

Social-Emotional Learning

Considerations for Implementation and Sustainability



In the spring of 2012 SEL BC held two meetings on the topic of social emotional learning, implementation and sustainability. Nancy Hinds, an educational consultant and facilitator of inquiry groups, facilitated the dialogue.

Purpose of the Paper

The purpose of this paper is to capture a conversation held over 2 days that aimed at surfacing key points from our own experience as well as from the research about what makes for sustainable SEL approaches and programs.

We offer the paper as a starting place or springboard for educators' exploration of this topic.

PREPARED BY SEL BC

Social Emotional Learning BC Network

SEL BC is a network of educators and researchers interested in the promotion of social emotional learning, social responsibility and collaborative learning.

SEL BC Members and other contributors who participated in the dialogues:

School Districts:

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Guiding Questions

- How are we supporting implementation of SEL in Lower Mainland schools and districts?
- How can current research inform implementation and sustainability of SEL?

"A comprehensive mission for schools is to educate students to be knowledgeable, responsible, socially skilled, healthy, caring, and contributing citizens."

(Greenberg et al., 2003, American Psychologist)



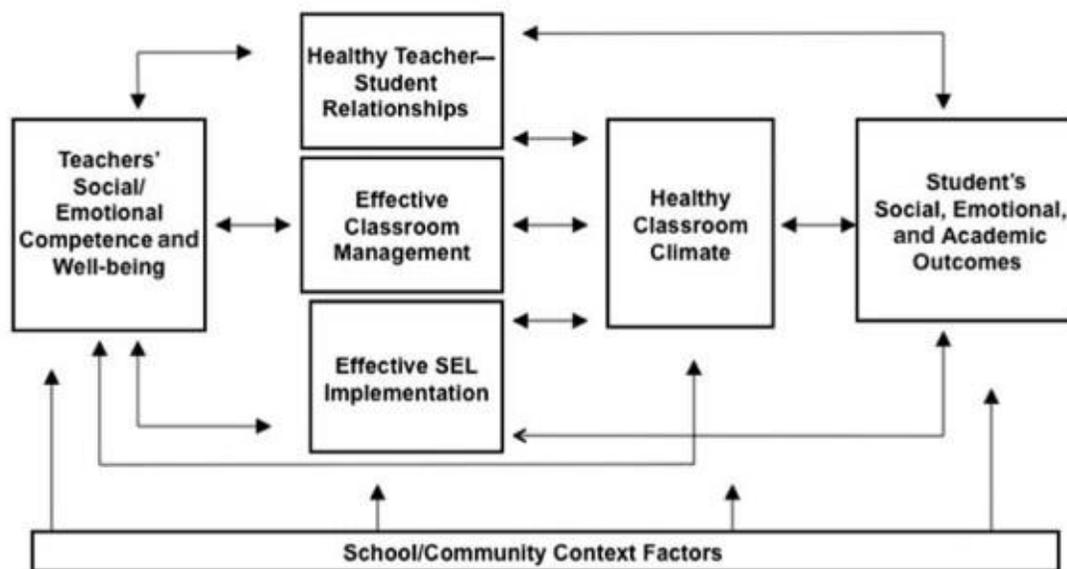
SEL Backgrounder

5 areas identified by The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL.org)

SEL Dimension	Description
Self-Awareness	The ability to accurately recognize one’s feelings and thoughts and their influence on behaviours. This includes accurately assessing one’s strengths and limitations, and possessing a realistic sense of self-efficacy and optimism.
Social Awareness	The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behaviour, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
Self-Management	The ability to regulate one’s emotions, cognitions, and behaviours effectively in different situations. This includes delaying gratification, managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working towards achieving personal and academic goals.
Relationship Skills	The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking help when needed.
Responsible Decision-Making	The ability to make constructive choices about personal behaviour, social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of self and others.

