exhaustion leads to an erosion of the quality of their work performance. They can develop a cynical attitude towards their students which results in more classroom disruption and even more emotional exhaustion – a negative spiral. Finally teachers feel like they just can't do the job anymore and give up. Today almost 50%

of US teachers leave their jobs within 5 years. It's too early to tell if CARE prevents burnout, but we are hopeful that by learning these skills, teachers will become more resilient and their classrooms more emotionally positive, resulting in calm, clear and kind teachers and students. Under these conditions teaching can be an extremely rewarding profession!

8. Is just providing training in skills SEL enough? How important is contextualization?

By definition SEL must be contextualized. While human beings are social and emotional beings, each culture and sub-culture has its own understanding of the key SEL domains articulated by CASEL. It's important for children to learn the socially appropriate ways in their culture to express emotion, build relationships, and resolve conflict. However, they also need to understand that different cultures have different social and emotional customs. I think this is a critical pre-requisite to successful cross-cultural dialog and peace.

9. What are some of the challenges with teacher training for SEL?

Teacher training in the US is typically controlled by the standards imposed by state and federal governments. Since universities must cover all the mandated curricular content, there is rarely space in the curriculum to fit SEL training. As a result, SEL can either be woven into other course content or be overlooked all together. Also, it's difficult for student teachers to understand and prepare for the stresses they will encounter.

10. If teachers claim to have very little time to do SEL in their classrooms – what are 3 points that you would encourage them to ALWAYS do in their classrooms – come what may?

I would recommend that teachers always get to know their students and greet them when they arrive. Also, when they are upset while teaching, model self-management skills by talking through their own emotion regulation process. For example, if I'm feeling frustrated because my students won't stop talking and listen. I can say to my class, "I'm feeling really frustrated right now. I need to talk to

you about the next lesson, but you can't hear me because you are talking. I'm going to take some deep breaths right now so I can calm down because it's really hard to teach when I'm feeling so frustrated. Let's all take some breaths together so we can all calm down and learn." This serves three important purposes; it allows the teacher to calm down in a healthy and authentic way rather than suppressing emotional expression, it teaches students how to calm down when you're upset and it helps create supportive relationships with students because the teacher manages her frustration rather than taking it out on the students.

11. Why do some children have low social skills and how might teachers help these students through SEL?

Normal social skills development can be impaired for various reasons both biological and environmental. For example, children with autism spectrum disorder may have difficulty developing social skills because of the deficits caused by the disorder. Children with insecure attachments to their caregivers learn working models of relationships that may translate into poor social skills in school. Children exposed to adversity, toxic stress and trauma may develop difficulties with social skills because they lack trust in others. This is just a few of the issues that may be associated with poor social skills. Teachers need to understand social and emotional development and what experiences can promote or impair this developmental process⁹.

Thank you for your time!

When teachers learn mindful awareness practices, they become more aware of how they are feeling, how this is affecting their students, and how to slow down and calm down so they don't over-react to student behaviors.

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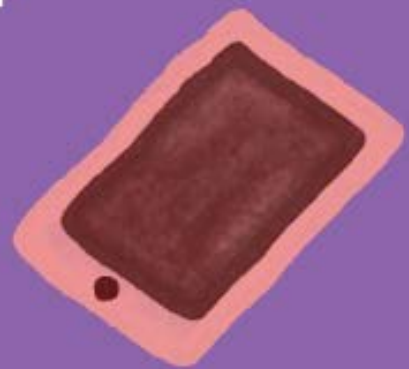
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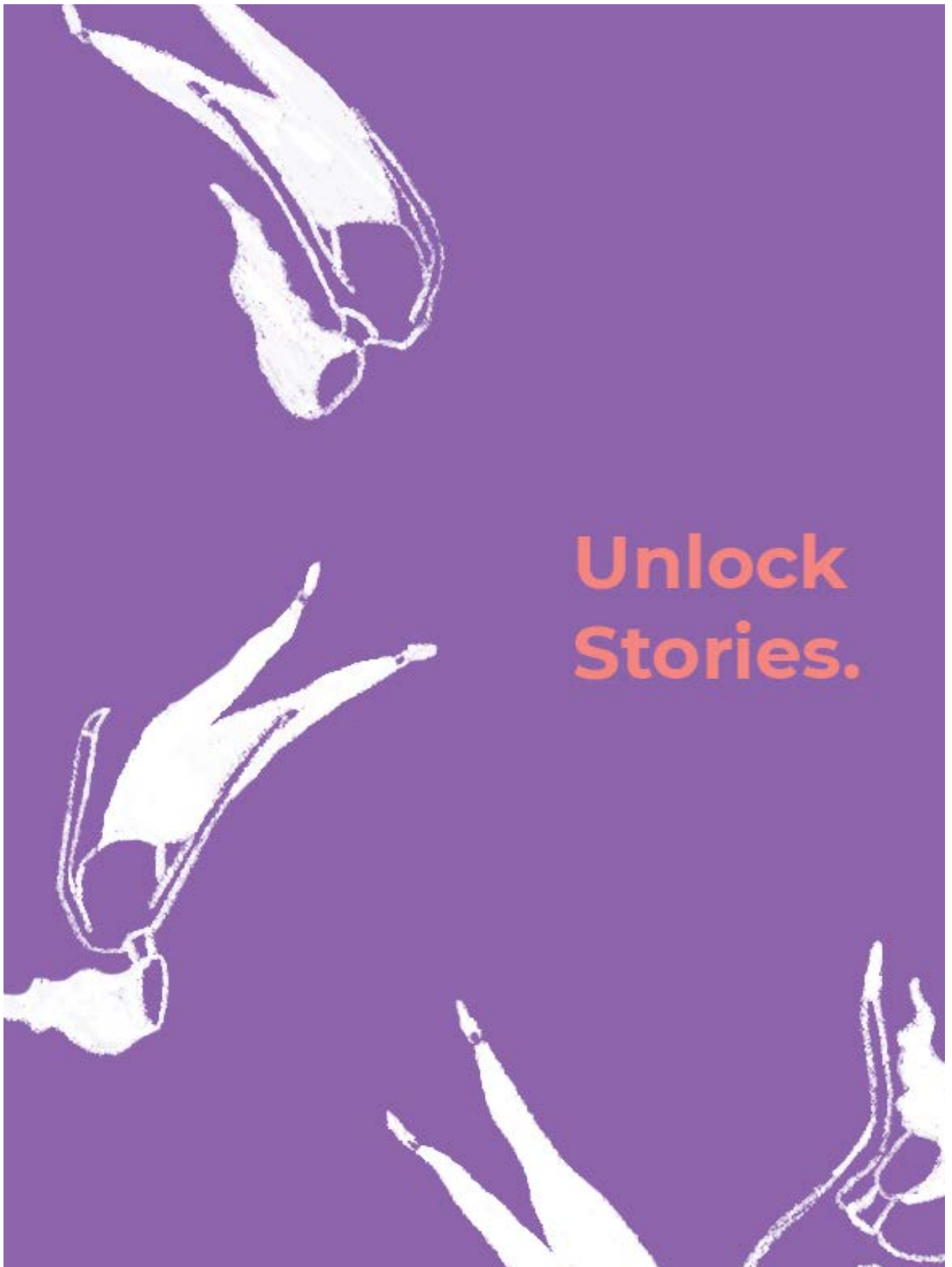
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Game Design and Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

SUSANNA POLLACK

President, Games for Change



In her role at Games for Change, the leading global advocate for the power of games as drivers of social impact, Susanna produces the annual Games for Change Festival, the largest gaming event in New York, dubbed by national media as “the Sundance of video games.” In 2017, Susanna launched the successful VR for Change Summit as a part of the Festival. In response to the positive reception to the VR programming at last year’s summit, Susanna is launching the XR for Change Summit this year to explore how VR/AR/MR technologies are offering radical new ways to create social impact. Susanna works closely with organizations that are actively pursuing digital games to further their public or CSR mission. On behalf of clients including American Express Foundation, United Nations, Women’s Sports Foundation, Autodesk, Carnegie Foundation, Ad Council, Smithsonian Museum and McKinsey Social, she has initiated dozens of programs to advance the games for good sector.

Editor’s Notes



- The author starts her opinion piece discussing how SEL has become a front-burner issue in education
- She goes on to explain how digital technologies, particularly digital games can help students develop SEL skills and the SEL potential for students to make their own games
- The author further discusses how Games for Change encourages students to develop games and game based curricula on real world issues, leading to development of SEL skills

Key Words



*Games for Learning,
Games for Change,
Games and SEL,
Cognitive skills,
Non-cognitive skills.*





In 2016, the Aspen Institute—one of the most preeminent nonpartisan policy centers in the United States—convened a National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. The signal was clear: social and emotional learning (SEL) is now a front-burner issue in education.

The two-year study culminated in a recent set of recommendations. Among the Commission’s findings are that social and emotional development is not simply a collateral benefit, it is central to learning and success. SEL instruction in schools needs to be intentional, integrative, designed locally, and accompanied by professional development for educators. What does this have to do with digital games?

Studies and surveys over the past several decades have made it increasingly clear that games offer learning benefits that should not be ignored—and SEL is one area in particular where digital games excel.

EdSurge, a web site that covers how technology impacts education, recently compiled a series of articles on Game-Based Learning: Preparing Students for The Future. It includes profiles of leading practitioners and researchers in the field of SEL and games. One of those profiled is Matt Farber, Associate Professor at the University of Northern Colorado, a former UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) Scientific Advisory Board Member, and a frequent collaborator with Games for Change. Farber’s work on games and empathy includes *The Limits and Strengths of Using Digital Games as “Empathy Machines,”* a working paper¹ commissioned by UNESCO MGIEP and co-authored by Marist College’s Dr. Karen Schrier. This study represents some of the most in-depth thinking about the potential for games and SEL.

While students using existing games both in formal and informal contexts is well-established, less studied is the SEL potential for students empowered to make their own games. In *Learning Empathy by Playing Video Games*², a recent article for UNESCO MGIEP’s Blue Dot Issue 8, Farber writes about students making games and his own experience leading “game jams” for Games for Change: “This model of design

OPINION

creation inspires and engages deep learning about serious topics, as youth work collaboratively using iterative design thinking to create game experiences on social impact topics that others might play.”

Games for Change is actively exploring this potential through its Games for Change Student Challenge

Games for Change is founded on the belief that video games can affect positive change by educating people, building awareness around an issue, and bringing people together. Over fifteen years, Games for Change (G4C) has brought together game creators, the non-profit sector, industry, and others at our annual Games for Change Festival; has produced leading social impact games such as Half The Sky Movement: The Game (with authors Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn and a consortium of NGOs); and has also consulted widely with NGOs, foundations, corporations, and activist causes.

Increasingly, Games for Change is playing a leading role in games and game-design for learning through our Games for Change Student Challenge. This national, city-based game design competition inspires students to create original digital games about real-world issues.

The Challenge was launched by G4C in New York City in 2015, in collaboration with the NYC Department of Education and a coalition of partners. After additional pilot programs in Pittsburgh and Dallas, the Challenge is now established in four cities: New York, Los Angeles, Detroit, and Atlanta. The Challenge serves middle and high school students aged 13 to 18 years, especially diverse and economically disadvantaged students. Since its inception, more than 17,000 middle and high school students and 250 educators have participated in the Challenge, and students have created and submitted more than 2,000 original games.

Here is how the Games for Change Challenge works: G4C hosts a game-design competition in each city. Public school students are challenged to choose a real-world issue and create an original digital game that focuses on that issue. Middle and high school students attend hands-on, collaborative game design courses and join hackathon-style game jams.

The Challenge connects students’ passion for video games to STEM learning; the game development experience and digital storytelling help build essential skills such as creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking and encourage civic engagement. G4C Challenge themes prompt students to research and design games on social issues, using content and assets from theme partners available on the Challenge website, and then submit their games to the competition.

G4C works with our curriculum partner, Mouse, to provide professional development and train educators in a game design curriculum. Teachers then lead game design courses in their schools, supported by industry professionals and mentor students during classroom visits. With local cultural, industry, and community-based organizations as partners, G4C hosts game jams, which are free to the public. Culminating events in each city exhibit games and celebrate student achievement by awarding juried prizes to encourage further learning and exploration.

A unique aspect of the G4C Challenge is the way it weaves together “cognitive” STEM learning—coding, expertise using software, and a window into potential STEM careers in gaming or related fields—and “non-cognitive” SEL skills.

For the Challenge, an assessment framework was developed in collaboration with Institute of Play to evaluate how students improved select 21st-century skills through their participation in the Challenge’s game design courses. Teachers filled out pre- and post-surveys to track student improvement in seven core skill areas: creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, agency, empathy and socio-emotional. Through this evaluation, we have seen statistically significant growth in each skill assessed.

A good example of how the Challenge works to build SEL competencies was a Challenge theme in 2018: Kindness and Empathy. For this theme, students were encouraged to “research how kindness impacts how we feel about ourselves, how we feel about each other, and how healthy our schools and communities are. Make a game that teaches people how being kind matters.”

Theme partners included Lady Gaga’s Born This Way Foundation and iThrive Games, a nonprofit based near Boston whose mission is to benefit teens through “games as a medium for change, growth, and exploration of self and the wider world.”

A unique aspect of the G4C Challenge is the way it weaves together “cognitive” STEM learning—coding, expertise using software, and a window into potential STEM careers in gaming or related fields—and “non-cognitive” SEL skills.

These two partner organizations provided resources for students, including guidance on game-design elements that create a positive empathetic experience and those to avoid (such as gratuitous confrontations). Born This Way Foundation offered its research into creating “Kind Communities” that support mental



wellness in youth. Students also accessed a curated list of games that exemplified how games can create empathetic experiences, such as *That Dragon, Cancer* (a family dealing with a child's illness), *Never Alone* (Inuit culture), *Max: An Autistic Journey*, *To The Moon* (on aging), and *1979: Revolution* (on being politically marginalized and making difficult choices in a time of social upheaval).

