

Inspiration Must Precede Remediation: Mental Health Requires Connection to SEL and Youth Purpose

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Morris County Psychological Association

February 8, 2023

Setting the Stage

- We are too quick to try to “fix” children without also inspiring them. Indeed, without connecting students to a sense of positive purpose, the Common Good, and the skills for complex social participation, we will not be adequately treating them or preparing them for their roles as adults in charge of our democracy. We will discuss the necessity of fostering children’s social-emotional and character development (SECD), helping them articulate a sense of positive purpose, and nourishing their sense of constructive contribution. Examples of how each of these can be accomplished in school and clinical contexts will be provided.

Looking Ahead

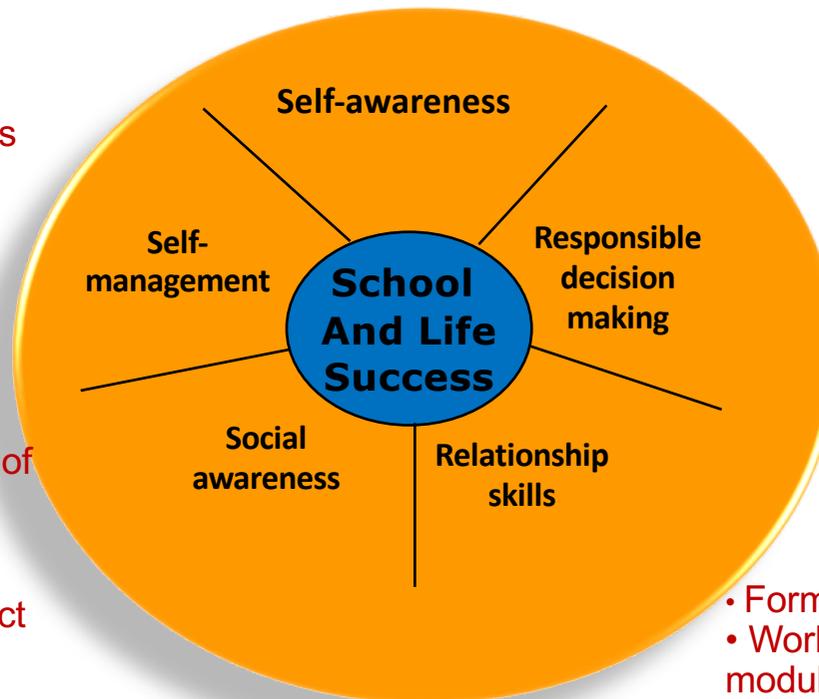
- “What skills and dispositions are needed to prepare students for active, engaged citizenship in the 21st century?”

It May Be More Feasible in the Near Future to Focus More on Activating SEL Skills (CASEL 5) Than Putting in Programs to Teach Them— the Latter Requires a Solid 3 Year Planning Window

- Identify one's emotions, values, strengths, and limitations
- Appropriate self-efficacy/growth mindset
- Sense of purpose, mission
- Risk-taking; trustworthiness

- Manage emotions and thoughts
- Establish and achieve goals
- Persevere to overcome obstacles
- Focus and organization