The Prosocial Classroom

(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009)



A model of teacher social emotional competence and classroom and student outcomes

The B.C. Cross-Curricular Competencies

The following are the current working definitions as of September 2015 of the Cross-Curricular Competencies for British Columbia:

COMMUNICATION

The communication competency encompasses the set of abilities that students use to impart and exchange information, experiences and ideas, to explore the world around them, and to understand and effectively engage in the use of digital media.

THINKING – Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking

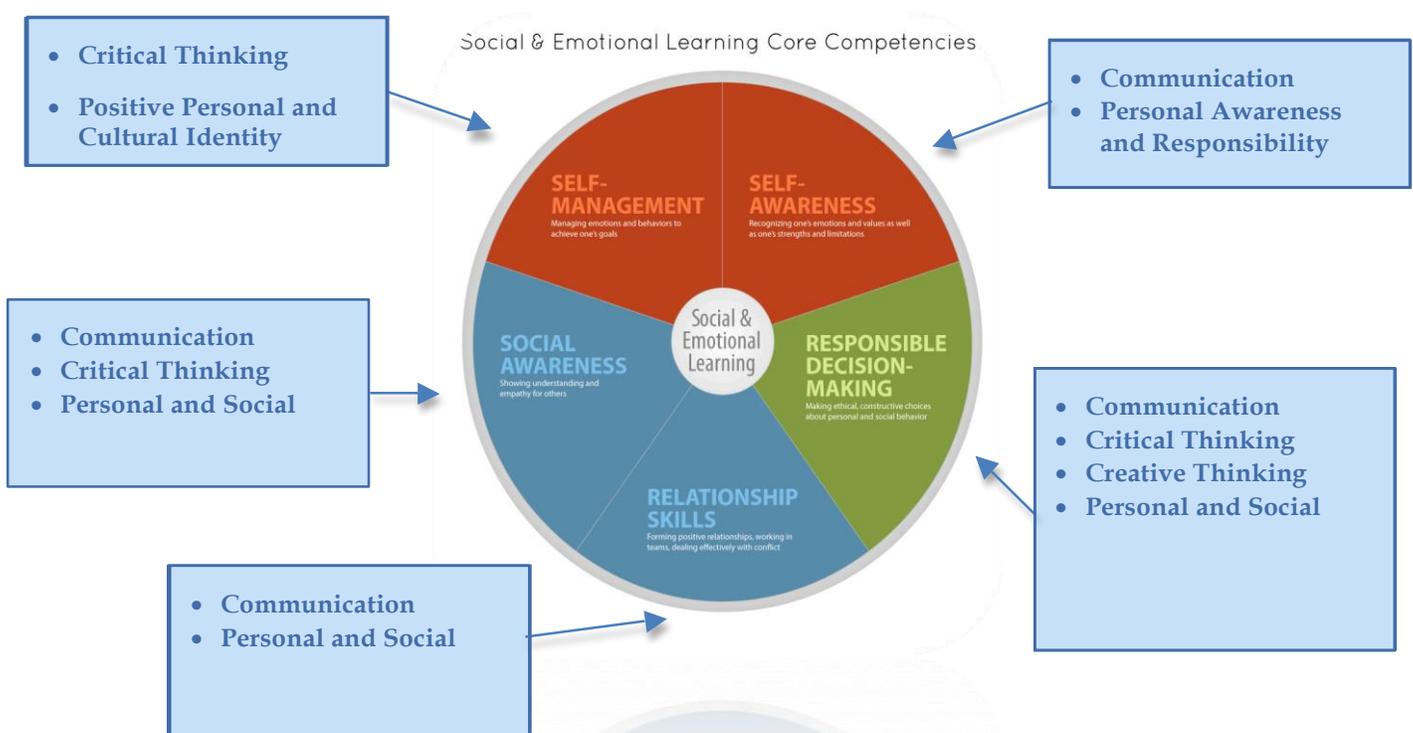
The thinking competency encompasses the knowledge, skills and processes we associate with intellectual development. It is through their competency as thinkers that students take subject-specific concepts and content and transform them into a new understanding. Thinking competence includes specific thinking skills as well as habits of mind, and metacognitive awareness. .