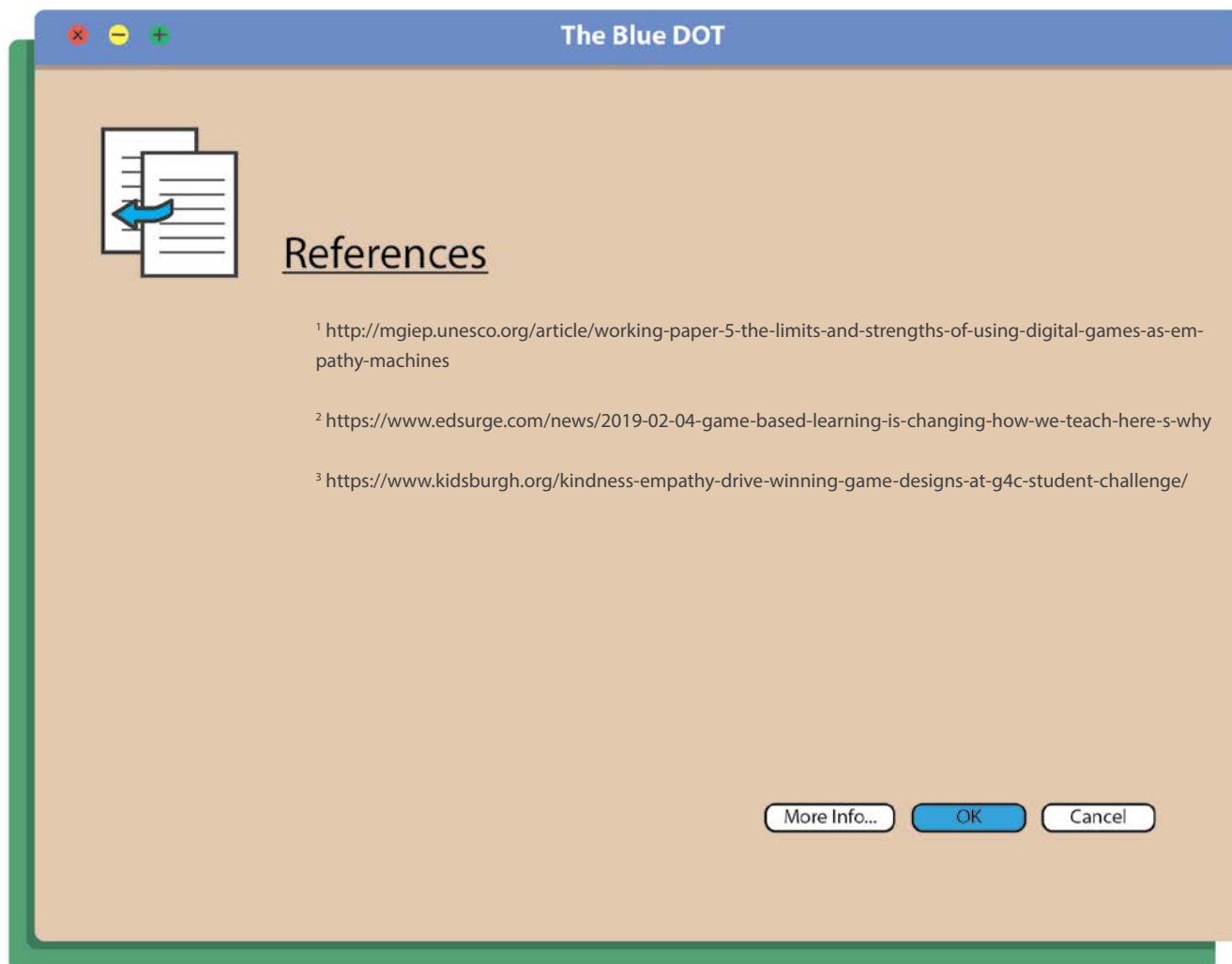
The positive SEL outcomes from this Challenge theme can be seen in two winners of that category in Pittsburgh, as profiled in the local blog Kidsburgh³. The winners (both 13-year-old girls) were motivated to create games that would have a positive impact—as one of the girls said, “If my game causes young people to be more kind to each other then it is a success.”

Kendell Coddington's Garret at Chameleon School follows Garret, a gecko who is the only non-chameleon at his school who learns to embrace his differences. Players of Kathryn Bodnar's *Chasing Dreams* become Sky, a girl who discovers her world is threatened by flames from a mysterious source—and discovers that love and acceptance are needed to keep the flames at bay. The Kidsburgh article concludes with observations by Bodnar's game design teacher who noted that the G4C competition encouraged confidence in her student and her abilities. The teacher also thought it was notable that the competition was won

by two young women: “It proves we must be doing something right that these two young people are not afraid to assert themselves and give their best.”

In the conclusion to their working paper on digital games as “empathy machines,” Farber and Schrier acknowledge that “as research and empirical evidence in the intersection among games and empathy is limited, we often asked more questions than provide answers.” To achieve those answers, they suggest that “much more research in this burgeoning area and, in particular, more consideration as to the specific factors of gaming that may inspire or constrain empathy skills, behaviors, and attitudes” are required.

As we look forward to the sixth year of the Games for Challenge, our experience is that engaging students with game design within the proper context and adequately supporting educators and resources shows great promise for developing SEL competencies. The Challenge offers researchers a body of evidence and an increasing scope that could offer a rich opportunity for understanding how game design can uniquely contribute to the increasingly clear need for equitable, integrated and innovative approaches to social and emotional learning.





SEE Learning: *Expanding the Boundaries of Social and Emotional Learning*

BRENDAN OZAWA-DE SILVA AND TYRALYNN FRAZIER



BRENDAN OZAWA-DE SILVA

Ph.D., Associate Director for SEE Learning, Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics, Emory University Education

Brendan Ozawa-de Silva is the Associate Director for SEE Learning at the Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics at Emory University. Prior to this, he served as associate professor of psychology at Life University, and as associate director for the Center for Compassion, Integrity, and Secular Ethics at Life University. His research focuses on the psychological, social, and ethical dimensions of prosocial emotions and their cultivation, with a focus on compassion and forgiveness; and his chief interest lies in bringing secular ethics—the cultivation of basic human values—into education and society. He was the founding director of the ChillOn Project, a higher-education-in-prison program; he is a Fellow of the Mind and Life Institute; and he is an associate editor for the Journal for Healthcare, Science, and the Humanities. He holds doctorates from the University of Oxford and Emory University.



TYRALYNN FRAZIER

Ph.D., Research Scientist, Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics, Emory University

Tyralynn Frazier is lead Research Scientist with the SEE Learning Program. In this capacity, she works on the strategic development of implementation and evaluation goals and objectives that support evidence-based program planning. Her background is in the study of emotional self-regulation, and the importance of emotional regulation in the relationship between stressors experienced over the life course such as discrimination, violence, and trauma. Tyralynn's primary objective is to focus the SEE Learning research program on developing an effective educational intervention that has the potential to have a lifelong positive impact on both educators and students. She holds an MPH in epidemiology from Emory University, and a Ph.D. in Biomedical Anthropology from Emory University.



Editor's Notes



- The authors begin the Opinion Feature discussing how the team at Emory University started researching the science of compassion almost fifteen years ago when it was unclear whether children could grasp complex practices supportive of development of prosocial competencies
- The authors then discuss the prevalent SEL movement and how various academics and practitioners advocated for SEL skills in education
- Further, the authors discuss the SEE Learning Program at Emory University that provides educators with a comprehensive framework for the cultivation of social, emotional, and ethical competencies that can be used in kindergarten-12 education as well as higher education and professional education

Our team at Emory University first started researching the science of compassion fifteen years ago, and started piloting lessons on compassion in classrooms ten years ago. Back then, it was still unclear whether children, especially very young children, could grasp some of the more complex concepts and practices supportive of the development of prosocial competencies.¹

Could children as young as six or seven years old recognize interdependence--the fact that the everyday things we need for survival, like our clothing, housing or food, are the product of hundreds, thousands, or millions of hands before they reach us? Could they take the perspectives of others, even those they disliked, to generate empathy and compassion? Could they notice emotions with awareness and mindfulness before reacting impulsively, learning to deal with a spark of anger or jealousy before it became a blazing forest fire that might endanger themselves and others?

Often we wondered if such concepts and practices, which often went far beyond what existing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs were tackling at the time, would simply be over the heads of such small children. But after our first lesson of introducing the spark to forest fire analogy—the idea that we can catch risky emotions before they become unmanageable and lead us to problematic behaviors—one of the smallest children in the

Key Words



*Emory University,
SEE Learning Program,
Emotional intelligence,
Social Emotional and ethical skills.*

class, a boy of six or so, came up to us and said, “There are a lot of forest fires in my life.”

The fact is, children do have great capacity to learn and cultivate social, emotional, and ethical skills beyond what is currently being offered to them. What they need are practical tools to help them in this journey. The SEL movement has done a great deal to show us this already. It has made a seismic shift in how we conceptualize K-12 learning, teaching us that empowering children with the skills to manage their emotions and their relationships can improve their academic performance, and set them up for success not only in education, but also in life.²

SEL is based around five competencies that are important for adults as well as children: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. The SEL movement remains dynamic, however, and is learning things all the time. In recent years, some of the founders of this movement, such as Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*, and Linda Lantieri, have called for additional components to be added to the traditional SEL approach. In their book *The Triple Focus*, Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge, call for “an education that inculcates compassion, as well as one that sharpens attention on the one hand, and opens students’ focus to understand the larger systems,



from economics to earth science, that shape our lives.”³ They identified these three elements--attention-training, compassion, and systems thinking--as currently underdeveloped in existing SEL programs, but as necessary skills for future generations.

Similarly, Linda Lantieri, developer of multiple SEL and conflict transformation programs and a recognized leader in the SEL movement, has called for the integration of mindfulness and SEL. In an article with Vicki Zakrzewski, she argues that mindfulness supplies an “inside-out” dimension, built around students’ innate capacities for self-awareness and empathy, complementary to SEL’s “outside-in” approach of skill-building.⁴

The SEL movement remains dynamic, however, and is learning things all the time.

At the same time, the Dalai Lama, a long-time believer in the vital importance of education and peaceful dialogue for the future of the planet, was calling for a program that would represent an evolution in the way we educate children. Such a program should include compassion, the cultivation of ethical mindfulness, the training of the mind and emotions, and a recognition of our

common humanity and interdependence. This should be done, he argued in works such as *Ethics for the New Millennium* and *Beyond Religion*, not on the basis of religion, but rather on the basis of critical inquiry, common experience, and modern science. Moreover, such a program, he expressed, should lead to a global movement.

The SEE Learning Program

The SEE Learning program at Emory University was developed to realize these aspirations and calls for an evolution of education, building from the university’s history of research in contemplative science and the science of compassion.

SEE Learning provides educators with a comprehensive framework for the cultivation of social, emotional, and ethical competencies that can be used in kindergarten-12 education as well as higher education and professional education. It also provides an age-specific curriculum for K–12 schools, comprised of easy to implement lessons, as well as an in-person and online support structure for educator preparation, facilitator certification, and ongoing professional development. The online orientation course, curriculum, and supporting materials are available for free at the program website: seelearning.emory.edu.

SEE Learning was intended from the start to be a global program, and its development has reflected that. The curriculum was

created with the help of an international team of educators, who piloted the lessons of the curriculum in preliminary feasibility studies. From 2017-2018, over 600 educators attended SEE Learning workshops in the U.S., Europe, and India for this purpose. Their feedback on the program was overwhelmingly positive, and their suggestions helped refine the curriculum further. Additionally, an international program committee, consisting of over 30 country managers and advisors, reviews all materials and facilitates translation, implementation, and localization efforts.

The development of the SEE Learning framework was grounded in the strong scientific foundation established through the SEL community. It also expands on SEL by drawing in new developments based on the latest evidence-based approaches in educational practice, thereby integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Trauma and Resilience-informed Education, Mindfulness and Attention Training, Systems Thinking, Peace Education, Ethics and Compassion (see Figure below).



As Dr. Goleman wrote for the program’s global launch: “SEE Learning has been brilliant in finding ways to integrate all these pedagogic innovations into the classroom. I’d call SEE Learning SEL 2.0, showing the way to the future direction for this critically important educational approach.”

The SEE Learning Framework and Curriculum

The SEE Learning framework is comprised of three domains (Personal, Social, and Systems) and three dimensions (Awareness, Compassion, and Engagement). The curriculum follows this framework, gradually building up knowledge and skills in each area. The overarching aim is the cultivation of emotional, social, and ethical intelligence in students’ individual and collective experience.

The power of this approach can be seen if we take concrete examples of issues that students must face and overcome, such as social anxiety, interpersonal conflict, or discrimination. The young boy who spoke of forest fires may have been thinking of

conflicts in his life. To know how to deal with those conflicts as he grows older, he will have to learn how to recognize and deal constructively with his emotions, cultivating mindfulness, meta-cognition, and an awareness of how stress impacts his body and mind. These constitute aspects of the Personal domain. He will also have to learn how to take others’ perspectives, empathize, listen, communicate, and overcome biases and prejudices—all aspects of the Social Domain. Lastly, he will have to understand how entrenched conflicts are often driven by systemic issues that go beyond the immediate parties involved, stretching out in networks and back in time. He will need to cultivate his innate ability to be a systems thinker.

