

Transforming Students' Lives with Social and Emotional Learning

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How educators and students process and respond to emotions influences children's education in ways that affect their social, emotional, and cognitive development. A recent meta-analysis of research on programs focused on social and emotional learning (SEL) shows that a systematic process for promoting students' social and emotional development is the common element among schools that report an increase in academic success, improved quality of relationships between teachers and students, and a decrease in problem behavior (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). SEL can be especially powerful when grounded in theory and empirical evidence, and when adult stakeholders in children's education are actively involved in cultivating and modeling their own social and emotional competencies (Brackett et al. 2009). As this chapter illustrates, SEL programming results in significant shifts in social, emotional, and academic competencies as well as improvements in the quality of learning environments.

There is growing recognition at the local, state, and federal levels in the United States (US) and around the world that schools must meet the social and emotional developmental needs of students for effective teaching and learning to take place and for students to reach their full potential (<http://casel.org/research/sel-in-your-state/>). Efforts to promote SEL in schools align with the views of leading economists who have been calling for a greater focus on what have been traditionally referred to as "soft" skills. Nobel Laureate, James Heckman, has written that the greatest returns on education investments are "from nurturing children's non-cognitive skills, giving them social, emotional and behavioral benefits that lead to success later in life..." (Heckman & Masterov, 2004). Heckman argues that investing in emotion skills is a cost-effective approach to increasing the quality and productivity of the workforce through fostering workers' motivation, perseverance, and self-control.

As increasing efforts move toward better preparing youth to enter and contribute to a competitive and global workforce, epidemiological evidence suggests that the basic needs of youth still are not being met. For example, the incidence of emotional disturbances among youth in the US is widespread. Approximately one in five American adolescents experience problems with anxiety or depression (e.g., Benjamin, Costell, & Warren, 1990; Kessler & Walters, 1998) and prescribed antidepressants are being used at exceedingly high rates (Delate, Gelenberg, Simmons, & Motheral, 2004; Olfson & Marcus, 2009). Adolescents with a history of anxiety and depression are more likely to engage in risky and maladaptive behaviors such as using illicit drugs, withdrawing from friends, disconnecting from school, and bullying classmates (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2005). Youth in the U.S. are more likely to experience intimidation or verbal abuse from peers at school compared to those in other developed countries (e.g., England, Italy, Japan; Miller, Malley, & Owen, 2009), and recent trends show that 28% of students aged 12-18 years report being victims of bullying (DeVoe & Murphy, 2011). These behaviors are problematic, threatening the physical and psychological health of youth, diminishing their ability to engage in learning and in society, and underscoring the need for SEL programming.

In this chapter, we describe the objectives and theoretical underpinnings of SEL, highlight research findings demonstrating the evidence supporting SEL programming, and advocate for comprehensive and systematic implementation of SEL programming in schools. We also provide overviews of several SEL programs with evidence of success, and present one program in particular, The RULER Approach to SEL (RULER), that incorporates both the science of emotions and ecological systems theory into its theory of change, content, and methods of implementation and sustainability.

What is SEL?

SEL refers to the process of integrating thinking, feeling, and behaving in order to become aware of the self and of others, make responsible decisions, and manage one's own behaviors and those of others (Elias et al., 1997). Intervention programs focused on SEL are designed to facilitate this process in systematic and comprehensive ways within schools and districts. The SEL movement stems, in part, from scientific research on emotional intelligence (EI; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), which was later popularized by Daniel Goleman (1995). EI refers to the mental abilities associated with processing and responding to emotions, including recognizing the expression of emotions in others, using emotions to enhance thinking, and regulating emotions to drive effective behaviors (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). These abilities are likely to be associated with social competence, adaptation, and academic success (see review by Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008). Also, see Roberts (this volume).

Schools increasingly are implementing school-wide SEL policies and curricula in order to foster caring relationships between teachers and students, cooperation and conflict reduction among students, a greater sense of school safety, and the development of social and emotional skills in students, teachers, and school leaders (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). However, some of these efforts have been limited in that they (1) focus too narrowly on specific social or emotional variables, such as preventing bullying, substance abuse, unhealthy sexual practices, delinquency, or violence; or promoting character development, career preparation, family life, community service, or physical or mental health or (2) are introduced in a piecemeal, unsystematic fashion. These, often disjointed, efforts do not fall under the umbrella of SEL programming (Devaney et al., 2006). SEL programming offers a more unified and coordinated approach that targets a broader spectrum of positive youth outcomes that extend into lifelong success, including enhancing the social-emotional climates of classrooms, schools, and districts (Greenberg et al., 2003). Specifically, SEL programs are designed to create learning environments that meet the developmental needs of students, including feelings of belonging, safety, and community, and thus provide ideal conditions for success across the domains of their lives – academics, relationships, personal, and ultimately in the workforce (Becker & Luthar, 2002; Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczek, & Hawkins, 2004).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a nonprofit entity that advocates and provides leadership for high quality SEL programming and learning standards, identifies five core competencies associated with SEL: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making (Zins, Weissberg, et al., 2004). Figure 1 illustrates and describes these competencies.