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL – Positive Personal and Cultural Identity, Personal Awareness and Responsibility, and Social Responsibility

Personal and social competency is the set of abilities that relate to students' identity in the world, both as individuals and as members of their community and society. Personal and social competency encompasses the abilities students need to thrive as individuals, to understand and care about themselves and others, and to find and achieve their purposes in the world.

<https://curriculum.gov.bc.ca/competencies>

How Do B.C.'s Competencies Map onto the 5 Areas of SEL?



What is Working in B.C.?

Practical Examples from the Field

The Opening Dialogue

To guide the opening dialogue, the question was posed, "what is working?" Charts were placed around the room with various initiatives we are using to support SEL. Small groups gathered to discuss these topics -- and to identify the key factors contributing to success. The topics were:

- Supported Programs and Training
- Mentorship
- Teacher Education -- Pre-service and Institutes
- Learning Teams and Inquiry Approaches
- Systemic Approaches at the Classroom, School and District levels

Eight key areas emerged following the conversation. These are described below.

Supported Programs and Training

Areas of support were identified that facilitated SEL implementation in classrooms and schools. These areas included programming that is comprehensive and teacher friendly, the provision of training time from districts, and opportunities for universities and districts to collaborate in implementation and program evaluation. Additional support was noted in the form of having champions within individual schools to support the implementation of a particular program.

Other Community Groups

Relationships between schools and other community groups where shared initiatives, collaboration for programs and training, consultation and problem-solving can be explored and built upon. Characteristics of successful collaborations involve a multilingual approach across systems (translators), and continuity of relationships and dedication and commitment over time.



Mentorship

Mentorship was identified as a critical area to support educators in implementing SEL initiatives. In particular, for new teacher induction, the importance of embedding SEL ideas and strategies in professional learning conversations with new teachers. At the district level, this involves organization for sustainability and awareness that SEL is an integral part of teaching and learning.

Summer Institutes

Summer institutes have proved to be a popular professional development option for teachers. The group identified the inclusion of choice of programs, offering introductory presentations and implementation training in various SEL programs as important features of a well-received summer institute. Other factors to consider for a summer institute include effective communication to educators to raise awareness of the professional development opportunity, and program relevance to educators.

What is Working in B.C.?

Practical Examples from the Field...continued



Teacher Education

The group identified the opportunity to embed social emotional learning in teacher education. Examples of this include the SEL teacher education cohorts, and the new CREATE program at UBC that includes courses for all teacher candidates on creating safe classroom environments, and on diversity. Another example is the Lifework Module at SFU that is housed in an elementary school in Coquitlam. This last initiative involves collaboration with staff development and district support.

Learning Teams/Inquiry Approach

Learning teams are professional learning communities consisting of a small group of teachers (up to 12 per group) exploring questions about their practice. Factors that enable success include trained facilitators (coordinators), funding support from districts, and a supportive environment for teachers to explore and integration of ideas over time.

District-Wide Approaches

Several approaches were mentioned as key in supporting effective SEL implementation. **District wide approaches include the inclusion of all school personnel, provision of teacher resources and support, and the use of common language and practices.**

School-Wide Approaches

Successful school-wide approaches require support from the school board, the classroom and the district. Specifically, the school board can offer initial information sessions, commitment for administration support, staff choice, and a SEL district staff position. District support comes in the form of Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent support, putting in place SEL accountability contracts, facilitating assessment and offering release time for SEL reps. Classroom based components include providing program materials, online resource materials, and student enthusiasm.

Key Factors

1. District and provincial-wide structures
2. Training & professional learning (sustained)
3. Funding - over time, long term

What does the Research Say about Effective SEL Implementation?