It is these capacities put together that constitute what the program calls ethical intelligence. Underlying education for peace, sustainability, and global citizenship is this concept of ethical intelligence: the capacity to discern situations and act in ways that are in the best long-term interests of oneself and others—meaning wisely, responsibly, with integrity, and with an acknowledgment of the needs and rights of all humanity, not just those of one’s own group. The education of ethical intelligence may seem a lofty goal, but recent scientific research, including research conducted at Emory University, has demonstrated that compassion and other prosocial emotions can be cultivated with measurable effects.⁵

The Dalai Lama, a long-time believer in the importance of education and peaceful dialogue for the future of the planet, was calling for a program that would represent an evolution in the way we educate children

Future Directions

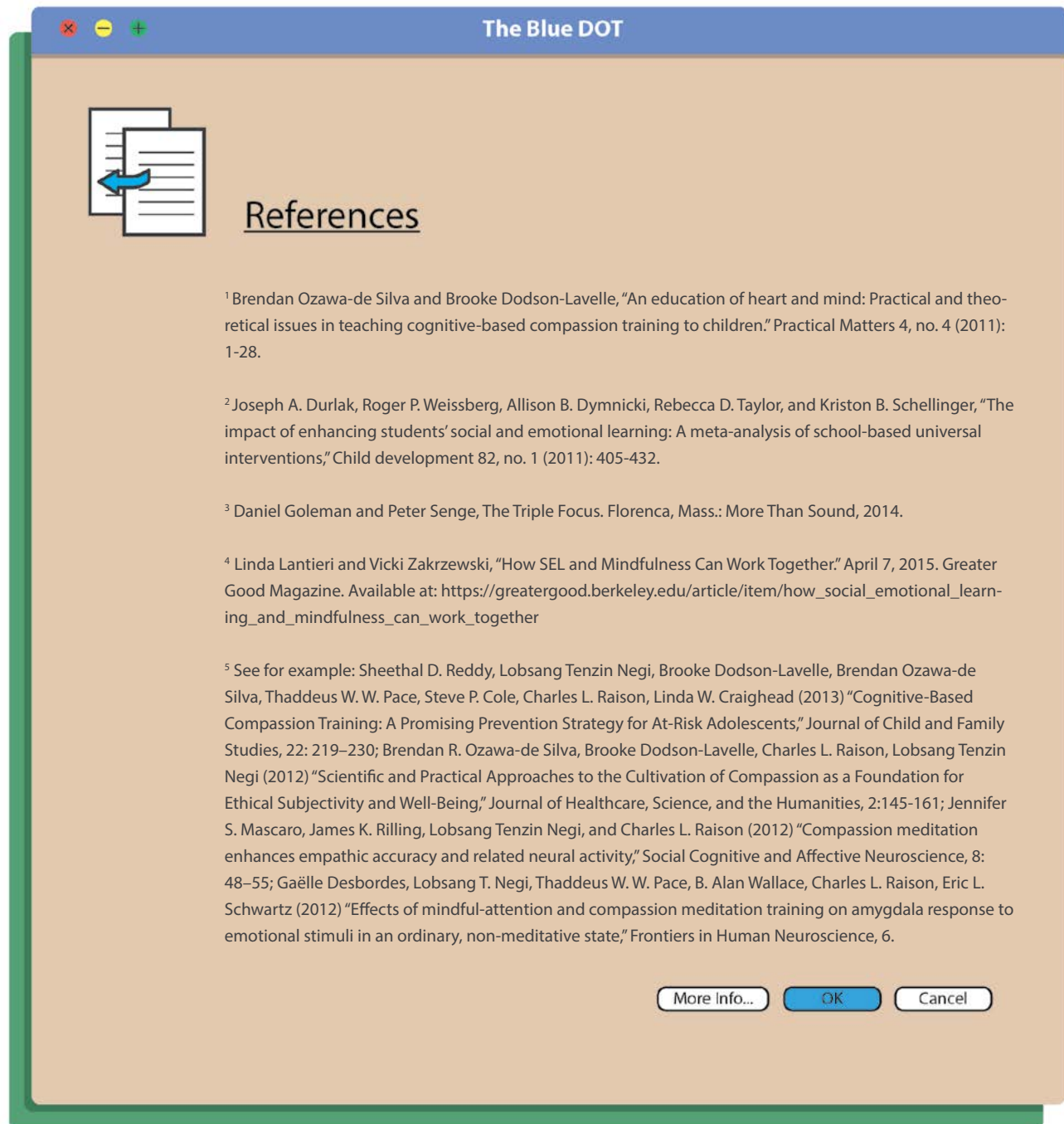
The future direction of the program is to evolve from this strong evidence-informed foundation towards the development of a sound evidence-base for the effectiveness of the curriculum and training courses on educator and student outcomes, as well as insight into underlying mechanisms. This includes the ongoing development of process evaluation methods to track fidelity to implementation domestically and internationally, as well as exploring the conceptual alignment between the SEE Learning program and other international initiatives, such as the International Baccalaureate and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. To this end, the program is actively seeking additional international partners for research and implementation with the aim of supporting a global movement “The time for social,

OPINION

emotional, and ethical learning has come,” the Dalai Lama writes in the foreword to the SEE Learning Companion. Indeed, we cannot afford to wait any longer. A wealth of data shows that children and youth today are facing unprecedented challenges—on a personal level, with rising rates of depression, suicide and addiction; on a social level with struggles related to social anxiety, self-worth, and how to handle social media; and on a systems level, with widespread conflict, entrenched economic and social inequity, and environmental changes that could endanger the future of humanity itself.

As much as we may not want it, the children of today will face the threat of “forest fires,” both personal and collective. Our job must be to prepare them to face such challenges with wisdom and compassion for themselves and one another. Nothing less than their own happiness and survival may be at stake.

For more information visit seelearning.emory.edu



The screenshot shows a presentation slide titled "The Blue DOT" with a blue header bar. The slide content is on a light brown background. On the left, there is an icon of two overlapping documents with a blue arrow pointing from the top document to the bottom one. To the right of the icon is the section title "References" in a large, bold, black font. Below the title, there are five numbered references. At the bottom right of the slide, there are three buttons: "More Info...", "OK" (highlighted in blue), and "Cancel".

The Blue DOT

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- ⁵ See for example: Sheethal D. Reddy, Lobsang Tenzin Negi, Brooke Dodson-Lavelle, Brendan Ozawa-de Silva, Thaddeus W. W. Pace, Steve P. Cole, Charles L. Raison, Linda W. Craighead (2013) “Cognitive-Based Compassion Training: A Promising Prevention Strategy for At-Risk Adolescents,” *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 22: 219–230; Brendan R. Ozawa-de Silva, Brooke Dodson-Lavelle, Charles L. Raison, Lobsang Tenzin Negi (2012) “Scientific and Practical Approaches to the Cultivation of Compassion as a Foundation for Ethical Subjectivity and Well-Being,” *Journal of Healthcare, Science, and the Humanities*, 2:145-161; Jennifer S. Mascaro, James K. Rilling, Lobsang Tenzin Negi, and Charles L. Raison (2012) “Compassion meditation enhances empathic accuracy and related neural activity,” *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 8: 48–55; Gaëlle Desbordes, Lobsang T. Negi, Thaddeus W. W. Pace, B. Alan Wallace, Charles L. Raison, Eric L. Schwartz (2012) “Effects of mindful-attention and compassion meditation training on amygdala response to emotional stimuli in an ordinary, non-meditative state,” *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 6.

More Info... OK Cancel





The Brain Basis for Social-Emotional Learning

Also Supports Academic Learning

MARY HELEN IMMORDINO-YANG, LINDA DARLING-HAMMOND AND CHRISTINA KRONE

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang is a professor of education, psychology and neuroscience at the University of Southern California. Linda Darling-Hammond is the Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University and president of the Learning Policy Institute. Christina Krone is a doctoral student in urban education policy at the University of Southern California. This article is reprinted with permission from *The Brain Basis for Integrated Social, Emotional, and Academic Development* (Aspen Institute, 2018). The full brief is available from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/publications/the-brain-basis-for-integrated-social-emotional-and-academic-development/>

Editor's Notes



- The authors start off the Opinion Piece discussing the concept of 'brain plasticity' and briefly touch upon how the concept presents a critical opportunity and responsibility for education
- The authors discuss the importance of social relationships, emotional experiences and cognitive opportunities for human brain development, a critical insight that has emerged from the neurosciences over the past two decades
- The authors also discuss how educational policies and practices, which are more consistent with how the brain develops, could be linked to promoting academic learning and personal development

Key Words



*Neurosciences,
Education policy,
Human brain plasticity,
Brain networks,
Social relationships,
Cognitive opportunities,
Emotional experiences.*



Throughout life, and to an extraordinary degree in young people, the brain develops differently based on opportunities to engage actively and safely with rich and meaningful environments, social relationships and ideas. **The brain's plasticity, the very adaptability that allows us to adjust to the demands of different contexts and experiences, therefore presents a critical opportunity and responsibility for education.**

Over about the past 15 years, huge strides have been made in the science behind how the brain develops, how that development relates to thinking and the settings and contexts that are conducive to brain development and therefore to learning.

Perhaps the most striking, fundamental insights that have emerged from the field of developmental neuroscience over this time are these: Human brain development requires social relationships, emotional experiences and cognitive opportunities—and the quality of these relationships, experiences and opportunities influences how the brain develops, and hence how a person thinks and feels. Though healthy human environments can vary greatly on their specific characteristics and cultural features, when a person's world is seriously impoverished on any of these dimensions, brain development and the learning that depends on it are compromised. When a person's world is enriched on these dimensions, brain development is facilitated and learning is enabled. While environments affect brain development across the lifespan, the most vulnerable periods are those in which the brain is most actively changing: prenatal development through childhood, adolescence, the transition to parenthood and old age.

The developmental sculpting of the brain's networks through learning is akin to the process of growing a botanical garden. When given adequate opportunity, plants naturally grow through various developmentally appropriate phases, such as seed germination and cycles of budding and flowering. However, the particular characteristics of a garden reflect the age and types of the plants and a combination of geography, climate, soil quality, care, cultural context (such as preferences for rock gardens versus wildflowers), and the gardener's own choices. The garden is also affected by how it is laid out and used (for example, for picnicking under shade trees, growing vegetables, strolling along paths, or playing active sports). In this way, the local conditions, the gardener's skills and taste, the patterns of use, and time all shape the garden and affect its future growth and health.

Just as a garden grows differently in different climates and with different plants, styles of gardening, and use, a person's brain develops differently depending on age, predispositions, priorities, experiences, and environment. When given adequate opportunity, support, and encouragement, children naturally

think, feel emotions, and engage with their social and physical worlds. And these patterns of thoughts, feelings, and engagement organize brain development over time and in age-specific ways, influencing growth, intelligence, and health into the future.

While the components of the genetic code could be likened to a gardener's seeds and instruction manual, the epigenetic forces—the environmental forces from “above the genome”—provide the supports and triggers that open and close various pages of the manual, and even reorder, copy, and delete pages, telling the gardener whether, when, where, and how to plant various seeds given dynamic environmental conditions, and how to care for, arrange, prune, and fertilize plants at different stages, in accordance with the changing weather conditions and the desired uses and appearance of the garden. Genes are not sufficient to build a person, and the genome itself is dynamic, changing in response to environmental cues.

Epigenetic forces are like the climate, the weather, and the gardener's actions. They are aspects of the person's social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and physiological contexts—the engaging and rigorous intellectual opportunities, warm and rich social relationships, and healthy physical and emotional environments in which a person lives. Together, these forces trigger and organize brain development and therefore a person's readiness and capacities to learn.

Though work on the brain from two to three decades ago sought to identify specific brain regions' unique contributions to mental processing, many scientists have shifted to a focus on the networks of connectivity between regions that facilitate different activity modes important for thinking and learning. The basic



organization of these networks appears to be present at birth and to develop across the first decades of life, but it is the way the brain is used, including how a person thinks, feels, and relates to others, that strengthens and tunes these dynamic networks over time. The growth and balance of these networks depends in part upon a person’s environment, opportunities, and relationships, which together influence the “cross talk” of neurons within the same network and the delicate balance of activity among the networks.

Through their co-regulation and coordination, each of the brain’s major networks contributes to social, emotional, and cognitive functioning, allowing a person to operate well in the world and to take advantage of learning opportunities. Extensive research in adults connects the functioning of brain networks to intelligence, memory, mental flexibility and creativity, mental health, capacities for emotion regulation and attention, and other essential abilities. In children, adolescents, and across adulthood, the functioning of these networks correlates with the quality of one’s environment, resources, and relationships and improves with targeted intervention. To varying degrees, these networks appear to be malleable across the lifespan.

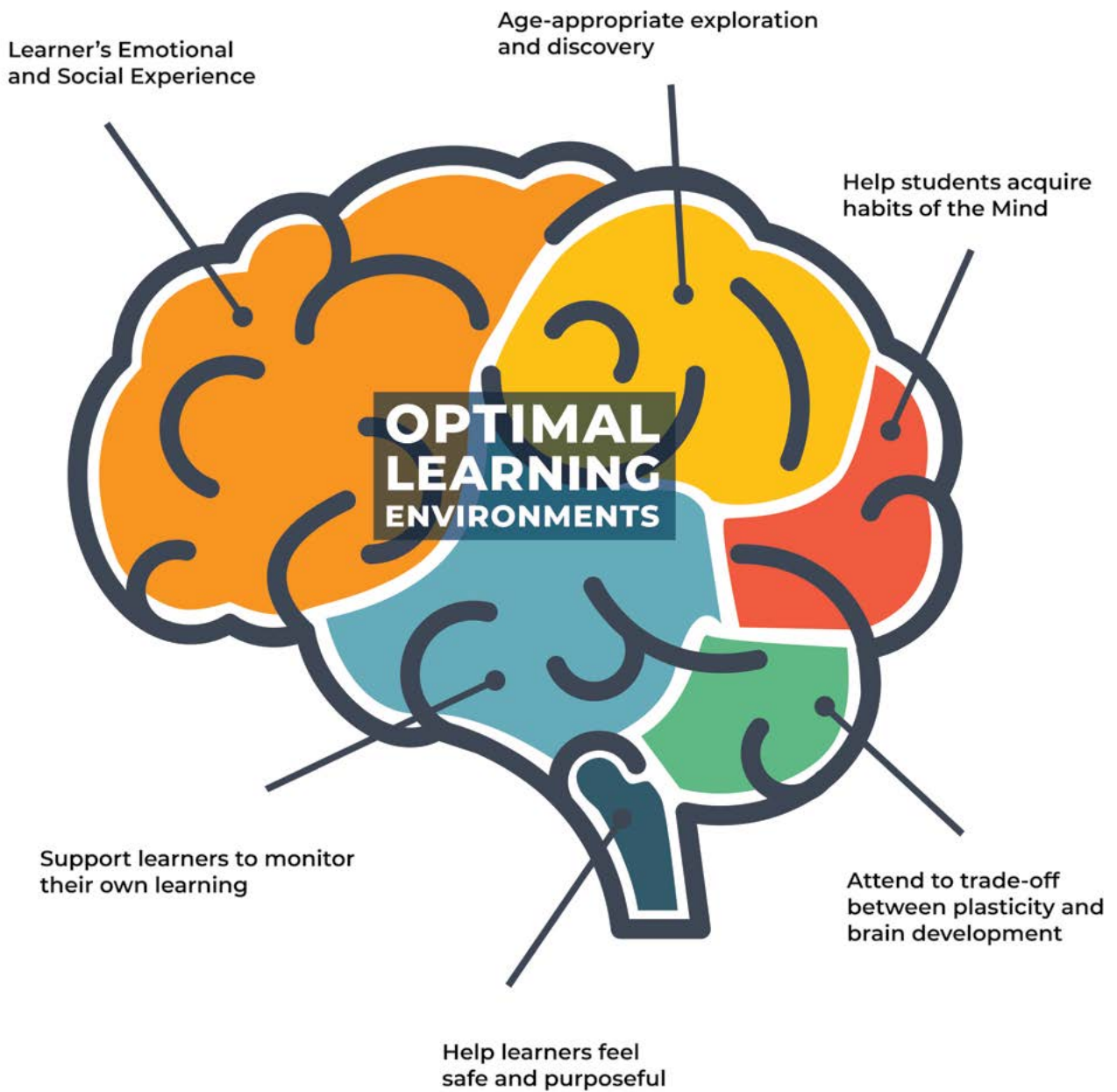
The developmental sculpting of the brain’s networks through learning is akin to the process of growing a botanical garden. When given adequate opportunity, plants naturally grow through various developmentally appropriate phases

Brain science usually does not translate directly into educational policy or practice. But educational policies and practices that are consistent with how the brain develops are more likely to promote academic learning and personal development than those that undermine or are inconsistent with brain science. And the brain science is unequivocal: in addition to nutrition, sleep and low exposure to toxins, children’s social-emotional experiences of family, school and community are paramount—directly and indirectly impacting the brain networks that undergird cognition and intelligence. Social-emotional experiences teach the brain what to attend to, and ready the person for academic learning.