Figure 1. CASEL SEL Competencies

Self-awareness	Accurately assessing one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence
Self-management	Regulating one's emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately
Social awareness	Taking the perspective of and empathizing with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources
Relationship management	Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding cooperative relationships; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed
Responsible decision making	Making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social norms, respect for others, and probable consequences of various actions; applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations; contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

The design of SEL programs helps schools use curricular tools and strategies to develop in students the competencies delineated in Figure 1 (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2004). Thus, SEL is one entryway for educators to influence student outcomes by teaching competencies that contribute to optimal outcomes. Although limited research shows that changing a student's IQ may be possible (Becker, Ludtke, Trautwein, Koller, & Baumert, 2012; Brinch & Galloway, 2011), copious research shows that students can learn how to use their emotions to make healthy decisions and to manage behavior effectively (Durlak et al., 2011; Durlak & Weissberg, 2011). For example, self-management, which includes controlling one's impulses, is a critical component of success in school and in life. Children who are better able to self regulate have greater impulse control and pay more attention in school (Lane, Pierson, & Givner, 2003; McClelland et al., 2007). Self-regulation in childhood is related to better concentration during adolescence, which leads to higher academic grades as well as better

performance on standardized tests (Eigsti et al., 2006; Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989). There also is some evidence that children who are poor at self-regulation are more likely to spend time in prison later in life compared to their peers who are better at self-regulation (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004).

A number of investigations, including large-scale experiments, support the notion that targeted SEL interventions can both improve the social-emotional attributes of classrooms and facilitate students' social-emotional and academic well-being (e.g., Brackett, Rivers, Reyes, & Salovey, 2012; Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Raver et al., 2011). For example, a meta-analysis of 213 studies evaluating SEL programming efforts demonstrates its benefits to youth from elementary through high school and across urban, suburban and rural schools in the U.S. (Durlak et al., 2011). Almost half (47%) of the reviewed interventions were tested by randomizing students or classrooms to either receiving the SEL program or to functioning as a control group. Primary outcomes were increases in students' social and emotional skills, improvements in students' prosocial attitudes and behavior, better mental health, and improved academic performance, including an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement assessed through report card grades and test scores.

Theoretical Foundations of SEL

The concept of SEL is grounded in the field of positive youth development which upholds that the needs of youth must be addressed by creating environments or settings that promote outcomes like school achievement, mutually supportive relationships with adults and peers, problem solving, and civic engagement (Catalano et al., 2004; Greenberg et al., 2003). Efforts to promote positive youth development differ from those aimed at reducing risk factors in that they are focused on enhancing skills, building assets, and promoting resilience to achieve positive outcomes (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002). Positive youth development interventions like SEL programming typically utilize a skill-building, whole-child approach that is focused on cultivating assets, not on preventing problems. Schools are predominant settings that serve the educational and developmental needs of youth, and thus are compelling targets for universal efforts to promote positive youth development.

To accomplish this broader educational agenda, school-based programming needs to meet two standards: (1) enhance the social and emotional assets and learning of students across the curriculum, and (2) improve the quality of the environments in which academic, social, and emotional learning occurs (Greenberg et al., 2003; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006; Zins, Elias, Greenberg, & Weissberg, 2000). Thus, the success of any attempt to educate the whole child is dependent upon the extent to which learning occurs in caring, supportive, safe, and empowering settings. This premise has roots in ecological systems theory and self-determination theory. Ecological systems theory posits that the settings youth inhabit, like school, shape their development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Features of school settings that are related to positive youth development include opportunities for empowerment and skill building, the presence of supportive adults and peers, and being safe and orderly (Catalano et al., 2004). According to self-determination theory, youth are more likely to flourish when in settings that address their social and emotional needs, such as experiencing meaningful relationships, having confidence in their abilities, and feeling autonomous (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Students are more likely to thrive in classrooms that foster meaningful, caring, safe, and empowering interactions (e.g., Battistich, Solomon, Watson, & Schaps, 1997; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002; Osterman, 2000).

It is the responsibility of schools to provide enriching environments for young people to assimilate into and contribute to society. Convincing empirical evidence indicates that schools can be highly effective in promoting positive youth development even in (and perhaps especially

in) the presence of other contextual variables such as low family socioeconomic status and segregated, economically depressed neighborhoods (McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Solomon, Battistich, Kim, & Watson, 1997). Learning climates also can thwart development if they are not well designed (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Moos, 1979). A powerful example comes from the high-stakes testing environment prevalent in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) era. This climate may very well have damaged the protective emotional connection many youth have with school and teachers (Mulvenon, Stegman, & Ritter, 2005). When youth do not feel connected to school, their grades slip, they become disruptive in class, and they are unlikely to aspire to higher educational goals. Struggling students are most vulnerable to the anxiety and frustrations accompanying standardized tests, and over time they are more likely to give only token efforts in school (Paris, 1993). Such environments pose real threats to the availability of school resources like caring relationships and empowerment-building opportunities (Ravitch, 2010).

Teachers, as the primary actors in classroom settings, have a significant opportunity to affect the positive development of youth not only through the content of their instruction but also through the quality of their social interactions and relationships with youth, including how they both manage behavior in the classroom and model social and emotional processes (e.g., Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). However, few professional development opportunities exist that help teachers improve their interactions with youth along these lines (Hargreaves, 1998). In the next section, we describe examples of SEL programming efforts as a promising approach for fostering positive youth development.

Examples of SEL Programs

CASEL's best practices guidelines for SEL programming include the development of a specific set of skills related to social and emotional development using active learning techniques that are connected and coordinated (CASEL, 2003). CASEL further advocates that quality SEL programming needs to include a comprehensive and systematic approach, one that involves all the stakeholders involved in the students' education (Devaney, O'Brien, Resnik, Keister, & Weissberg, 2006). By definition, programs that can be classified as addressing SEL integrate emotions in some way, such as helping students identify, talk about, and regulate feelings. Here we briefly review four SEL programs that provide emotion skill-building opportunities for students. One program will be explored in depth in the final section of the chapter to more fully illustrate how quality SEL programming is grounded in emotions theory, has an articulated theory of change that is supported empirical evidence, has a detailed implementation plan that includes children and the adult stakeholders in their education, and has in place practices for sustainability. Information on other programs can be found in reviews by CASEL (2003).

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS). PATHS is an SEL program for preschool and elementary school designed to increase social and emotional competence; prevent violence, aggression, and other behavior problems; improve critical thinking skills, and enhance classroom climate (Greenberg, Kusche, & Mihalic, 1998). PATHS derives from the affective-behavioral-cognitive dynamic (ABCD) model of development which postulates that social competence is achieved when affect, behavior, and cognition work together (Greenberg, Kusche, & Riggs, 2004). This collaborative networking of emotional, behavioral, and cognitive systems occurs over the course of development as emotional responses begin to be verbalized and processed cognitively so that behavior can be controlled. Teachers trained on PATHS teach lessons on self-control, social problem solving, and emotional awareness and understanding. PATHS also includes lessons on labeling and expressing feelings using drawings of faces expressing different feelings and through conversations about feelings (Greenberg, Kusche,

Cook, & Quamma, 1995). Teachers using PATHS typically teach three 20-30 minute lessons per week.

PATHS for the elementary level has been shown to: improve children's feelings vocabulary, and their understanding of their own feelings and those of others (Greenberg et al., 1995); increase children's inhibitory control and their verbal fluency; and reduce behavioral problems (Riggs, Greenberg, Kusche, & Pentz, 2006). Among high-risk children, PATHS has positive effects on academic, social, and emotional skills; peer interactions, and engagement in problem behaviors (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group [CPPRG], 1999). Preschool PATHS has been shown to increase social competence and reduce social withdrawal (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007).

The Responsive Classroom (RC) Approach. The RC approach is a way of teaching that integrates the social, emotional, and academic needs of children. RC includes ten classroom practices designed for both optimal learning and creating a classroom where children feel "safe, challenged, and joyful" (www.responsiveclassroom.org). Examples of classroom practices include: 1) the morning meeting wherein children and teachers greet each other, share the day's news, and prepare for the day ahead; and 2) use of teacher-led collaborative problem-solving strategies such as role-playing and conferencing. Central to these classroom practices are a balanced emphasis on children's academic and social learning, as well as creating an environment that is academically challenging and building social skills (Rimm-Kaufman, Fan, Chiu, & You, 2007). RC offers myriad resources and training supports to help with implementation and sustainability. Once classroom practices are in place, extensions to the larger school and family community are made.

Emerging evidence suggests that RC impacts the social and emotional climate of the classroom, as well as student outcomes. Students in third to fifth grade classrooms that adopt RC report liking their school more and having more positive feelings toward learning, their teachers, and their classmates (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008). Results from quasi-experimental studies have shown an increase in reading and math scores as well as closer relationships with teachers, more pro-social skills, more assertive behavior, and less fear among children in RC classrooms compared to those in comparison classrooms after multiples years of exposure to the RC approach (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2007; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). Teachers using the RC approach also report engaging in more collaboration with other teachers and having more positive perceptions of the school (Sawyer & Rimm Kaufman, 2007).

The Reading, Writing, Respect, and Resolution (4Rs) Program. 4Rs trains teachers to use a literacy-based curriculum that includes lessons on conflict resolution, cultural difference, and cooperation (Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2008). 4Rs is designed to combine specific instructional, skill-building techniques and also model positive social norms. A randomized control trial of 18 schools with 82 third grade classrooms showed evidence that 4Rs impacts the social and emotional climate of the classroom, which reflects the extent to which the interactions between teachers and students reflect warmth and support, a lack of anger and hostility, consistent response from teachers to the needs of students, and teacher integration of students' ideas and interests into learning activities (Brown et al., 2010). Encouraging effects have been found (Aber, Jones, Brown, Chaudry, & Samples, 1998). After the first year, trained, independent observers, rated 4Rs classrooms higher in quality of student-teacher interactions and teacher's sensitivity to student needs (Brown et al., 2010). After two years in the program, children were rated as more socially competent, more attentive, and less aggressive than their peers in comparison classrooms (Jones, Brown, & Aber, 2011).

The RULER Approach to SEL. RULER is anchored in the achievement model of emotional literacy, which states that acquiring and valuing the knowledge and skills of

recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating emotion (i.e., the RULER skills) is critical to youth development, academic engagement and achievement, and life success (Rivers & Brackett, 2011). RULER's sustainability model includes systematic professional development for the adults involved in the education of children, including teachers, support staff, school and district leaders, and parents. RULER provides opportunities for adults and students to practice applying and modeling their RULER skills in ways that make emotions central to learning, teaching, and leading. Learning tools and lessons are integrated into the standard academic curriculum from preschool through high school. RULER is the focus of the case study included in the next section.

Case Study: The RULER Approach to SEL

RULER is a multi-year, structured program that combines an emotional literacy curriculum for students with comprehensive professional development for school leaders, teachers, and support staff, as well as training for families (Brackett et al., 2009; Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2011; Maurer & Brackett, 2004). Emotional literacy refers to an individual's attitudes, knowledge, and expertise regarding five key emotion skills: *recognizing* emotions in the self and others, *understanding* the causes and consequences of emotions, *labeling* emotional experiences with an accurate and diverse vocabulary, and *expressing* and *regulating* emotions in ways that promote both intra- and interpersonal growth (Brackett et al., 2009; Brackett, Rivers, Maurer, Elbertson, & Kremenitzer, 2011). These RULER skills are important for effective teaching and learning, decision making, relationship quality, and both health and well-being for children and adults (e.g., Mayer et al., 2008).

The achievement model of emotional literacy, on which RULER is based, is an outgrowth of the ability model of EI (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990) and is anchored in research on emotional development (e.g., Denham, 1998) and emotional competence (e.g., Saarni, 1999). EI theory proposes that the ability to reason about and leverage emotion enhances thinking, problem solving, relationships, and personal growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Indeed, individuals with higher EI tend to perform better in school (Gil-Olarte Marquez, Palomera Martin, & Brackett, 2006; Rivers, Brackett, & Salovey, 2008), have better quality relationships (Brackett, Warner, & Bosco, 2005; Lopes et al., 2004), resolve conflict in more constructive ways (Brackett, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner, & Salovey, 2006), solve social reasoning problems more effectively (Reis et al., 2007), and engage less frequently in unhealthy behaviors (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Trinidad & Johnson, 2002). The achievement model conceptualizes emotional literacy as distinct from the conceptualization of EI: whereas EI refers to an individual's fixed *capacity* or *ability* to reason with and about emotion-related information, emotional literacy focuses on the malleable aspects of emotion-related information, the knowledge and strategies that are *acquired* through experience and formal instruction. In other words, emotional literacy results from the acquisition and utilization of essential emotion skills, similar to how children learn how to write and communicate effectively.

Developmental literature on emotion-related abilities has informed the achievement model of emotional literacy in myriad ways. Based on the idea that emotion-related skills emerge in infancy, grow in preschool, continue to develop through the school-age years, and parallel the increase in cognitive capacities over the life course (Eccles, 1999), emotional literacy provides a framework for tailoring lessons to age, in order to match the levels of cognitive, social, and emotional development necessary to learn important emotion-related skills. For instance, Saarni (1999) found that five year olds can only describe situations that lead to the expression of basic emotions, whereas seven year olds can describe situations that lead to the expression of more

complicated emotions of pride, worry, and guilt. However, only by age 10, can children describe situations that elicit relief or disappointment. These increases in emotional understanding over time inform the scaffolded approach that the achievement model of emotional literacy supports.

According to the achievement model, emotional literacy develops through: 1) an appreciation of the significance of emotions in learning, relationships, and personal growth; 2) the acquisition of knowledge and skills related to the full range of emotions; 3) being in environments that are safe and supportive for experiencing a wide range of emotions and practicing RULER skills; 4) frequent exposure to adults and peers expressing a range of emotions and modeling RULER skills; and 5) consistent opportunities to practice using RULER skills in social interactions with accompanied feedback on their application so that their use becomes refined and more automatic.

The RULER Skills

“RULER” represents each of the five interrelated emotional literacy skills. The acronym is not intended to reflect a hierarchy in which one skill precedes another in a progressive chain as the development of one RULER skill likely influences another. For example, as a young boy’s emotion vocabulary (labeling emotion) becomes more sophisticated, he likely will become more skilled at reading a friend’s facial expression (recognizing emotion), because language helps to shape the sensory processing involved in seeing another person’s face (Feldman Barrett, Lindquist, & Gendron, 2007). Here, for simplicity, we describe briefly each skill separately.

Recognizing emotion. Recognizing the occurrence of an emotion – by noticing a change in one’s own thoughts or body, or in someone else’s facial expression or voice – is the first clue that something important is happening in the environment. Students who accurately recognize emotional cues, both their own and those expressed by others, are able to modify their own behavior and respond in ways that are socially appropriate and helpful (Ekman, 2003). For example, the student skilled at recognizing emotions likely would behave differently toward a friend who is smiling than toward a classmate with pressed lips and furrowed brows. The smile reveals joy and invites the student to approach, whereas the latter cues represent anger and inform the student to stay away or approach with caution.

Understanding emotion. Emotions are triggered by appraisals of events and lead to relatively distinct patterns of physiology, thoughts, and behaviors. Students with a deeper understanding of emotion know the causes and consequences of different emotions, as well as how discrete emotions like disappointment, excitement, and anger may influence their attention, thoughts, decisions, and behavior. This skill helps students to interpret situations more readily from others’ perspectives and to develop empathy (Denham, 1998). For instance, a teenager who understands that his friend’s unusual angry outburst is likely related to the divorce of his parents, might empathize with him, and encourage him to talk about his feelings.

Labeling emotion. Labeling emotion refers to making connections between an emotional experience and emotion words. Students with a mature “feelings vocabulary” can differentiate among related emotions like peeved, annoyed, angry, and enraged. Labeling emotions accurately helps students communicate effectively, reducing misunderstanding in social interactions. Indeed, students who can label emotions properly have more positive social interactions and perform better in school, whereas students with deficits in labeling emotions are known to have behavioral and learning problems (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Mayer, et al., 2012).

Expressing emotion. Expressing emotion refers to knowledge about how and when to express diverse emotions with different people and in multiple contexts. Children who are skilled in this area understand that unspoken rules for emotional expression, also called “display rules,” often direct how emotions are expressed and tend to modify their behavior accordingly. Display

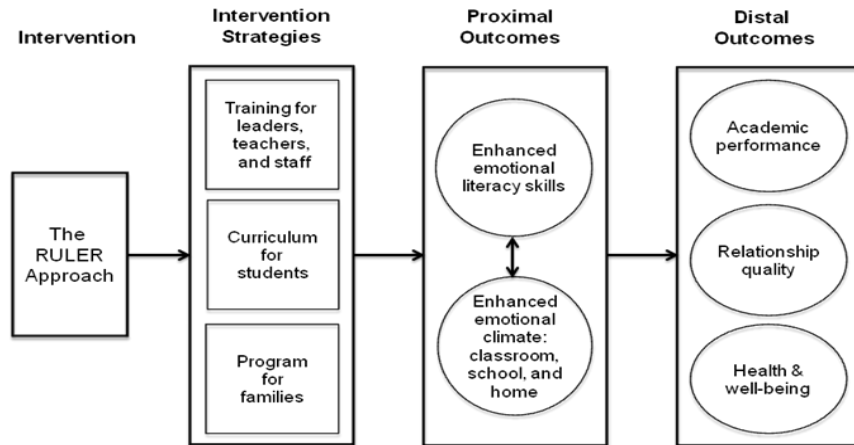
rules, often codified in childhood as “manners,” vary across contexts (home and school) and often are culturally specific. For example, it is generally less acceptable in Asian cultures to express negative emotions like anger to others than in Western cultures (Argyle, 1986). For many emotions, there also are gender-specific norms for expression (Shields, 2002); expressing anger is generally considered acceptable for boys, but not for girls, while expressing sadness is more acceptable for girls than for boys.

Regulating emotion. Regulating emotion refers to the strategies used to manage the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to an emotional experience (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). Emotions can be prevented (test anxiety can be avoided), reduced (frustration toward someone can be lessened), initiated (inspiration can be generated to motivate a group), maintained (tranquility can be preserved to stay relaxed), or enhanced (joy can be increased to excitement when sharing important news) (Brackett et al., 2011). Students who know and use a wide range of emotion regulation strategies are able to meet different goals, such as concentrating on a difficult test and dealing with disappointing news, and managing challenging relationships. For a more detailed review of the emotion regulation literature see Jacobs and Gross (this volume).

RULER Theory of Change.

RULER’s theory of change for student development and outcomes is rooted in both the achievement model of emotional literacy (Rivers & Brackett, 2011) and ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The theory specifies a set of pathways through which RULER influences emotional literacy skill development and positive shifts in school and home communities, as illustrated in Figure 2. Accordingly, RULER both integrates the teaching of emotional literacy into the academic curriculum and provides opportunities for students and all adult stakeholders – school leaders, teachers, staff, and family members – to learn and then apply these skills in their daily interactions. The integration into existing curriculum and training of both students and adults is the cornerstone of RULER. Moreover, the focus on both shifting the attitudes and developing the skills of the adults who create learning environments in addition to training them how to teach lessons to students makes RULER unique.

The intervention strategy for RULER is to integrate it into both the classroom and system (school or district) in ways that sustain it (CASEL, 2003; Catalano et al., 2004). First, adult stakeholders participate in professional development and program training so that emotional literacy is being developed, modeled, and practiced regularly. This ensures RULER is embedded into all aspects of the school environment including social interactions, self-reflective activities, and teaching. Only then do teachers begin using the student-level curriculum in the classroom and involve family members in their own training.

Figure 2. *The RULER Approach theory of change for students.*

As Figure 2 illustrates, RULER has two proximal outcome targets: 1) enhanced emotional literacy (RULER) skills among students and all adult stakeholders, and 2) enhanced emotional climate (quality of social and emotional interactions) across settings, including the classroom, school, district, and home. These proximal outcomes mutually reinforce each other so that individual skill development enhances the emotional quality in each setting and vice versa.

RULER also has three primary distal outcomes for students: 1) academic performance, 2) relationship quality, and 3) health and well-being. The simultaneous development of students' emotional literacy skills and enriched emotional climate are the bases for these distal outcomes (Brackett et al., 2012; Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2012). The theoretical rationale for this proposition is multifold. First, emotional literacy skills among youth and adolescents are associated positively with each of the distal outcomes. Accumulating empirical evidence shows that children and youth with more developed RULER skills have greater social competence, psychological well-being, and academic performance (Denham, 1998; Fine, Izard, Mostow, Trentacosta, & Ackerman, 2003; Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Mayer, et al., 2012; Saarni, 1999). Those with less developed emotion skills are more likely to experience depression and anxiety, engage in violent behaviors such as bullying, use drugs and alcohol, destructive relationships, and have poor academic performance (e.g., Eisenberg et al., 2000; Halberstadt, Denham, & Dunsmore, 2001; Saarni, 1999). Thus becoming emotionally literate can be critical to developing into a healthy and productive adult. Second, as stated earlier in this chapter, a positive emotional climate in the classroom meets students' basic development needs for caring and supportive relationships, including the feeling that their opinions count and are respected (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991). There also are numerous plausible mediating variables between RULER's proximal and distal outcomes, among which may include student engagement, decision making, problem-solving ability, and enhanced mental health (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011; Reyes et al., 2012).

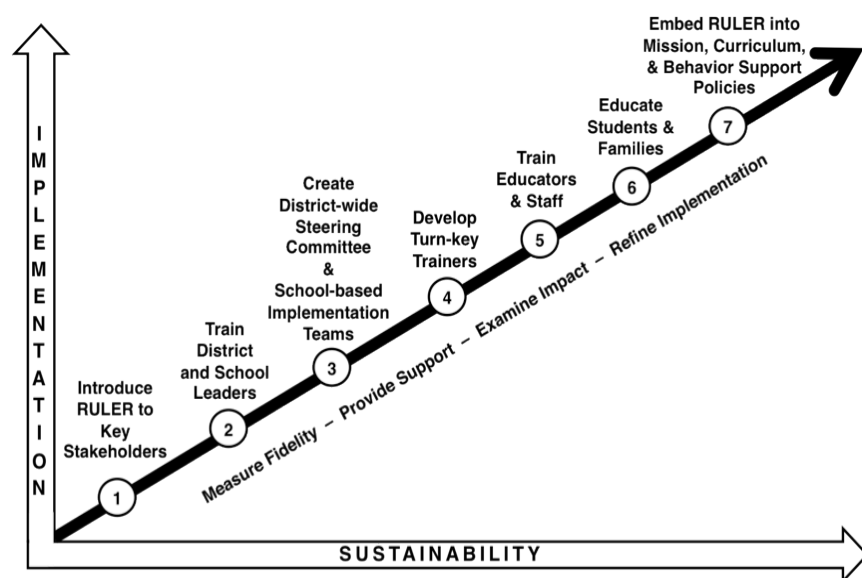
Implementation of RULER.

Initial implementation of RULER typically extends across a two-year period. By the third year, schools gradually become independent from the program developers, and sustainable, positive effects are expected. The comprehensive sustainability model is designed to build

capacity within schools using a train-the-trainer approach to preserve the programs over time. Figure 3 depicts the action steps for the first year of implementation.

Briefly, the first action step involves securing the commitment from key stakeholders, including the superintendent, school board, building-level administrators, teachers, and support staff (e.g., school counselors and psychologists). These stakeholders, who are more likely to champion the program if they are included in the early planning phase, need to: 1) understand the program's evidence base, 2) make explicit the links between the program's principles and the philosophy, policies, and current practices of the school, and 3) understand how the program can help the school enhance the social, emotional, and academic growth of students and staff.

Figure 3. Year 1 Implementation Plan for RULER



The second action step involves training for both district- and building-level administrators who learn how emotions impact relationships and organizational climate, as well as how they can harness the wisdom of emotions to both become more effective leaders and create optimal learning environments. Administrators hone their RULER skills, learn how to use program tools, and work toward developing a long-term sustainability plan. This training also gives leaders the credibility to promote the program.

The creation of a district-wide steering committee and school-based implementation teams marks the third action step. The steering committee functions in an advisory and decision-making capacity to the implementation teams at each school and the district itself. Generally schools appoint a coordinator to manage the rollout and key contact for the program developers, steering committee, and implementation teams.

School districts ultimately want to develop the internal capacity to sustain and enhance program implementation. Thus, the fourth action step involves the development of turnkey trainers, usually implementation team members, who learn about program concepts and tools in order to expedite and monitor the rollout at individual schools. Turnkey trainers should represent educators from different grade levels and areas of expertise (e.g., science, language arts, and pupil support personnel), and who are known for their social, emotional, and leadership skills and for being excellent presenters and group facilitators. Turnkey trainers attend a 30-hour

institute led by RULER experts and then receive online support and coaching. Schools and districts with greater readiness for RULER often send a team of trainers to a RULER institute in advance of rolling out the program. These turnkey trainers can become the internal change agents that guide the school or district throughout the implementation process.

Action Steps 5 and 6 involve training and support first for teachers and support staff and then for students and families. Adult educators first develop their own RULER skills and learn how emotions influence learning, relationships, and health before they begin teaching students about emotional literacy. Thus, in the initial rollout year, teachers first learn and use and then teach their students the “anchors” of emotional literacy, four tools that were designed to help both adults and children to develop their RULER skills, self-and social awareness, empathy, and perspective-taking ability, as well as to foster a healthy emotional climate. One the anchors are implemented with fidelity, teachers learn how to integrate the *Feeling Words Curriculum*, a language-based emotional literacy program for students. The next section includes descriptions of these components. The success of RULER is dependent, in part, on adult family members being active participants. Like educators and students, RULER includes training for family members on how to develop and apply each of the RULER skills at home in order to foster healthy relationships, greater bonding among family members, academic performance, and well-being.

Mistakenly, some school leaders separate emotional literacy programming from the essential components of instruction, jeopardizing its perceived importance and sustainability. For this reason, Step 7 focuses on embedding RULER into the school’s mission, overarching curriculum and instruction, and behavior support policies. For example, the anchor tools, described in the next section become part of each school’s approach to managing conflict.

Finally, because optimal professional development is on-going, collaborative, and reflective (National Staff Development Council [NSDC], 2001), turnkey trainers and other educators’ learning continues after initial training. Advanced training includes skill-building modules, individualized coaching sessions, support from RULER staff, and online resources, including model lessons conducted by both the program developers and teachers in various grade levels as well as professional learning communities for teachers to share lesson plan ideas and examples of stellar student work.

Components of RULER

The Anchor Tools. The RULER Anchor Tools are designed to promote CASEL’s competencies, RULER’s proximal and distal outcomes, including the prevention of bullying, and also to align with common core state standards. They provide a common language and set of strategies that integrate into all aspects of learning at school and at home, including the standard curriculum and its physical spaces and learning environments. Table 1 briefly describes the four anchor tools. For example, morning meetings use tools such as the Charter and the Mood Meter to help teachers and students to identify the feelings they are bringing to the classroom, determine the best feelings and mood states for specific lessons and activities, and then to select effective strategies to modify or maintain these feelings and moods in order to achieve the learning goals for the day.

Table 1. *RULER Anchor Tools for Developing Emotional Literacy Skills and Fostering Supportive Learning Environments*

Charter	<p>A document with a mission statement at its core, developed collaboratively by all members of the learning community. Leaders and teachers create a faculty charter, teachers and students create individual classroom charters</p> <p>Critical components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings each stakeholder wants to have in the community, such as feeling valued, empowered, and respected ▪ Identification of behaviors that foster those feelings ▪ Guidelines for handling uncomfortable feelings and conflict
Mood Meter	<p>A self-awareness tool to develop RULER skills.</p> <p>Help students and adult stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identify their feelings accurately ▪ Build self-and social awareness ▪ Develop a sophisticated emotion vocabulary ▪ Set daily goals for how they want to feel in school ▪ Strategize effectively in order to achieve their goals <p>Teachers use the tool to help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Differentiate instruction ▪ Enhance student memory and learning by considering the best mood states for different learning activities
Meta-Moment	<p>A process to improve reflective practices and self-regulation.</p> <p>Helps students and adult stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognize “triggers” and respond to challenging emotional experiences with effective strategies ▪ Cultivate one’s “best self” to react more positively when triggered ▪ Be more preventative than reactive when regulating emotions
Blueprint	<p>A problem-solving tool for complex interpersonal situations.</p> <p>Helps students and adult stakeholders to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problem solve effectively about challenging situations ▪ Build more empathy and understanding of others’ perspectives. ▪ Reduce conflict and bullying

The Feeling Words Curriculum. The *Feeling Words Curriculum* includes units that each focus on exploring one feeling word in myriad ways (Brackett, Maurer, et al., 2011). The lessons that comprise each unit are calibrated for each grade level and are designed to integrate seamlessly into and across the core curriculum, including English language arts, social studies, humanities, math, and science. The feeling words in the program characterize the gamut of human emotions and were selected from a systematic review of research (e.g., Plutchik, 2003) on basic emotions (e.g., joy, fear), more complex, self-evaluative emotions (e.g., guilt, pride), and other, emotion-laden terms that describe motivational and relationship states (e.g., empowerment, alienation). Words are grouped into families that maintain continuity across grade levels and reflect the basic developmental needs of children (i.e., the need to feel connected to

others, to feel competent in one's abilities, and to feel that one's behavior is self-directed; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Vocabulary plays a pivotal role in social and emotional development (e.g., Harre, 1986; Russell, 1990), and acquiring a sophisticated feelings vocabulary helps children to: become consciously aware of their own and others' emotions, communicate effectively about emotions, and better regulate emotions and their behavior (e.g., Feldman Barrett, Lindquist, & Gendron, 2007; Hesse & Cicchetti, 1982; Lieberman et al., 2007).

The steps in the Feeling Words Curriculum encourage differentiation of instruction, address each student's unique thinking and learning style, and are aligned with common core state standards. The activities represented by the steps are highly interactive and engage students in a creative, multifaceted approach that incorporates personalized and integrated learning, divergent thinking, both teacher-student and parent-child bonding, creative writing, and collaborative problem-solving to develop strategies for regulating emotions. RULER is a spiraled curriculum; the complexity and number of steps in each program vary as a function of students' cognitive, emotional, and social development (Brackett, Kremenitzer, et al., 2011; Maurer & Brackett, 2004).

RULER Impact

Monitoring the progress and impact of an SEL program like RULER is an integral part of the implementation process. RULER has been adopted by hundreds of schools and is being evaluated rigorously. Thus far, research suggests that embedding RULER into a school or district fosters a range of behaviors and shifts in school climate that are essential to both positive development and academic achievement. Here we review some of the research findings.

Results from numerous studies align with the program's theoretical model. In one study, students in middle school classrooms integrating RULER for one academic year had higher year-end grades and higher teacher ratings of social and emotional competence (e.g., leadership, social skills, and study skills) compared to students in the comparison group (Brackett et al., 2012). A randomized control trial in 62 schools tested the hypothesis that RULER improves the social and emotional climate of classrooms (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2012). After one academic year, schools that had RULER as compared to those which used the standard curriculum were rated by independent observers as having higher degrees of warmth and connectedness between teachers and students, more autonomy and leadership and less bullying among students, and teachers who focused more on students' interests and motivations. Additional research examined the extent to which these first-year shifts in the emotional qualities of classrooms were followed by improvements in classroom organization and instruction at the end of the second year (Hagelskamp, Brackett, Rivers, & Salovey, 2012). The results supported RULER's theory of change. Compared to classrooms in the comparison schools, classrooms in RULER schools exhibited greater emotional support, better classroom organization, and more instructional support at the end of the second year of program delivery. Improvements in classroom organization and instructional support at the end of Year 2 were partially explained by RULER's impacts on classroom emotional support at the end of Year 1. Other research shows that, consistent with RULER's implementation plan, mere delivery of RULER lessons is not sufficient for cultivating benefits for students. In one study, students had more positive outcomes, including higher emotional literacy and more developed social problem-solving skills when they were in classrooms with teachers who had attended more training, taught more lessons, *and* were rated by independent observers as high-quality program implementers, as compared to their counterparts (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, Elberston, & Salovey, 2012). Thus, SEL programs like RULER must be taught authentically, consistently, and with high quality in order to achieve intended outcomes. Though the proper implementation of RULER and other similar

SEL programs comes with a price to schools as they must pay for instructional materials, trainings, and ongoing support, programs that target cognitive, behavioral, and academic changes are likely to generate large benefits that can be translated into savings to society in the short and long run in the form of enhanced educational attainment and achievement; reduced aggression, crime, and drug use; less welfare needs; reduced costs for social workers and counselors; and increases in earnings (Belfield et al., 2005; Karoly, 2010).

Summary and Conclusions

Over the last two decades, the field of SEL programming has come a long way. Numerous evidence-based programs have been developed, validated, refined, and disseminated across the U.S. and in other countries. Research that demonstrates the benefits of SEL training for both students and educators also is well documented (Durlak et al., 2011). Why, then, are SEL programs not a part of everyday practice in all schools? With ongoing changes in educational policy over the last decade, such as the No Child Left Behind act and initiatives like the Common Core State Standards in the United States – academic demands and pressure on teachers to raise test scores have become more stringent and schools have less time to integrate, nevertheless consider SEL programming. Major progress in SEL likely will not happen until legislation such as the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act is passed which holds schools accountable for the social and emotional development of students. Above all, educators, researchers, and parents must champion the SEL cause and the efforts toward enduring SEL programming in schools. As this chapter demonstrates, keeping SEL separate from academics is a disservice to educators, students, and families. The time has come to ensure that all children and adults develop skills to maximize their full potential – academically, socially, and emotionally.

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