The SEL BC members reviewed five key research articles in the area of SEL implementation and sustainability. Following a review of the research, the group identified five critical areas for effective SEL implementation and sustainability:

1. Focus on the Teacher
2. Professional Support and Education
3. Process of Implementation in the Classroom
4. District Values/Mission/Vision
5. Conditions

Focus on The Teacher

Successful student SEL is inextricably linked to teachers' SEL skills. A review of the research has found that better implementation of SEL curriculum occurs when a teacher has enhanced SEL competencies. In fact, better student-teacher relationships are possible when teachers have stronger SEL competencies. A positive feedback loop is created via the teacher's ability to model appropriate social and emotional behaviour in the transactional relationship (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

In their 2008 review examining the factors that affect implementation of programs, Durlak and DuPre identified characteristics of the program provider (i.e. teachers) that impact strength of implementation (p. 337). These include:

- Perceived need for innovation - extent to which the proposed innovation is relevant to local needs
- Perceived Benefits of Innovation
 - Extent to which the innovation will achieve benefits desired at the local level
- Self-efficacy
 - Extent to which providers feel they are will be able to do what is expected
- Skill Proficiency
 - Possession of the skills necessary for implementation



“Socially and emotionally competent teachers set the tone of the classroom by developing supportive and encouraging relationships with their students, designing lessons that build on student strengths and abilities, establishing and implementing behavioral guidelines in ways that promote intrinsic motivation, coaching students through conflict situations, encouraging cooperation among students, and acting as a role model for respectful and appropriate communication and exhibitions of prosocial behavior”

(Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 492)

Continued...

What does the Research Say? ...continued

Professional Support and Education

Elias and his colleagues (2003) examined implementation, sustainability and scaling up of SEL programs in public schools. They noted the importance of professional development including, “ongoing processes of formal and informal training, including the involvement of acknowledged experts” and “the presence of a program coordinator or committee to oversee implementation and resolution of day-to-day problems.” (p. 311).

In his review of school-based prevention programs, Greenberg (2011) noted areas for future research including teacher training in social emotional learning. Citing Jennings and Greenberg (2009), Greenberg commented that many teachers receive little or no training in this area during their pre-service training, leaving them limited in their ability to develop relationships with difficult students and manage inattentive learners. In addition, the potential benefit of integrative models that include programs for teachers (e.g. SMART and CARE) along with SEL classroom curricula may have synergistic effects.

Finally, in their review of factors for effective implementation Durlak and DuPre (2008), identified factors relating to the prevention support system (p. 338) that included:

- Training
 - Approaches to insure provider proficiencies in the skills necessary to conduct the intervention and to enhance providers’ sense of self-efficacy
- Technical Assistance
 - Resources offered to providers once implementation begins, which may include retraining in certain skills, training of new staff, emotional support, and mechanisms to promote local problem solving efforts.



Process of Implementation in the Classroom

The quality of delivery of a program is critical to its success. Indeed, research has found that programs that are delivered in a “watered down” fashion do not see the same outcome benefits as the same program that has been delivered with fidelity (for a review see Blueprints News, March 2003).

With that said, programs also need to have some flexibility to fit particular contexts. In their review, Durlak and DuPre (2008) noted their finding uncovered a role for adaption in program delivery, but that that role pertains to finding the right mix of fidelity and adaptation.

With regards to delivery, it is important that programs are inclusive of all school populations, are highly visible in the school and community, have components that explicitly foster mutual respect and support among students and have varied and engaging instructional strategies (Elias, Zins, Graczyk & Weissberg, 2003

Continued...

What does the Research Say? ...continued

Conditions

Bond and Cormola Hauf reviewed the characteristics of effective programs (2004). In this review, the authors commented that the “careful assessment of strength, capacity, and resources is an essential step in designing, adapting, and implementing an effective program” (p. 208). Further, the authors discussed obtaining buy-in and commitment by engaging in consultation and collaboration with others with regards to resource exchange and support. Conditions that are important for effective delivery are:

1. a positive work climate;
2. organizational norms regarding openness to change, innovation and risk-taking, integration of new programming into existing practices, and
3. shared vision and buy-in among staff (Durlak & DuPre, 2008).