What are the insights for education? **Optimal learning environments attend in age-appropriate ways to developing each of the broad capacities supported by the brain’s major networks: this includes sustained, flexible attention and productivity on tasks; reflection, memory, and meaning-making; and agency and emotional relevance.**

Learning environments that are structured to be consistent with how the brain develops generally include the following features. They place the learner’s emotional and social experience at the forefront, and help students build scholarly and social identities that incorporate their new skills and knowledge. They help people to feel safe and purposeful, and to believe that their work is important, relevant, and valuable. These learning environments should also support age-appropriate exploration and discovery, followed by reflection and discussion for deeper understanding. They support learners in monitoring their own learning, so they can flexibly move between these modes of engagement—knowing when and how to dig in, stop and think, gather more information, or seek help—as they pursue meaningful learning goals. They attend to the trade-off between plasticity and efficiency in brain development, strategically offering activities that encourage flexible and efficient thinking along with those that encourage mastery of necessary building-block skills and knowledge. They also help students acquire habits of mind that facilitate acquisition of age-appropriate knowledge and skills, reasoning, and ethical reflectiveness. These habits of mind become tools for navigating the world as a learner, bringing curiosity, interest, persistence, and a deep thirst for understanding.

To provide purposeful learning environments and opportunities for young people—and strategic opportunities for brain development—requires educators to attend to the development of the whole child in context, and to the need for aligned partnerships throughout the community that can support children’s and their families’ health and wellbeing. Educating the whole child, and engaging families and communities in this process, is not just a luxury for those with the opportunity and the means, or a remediation strategy for the underprivileged or underperforming. It is a necessity for all children. Genuinely pursuing an integrated, whole-child approach to education will require substantial innovation in policies and practices, but children’s brain development, and the learning that depends on it, are at stake.





#KindnessMatters

Be the change for the SDGs A Global Youth Campaign



UNESCO MGIEP has initiated an International Youth Campaign on Kindness for the Sustainable Development Goals. The purpose of this Campaign is to mobilize the world's youth to achieve the 17 SDGs through transformative acts of kindness. Thus far 2,000 + acts of Kindness have been received from over 50 countries globally.



2,449 Stories by Individuals



327 Stories by Groups



Stories from 54 countries



21% from Age Group 15-17
79% from Age Group 18-35



50% Female
50% Male

(as of June 2019)

Best of #KindnessMatters



1. A Passion of Gold and Fire: Saving bees for humankind

SÉBASTIEN PINS (29M, BELGIUM)

Have you ever wondered where most of the food on your plate comes from? Well, you'd be surprised to know that a majority of the fruits and vegetables we eat have been pollinated by Bees, making their contribution to food production critical. **Here's a sobering thought:** In 2018, a number of species of honeybees were declared to be headed for extinction. With their looming extinction, it is inevitable that less production of food crops will ultimately lead to worldwide famine. Sensing the urgency of the matter, young film-maker Sébastien Pins decided to create 'A Passion of Gold and Fire', a powerful documentary about the difficulties faced by apiaries in his city.

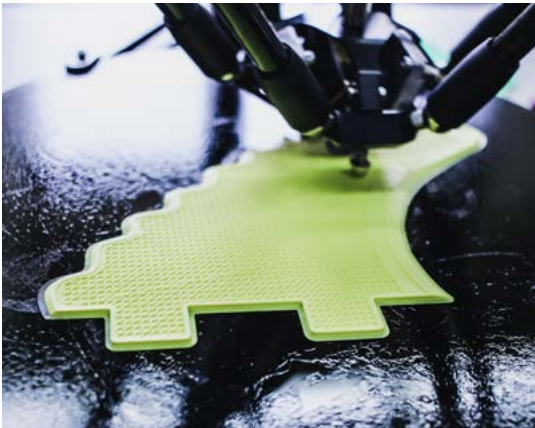
2. Meet the period man of Pune

PRAVIN NIKAM (26M, INDIA)

It was a study tour to Assam in the year 2011 that exposed Pravin Nikam to the social issues and taboos around menstrual hygiene among the locals. This inspired Pravin to dispel the many myths around menstruation and work towards empowerment of women on issues around menstrual health management, reproductive health rights and life skills. He founded **Roshni Foundation**, a Pune based NGO that actively works towards issues of gender, sexuality, menstrual health management, sexual and reproductive health rights and improving health conditions through educational tools and storytelling. His efforts fetched him the National Youth Award by the Government of India for the year 2015-16



2,776 Stories in total



3. 3D printed prosthetic limbs

MOHAMMED KAMAL BAABAID (24M, YEMEN)

For 24-year-old Mohammed Kamal Baobaid, an engineer, who lives in the war-torn city of Aden in Yemen, Yemini civil war made him think of an opportunity to serve his countrymen. He put his expertise to use by printing 3D prosthetic limbs for friends and acquaintances who lost limbs in the war. Determined to make an impact, Mohammed Kamal Baobaid and his friends founded **Enable Aden**, through which they use 3D printing technology to provide 'lightweight, movable and easy to use prosthetic limbs' which can be used with much more ease than the previously existing bulkier versions.

4. 17,000 kms for awareness injured Armed Forces Veteran

MITSU CHAVDA (27F, INDIA)

Mitsu Chavda started her solo journey '**Ride for Soldiers**' to raise awareness about Paraplegic Rehabilitation for injured Armed Forces veterans. She covered 17000 kms- 102 cities in 65 days during which she also raised funds to be donated to **Paraplegic Rehabilitation Centre for Armed Forces**. During her trip, she visited schools and colleges and gave lectures on the sacrifices of paraplegic soldiers, talking about young jawans who suffer injuries while on duty



5. Young sea lovers to save underwater life through artificial reef

MUSTAPHA BENGHERNAOUT (31M, ALGERIA)

In a coastal Mediterranean city called Mostaganem (Algeria), the **aquatic life was drastically reducing due to pollution**. The fish and other aquatic animals left the coast with a high chance of never returning. A group of young sea lovers assessed the threat of depleting numbers of marine life and decided to start an **ocean cleanliness drive** as well as create an artificial reef, submerged in the sea. Marine life was slowly restored and the artificial reef became home to many more aquatic fauna and flora. On the success of this activity, young people across the country were inspired to conduct similar activities and drives.

Interested to know more? Explore the best stories from #KINDNESSMATTERS
mgiep.unesco.org/kindness





COVER
STORY

SEL for SDGs:

Why Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

is necessary to achieve the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs)



STANLEY T. ASAH ¹

NANDINI CHATTERJEE SINGH ²

¹Human Dimensions of Natural Resource Management, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA,
Email -stasah@uw.edu

²UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, 35, Ferozshah Road, New Delhi, 110 001, INDIA,
Email – n.chatterjee@unesco.org



ISSUE • 10

Editor's Notes



- The article builds a case for how the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved through social and emotional learning
- The authors begin the article describing the conflicting goals of the SDGs and how the attainment of these goals may necessitate a balancing act
- Further, the authors discuss 'dissonance and the SDGs' at the level of individual and social collectives because of the conflicting nature of the SDGs
- The authors then posit two specific avenues, emotional resilience and prosocial behavior, for managing dissonance and attainment of the SDGs. They describe the need for social and emotional learning as fundamental skills in our education systems to achieve the SDGs

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are not necessarily a set of consistent objectives but rather a series of potentially conflicting goals¹. From the perspective of the development agent, these conflicting objectives entail inconsistencies in actions—and antecedents—needed to attain the SDGs. For example, eradicating poverty—a societal objective—might entail (at least in the short term) working the self to the point of compromising personal well-being, another SDG. Another clear example of such conflicts is the slow progress or even resistance to climate change policies because of the relationship across work choice, economic growth and climate change. Thus, **attainment of these goals may necessitate a balancing act—development agents may consider multiple options and make tradeoffs.**

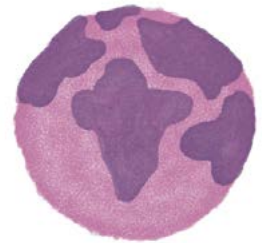
Dissonance and the SDGs

At the level of the individual and social collectives, these tradeoffs in SDGs will be quite taxing because the conflicting goals are, in effect, inconsistent cognitions², generally referred to as cognitive dissonance or dissonance³. According to dissonance theory⁴—one of the most tried and tested theories in the behavioral sciences—inconsistent cognitions evokes aversive arousal state that leads to attitudes and behaviors aimed at reducing the arousal⁵. Dissonance is constituted by two important social

Key Words



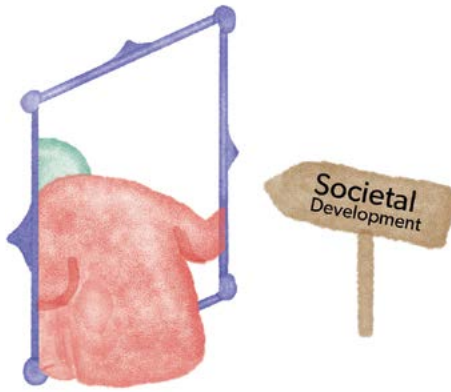
*Sustainable Development Goals,
Dissonance,
Emotional resilience,
Prosocial behavior,
Social and Emotional Learning,
Neurosciences,
Whole brain approach to education.*



psychological processes: inconsistency among cognitions, a more rational phenomenon referred to as cognitive discrepancy, and the unpleasant emotional and motivational state that arises from holding two contradictory cognitions, referred to as dissonance⁶.

Dissonance is unpleasant—the aversive arousal state is because inconsistent cognitions impede effective and unconflicted actions. The unpleasant emotive state of dissonance motivates attitude changes or engagements in other dissonance-reduction processes. Hence, encounters with dissonance trigger a variety of dissonance reducing cognitions—attitudes and behaviors that align cognitions with behavioral commitments to facilitate the execution of effective unconflicting actions⁷. For example, it has been widely demonstrated that following a dissonance-triggered decision, people alter their attitudes to be more consistent with their choices⁸. This is the case because following a dissonance-triggered decision, psychological processes are deployed to assist with the execution of the decision. This process involves post decision views of the chosen alternative in a more favorable light and the rejected option in a more negative light so as to help the individual follow through and act on the decision in a more effective manner⁹.

Dissonance has important implications for the attainment of the SDGs—it strains development



agents' rational (cognitive discrepancy) and emotional (aversive arousal) capabilities to reflect, self-regulate and act in pursuit of the attainment of those goals. These strains may undermine attainment of those goals. For example, if development agents view an otherwise prioritized development goal in a more negative light because it conflicts with an otherwise less prioritized goal but that they favor at that moment, the former may be jeopardized. Additionally, because dissonance challenges both cognitive and emotional capabilities, it might be self-defeating, leading to inaction—discouraging actions in pursuit of SDGs. In contrast, because dissonance prompts development agents to reflect on their values and other behavioral antecedents, and to self-regulate the unpleasant emotive state, it is a necessary aspect of measured deliberative sustainable development actions because it obligates the development agent to weigh options and make decisions. Thus, dissonance has considerable implications for how we understand and manage individual and social actions that enable attainment of the SDGs.

Prosocial behavior promotes human flourishing which we believe is critical for attainment of the SDGs

The dual potential of dissonance to undermine development goals by enabling compromise and inactions, and by fostering measured deliberative development-oriented actions, necessitates appropriate dissonance management for the attainment of development goals. **We posit two specific avenues, emotional resilience and prosocial behavior, for managing dissonance and attainment of the SDGs.** While dissonance is a core motivation for maintaining coherent thinking¹⁰, subsequent actions to achieving the SDGs necessarily depend on the cultivation of both emotional resilience and prosocial skills.

Emotional resilience is the capacity to draw upon positive emotions to cope with negative and stressful experiences¹¹. This requires regulation of emotional response. In order to demonstrate emotional regulation, individuals need to be mindful, recognize emotional information, identify positive and negative emotion, mindfully self-regulate emotion to maintain positive affect. This malleability in an emotional state to ensure positive affect has been shown to have several positive outcomes¹² because of its adaptive value.

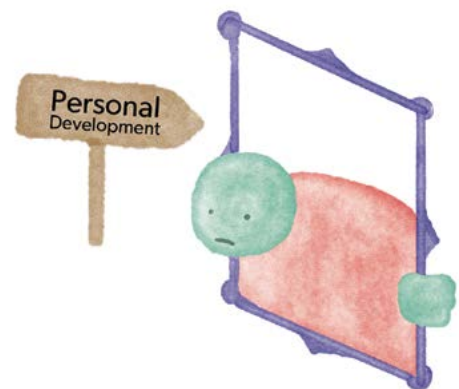
On the other hand, prosocial behaviour is voluntary social behavior that represents a broad category of actions that are generally beneficial to other people and to the ongoing political system¹³. Thus, prosocial behavior promotes human flourishing which we believe is critical for attainment of the SDGs. Prosocial behavior has been shown to be altruistic and motivational since it seeks to improve another person's welfare, in contrast to egoistically motivated action¹⁴ and is hence sustainable as a behavior. Consequently, the specific cultivation of prosocial behavior serves as a necessity to achieve the SDGs.

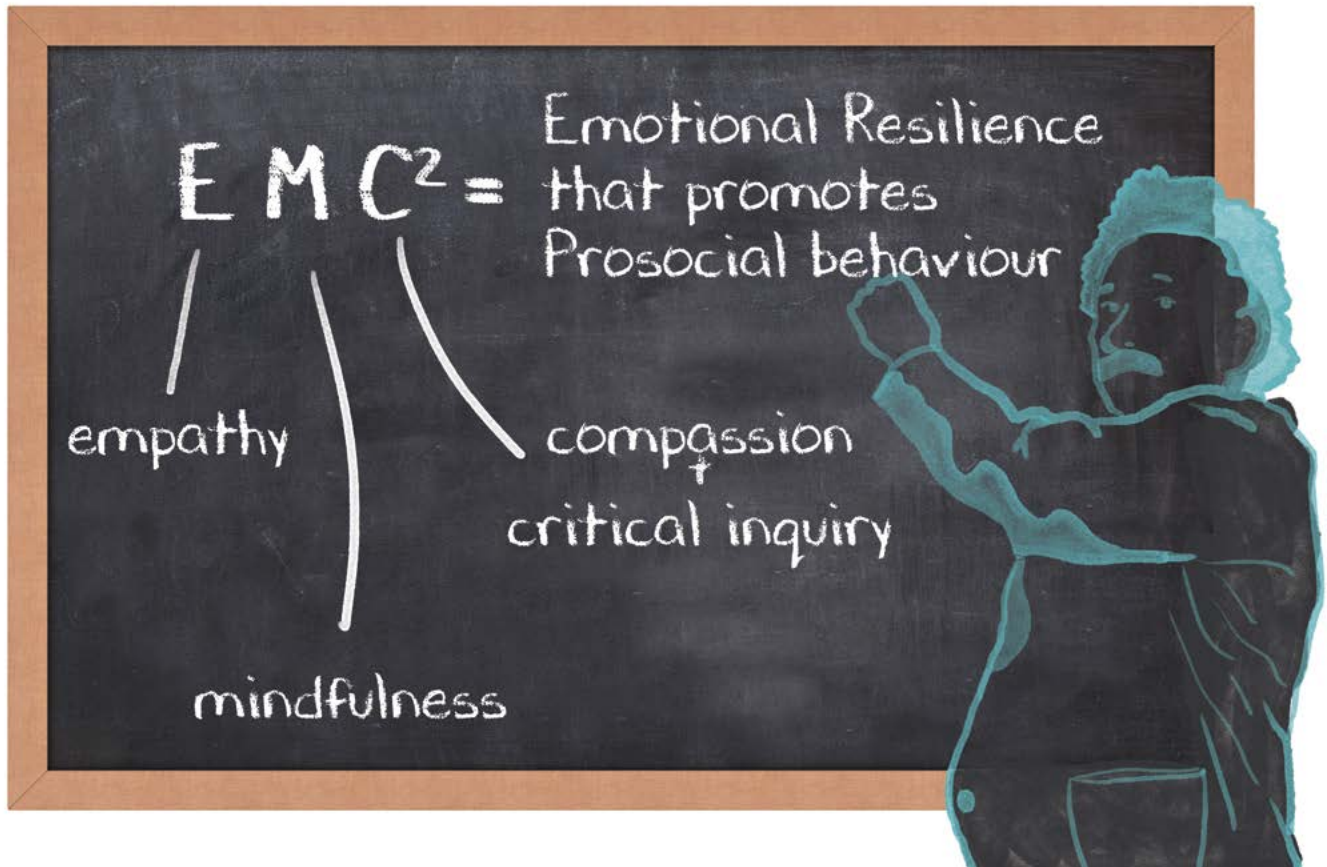
Social and Emotional Learning as fundamental skills

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has emerged as competencies through which individuals recognize and regulate emotions, identify positive purpose, demonstrate empathy for others, take constructive action, and promote human flourishing.

With origins in emotional intelligence¹⁵, SEL skills are powerful competencies since they have been shown to (a) facilitate learning (b) build emotional resilience (c) promote prosocial behavior and (d) instill pluralistic thinking.

Recent research from the neurosciences shows that the emotional centres of the brain are closely intertwined with the cognitive centres of learning in the brain.¹⁶ As a consequence, when the brain encounters situations of dissonance, cognition and attention are hampered and emotional response is explosive or distraught. Thus explicit training in SEL build competencies that might empower and enable individuals to regulate emotional response. One such framework entitled EMC2¹⁷ seeks to provide explicit training in four competencies namely empathy (E), mindfulness (M), compassion (C) and critical inquiry (C) to build emotional resilience and promote prosocial behavior.





EMC² Framework

The EMC² framework is designed to develop and nourish the 'whole brain'. Recent advances in the cognitive neurosciences have established that the human brain comprises of two primary cortices, namely the neocortex (also called the logical or rational brain) and the limbic cortex (or the social and emotional brain¹⁹). The EMC² framework is designed to specifically build four competencies, the underlying neural circuits of which nurture the limbic and the neo-cortex (whole brain).

Empathy is the general capacity to recognise emotion and also resonate with others' emotional states such as happiness, excitement, sorrow, or fear. Empathy is naturally embedded in the human brain in the 'mirror neuron network'¹⁹ and forms the basis of societal structure.

Mindfulness is self - regulation and the building of conscious awareness that arises from paying attention to the experience of right now²⁰. It is designed to cultivate conscious awareness of a) where attention resides, b) how emotions and feelings are experienced in the body, and c) how thought, beliefs, values, and emotions may influence one's ability to pay attention and regulate emotion.

Compassion is the ability to take positive action to alleviate suffering in the other. Compassion requires behavioural action motivated by the need and desire to improve the other's wellbeing and is the fundamental basis to promote prosocial behaviour²¹.

Critical Inquiry is the continued ability to question and evaluate decisions, actions and behavioural change through

observation, experience, thinking, reasoning and judgement.

Dissonance and EMC²

Since dissonance is an unpleasant emotive state, subjects of dissonance require emotion-regulatory capabilities (emotional resilience) to navigate the behaviors and prerequisite antecedents to attain SDGs.

Dissonance can be caused by beliefs, attitudes, values, and feelings about oneself, others, or the environment. Thus, interventions to reduce dissonance are required to address the cognitive antecedents of emotion, the intensity of emotional response, and the cognitive regulation of this emotional response. These can be achieved by combined training of empathy and mindfulness to build skills for emotional resilience or regulation.

According to the Fredrickson's broaden-and-build theory²² positive and negative emotions have distinct and complementary adaptive functions and cognitive and physiological effects. While negative emotions narrow one's momentary thought-action repertoire by preparing one to behave in a specific way (e.g., attack when angry, escape when afraid), positive emotions (e.g., joy, contentment, interest) broaden one's thought-action repertoire, expanding the range of cognitions and behaviors that come to mind. These broadened mindsets, in turn, build an individual's physical, intellectual, and social resources which in turn could encourage expanded perspective and facilitate dialogue towards resolution of the dissonance.

SEL, Education and the SDGs

The question we ask ourselves is how can we develop these competencies? One such avenue could be our formal education system. Recent experiences with SEL in schools show promise in improving pro-social behavior and inculcate actions that go beyond just the self but towards the collective good²³. This however suggests a radical change in our education systems. We are advocating here for a whole brain approach to our education systems whereby the focus shifts from purely building intellectual intelligence to one where there is a balance of both intellectual and emotional intelligence.



The objective is therefore towards building emotionally resilient individuals who are able to navigate the complex landscape of conflicting goals and dissonance to one of prosocial behavior that promotes human flourishing and the attainment of the SDGs.



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How do teachers view Social and Emotional Learning? ~ *Teacher perspectives from four countries*



MAHIMA BHALLA,
Difference Learning Coordinator, UNESCO MGIEP

Editor's Notes



-The article focuses on teacher's perspectives on social and emotional learning from four countries, including India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and South Africa

-The article describes the SEL practices teachers adopt in formal classroom, the SEL competencies teachers find essential, teachers' views on SEL through digital pedagogies and the challenges they face in implementing SEL in classrooms

-Based on the teacher responses, the article also provides key recommendations for policymakers, curriculum designers and school administrators

Key Words



*Teacher perspectives,
Global Citizenship,
Social and Emotional Learning,
Challenges,
Classrooms,
Digital,
Pedagogies.*

It's a warm Monday morning. First graders in a classroom are busy with exploration- some creating music, some making craft while others are engaging in free play. One of the girls, Julie¹, seems disengaged and visibly upset. The teacher shares with other students that Julie is upset as she will not be seeing her dog for the next two weeks. Seeing Julie cry, her friends come and hug her. Two girls kneel down and pretend to be Julie's dogs, just to make her happy.²

While it is evident that social and emotional skills are an inherent part of human nature, how often do educators utilise such opportunities for development of key social and emotional competencies? Given the academic rigour of most education systems, do we sometimes tend to miss out on other key dimensions of human development?

In April 2019, forty teachers from four countries participated in a 4-day Capacity Building Workshop conducted by the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) in New Delhi, India. This workshop focused on teacher training and implementation of two digital courses - Digital Intercultural Exchange (DICE) and Global Citizenship (GC), and saw participation from South Africa, Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. Both programmes cater to school-going adolescents, building adolescents' knowledge around Global Citizenship and developing their competencies in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). The purpose of this workshop was also to enhance teachers' understanding of SEL and its importance.

So, why Social and Emotional Learning?

Many of us have experienced school education to be competitive, stressful, punitive and might have even faced school refusal at some point. Being caught up in the rat race to be successful

academically and professionally often makes us go against our very nature, rather than bringing out our innate altruism. Education systems around the world are realising the need to implement social and emotional learning as a key component to build a more peaceful and compassionate world. Self-awareness and emotional intelligence form a major part of SEL programmes, thus helping us become more empathetic and compassionate. According to leading emotions expert Richard Davidson, "our emotions work with our cognition in a seamless and integrated way to help us navigate the classroom, workplace, our relationships, and the decisions we make in life"³. Since social and emotional skills play a major role in the development of self and of relationships, it is imperative that these be integrated into mainstream education for holistic development of all learners. Research on SEL programmes has not only demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, prosocial behavior, but also an 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement⁴.

In order to contribute to the goal of peaceful and sustainable societies as outlined in SDG 4.7, UNESCO MGIEP recognises the need to move beyond only academic purposes of education. The Institute realises the importance of SEL and is working towards mainstreaming SEL skills in education systems to help learners become more self-aware, empathetic, mindful, compassionate and rational beings. For this purpose, the Institute



“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

Teacher perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning

"Before the start of the class or at the end I give them a situation based on the lesson being taught. I ask them to imagine/or put themselves in that situation and post the answer for the further discussion in the classroom, for example "One of your friends is being ill treated based on his / her religion. What will you do or How will you react?"

"We have created small clubs, prakriti club, heritage club to organize different activities like awareness programmes related to social issue through nukkad natak, visiting orphanage house, distributing old clothes, books and visit to hospital and controlling traffic sometimes."

"I think our students need to set goals, practice mindfulness, develop human touch and of course decision making skills."

has developed digital courses addressing global issues and SEL skills, to be accessed by adolescents around the world. The intent is to utilise the power of digital pedagogies for effective, engaging, individualised learning, with a wider reach to a diverse audience. For successful implementation of these courses, it is important for key stakeholders, that is, teachers to understand the critical need to practice SEL in classrooms.

With the intention of better understanding teachers' perceptions of SEL, participants of the Capacity Building workshop held in New Delhi, India were asked to fill in a short survey. The survey comprised of four main open-ended questions, inquiring about teachers' practices in SEL, competencies they find essential, their view on SEL through digital pedagogies, and challenges in implementing SEL. Following is an overview of the 23 responses received on the survey, shedding light on how SEL is understood, conceptualised and received across school contexts. It also garners support for the need for implementing SEL in K-12 classrooms and for addressing the challenges that this comes with.

SEL in the classroom

“Although SEL has been conceptualized in various ways, it can broadly be understood as the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to manage their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions”⁵⁵.

So, what do these teachers understand of SEL? Which competencies are important to them?

20 out of 23 teachers reported that they do practice some form of SEL in their classroom.

Teachers' responses brought out certain interesting perceptions and practices of SEL across a variety of classroom contexts. While none of the teachers reported implementing a separate SEL curriculum or programme, most of them did mention some form of SEL skill development in the classroom. This seems to reflect two important points that curriculum designers or SEL enthusiasts should take into account. One, that social and emotional learning skills are inherent to any classroom learning and practice; when a bunch of children come together to learn, you cannot possibly ignore social and emotional development, even if the goals are not explicitly stated. Two, one can interpret that teachers find it easiest to practice and work on SEL competencies within the classroom, as a part of their curricular subject. Some of the teachers also associated SEL with life-skills or value education, or with other social service activities.

Teaching and Learning SEL through digital pedagogies

21 out of 23 teachers hold a positive view regarding teaching SEL skills through a digital medium. They shared several reasons for why they believe in the power of digital pedagogies to deliver social and emotional learning programmes. Some of the most prominent factors were the multi-modal and innovative nature of educational technologies, which may make learning more engaging and motivating for all learners. “It’s excellent as digital medium involves audio-visual learning which helps in better understanding of the content & which in turn leads to better outcome. Moreover it’s different from traditional teaching & breaks the monotony too”, answered a teacher. Another shared, “It’s a great idea because children are more fond of technology and the learning will be more effective than just normal classroom teaching. There will be more excitement and enthusiasm to learn.

Teachers also said that digital pedagogies help students develop 21st century skills, offering a broader word view as well. According to one respondent, these can offer “the best platform for the learners to learn not only what’s happening around them but globally so that they can make more informed decisions.” Another teacher believes that “if teaching and learning SEL skills takes place through a digital medium, students would be exposed to 21st century learning and it would enhance their interest of learning”.

Apart from these, they also mentioned an essential advantage that digital curricula offer - **greater flexibility** to cater to and incorporate different learning levels. “The medium can encompass the different levels of students on the same board”, shared an educator. Lastly, another point that came out through their responses was that of **learner agency**. Digital pedagogies definitely provide scope to each learner to navigate the experience themselves rather than being dictated by the teacher always.

Challenges with SEL Implementation

While it is established that emphasis on social and emotional skill building is essential, how do we ensure that SEL finds the required space within an academically driven education system? On one hand, all teachers acknowledged the importance of SEL, while on the other, they also shared several challenges that prevent them from implementing SEL in the right manner. Time and curriculum appeared to be two of the biggest constraints. “Time constraint, as due to the pressure of completing the syllabus might not motivate the teachers to experiment with their pedagogy & integrate SEL learning in their teaching”, reported one teacher from India. Another teacher mentioned, “time constraint and curriculum more focused on academic outcome”



as a challenge. “Must include in lesson plan and make a deliberate effort to include in the lesson”, suggested a teacher, signifying the importance of integrating SEL within the classroom. The same finding is supported through a⁶ national survey conducted in the US in 2012, “A majority of teachers (81 percent) rank time as the biggest challenge to implementing SEL, although research shows SEL can support increased time on task”⁷.

Another interesting challenge that was highlighted by certain teacher responses was that of diversity. Teachers shared that both intellectual as well as cultural diversity could pose a challenge to implementing SEL successfully. This brings forth a very relevant concern. Are SEL programmes or curricula inclusive? How do we ensure that the SEL models cater to all students, regardless of culture, economic background and abilities?

A few teachers also shared a challenge of lack of training. “Lack of knowledge. I’m not fully confident yet. This is the first time we got an idea about SEL. In Sri Lanka as a system we don’t use SEL. Most of our teachers use traditional methods”, shared a Sri Lankan teacher. Apart from this, teachers also mentioned

challenges such as lack of facilities, a large number of students and application or transfer of SEL skills.

Key recommendations

These teachers’ perspectives from various countries further contribute to the plethora of research on the importance of Social and Emotional Learning in schools. Following are certain recommendations for policymakers, curriculum designers and school administrators, based on the responses to the survey.

1) Given the curricular and time restraints, it becomes imperative for curriculum developers, policymakers and other SEL professionals to consider and design approaches to blend SEL skills within the mainstream curriculum. **SEL skills should ideally be embedded in the academic subjects or there should be specific time allotted to SEL within the entire curriculum.** This may include a separate course on SEL, including scheduled classes, targeted and measurable learning outcomes, along with assessments. The same finding was voiced out through a national survey⁸ conducted by CASEL in the US.



“Two in three teachers (62 percent) think the development of social and emotional skills should be explicitly stated in their state education standards”⁹.

2) Since the very core of SEL is understanding of self and others, including skills of empathy, relationship building and compassion- it becomes essential for all SEL programmes to be **designed in an inclusive manner**. From a single lesson to an entire curriculum, it is not only essential to keep in mind the needs of diverse learners, but also explicitly lay emphasis on differences, appreciation and acceptance of diversity - be it cultural, linguistic, racial or intellectual. “When teaching and designing SEL programs, we need to take into account factors such as students’ cultural values and beliefs about emotional expression and social interaction, along with exposure to racism, prejudice, and violence—all of which affect whether and how a student will use SEL skills”¹⁰. For this, teachers too need to be aware of their students’ backgrounds and abilities so as to ensure inclusivity and sensitivity in the classroom.

3) SEL programmes and curricula must also focus on **training the teachers** to implement the programmes effectively. The survey suggests that while teachers have positive attitudes toward SEL, they do not feel as equipped to practice SEL regularly. Therefore, all programmes must focus on training and providing support in terms of examples, resources and simple strategies that can be embedded in everyday classroom learning. Often teachers do not find the time to explore beyond the academic lesson, hence simple directed activities that can be easily implemented will offer great help to educators.

4) **Educational technologies** can offer an effective alternative medium for practicing SEL skills. Digital pedagogies have the potential to offer an engaging, interactive, individualised learning experience. At the same time these have an advantage over traditional pedagogies in terms of scalability, replicability and reach to a wider more diverse audience. If affordable and easy-to-use, these can reach various contexts, supporting both learners and teachers, overcoming barriers such as large number of diverse students, lack of resources and training.

SEL Competencies Valued by Teachers



Based on responses from 23 teachers from Bhutan, India, South Africa



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Footnotes and References

¹ Name changed.

² This real anecdote is based on observation.

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Mindfulness in the Classroom

VICTORIA WEBB



Tori Webb is a third-year student at the University of Virginia majoring in History, minoring in Sociology, and pursuing a Master's of Teaching in Social Studies Education degree. Tori began her mindfulness journey in Spring 2018 when she enrolled in "Mindfulness in Health and Human Development," taught by Professor Tish Jennings, at the University of Virginia. Currently, she is enrolled in the advanced part of the course which focuses more on leading and teaching mindfulness practices to others. Tori is interested in how mindfulness can be applied to, and potentially benefit, middle and high-school students in the classroom setting.

1. What is the role of the teacher in teaching SEL?

The teacher plays a pivotal role in teaching SEL. They are the guider or facilitator in helping students integrate mindfulness into their lives. Along with teaching students about mindfulness and SEL, teachers play a supportive role in encouraging students to continue practicing mindfulness outside of the classroom. **I think one, if not the most important role of the teacher in teaching SEL, is recognizing and acknowledging that students are people too.** They are not just another number on the class roster. Each of them brings their own unique personalities and experiences to the classroom, that the teacher should appreciate and expound upon. By doing this, students not only feel appreciated, but also have the opportunity to forge a strong relationship with their teacher, which itself has many positive benefits.

2. Is it important for a teacher to be trained in SEL? Why or why not?

I definitely think it is important for teachers to be trained in SEL. I think it gives the teacher an almost newfound appreciation for their profession. It reminds them that they are making an impact on the lives of many children, who look to them to provide social and emotional support, as well as academic support. Teachers can use SEL as an avenue for connecting to their students on a deeper

level. Moreover, SEL provides an outlet for teachers to examine their own social and emotional well-being. **When teachers are more self-aware it has a positive effect on their students.**

3. Describe how teachers are trained in SEL.

Teachers can be trained in SEL through a variety of workshops or professional development programs that are designed using an SEL-based curriculum.

4. How is SEL training for 'the teacher' different from SEL training for 'the student'?

I think SEL training for "the teacher" is different from SEL training for "the student" because SEL training "for the student" is a byproduct of teacher wellness. There is a connection between teacher SEL and student SEL. **When a teacher has the opportunity to check in with themselves, become vulnerable, remember their passion for teaching, and surround themselves with like-minded individuals, their SEL is stronger and more effective.** In turn, when a teacher does take care of themselves in this way, they are better able to become more effective educators and support an environment for students to grow in their own social and emotional learning.

SEL provides an outlet for teachers to examine their own social and emotional well-being.

When teachers are more self-aware it has a positive effect on their students.

5. What are some of the challenges you face as a student, training to become a teacher in SEL?

As a student training to become a teacher in SEL, I think one of the biggest challenges I face is remembering that in the future, when I am a teacher, I constantly need to be taking care of myself and practicing my own SEL. I think in the teaching profession, like any profession, it is very easy to get overly stressed, frustrated, anxious, etc. However, **if we, as teachers, want to have a positive effect on the lives of our students, we must take care of ourselves.** We must make our emotional and mental health one of our top priorities because students benefit from a teacher who is self-aware and mindful of themselves.

6. Describe some of the results (positive or negative) you have experienced since you started taking the teacher training course titled 'Mindfulness in Health and Human Development' at the University of Virginia.

I have experienced many positive results/effects since enrolling in "Mindfulness in Health and Human Development" at the University of Virginia. One, is that I am more aware of my emotions, how I react to certain situations, and how I have the tendency to internalize those feelings. Mindfulness has helped me better manage my stress and anxiety, and taught me more effective ways to regulate these strong emotions. Second, I am much more aware of my interactions with others. I am a mindful listener or an active listener - paying attention to what other people are saying in a conversation and not just simply thinking of what my response is going to be. Third, I am more aware of the present moment. As someone who deals with anxiety on a daily basis, I am constantly

either thinking ahead or dwelling on the past. By implementing mindfulness in my life, I have greater appreciation for the present moment, and thus greater appreciation for my family, friends, or others who are experiencing the present moment with me.

7. Describe some of the methodologies / techniques used to teach mindfulness in classrooms. Can these exercises be taught digitally to students?

I think one of the best ways to teach mindfulness in classrooms is both explaining in simple terms what mindfulness is, why we practice it, and what benefits it can have, as well as leading students in a variety of practices. **A 3-breaths/setting intention practice could be useful at the beginning of class when students first sit down and are trying to get situated.** I have found this practice to be a great way for students to focus, pay attention, and get settled in for a day of learning, exploring, and interacting. A body scan exercise might be useful when students are experiencing a particularly high amount of stress, and that stress manifests physically. A mindful eating exercise might be fun when students have snack time! I think mindfulness and mindful practices can be taught digitally, as we have seen with the rise of mindfulness apps like Insight Timer or Calm. However, I know some people have a hard time practicing mindfulness digitally because in some ways it's counterintuitive. Mindfulness is a way for us to disconnect from technology, but we are going to learn mindfulness using technology? It's an interesting way to think about it, and I think it comes down to personal preference more than anything.

8. What are some of the challenges you face as a teacher while implementing SEL (specifically mindfulness) in classrooms?

I think some of the challenges one can face as a teacher while implementing mindfulness into classrooms, is that **some of the concepts/themes/topics that are discussed in mindfulness-based curriculum can be quite broad and/or personal. Oftentimes, many people don't want to dig that deep or become vulnerable.** So, while mindfulness affords those individuals the opportunity to challenge themselves and "peel the onion" of emotions, so to speak, it is important to not push people into doing something they're not comfortable doing. One of the most important points about mindfulness is that everything is voluntary and not being forced onto someone. That's why many mindfulness facilitators will start their practice off with the words "I invite you to..." because nothing should be obligatory.



9. Is there enough time for SEL practices in classrooms? How can teachers always make sure that there is enough time for SEL?

Like trying to implement mindfulness into your daily life, I think teachers need to carve out a time for mindfulness in their classrooms. There should be enough time for SEL practices in classrooms because it's so important. Of course, it's very easy to say that and much more difficult to actually implement given the time and schedule constraints that teachers face every day. Regardless, I think teachers should make SEL a priority because it's a win-win situation for both parties - teacher and students. Teachers are taking care of themselves which has a positive effect on their students; students feel appreciated and acknowledged, leading to more enthusiasm and excitement when it comes to learning and being at school.

10. Describe some of the results (positive / negative) you have seen in students who have practiced mindfulness.

I had an amazing opportunity to give a presentation on mindfulness and lead middle-school students in a mindfulness practice, a month ago in my hometown in Virginia. After the presentation and practice, I asked the students how they felt about everything and any comments they had. One of the students, after the practice, said, "The other day I twisted my ankle playing basketball with my friends and it's been bothering me

ever since. But after doing that practice, my ankle doesn't hurt as much anymore." That was a lightbulb or "ah-ha" moment for me. While mindfulness is not a "cure" for any sort of pain, this student was more aware of his body and how he was feeling because of mindfulness. He recognized where the pain was coming from and could focus his attention and breath on that part of his body. Another student after the practice said, "I like your voice better because when someone does a mindfulness practice over the intercom it doesn't sound as good." This points to how mindfulness can sometimes be difficult to practice when it's done digitally or through some piece of technology. Some people need to be in the same room as the mindfulness facilitator in order to have the full experience.

11. Does SEL training for students vary across grades i.e. primary versus middle school versus high schools?

I think SEL training does vary for students across grades because different aged students are at different stages of their lives. For elementary-schoolers, SEL may be more focused on paying attention, staying focused, and learning to have positive interactions with peers. For middle-schoolers, SEL may be centered around finding yourself, understanding the variety of changes going on in their lives, and regulating the emotions that come with these changes. For high-schoolers, SEL may highlight ways to regulate stress and anxiety, forge strong relationships with adults and peers, and appreciate the present moment before the added pressure of college and then the adult world hits.



RISE Together

BRYAN CHRIST



Bryan Christ, a MPP candidate at the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy, lives in Crozet, Virginia. Bryan is the Co-Director of Rise Together, a nonprofit team mentoring program that connects University of Virginia students with local diverse K-12 youth. Bryan has a vision of carving a clear path towards education reform by incorporating cutting-edge youth development theories and social-emotional learning to ensure the education system empowers, engages, and serves all students.

The Need for Mentors

Mentors can have profound positive impacts on youth. Young adults in the United States (US) who are at-risk of falling off track but have a mentor are 55% more likely to enroll in college, 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, and 130% more likely to hold leadership positions. Despite these compelling impacts of mentoring relationships, 1 in 3 children will grow up without a mentor in the US¹.

Overview of Rise Together

Rise Together, a nonprofit team mentoring program, seeks to close this mentoring gap in Charlottesville, Virginia by providing first-generation college-bound high school and middle school students with trained University of Virginia (UVA) undergraduate mentors. Rise Together takes a holistic approach to education by fostering Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and academic learning. Mentoring sessions consist of academic tutoring and group and individual activities led by mentoring teams that teach mentees key social-emotional or college readiness skills such as effective studying methods, resilience, self-advocacy, and conflict management.

The main elements that distinguish Rise Together from other youth development programs are that we believe mentors can learn as much as mentees from mentoring relationships and that a trained team of mentors operating in a 2 student to 1 mentor ratio is more effective and scalable than 1-1 matches. Accordingly, we devote an equal amount of time conducting training sessions for mentors and running mentoring sessions with mentees. Targeted training focused on SEL, learning critical mentoring skills, and designing educationally sound programming not only results in more impactful mentoring relationships, but also spurs professional development for mentors, many of whom will rely on these experiences while pursuing a career in education. In fact, roughly half of our mentors volunteer for course credit for University of Virginia's Curry School of Education and Human Development.

Rise Together Mentor Training Process

Each mentor training session begins with a group evaluation of the team's performance in the previous week's mentoring session. To aid this process, we display pictures and videos from mentoring sessions so mentors can accurately observe and recall their performance in real time. This allows for group problem solving to identify ways to address challenges at the team and individual level. For example, if pictures and video show that mentors are struggling to bring students back together after activities, the team

would come up with a strategy to quickly grab attention such as a quiet signal. Additionally, each mentor is given an opportunity to discuss any challenges they have with their mentoring relationships, allowing more experienced mentors to share methods to effectively connect with students. As a result, mentors further hone collaborative problem solving and critical self-evaluation, two essential social-emotional skills for future teachers and professionals. Mentor training sessions also include targeted skill development activities that promote specific social-emotional competencies necessary for effective team mentoring. Though skill development lessons are based on pressing needs of each mentoring team, we teach every team active listening, large and small group facilitation, public speaking, and managing disruptive



behavior. In addition to fostering SEL, training sessions build mentor buy-in by giving them opportunities to collaboratively design elements of mentoring lesson plans. In order to build buy-in while also ensuring programming is educationally sound, we scaffold how much of the agendas mentors design throughout the semester. For example, at the beginning of the semester, mentoring agendas are very scaffolded with teams only focusing on designing fun team building activities rather than substantive SEL lessons in order to model effective youth programming. By the end of the semester when mentors are well-trained, they design entire mentoring session agendas on whatever SEL topic they believe is most relevant to their mentees. Training sessions also allow mentors to practice how they will explain and run the following week's mentoring agenda. In turn, not only do mentors perform better in mentoring sessions, they also further internalize and reflect on whatever social-emotional skills they plan to teach mentees. The greatest example of training sessions resulting in deeper SEL for mentors was a unit we did on social comparison, or the tendency to compare oneself to others. To prepare for the lesson, mentors practiced an activity they planned to run with their mentees that was designed to make students aware of social comparisons they make regularly. For many mentors, this activity completely opened their eyes to the fact that they still make social comparisons in college, which allowed them to come up with strategies and examples of how to combat this tendency in their lives that they were able to share with their mentees.

Mentor Training Results

Though we are in the midst of conducting a rigorous evaluation of our program by an independent outcomes specialist, our mentor training model has shown success in our first three years of operation, both for mentors and mentees.

YOUTH VOICES

Mentor Outcomes

Mentors consistently report that training sessions are essential to their mentoring performance. Specifically, 91% feel prepared to serve mentees after training sessions and 94% believe the training is valuable. Training also improves mentors' confidence in their social-emotional skills: A pre-post survey indicated mentors were 54% more likely to feel confident in their public speaking abilities. In the words of one mentor, Rise Together "...increased my comfort level talking about tough social issues, mentoring, leading groups and conversations, and working with students. It has made me more sure that I want to continue my education to become a teacher." Mentors also report that training sessions build ownership of the program, with 95% believing Rise Together staff gave them enough opportunities to design mentoring sessions and have leadership roles. As a result, 85% of mentors are willing to volunteer with Rise Together again despite having to manage college schedules and coursework.

Mentee Outcomes

Providing well-trained mentors has also resulted in positive outcomes for middle school and high school mentees.

Middle School Students

Middle school mentees consistently report program satisfaction and are 118% more likely to enjoy being at Rise Together than at school, which is primarily due to the confidence mentors help instill in them. Specifically, 84% feel Rise Together improves their confidence in their ability to attend college, 78% feel it makes them a more confident leader, and 73% feel it makes them more confident in themselves. Additionally, because of programming mentors designed to promote the social-emotional competency of compassion through community service, our pre-post survey indicated mentees were 120% more likely to feel confident creating and implementing community service projects.

High School Students

Similar to their middle school counterparts, high school mentees are highly satisfied with the program: They are 148% more likely to enjoy being at Rise Together than at school and 85% feel the program is meaningful, primarily because of improvement on college and social-emotional skills. Specifically, 80% report Rise Together gave them opportunities to work on college preparation skills and 85% said it allowed them to practice leading and working with others. According to two high school mentees, Rise Together "...helps you realize the skills you need for college, learn to communicate with the people around you and learn how the college setting is academically," and mentors "...help them [students] work on life skills, develop character, and understand their studies."

Program Growth and Vision

Because of these positive outcomes, we are experiencing explosive program growth: 100% of school partners invited Rise Together to expand programming for their students, and we have sustainably grown 650% since our pilot year. Our vision is to scale to other colleges throughout the US and, eventually, the world so that all students have access to the guidance, resources, support, mentors and opportunities necessary to take charge of their education, life and dreams.





Teaching Heart-Mindfulness *in* Primary Schools

POLINA P. MISCHENKO, M.ED., ABD



Polina P. Mischenko holds a Master's in Education from Harvard Graduate School of Education and is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Virginia (UVA) Curry School of Education & Human Development. At UVA, she instructs undergraduate and graduate courses on mindfulness in health & human development and in teaching. As a recipient of the Mind & Life Institute 1440 Grant, Ms. Mischenko has been researching what it takes to teach mindfulness in elementary school settings, focusing on the perspectives and experiences of teachers delivering the Compassionate Schools Project (CSP) mindfulness-based social emotional learning curriculum.

In a world where hundreds of millions of children around the world face violent or otherwise traumatizing life circumstances at home or in their communities, education systems need to make a conscious effort to acknowledge students' realities and promote social emotional learning (SEL) at an early age. *One effort to promote students' social emotional capacities to cope, overcome, and flourish that has been gaining recognition worldwide is the integration of mindfulness education in schools.*

Mindfulness is a way of paying attention to what is happening within and around you in the present moment. In this piece, I use the term "heart-mindfulness"¹ interchangeably with mindfulness to emphasize the importance of cultivating "heart" qualities in the way we pay attention, such as compassion, nonjudgement, and kindness. Although research on mindfulness-based interventions is still nascent, recent results at the primary school level suggest that these programs have promise for improving students' psychological well-being, self-regulation skills and prosocial outcomes, such as empathy.²

One such new program at the primary school level is the Compassionate Schools Project (CSP) social emotional learning curriculum. CSP aims to promote social emotional competencies³ and compassion through games, stories and mindfulness-based

practices, such as taking deep breaths, breath and body awareness, mindful listening, yoga-based postures, generating kindness and compassion toward self and others, and mindful eating. Approximately 10,000 students (grades K-5) have participated in this program as part of a randomized control trial in the U.S.A. during the time typically allocated for physical education (P.E.) and health. Approximately 50 primary school teachers received intensive professional learning on mindfulness, SEL, and CSP to ensure successful program implementation.

As a mindfulness practitioner, I am enthusiastic about the potential benefits of mindfulness for children. However, I am also cautious and believe that more research is necessary on the processes and variables that hinder or facilitate program effectiveness in diverse settings. With support from The Mind & Life Institute⁴, I am exploring factors influencing CSP implementation with particular attention to challenges that teachers face and how they can overcome them in mindful and compassionate ways. Most of the schools implementing CSP are high poverty schools with large numbers of children exposed to trauma and/or struggling with mental health. Here, I share some of my preliminary findings.

“I’ve gotten better at allowing kids to express themselves without judgment. . . . I have a lot more sense of empathy and compassion than I did before.”

One of the reoccurring challenges mentioned by teachers was classroom management. While classroom management issues were common at the schools, some teachers expressed that the management challenge may have been amplified in CSP. For one, the curriculum can bring to the surface many of the socio-emotional challenges that students encounter, and some teachers did not feel competent or supported by the school in addressing students’ needs. Additionally, the challenge of learning a new curriculum, logistics, and inadequacies of the physical environment made management more difficult. Many schools implemented CSP in the gym, which students associate with “going wild,” not practicing yoga-based postures and learning mindfulness. Having yoga mats added another challenge (e.g., students rolling up like tacos, flapping them up and down to make noise) – teachers were not accustomed to this new and versatile addition to the classroom. Although teachers struggled with classroom management, many expressed improvements in their skills as they progressed with CSP. ***Teachers who felt they had made progress shared that it was largely due to their personal growth in heart-mindfulness, which allowed them to embody⁵ heart-mindfulness and apply their practice to classroom management.***

Embodying heart-mindfulness

Most teachers became formally acquainted with mindfulness through the professional learning program, Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education (CARE), that explicitly focuses on teacher self-care and mindful awareness and compassion practices⁶. Teachers also often attended, Community Approach to Learning Mindfully (CALM)⁷, a school-based mindful movement program offered for teachers by the project. They reported engaging in guided meditations, body and breath awareness, meditation on scriptures, yoga, mindful walking, mindful eating, and deep breathing. Teachers made an intentional effort to practice regularly outside of school as well as in class while delivering CSP.

A commonly reported benefit of practice was self-regulation. One teacher stated, “I feel more empowered in my own ability to face [classroom] challenges, because now I practice mindfulness.” One teacher described her progress, “The mindful approach by [Patricia A.] Jennings is something I’m really working on. . . . How you can distance yourself from behavior and not be affected by it, not lose your temper and start screaming.” A third teacher, previously a P.E. teacher, stated that she told a student, ‘I believe it’s really changed me.’ The student responded, “It really has because you don’t yell at us anymore.” ***This same teacher expressed how these practices have helped her in the “heart” realm: “I’ve gotten better at allowing kids to express themselves without judgment. . . . I have a lot more sense of empathy and compassion than I did before.” Generally, teachers expressed that their personal practice helped them to remain calm, not reactive, to be less judgmental and more compassionate.***

Heart-mindfulness strategies

Effective teachers⁸ also applied heart-mindfulness strategies in their approach to classroom management. Here I share two:

Supporting student self-regulation: Heartful planned ignoring. While many teachers intentionally ignored student behavior, effective teachers were able to calmly redirect attention from the misbehavior and focus on the lesson without reacting in frustration. One teacher shared how she heart-fully sets up planned ignoring in the beginning of the year by telling students that if she ignores misbehavior, it does not mean that she does not see it or that she does not care about the students who are misbehaving, it just means that she’s giving them “space to fix it on their own.” In other words, she is giving students an opportunity to self-regulate. She explained how she does this: “I just . . . blur him out and keep going and then all of a sudden he’s regulating himself and he’s doing what we’re doing. Which is . . . nothing I would have ever thought would happen if I were the one controlling him.” As this teacher recognized, planned ignoring

requires that teachers let go of trying to control students and give them a chance to regulate themselves, a critical objective of the curriculum.

Cultivating a compassionate community: Modeling for our friends. Teachers also supported classroom management and showed students what it means to be compassionate through modelling. Teachers modelled compassion by engaging in strategies, like planned ignoring, in which they did not judge, label or demean students who were misbehaving. They referred to students as “friends” and provided them with opportunities to self-regulate and rejoin the class when ready. Students were also encouraged to notice without judgement when a friend was struggling and empowered to help their distracted peer by also modeling mindful behavior. Through their teachers’ example, students were given a clear understanding of how they can mindfully respond to distractions in the class, as well as how to be helpful and compassionate to their struggling peers.

The teachers who engaged in these strategies spent the first few weeks of school developing and role playing classroom expectations with students and explaining the purpose of the strategies. During classroom observations, it was evident that students in these classes were clear on what was expected of them and assisted their teachers in cultivating a mindful and caring classroom community to be helpful and compassionate to their struggling peers.

Making it work: Investing time in setting expectations

Most importantly, to ensure the success of these strategies, the CSP curriculum encourages teachers to spend the first few weeks of the school year to develop classroom expectations with students and role play expectations to deepen student learning. It is important that they understand why you are “ignoring” them and why it is important that they take care of themselves and model appropriate and compassionate behavior for their peers. During classroom observations it was evident that students of effective teachers were clear on what was expected of them and assisted their teacher in cultivating a mindful and compassionate classroom community.

Implications

As heart-mindfulness interventions pique the interest of education leaders around the world, this research reminds us to first consider the potential implementation challenges and recognize the importance of having authentic and competent teachers. It also shows that there is still much to learn about how teachers can teach mindfulness in such a way that children, from a young age, can deeply understand how to use heart-mindfulness strategies to overcome personal obstacles and cultivate compassionate communities.

Link to CSP: www.compassionschools.org



Illustration by Polina P. Mischenko

YOUTH VOICES



Photos by Compassionate Schools Project

The Blue DOT



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¹ Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. (2006). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62, 373–386. doi: 10.1002/jclp.

² Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Oberle, E., Lawlor, M. S., Abbott, D., Thomson, K., Oberlander, T. F., & Diamond, A. (2015). Enhancing cognitive and social–emotional development through a simple-to-administer mindfulness-based school program for elementary school children: A randomized controlled trial. *Developmental Psychology*, 51, 52–66.

³ Social emotional competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management and responsible decision-making. For more details see: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). (2013). 2013 CASEL guide: Effective social and emotional learning programs— preschool and elementary school edition. Chicago: Author.

This research was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Mind & Life Institute 1440 legacy grant.

⁵ Embodiment refers to the teachers' ability to maintain connection to their personal practice and model the qualities of mindfulness (e.g., calm, presence, nonjudgment, compassion) in the process of instruction and student-teacher interactions.

⁶ Jennings, P. A., Brown, J. L., Frank, J. L., Doyle, S., Oh, Y., Tanler, R., ... Greenberg, M. T. (2017). Impacts of the CARE for Teachers program on teachers' social and emotional competence and classroom interactions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 109, 1010–1028.

⁷ Harris, A. R., Jennings, P. A., Katz, D. A., Abenavoli, R. M., & Greenberg, M. T. (2016). Promoting stress management and well-being in educators: Feasibility and efficacy of the CALM intervention. *Mindfulness*, 7, 143–154. doi:10.1007/s12671-015-0451-2

⁸ My research focused on both teachers rated high on fidelity and quality of implementation and those rated low. Effective teachers were rated high.



INTERVIEW

Interview with Sadhguru

FOUNDER, ISHA FOUNDATION

By Akriti Mehra, Communications Specialist, UNESCO MGIEP

1. How can education help create peaceful and sustainable societies?

Sadhguru: There is a whole effort in the traditional Indian education systems about establishing a universal identity before children start their education process. Because education is seen as empowerment, before you empower them, the first thing is that they have a cosmic identity. This is called *Aham Brahmasmi*. If we have national, racial, religious and ethnic identities, which all boils down to the family and then to the individual human being, then we are establishing a strong sense of limited identity and expecting peace will happen. This cannot happen in the very nature of things because this identity is what our intellect will function around - whether it is of gender, race, religion, or nationality, inevitably our intellect will work only towards protecting our identity. That is why always in the East, we established a cosmic identity because only then your intelligence will work towards integration, towards a universal consciousness.

2. What are some of the learnings / values that we can take and apply from Mahatma Gandhi's teachings towards creating peaceful societies?

Sadhguru: If you look at Mahatma Gandhi, he was not talented or anything special. He could not successfully practice as a barrister in India, which is why he went to South Africa. But suddenly, the man made a commitment towards something. He became so committed that he became a giant.

This is all that happened to many people who are historically known as great beings. They were living with a limited identification, and then, all of a sudden, an event occurred that broke their identities so they were able to relate to a larger process happening around them. They did things that they themselves could not imagine possible. Being committed is just something we have to decide within ourselves. Whatever happens, life or death, one's commitment should not change. When you are truly committed, you express yourself totally, in every possible way. When commitment is lacking, somewhere you lose your purpose. When the purpose of why we are here is lost, there is no question of fulfilling our goals.

3. Are current education systems equipped to facilitate the development of a culture of peace? Why or why not?

Sadhguru: Without peaceful human beings, there is no peaceful society, nation or world. Above all, when we as individual human beings do not know how to be peaceful within ourselves, what are we talking about world peace? Because what you see in the world is just a larger manifestation of what is happening in human minds.

Unless we create peaceful human beings, there cannot be a peaceful world.

Unfortunately, our education systems have become completely divorced from this. We are only interested in placing our children in a factory-like situation, where everyone is pushed through the same extruder and they are supposed to fall out in the same shape. But that is not how human beings are made. So what can we do about it? My entire life's work is about individual transformation because without that there is no such thing as changing the world. The world, society, and nation are all just words. The reality is just you and me, and how we are within ourselves right now. From the very beginning, competition or one being above the other has become the way of our education. Instead of each child exploring how to unravel the genius within, this destructive pursuit of how to be above someone else is violence. There may be efforts to being peaceful as a moral quality but the ambience of ruthless competition breeds violence.

4. What changes need to be brought about to current education systems (in terms of content and delivery) to achieve peaceful and sustainable societies? What role can teachers play?

Sadhguru: Modern education is oriented towards exploiting everything. The focus is what can we get out of every life of this planet. That's not going to lead to human wellbeing. This is not the right kind of education. Our focus should be what can we do for every life on this planet. This inspiration is completely missing. If we have to change this, first of all we have to change our economic module. What is significant in our life has to change - which is not going to change right away. When economics and money is the biggest value in a society, competition is inevitable. Where there is competition of an intense kind and it gets more and more aggressive, many fall by the wayside. Now when it comes to teaching, you do not have to be an expert in a particular subject to teach. All you need to be is a loving human being, who is inspiring for the children to be with. If you ask children why they took to a certain subject, most of them will say it was because of one of their teachers. If it was a teacher they loved, they naturally loved the subject also. This is how a child functions. Altering human consciousness is not about the content but about the context. To change the fundamental context as to why we are educating ourselves has to change from exclusive one-upmanship to an all-inclusive approach. This needs care to establish a very inclusive identity from an early age.



5. Can you share an example of what you may perceive as a successful learning environment, in which students have been deeply involved in the learning process?

Sadhguru: We have an education initiative called Isha Vidhya, which is about bringing high quality education to rural India. This is something people in that economic strata would normally never have access to. Over sixty percent of the children are first generation school-goers and forty-two percent of them are girls. During their vacations at least fifteen to twenty percent of the children come back to school a week or ten days in advance because they want to be a part of setting up the school. This is because they feel it is their school and they want to be involved. There is nothing very unique about Isha Vidhya. It is a simple school, but the administrators, teachers and staff are highly dedicated people. Their level of focus and commitment, and the way the children have evolved, is a phenomenon to watch. It is just the devotion of the people which has made the difference.

6. What do you imagine the 21st century classroom to look like?

Sadhguru: Soon, a simple gadget will know more than the entire university knows. Schooling as we know it, in the next ten to fifteen years' time, could become absolutely meaningless, because knowledge-wise everything will be available. The burden of carrying information, assimilating it and expressing it in the world will soon be gone. So maybe there will be no such thing as a 21st century classroom. The day is coming when children need not go to school at all. Instead, this is the time for human beings to truly unravel and explore their consciousness.

7. What role can technology play in our education systems to help create a culture of peace?

Sadhguru: Because of technology the power of one's muscle has been neutralized. It is how much intellectual power you have that is deciding things right now. Again, as muscle power was taken by the machines, if intellectual power is taken by the machines, naturally human beings will dig deeper into their consciousness. If everything that you can do a machine can do in future, that will be a great day, because that means we are on a holiday! We don't work for a living.



Now we look at life in a completely different way which will be very, very significant. In fact, for the first time, we will become human beings! Once our focus turns inward, a culture of peace is a natural consequence.

8. What are some of the key values / skills and competencies individuals need to be equipped with to deal with the pressures of an external environment?

Sadhguru: The only problem in your life is the world is not happening the way you think it should happen. A bit of it happens your way, a bit of it my way, a bit of it somebody else's way. The world is always going to be like this, it's never going to happen 100% the way you want it. That's not the problem. The biggest problem is this you are not happening 100% the way you want. If this one person was happening the way you want this person to be, definitely you would keep yourself blissful not miserable. When you are an issue yourself how can you deal with the world? Only when you are no more an issue you can deal with the outside issues to the best of your ability. This is why my work is to offer tools and methods from the yogic sciences for every individual to manage one's own body and mind to their full potential.

9. What is 'inner transformation'? How can it help achieve happiness in individuals?

Sadhguru: Happiness is an inner situation. It blossoms from within and finds an external expression. The happiness is within, but we have kept the stimulus outside. Let's say you owned a car in the 1940s. When you bought a car, along with it you have to get yourself two servants, because morning you have to push-start the car. But today all your cars are self-start. It's time you put self-start on your happiness – that situation in your family, work or the world need not push your happiness to get it started.

Every human experience is rooted in a certain type of chemistry that you carry at that moment. What you call as peace, joy, stress, love are just different kinds of chemistry. Inner transformation, or what we call as "Inner Engineering" is a simple method to create the right kind of chemistry. If you fix the dynamics of what how this human being functions, then being peaceful and happy would come naturally to you.

Isha.sadhguru.org

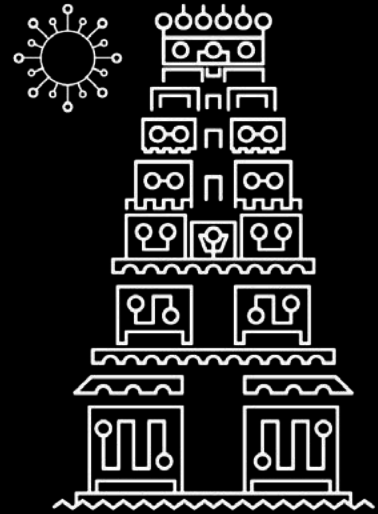


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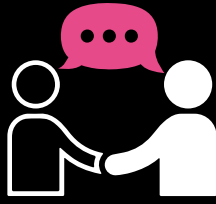
TECH 2019 will be held in Visakhapatnam in India – a coastal port city, often known as The Jewel of the East Coast, situated in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

Visakhapatnam offers the best of India's vibrant culture, fascinating architecture, jewel-like beaches, gastronomic delights and more.

CONFERENCE THEMES



THEME 1:
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Social and Emotional
Learning

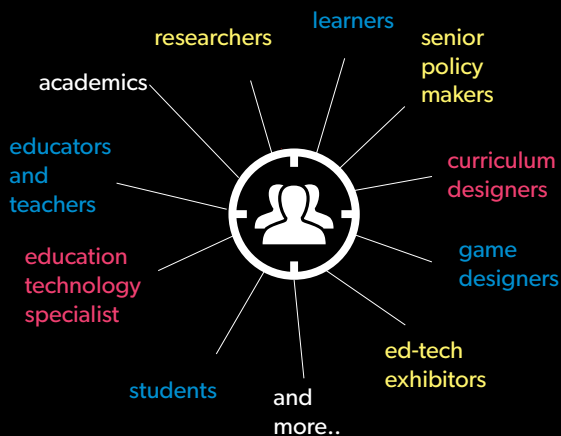


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Activity Bulletin



UNESCO MGIEP partners with Dell for its Policy Hackathon targetted at teachers in India

New Delhi, India | January, 2019

UNESCO MGIEP partnered with Dell for a first of a kind hackathon for teachers, challenging them to come up with innovative solutions to address the problems they face inside and outside the classroom. The hackathon is the first of a three-city PolicyHack series with applications from over 80 schools across India. Dell will be organising three additional PolicyHacks in other regions of India in 2019, with an endeavour to foster and cultivate innovative ideas on how teachers can leverage technology for themselves and for the benefit of their students.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>

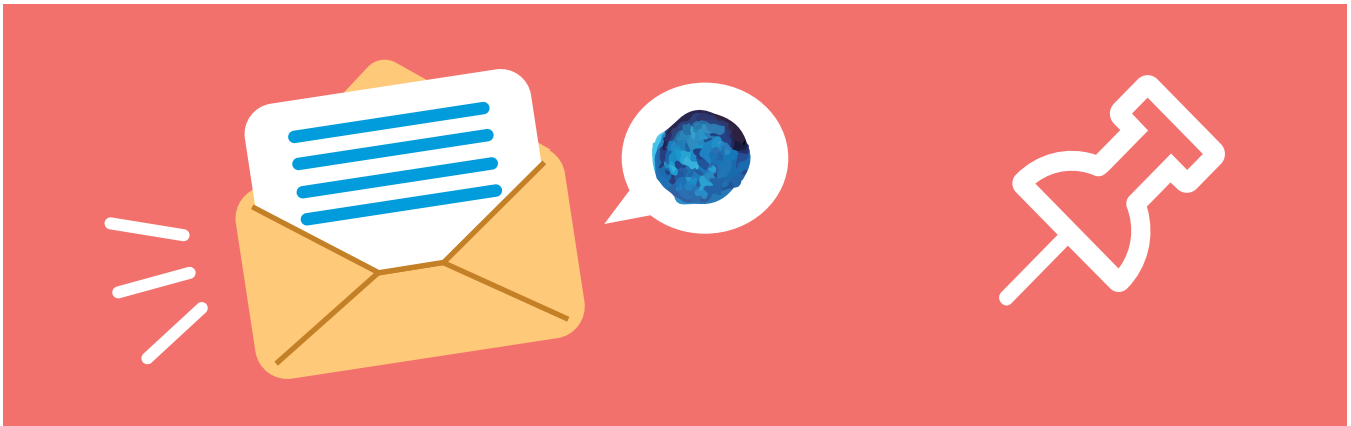
Hatch teams up with UNESCO MGIEP to promote learning through play

London, United Kingdom | January, 2019

Hatch has agreed with the UNESCO MGIEP to publish games developed or approved by the Institute that support the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The games will be a part of the Hatch Kids offering for premium subscribers, due for launch to consumers in the first markets in Q1 2019. "Play has always been an essential part of our well-being," said Dr. Anantha Duraiappah, Director of UNESCO MGIEP. He went on to state "Games offer a natural pedagogy to learn, teach and assess in education, and can help develop more attentive, empathic and compassionate individuals, who can in turn help build more peaceful and sustainable societies."

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>





When neuroscience meets AI: What does the future of learning look like?

Paris, France | March, 2019

Dr. Nandini Chatterjee Singh, cognitive neuroscientist, UNESCO MGIEP answered some questions on the convergence of neuroscience and Artificial Intelligence in learning, ahead of the International Congress on Cognitive Science in Schools, held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>

Creya Learning joins hands with UNESCO MGIEP for #KindnessMatters for the SDGs

India | April, 2019

Creya Learning joined hands with UNESCO MGIEP as a partner for the #KindnessMatters for the SDGs campaign, which is a global youth campaign, with special focus on adolescents and young adults. Through this partnership, UNESCO MGIEP and Creya Learning are collectively working towards creating a culture of kindness in schools in India.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>





Samsung, India, JNV and UNESCO MGIEP come together for the 'MyDream Project'

New Delhi, India | April, 2019

UNESCO MGIEP, Samsung, India and the Jawahar Navodaya Samiti (JNV) signed a partnership agreement for a unique research study, titled the 'MyDream Project'. The research study was conceptualized as a response to the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India's request to reduce curriculum stress in school children. As the research, knowledge and implementation partner, UNESCO MGIEP will conduct a two-year research study at 64 JNV schools in 8 regions across India to identify how Project-based Learning and Social and Emotional Learning can be used to drive learning outcomes of students.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>

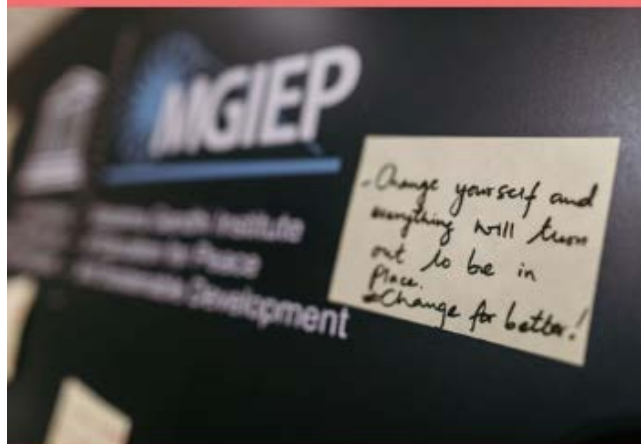
Joining hands for Global Citizenship education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning

New Delhi, India | April, 2019

With a focus on building peaceful and inclusive societies through Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), UNESCO MGIEP launched two of its projects during a Teacher Capacity Building Workshop held in New Delhi from 15th to 18th April 2019. These include courses on Digital Intercultural Exchange (DICE) Phase III and Global Citizenship designed for adolescents in the age group of 12 to 14 years. Both the courses build knowledge around contemporary global issues and impart essential SEL skills such as Empathy, Mindfulness, Compassion and Critical Inquiry. The workshop saw participation by over 35 teachers from India, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and South Africa.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>

TEACHER TRAINING WORKSHOP



15th -18th April 2019, New Delhi, India



Grammy Award winning musician and SDG champion Ricky Kej lends voice to #KindnessMatters for the SDGs

UNESCO MGIEP is delighted to appoint Grammy-Award winning musician from India, Ricky Kej as a Global Ambassador for Kindness. Ricky Kej who is a strong advocate and champion of environmental consciousness and sustainability received critical acclaim for the album Shanti Samsara. In his role as Kindness Ambassador, Ricky Kej will amplify the message of the campaign globally at UNESCO MGIEP's key events such as the International Youth Day 2019 celebrations, the United Nations General Assembly and UNESCO General Conference.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>

Promoting Children's Social and Emotional Well-Being - A Distinguished Lecture by Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl

New Delhi, India | April, 2019

How can social and emotional learning and mindfulness-based programs help develop social and emotional competence and well-being amongst children? In UNESCO MGIEP's ninth Distinguished Lecture, Dr. Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, Applied Developmental Psychologist and a Professor at the University of British Columbia, discussed how children's social and emotional well-being can be cultivated through evidence-based programs and practical approaches. The lecture was attended by almost two-hundred participants, including teachers, educators, students / researchers and academics of early childhood education, practitioners of social and emotional learning (SEL) and psychologists, amongst others.

Read more: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/news>





SOCIAL *and* EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Learn more about Social and
Emotional Learning at

mgiep.unesco.org



The Blue DOT is UNESCO MGIEP's bi-annual publication, featuring articles showcasing our activities and areas of interest. The magazine's overarching theme is the relationship between education, peace, sustainable development and global citizenship.

To view the e-publication, visit –
<https://mgiep.unesco.org/the-bluedot>



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of Education for Peace
and Sustainable Development



+91 11 23072356-60

35 Ferozshah Road,
ICSSR Building, 1st Floor,
New Delhi, 110001, India

Website: <https://mgiep.unesco.org/the-bluedot>

Email: bluedot.mgiep@unesco.org

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