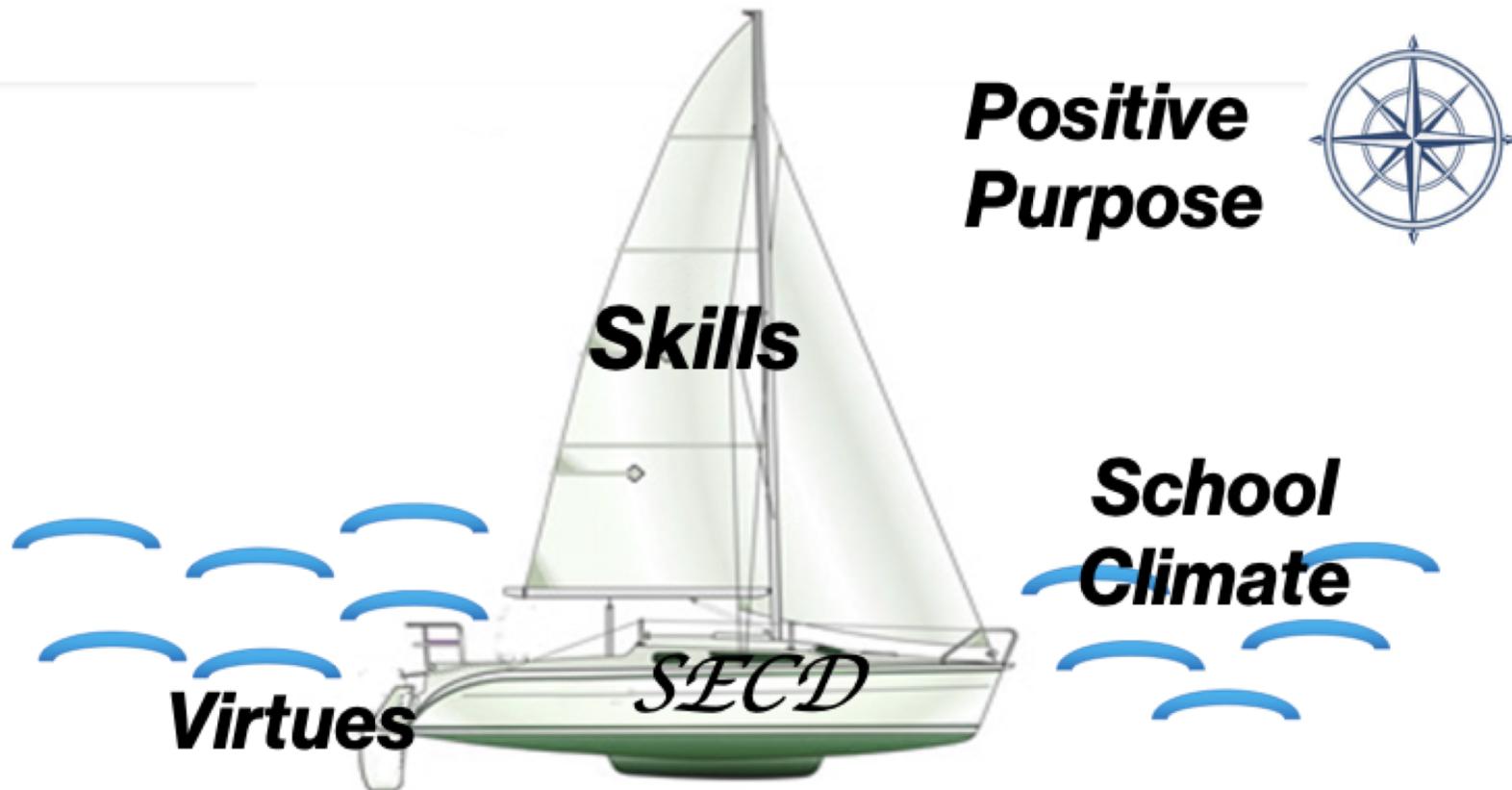
- Identify thoughts, feelings of others
- Take perspectives
- Prevent and resolve conflict
- Show understanding and empathy for others
- Know norms and expectations for different settings, situations



- Effective problem solving skills, strategy
- Identify many aspects of consequences, including common good
- Evaluate impact of decisions
- Analyze and critique

- Form positive relationships
- Work in groups, teams- modulate
- Deal effectively with conflict
- Positive communication skills
- When and how to give, ask for help; address feedback
- Listening; turn-taking

What is Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD)?



SECD helps us reach our positive purposes and helps our valued outcomes to happen

A Question to Consider

- *What emotions are involved in mastering a hard subject like algebra*?*
- **or some other challenging area/skill you have tried to master*

David Brooks *NY Times* 1/17/19

- Even when conditions are ideal, think of all the emotions that are involved in mastering a hard subject like algebra: curiosity, excitement, frustration, confusion, dread, delight, worry and, hopefully, perseverance and joy. You've got to have an educated emotional vocabulary to maneuver through all those stages.
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/17/opinion/learning-emotion-education.html>

We Set Our Sights on the Wrong Equity Goals

- **Preparation for College
Completion“+” and Career
Continuity**

Ready, Willing, and Able— Savitz-Romer & Bouffard

Employers Want Employees with **SEL!!!**

92 % Of surveyed executives say skills such as **problem-solving and communicating clearly** are equally or more important than technical skills.

National Bureau of Economic Research, 2015

The Top 10 skills identified by the World Economic Forum all **involve social and emotional competence.**

1. **Complex problem solving**
2. **Critical thinking**
3. **Creativity**
4. **People management**
5. **Coordinating with others**
6. **Emotional intelligence**
7. **Judgment and decision-making**
8. **Service orientation**
9. **Negotiation**
10. **Cognitive flexibility**

And research shows that social and emotional skills and attitudes also contribute to the other skills such as critical thinking.

What are the Elements of Youth Success? Climate, Character, and SEL Competencies

True academic and life success and mental health integrate intellectual, emotional & social facets of learning. These are inextricably interconnected.

Positive,
Character-Building
School/
Family/Program/
Classroom/Context
Climate

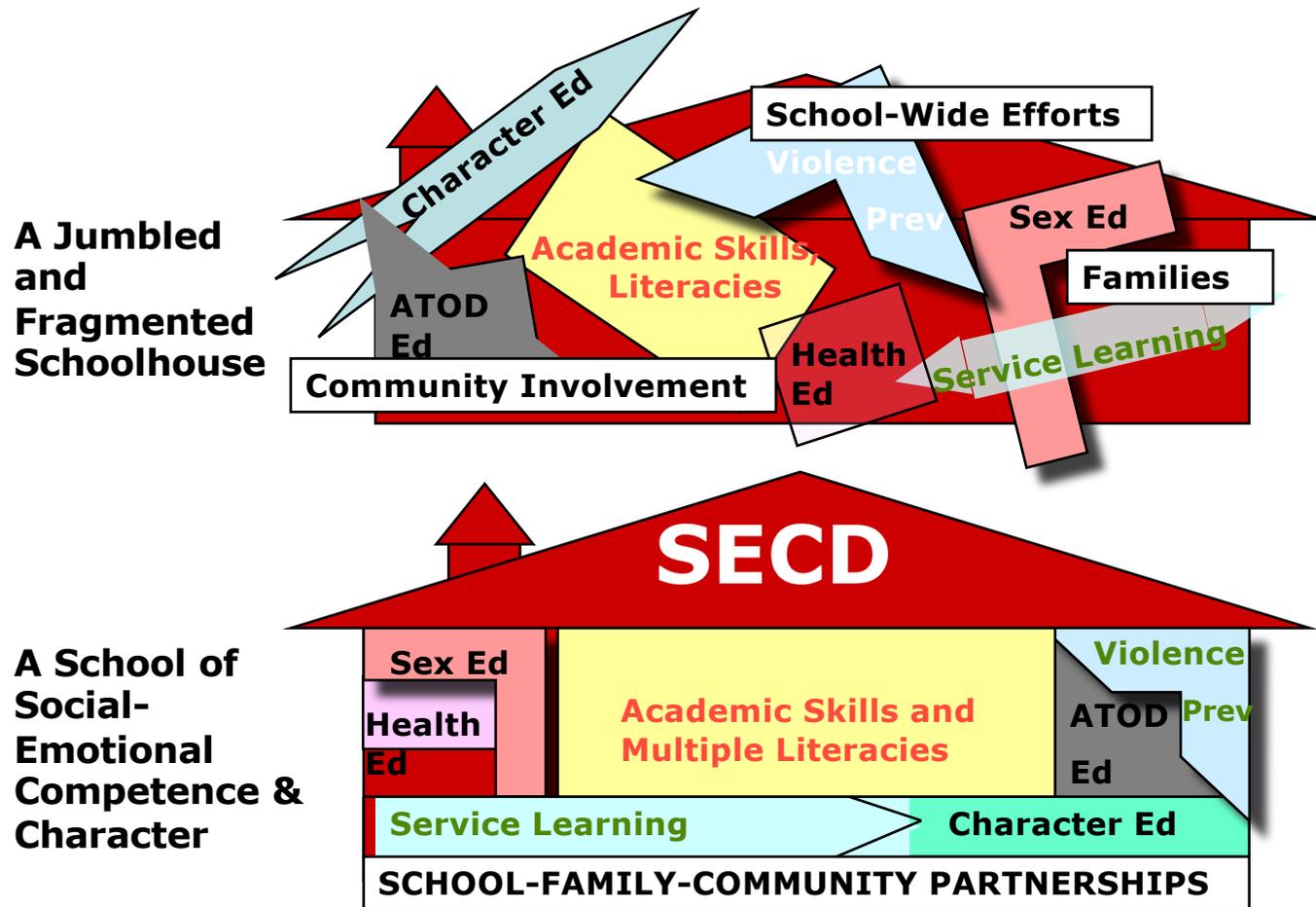
+

Explicit
Activation of
in SEL Skills

+

Habits of mind and patterns of thinking that include curiosity, explaining their reasoning, feedback process, asking questions, and defining and solving problems, and striving to communicate clearly and proudly.

When the Schoolhouse is Jumbled, SEL Must be **Added IN**, not Added On



This is especially true in times of volatility, uncertainty, chaos, and adversity– VUCA.

How Can We Add SEL/SECD "In" and Not "On"

- ***Create a Supportive, Positive School and Classroom Culture and Climate: Listen to SEL***
- ***Build Positive Purpose and Encourage Inspiration***
- ***Promote Student Voice***
- ***Adaptations for Tier 2 Group Interventions***
- ***Encourage Morning Classroom Conversations***
- ***Build Competencies in Civil Discourse, Engagement in Democratic Participation in School and Community***
- ***Connect SEL to Visual and Performing Arts***
- ***Build Staff Capacity for SEL Instruction and Leadership***

What is SEL Telling Us *Now*?

What Child and Caregiver Needs— including Yours-- Open the Door to Learning and Mental Health?

- We need to be “**seen**” and “**heard**”
- We need to be in a place of sharing, mutual helping and support—a **climate of comfort and respect**
- We need to **contribute**
- We need to be **reassured** and have optimistic future mindedness
- We need to **receive-- and to give--** caring, kindness, help, appreciation
- We need to be **understood with empathy** and compassion—to realize that we are in trauma, beset by strong emotions and worries

What is SEL Telling Us *Now*?

What Child and Caregiver Needs— Including Yours-- Open the Door to Learning and Mental Health?

- We need to have things **repeated to us patiently** and caringly, even though we should have heard it before. We need more and tangible prompts/cues/reminders and strategies and lots of reminders, please, because under stress and high emotionality, we don't always retrieve what we know, and we won't always access our best skills.
- We need to be engaged and have energies and talents focused, to **create tangible things we can show**, touch.
- We need **playfulness**, since we know that humor is helpful for creativity and biologically incompatible with stress—(Plus it is better to reduce anxiety and stress indirectly- better and more fun than anger control and stress management)

Create a Culture of Caring, Kindness, and Helping

- A classroom is a place where students need to be helpful, cooperative, kind, and caring about one another.
- For 180 school days, students enter classrooms wanting to be successful, recognized, valued, and supported.
- With your students, create classroom rules/norms for how to treat one another.
- **Observe existing patterns of caring, kindness, and helping within your classroom.** Pay particular attention to discussing how students can help one another and seek out help from adults in the school. Make it clear that caring and kindness are the norm, not the exception, and that **no students are excluded from receiving and providing these attributes.**

Ask (or Make Sure Your Clients Know the Answers to) Empathic Questions

- *What should you do in my class if you are feeling anxious about an exam, assignment, or project? What should you do if you are feeling distracted, saddened, or angered by losses in your life, either past losses or those you are anticipating?*
- *When and how do you learn best? Who are the people you look up to most, in your family, the community, in history, in various walks of life (sports, the arts, government, science, writing, etc.)? Why?*
- *What are examples of hope, heroism, and positive moral conviction and inspiration in your lives right now? Who or what provides this for you and what strengths can you draw from them that you can apply to your everyday life?*

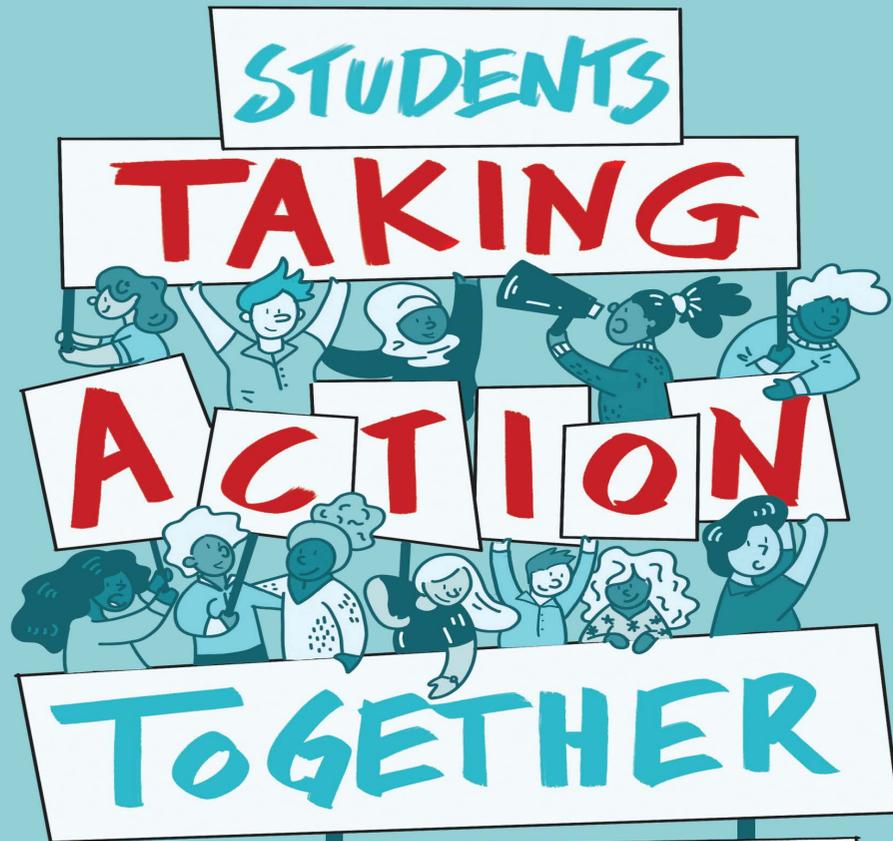


Available Resources That *Add In*, not On



- Fullmer, L., Bond, L., Nayman, S., Molyneaux, C., & Elias, M. J. (2022). ***Students Taking Action Together: 5 Teaching Techniques to Cultivate SEL, Civic Engagement, and a Healthy Democracy.*** ASCD.
- <https://www.secdlab.org/labhighlights/2022/2/6/new-stat-book-now-available-for-pre-order>
- Elias, M. J., Murphy, N., & McClain, K. (2021). ***Morning Classroom Conversations: Build Your Students' Social-Emotional, Character and Communication Skills Every Day.*** Corwin Press.
- ** Elias, M. J., & Leverett, L. (2021). ***Addressing equity through culturally responsive education and SEL.*** National Professional Resources, Inc. (www.nprinc.com)





5 Teaching Techniques to Cultivate **SEL**,
Civic Engagement, and a **Healthy Democracy**

Lauren M.
Fullmer

Laura F.
Bond

Crystal N.
Molyneaux

Samuel J.
Nayman

Maurice J.
Elias

Skills Are Essential, But Not Enough

Stanford University psychologist William Damon (2003, p. 9) defines noble purpose:

“stable and generalized intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self and of positive consequence to the world beyond the self”

Can we see ourselves as the igniters of our children’s purpose, for positive character, contribution, compassion, and citizenship?

Youth Contexts Must Stand for Something to Promote Positive Purpose



“Purpose gives SECD its ‘why’.” – Arthur Schwartz, CEO, Character.org

“Youth value what they learn to value.” – David Adams, CEO, Urban Assembly

Consider your classroom and school’s values; what do you want your classroom or school to stand for? What kind of inspiration are you providing to your youth? What is the Common Good with which you want them to identify? How are you preparing them to value and support this in the future?

Inspiration Precedes Remediation

- Adolescents are entering a search that will continue throughout their lives, as they author their identity through their deeds.
- Each of these big questions-- about purpose, gifts, connection, fears, suffering, and personal spirit-- represents a connection to purpose and meaning and a key deterrent to problem behaviors, as well as to recovery.
- *The two most important days of your life are the day you were born and the day you know why.*

Mark Twain

Strategies for Fostering Engagement and Building SECD in *ALL* Students

- **Meaningful, Participatory Student Government**
- **Staff/Student Committee Involvement**
- **Buddies, Mentors, and Tutors, across age and ability**
- **Opportunities for Feedback and Reflection**

Build Individual and Collective Responsibility Through Reflective Journaling

- Set the expectation that “the world depends on me,” at beginnings, midway, other natural, developmental time periods, at the start of counseling/groups, and reflect at the end.
- 2-3 goals to:
 - Make myself better
 - Make my classroom/group better
 - Make my school/program better
 - Make the wider community and world better

Assessing Vital Signs for Youth Well-Being: Writing, Portraying and Sharing Topics

1. Contentment and Joy

- **How much do you experience both joy and satisfaction in your life? Describe examples.**

2. Hope

- **To what extent do you look ahead in your life with optimism, positive expectation, and anticipation of accomplishment? What do you look ahead toward?**

3. Awe

- **How often do you experience a sense of wonder, amazement, and astonishment? When, where, and/or with whom to you have these experiences?**

4. Positive Meaning/Purpose in Life

- **Point to things in your life that give you positive meaning and purpose.**

5. Deep Connection

- **When do you have a sense that you are connected to something, or someone, bigger than yourself? *Describe examples and the feelings you have at those times.***

Question prompts help students start thinking more deeply about their own values or principles and their connection with others

- Whom do you admire? List three of that person's admirable qualities.
- Describe an incident or event from which you learned a lesson "the hard way."
- What could you change about yourself to become a better person?
- What three qualities do you value in a friend? A teacher? A counselor? A parent?
- Who has been most important in your life in helping you establish your values? Please explain.
- What are the three most important values you think it will be important to encourage in **your** children one day?
- What is the one rule that you believe is important to live your life by?
- If we lived in a perfect world, how would people behave differently than they do now?
- Your suggested questions? Please put in the Chat Box.

Here is part of an eighth grader's essay about perseverance: Consider the Intersection of SEL and Virtues

- *The key to success in my life is perseverance. My purpose is to continue to reach my goals, despite difficulties that I may face. My great grandmother was a person who struggled to make sure her family would be successful. Born in 1902, she was a maid who worked extremely hard just to make ends meet. She walked miles to get to work because she didn't have money for transportation; after working in someone's kitchen all day, she came home to take in laundry. Her driving desire to make life better for her children and theirs motivated her to persevere in a time when being black meant you were considered less than nothing. (Excerpted from [Urban Dreams: Stories of Hope, Resilience, and Character](#).)*

Storytelling with a Moral for Young Children

Talking Treasure

Stories to Help Build
Emotional Intelligence and Resilience
in Young Children



Vered Hankin
Devorah Omer

Maurice J. Elias
Amiram Raviv

Illustrations by Nurit Yuval

Trajectory of Purpose-Related Activities

- *Level One: The Positive Purpose of a Well-Known Individual– via picture book, fiction, biography, social studies, current events*
- *Level Two: The Positive Purpose of a Personally-Known Individual– local hero, community leader, clergy, first responder, family members, educators*
- *Level Three: My Positive Purpose*
- [Principal Kafele https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U98d6CQbz4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U98d6CQbz4s)

Prompts to Think and Write About Purpose

- (1) “Write about a personal experience where you feel that something you did made a difference” (e.g. family, friends, school, community, or natural environment).
- (2) “Describe how these experiences helped give you a sense of purpose.”
- (3) “How will you continue working toward this purpose?”

Foster Youth Conversations About “Who Am I” and My Connections to Others

- ***How do I see myself?***
- ***How do I think others see me?***
- ***How do I see others?***
- ***How do I want others to see me?***
- ***What do I want others to believe is my purpose in life?***

Foster Youth Conversations About “Who Am I” and My Connections to Others (cont’d)

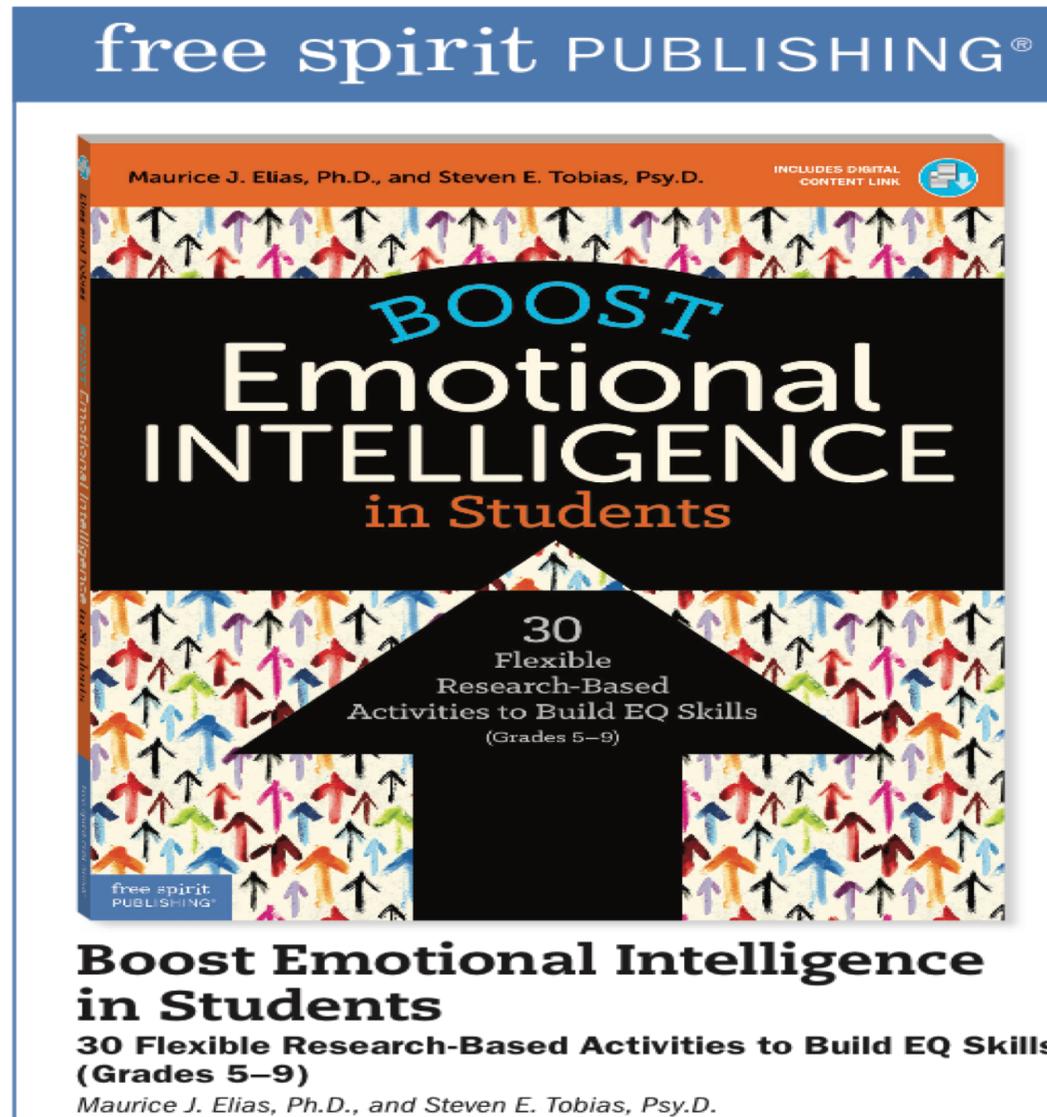
- ***When and with whom am I at my best?***
- ***When and with whom am I at my worst?***
- ***What are my best abilities?***
- ***What motivates me?***
- ***How do peers influence me?***
- ***Who are my best sources of help?***
- ***How can I do more of what will help me to succeed?***
- ***What is the connection of my answer to “Who Am I?”, my sense of positive purpose, and how I act?***

RAPS: Repeated Application of Problem Solving

- How are you feeling?
- What do you think the problem is?
- What do you want to happen?
- What are some solutions?
- If you did ___ what might happen? To you? Others? Short/Long Term?
- What idea do you think is best?
- What's your plan?
- How did it work? What did you learn that you can use in the future?

Build EQ Realistically in Your (Tier 2) Counseling

Complements existing SEL programs your school might be using



Can be used in an Empowerment Model, e.g., Newspaper Club; Girls Leading Outward

Sample Time Frames and Lesson Planning

What can you implement successfully with students so they learn and retain skills? It depends on the time frames you have available. You must be brutally realistic!

- If you have a full school year: focus on all 3 EQ Areas
- If you have 21 or more meetings: best to focus on EQ Area 1 (Self-Awareness and Self-Management) and either EQ Area 2 (Social Awareness and Relationship Skills) or EQ Area 3 (Responsible Decision-Making and Problem-Solving)

Sample Time Frames and Lesson Planning (cont.)

- If you have 11 meetings: select one EQ Area as your focus
- If you have 6 meetings: either focus intensively on three skills within EQ Area 1, or devote one lesson to each of six skills within EQ Area 1

Regardless, start and conclude with a self-evaluation assessment of what was learned and how to keep skill development going

Students: Survey Your Own EQ/SEL Skills

Rationale: Your success in anything you want to do depends on your EQ/SEL Skills- so, get real!!

EQ Area 1: Self-Awareness and Self-Management

How good are you at identifying your own feelings? How well can you express them, especially when the feelings are particularly strong (positive or negative)? How often do you reflect on your feelings, outside of times when people ask, “How are you?”

How well are you able to maintain your emotional and behavioral self-control in emotionally intense situations (also called trigger situations)? When do you find it most challenging to control and manage your emotional reactions? What tools or skills do you use to exercise self-control?

Students: Survey Your Own EQ/SEL Skills (cont.)

EQ Area 2: Social Awareness and Relationship Skills

How effective are your communication skills? How well do you listen to others? How well do you express yourself? How well do you balance listening and speaking? How aware are you of your nonverbal communication (body language, facial expression, eye contact, tone of voice) and that of others?

How well can you perceive things from other people's perspectives? When is this easiest for you, and when is it most difficult?

Students: Survey Your Own EQ/SEL Skills (cont.)

EQ Area 3: Responsible Decision-Making and Problem-Solving

How good are you at problem-solving? How good are you at facilitating others' problem-solving?

How resilient are you? How do you deal with challenges and obstacles? How often do you willingly put yourself in challenging situations, as opposed to trying to avoid them

Based on these reflections, identify your clear strengths. Be aware of them and keep working on them. Then take a realistic look at where you are most lacking. These are the things you need to improve upon (both individually and with the help of others) and to be mindful of in order to be effective at things that matter/suit your purpose.

Developing a Feelings Vocabulary

Sharing Circle

Share situations when you usually feel happy; repeat using *frustration, confusion, disappointment, pride*.

Skill Introduction

Ask students, “*How many different feelings do you think you experience in a day, an afternoon, an hour, or even at the same time?*”

- brainstorm
- review list
- role-play scene provided or one more relevant to context
- You ’re hanging out with your best friend and see on social media that this friend went to a party you didn’t know about.*

Roles: You, your best friend, and another friend who also went to the party.

Developing a Feelings Vocabulary (cont.)

Extension

Discuss differences between feelings such as frustration and disappointment, envy and jealousy, and sadness and grief.

Reflection

- students reflect in their EQ journals
- place students in pairs or small groups to discuss

Homework

Keep track of times when they feel strong emotions in the coming days and how they handle these emotions.

Developing Self-Control (M2, S5, L9)

- **Sharing Circle**
- Ask students to share examples of things they do to calm themselves down
- Ask them if they usually use positive self-talk when they are calm

- **Skill Introduction**
- Ask students when it is important for them to be able to control their strong feelings.
- Because self-control is so essential, you will show them strategies in this lesson and the next one to help them exercise self-control when they most need it.
-
- *Show and Practice “Belly Breathing,” “Four-Square Breathing,” “Keep Calm”*

Developing Self-Control (M2, S5, L9)

- **Reflection**

- Write in EQ journals which breathing strategies they prefer
- Ask them to anticipate an upcoming time when they might use these strategies and what might help them remember to do so.

-

- **Homework**

- Practice the techniques when calm, in preparation for using the techniques when they feel strong emotions. – determine good times to do this
- Write what happens when they actually try using one of the techniques and whether it goes well or not.

- **Generalization:**

- Reminders are essential. Work with other school staff, parents to provide prompts to use the skills.

Assertive Communication (M2, S7, L13)

- **“Without mentioning any names, what are the things these people do that show you they are being aggressive, passive, or assertive?”**
- Recognize these communication patterns in others
- Practice via video examples or role plays
- A necessary step before improving their own communication skills

Assertive Communication

(M2, SX, L1)

- **Your BEST Communication Skills**
- Using your BEST communication skills means using assertive body language, eye contact, speech, and tone of voice..
-
- **B: Body language:** posture and movements. For example, Slouching, standing or sitting up straight, getting too close to the other person while you're speaking.
-
- **E: Eye contact:** *whether* you are looking at the other person and *how* you do so. For example, rolling your eyes, gazing steadily and calmly? Facial expressions: frowning, scowling; discuss cultural variations
-
- **S: Speech:** the verbal content of your communication. avoid saying things that are likely to set other people off or make a situation worse (which can happen easily in trigger situations). Be clear and direct
-
- **T: Tone of voice:** how you sound as you speak. Is the tone calm, whiney, sarcastic, loud, or hesitant? An assertive tone of voice is moderate, confident, and sincere.

Assertive Communication

(M2, S7, L13)

- **“When is it hardest for you to be your BEST? Why? What is it about the person, place, time, or situation that makes it hard?”**
- Homework: Monitor Trigger Situations and use of BEST skills in situations, especially stressful ones
- **Trigger Situation Buster (TSB) Form**
- Briefly describe the trigger situation that happened.
- What feelings did you notice during this situation?
- What physical signs of stress did you notice? in your body?
- What self-talk were you aware of?
- What did you say and do?
- What happened after your actions? How did things end up?
- Rate how calm and under control were you while the situation was taking place?
- Rate whether you used deep/belly breathing and how it went
- Rate whether you used four-square breathing and how it went1: I didn't try it.
- Rate how satisfied you were with each element of your BEST skills
- What are some things you might do differently or better next time you face this situation or a similar situation?

Certificate Programs in SECD for Educators

- **The Academy for SEL in Schools (SELinSchools.org) certificate programs prepare educational professionals to help their schools become more positive places for children to learn, adults to teach, and all to thrive.**
- **Program Highlights**
 - **Brings like-minded educators from across the globe together in a professional learning community.**
 - **Program facilitators with substantial experience and expertise.**
 - **Combines asynchronous learning with synchronous workshops for optimal community-building and sharing.**
 - **Certificates in Instruction and School Leadership.**

Certificate Programs in SECD for Educators

SEL 101:
Foundations

SEL 102: Best
Practices in
SECD and
Positive
Climate

SEL 301 Virtual
Supervised
Practicum at
Your Job Site

Certificate from
Rutgers and
SEU and
ongoing SEL
Academy
virtual support

Encourage participation in the ongoing free webinar series about Academy programs, principles of SEL Instruction and Leadership, and STAT and the SEL Tier 2 Lab:

<https://psych.rutgers.edu/webinars-and-other-events>

Contact Information for Materials and Follow Up

- www.secdlab.org
- [Remember to join www.SEL4NJ.org](http://www.SEL4NJ.org)
- For Support or Questions about Implementation:
 - Maurice.elias@Rutgers.edu

Please follow the Lab @SECDLab for updates
and information on the latest projects and
events.

<https://twitter.com/SECDLab>

- For ongoing information about SECD:
 - www.edutopia.org/profile/maurice-j-elias