“There is now extensive theory and research in the sciences and social sciences that can and must guide the *content, structure, and implementation* of prevention and promotion efforts. Those programs that have been successful have built upon this knowledge base, not only increasing their own effectiveness but also incorporating evaluations that reveal which aspects of the theoretical models are most powerful and which need to be refined.”

(Bond & Carmola Hauf, 2004, p. 202)

District Values, Vision and Mission

Social and emotional learning programs experience more successful, sustainable implementation when those programs have links to stated goals of school or districts.

With regards to leadership, research has shown that administrative support is critical for successful program implementation (Durlak & DuPre, 2008). Specifically, this includes “consistent support from school principals”, and a “balance of support from both new and seasoned administrators” (Elias, et al, 2003, p. 311).

Regarding specific organizational practices and processes that are factors in quality implementation, Durlak and DuPre (2008) identified four factors:

1. Shared decision making;
2. Coordination with other agencies;
3. Open communication, and
4. Formulation of tasks (e.g. workgroups, teams, internal functioning).

The review of research led the SEL BC group to explore questions regarding ways in which districts in BC can build capacity within systems to support SEL. SEL BC members commented that SEL must be more than a district goal. Questions arose as to how SEL implementation and sustainability can be embedded in a district, in such a way that the priority does not shift with politics or turn-over.

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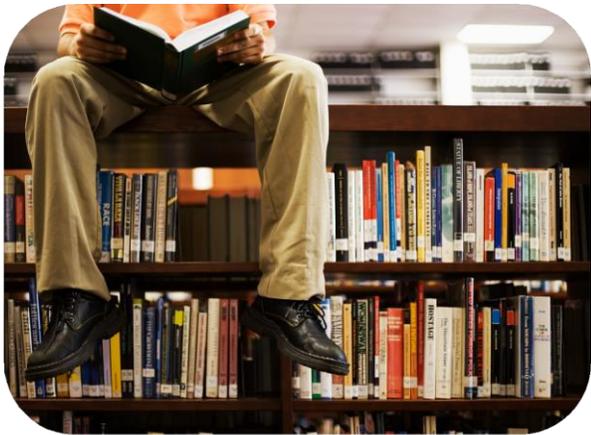
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Appendix A

What Does the Research Say about SEL?



“Emotions can facilitate or impede children’s academic engagement, work ethic, commitment, and ultimate school success.”

(Durlak et. al., 2011)

Effects of a Social Development Intervention in Childhood 15 Years Later

Hawkins, Kosterman, Catalano, Hill, and Abbott, (2008)

This study examined the long-term effects of an elementary school SEL program 15 years later, at ages 24 and 27 years. The non-randomized controlled trial included 598 participants (93% of the original sample in the conditions).

Results found outcomes across all 16 primary outcomes. Individuals who had received the SEL program had better educational and economic attainment, in addition to better mental health than those individual who did not receive the program.

Prosocial Foundations of Children’s Academic Achievement

Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura & Zimbardo, (2000)

A longitudinal study examined the contributions of early prosocial behaviours, to children’s developmental trajectories in academic and social areas. Prosocial behaviours include cooperating, sharing, helping and consoling.

Results from the study indicated that changes in academic achievement in Grade 8 could be better predicted from knowing children’s social competence 5 years earlier than from knowing grade 3 academic achievement.

The impact of enhancing students’ social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions

Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, (2011)

A recent meta-analysis revealed the following findings for children who received an SEL Program:

Student Gains:

- Social & Emotional Skills
- Improved attitude about self, others, and school
- Positive behavior
- Academic Achievement

Reduced risk for failure across the following areas;

- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress