Chapter 14
Social and Emotional Learning (SEL): A Framework for Academic, Social, and Emotional Success

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14.1   Skills for Success in School, Work, and Life

Young people will face many challenges in the decades to come, including global problems such as climate change as well as competition for oil, water, and other natural resources. Knowledge of math and science will be important, but knowledge alone will not be sufficient to prepare young people to meet these challenges. Solutions to these and other problems will demand teamwork and problem solving. In addition, the accelerating rate of information growth and the constant development of new technologies will require young people to have the requisite skills to learn independently, so that they can master new information throughout their lives.

In the future, students will also need different intra- and interpersonal skills to succeed both academically and socially in a variety of learning environments. For example, intrapersonal skills in the area of self-management will allow them to focus on tasks. Interpersonal skills such as social awareness and communication skills are necessary in order to plan collaboratively with others and work effectively in teams with people who come from different backgrounds and have diverse skill sets. The most successful individuals in the future will likely be those who are able to constantly seek and independently learn new information. In fact, two recent reports—one produced jointly by the Conference Board, Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Corporate Voices for Working Families, and the Society for Human Resource Management (2006), and the other by the American Management Association (2012)—both reveal that employers consider it critical that their employees have skills in the areas of critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration,

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and communication. Likewise, more than 600 teachers in a national survey indicated that they endorse social and emotional learning (SEL) for all students as something that merits more attention in school, improves academic performance, increases positive social behaviors, and prepares students for learning in the real world (Bridgeland et al. 2013).

14.2   History of SEL as a Framework for Academic, Social, and Emotional Success

In the past few decades, public education has faced increasing prevalence of issues that challenge students' healthy growth and development (Greenberg et al. 2001), including rising poverty, academic failure, school dropout, bullying, substance abuse, and violence. During the same time, schools have faced increasing demands to meet student needs and promote academic performance, leading to the implementation of a large number of prevention and intervention efforts addressing a variety of concerns. For example, the past 20 years has witnessed a series of academic innovations designed to improve student performance in core content areas such as reading and mathematics, along with a growing number of empirically supported programs that prevent risky behaviors such as drug use, violence, and bullying; promote character development, service learning, and positive behavior support, or both (see Catalano et al. 2002; Cicchetti et al. 2000; Durlak 1997; Greenberg et al. 2001; Weissberg and Greenberg 1998).

As schools attempt to implement an increasing number and variety of school-wide prevention and health-promotion initiatives, many efforts may lack the necessary coordination or support from key stakeholders, leading to poor quality and often only short-term implementation. Not surprisingly, educators reportedly suffer from "initiative fatigue" and often view programs as piecemeal add-ons that are easily abandoned when priorities shift.

It is however possible to coordinate and organize these important prevention efforts, in order to combat multiple barriers to student learning in a manner that is feasible and sustainable. Although the concepts, competencies, and skills behind what we now know as SEL had been receiving increased attention for years, the field lacked a unifying vocabulary or framework to tie everything together. The Fetzer Institute convened the leading minds in education research and practice for a meeting in 1994, where they coined the term *SEL*. SEL, as a new term and concept, would serve as a unifying framework for addressing a broad range of competencies and skills (Elias et al. 1997; Greenberg et al. 2003). These experts believed that addressing SEL as a developmental process would enable youth to develop important competencies that would likely not only reduce or prevent problem behaviors but also enhance young people's existing strengths and skills.

As a result of this Fetzer Institute, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) was officially formed "to make evidence-based SEL an integral part of education from preschool through high school" (CASEL n.d.).

CASEL has defined SEL as "the processes through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." SEL consists of "five interrelated sets of cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making" (CASEL 2012, p. 9). Although many other definitions encompassing a variety of personal and social skills have been proposed, we define SEL according to the five competency sets as originally presented by Elias et al. in 1997 and further refined in related works by Payton et al. (2000) and CASEL (2003, 2012). At the time of this writing, this is the most widely used research- and evidence-based set of competencies in the field of SEL. These competencies have been used in a wide variety of ways: They served as the defining criteria in the only comprehensive review of SEL programs (CASEL 2012) and as a basis for state learning standards for SEL in Illinois (2005), Kansas (2012), and Pennsylvania (2012). They have also been codified in proposed bipartisan federal legislation supporting SEL for students, specifically, the Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Acts of 2009 (H.R. 4223), 2011 (H.R. 2437), and 2013 (H.R. 1875). Table 14.1 displays the five competency domains, with examples of skills standards at pre-K, elementary-, middle-, and high-school levels. These developmental examples are intended to be illustrative rather than definitive.

Over the past three decades, the concept of SEL has served as an umbrella framework for a variety of approaches to positive youth development (Schonert-Reichl and Hymel 2007). Recent education movements, including 21st Century Learning, Career Readiness, and Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)'s Whole Child, are designed in part to prepare students to succeed in the global future. Not surprisingly, these movements converge on a similar set of goals for students that center on the development of social and emotional competencies. As mentioned earlier, a number of reports have also identified competencies and skill sets related to SEL that will be important for success in the future (see, e.g., American Management Association 2012; US Department of Labor 1991; and Wilstrom-Ahlstrom et al. 2011). For example, a recently released National Research Council report recommends an educational approach the authors call "deeper learning" and highlights the importance of twenty-first century skills in three critical domains: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Cognitive competencies include critical thinking, problem solving, and reasoning; interpersonal skills include communication and collaboration with others; and intrapersonal competencies include metacognition, conscientiousness, and self-direction (Pellegrino and Hilton 2012). The partnership for twenty-first century skills (2011) has developed a framework that includes *learning and innovation skills* such as creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, and collaboration; and *life and career skills* that include flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility.

Table 14.1 Sample social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies and skills at key developmental periods

Skill domain	Definition[a]	Example competency and skill standards[b]			
		Preschool	Elementary school	Middle school	High school
Self-awareness	Accurately recognizing one's emotions and thoughts, and their influence on behaviors, assessing one's strengths and limitations, and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism	Recognize and label basic emotions, describe oneself using several basic characteristics, show initiative, self-direction, and independence in actions	Describe a range of emotions and the situations that cause them, identify personal skills and interests that one wants to develop, identify personal strengths and weaknesses, ask clarifying questions	Analyze factors that create stress or motivate successful performance, describe benefits of various personal qualities	Analyze how thoughts and emotions affect behavior, generate ways to develop more positive attitudes, implement a plan to build on a strength, meet a need, or address a challenge
Self-management	Regulating one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations	Express feelings that are appropriate to the situation, understand and follow rules, identify and develop techniques to manage emotions	Identify goals for academic success and classroom behavior, describe the steps in setting and working toward goal achievement	Apply strategies to manage stress and to motivate successful performance, set a short-term goal and make a plan for achieving it	Analyze cause/effect relationships, evaluate how expressing more positive attitudes influences others
Social awareness	Demonstrating the ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures; to understand social and ethical norms for behavior; and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports	Recognize the feelings of others, show sympathy and caring for others	Describe ways that people are similar and different, predict how one's own behavior affects the emotions of others	Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to stereotyping and identify ways to address this	Demonstrate ways to express understanding of those who hold different opinions

Table 14.1 (continued)

Skill domain	Definition[a]	Example competency and skill standards[b]			
Relationship skills	Establishing and maintaining healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups, communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating with others, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed	Demonstrate attachment to familiar adults, develop positive relationships with peers, engage in cooperative group play	Describe approaches for making and keeping friends, identify approaches to resolving conflicts constructively	Demonstrate cooperation and teamwork to promote group effectiveness	Evaluate the application of communication and social skills in daily interactions with peers, teachers, and families
Responsible decision-making	Making constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior, social interactions, and school based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the well-being of oneself and others	Discuss why rules exist, follow rules and make good choices about behavior, begin finding alternative solutions to problems	Identify a range of decisions that students make at school; identify and apply the steps of systematic decision-making	Analyze the short- and long-term outcomes of safe, risky, and harmful behaviors, evaluate one's participation in efforts to address an identified need in one's local community	Analyze one's responsibilities as an involved citizen of a democratic society, work cooperatively with others to plan, implement, and evaluate a project that addresses an identified need in the broader community

[a] Definitions from CASEL (2012, p. 9)
[b] Examples from Anchorage School District 2004/2013; Illinois State Board of Education 2005; Kansas State Department of Education 2012)

In the past decade, state learning standards have also begun moving in the direction of articulating standards for SEL that will prepare students for present and future success. This goal is reflected in the Common Core State Standards developed by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers (2010), organizations which represent all the states. The Common Core Standards articulate what students should know and be able to do in the areas of mathematics and English language arts at each grade. However, they go beyond knowledge acquisition to describe the underlying learning skills (many of which are social and emotional competencies) students will need to master these subject areas, including skills in problem solving, speaking, and listening. These were previously called "habits of mind" and are now referred to as the "capacities of a literate individual" for English language arts and "standards of mathematical practice" for mathematics. Capacities of a literate individual include demonstrating independence, building strong content knowledge, responding to varying demands, comprehending and critiquing, and valuing evidence. Standards of mathematical practice include making sense of problems and persevering in solving them, reasoning abstractly, constructing viable arguments, using appropriate tools strategically, and reasoning (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers 2010).

A number of programs have been developed over the years to promote social and emotional competencies. In the sections that follow, we discuss programs currently available to schools and to afterschool and expanded learning programs, the research that supports the efficacy of these programs, and common elements of SEL programs.

14.3   SEL Programs

SEL programming has typically been delivered within the school setting during the day; however, research suggests that providing high-quality SEL instruction in afterschool or expanded learning programs could also be an effective way to strengthen students' social, emotional, and academic skills (Durlak and Weissberg 2007; Durlak et al. 2010; Miller 2003). In fact, given the limited time during the school day and the current emphasis in public education on core academic content areas and high-stakes testing, programs designed for delivery outside the instructional day or in settings other than school may have excellent potential for enriching the lives of youth.

As we use the term, "SEL programs" encompasses any educational activities and pedagogy designed to promote the development of social and emotional skills and behaviors. The SEL framework has been applied in programming intended to address a wide variety of goals, including to support positive youth development broadly defined; to promote health and character development; and to prevent substance abuse, violence, and other risk behaviors. SEL "programs" have also taken a variety of forms, for example, some out-of-the-box lesson-based curricula focus ex-

plicitly on developing social and emotional skills, whereas others seek to integrate social and emotional skill development within a core academic subject area, such as language arts or social studies. Other approaches involve training and professional development initiatives designed to influence teacher and staff pedagogy and emphasize responsive practices.

14.3.1 Impact of SEL Programs

Over the past few decades, the field of SEL has advanced in terms of both the quality of programming and the growing evidence base to support the effectiveness of SEL instruction. Two recent developments are (a) a meta-analysis of 213 research studies of SEL programs (Durlak et al. 2011) and (b) a comprehensive review of 23 evidence-based SEL programs currently available for use in preschool and elementary schools (CASEL 2012). These and other studies indicate that social and emotional competencies and skills are teachable, that regular classroom teachers can effectively develop those competencies and skills in their students (Cohen 2006; Durlak et al. 2011; Kress and Elias 2006) and in themselves; and that, when implemented with fidelity, SEL programs can improve social behavior and academic performance and reduce conduct problems and emotional distress (Durlak et al. 2011). Many educators now believe that SEL is "the missing piece" in education and a critical factor in student success both in and out of the classroom (Bridgeland et al. 2013).

The *2013 CASEL Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs: Preschool and Elementary Edition* is a comprehensive review developed by a large team of researchers, of which we were a part. A companion edition covering programs for middle-school and high-school ages is in development as of 2013. The release of this guide was an important development, because it set a new standard for the minimum level of evidence required for SEL programs to be considered effective. Specifically, at least one evaluation using a pretest/posttest, control group design must have demonstrated that the program had a desired effect on at least one of four key outcomes: academic performance, positive social behavior, emotional distress, or conduct problems (CASEL 2012). A total of 23 programs were found to meet these criteria, with many having more than one qualifying evaluation or influencing more than one outcome of interest.

Although the *2013 CASEL Guide* is the only review to focus specifically on SEL programs, several other systematic reviews of evidence-based prevention programs exist, including the US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences's *What Works ClearinghouseTM),* the US Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) *National Registry of Evidence Based Programs and Practices (NREPP),* the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence *Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development,* the California Healthy Kids *Research-Validated Programs,* and the US Department of Justice's *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Model Programs Guide.* Each of these guides has slightly different review

criteria. For example, some assess quality of evaluation studies in terms of characteristics of the sample, study design, analysis procedures, and reported outcomes (e.g., *What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), NREPP*). Others (e.g., California Healthy Kids *Research-Validated Programs*) focus on specific outcomes of interest in addition to requiring adequate study design. Still others examine programmatic features that occurred during the evaluation (e.g., *NREPP, OJJDP Model Programs Guide*) such as fidelity of implementation or quality of training and implementation support. Many of the effective SEL programs have also met the criteria for inclusion in these other sources, and descriptions of them can be found there. Because the *2013 CASEL Guide* is the only source to focus exclusively on SEL, however, we base our following discussion of effective programs on the set of programs listed therein.

Based on evaluation studies conducted to date and reported in the *CASEL Guide*, preschool-level SEL programs have had the greatest effect in reducing conduct problems, with lesser effects in the areas of academic performance, positive social behavior, and emotional distress; elementary-level programs are equally likely to reduce conduct problems and increase positive social behaviors (e.g., Domitrovich et al. 2007; Hennessey 2007; Schonert-Reichl and Lawlor 2010; Webster-Stratton et al. 2001; Webster-Stratton et al. 2008). However of the ten programs with multiple evaluations, all of them were shown to affect more than one of the four desired outcomes. One longitudinal study of the High Scope Preschool Program followed students for 37 years, finding a range of important long-term educational and economic outcomes, including greater high-school graduation rates, delayed childbearing, and higher-socioeconomic status (Muennig et al. 2009).

An extensive research literature at the middle- and high-school levels suggests that programs promoting social and emotional development (often called "life skills" in the research literature) can reduce a range of adolescent risk behaviors, including substance use and violence. Substance-abuse-oriented programs focus on emphasizing refusal skills, building self-esteem, and promoting a sense of personal responsibility. Many also develop a range of communication skills such as assertiveness, communicating wants and needs effectively and directly, and negotiating with peers (see, e.g., Botvin et al. 1990; Dusenbury et al. 1989; Eisen et al. 2003; Pentz et al. 1989). Other SEL programs take a social cognition approach to reducing youth violence (Farrell et al. 2001; Farrell et al. 2003). These emphasize conflict-resolution strategies, problem-solving processes, and understanding emotions.

14.3.2   Characteristics of Effective SEL Programs

SEL programs appear to be most effective when they have four primary characteristics, which Durlak et al. (2011) refer to as *SAFE features* (a) a *S*equenced training approach; (b) *A*ctive forms of learning to practice new skills; (c) a *F*ocus on skill development; and (d) *E*xplicit definitions of the social and emotional skills the program is seeking to promote. In addition, all programs with proven effectiveness contain certain design elements in common, such as providing opportunities for

behavioral practice, and integrating SEL concepts into the classroom and throughout the school day (CASEL 2012). Note that these features largely overlap with SAFE. Next, we discuss each of these principles, many of which are applicable to other types of prevention programming as well.

Effective Programs Are Comprehensive Effective programs can be used with a variety of populations and are comprehensive in terms of age, culture, language, and skill development. Effective programs also support social and emotional development across multiple grade levels (CASEL 2012)—ideally providing developmentally appropriate coverage of all age groups or grades, preschool through high school (Greenberg et al. 2003; Nation et al. 2003). Such programs are sequenced in a way that scaffolds skill development year over year so that programming builds on what students learned in years past while also enhancing these skills and developing new ones. For example, a lesson on patience in week 15 might expand skills taught during the week 6 lesson on self-calming strategies such as deep breathing or counting to ten. A sixth-grade lesson on peer pressure might build on lessons that taught self-respect and assertive communication during fifth grade.

Because the landscape of our education system is diverse, it is important that programs are appropriate for, and sensitive to, diverse populations. Research has shown that programs are more effective when they not only address linguistic competence but also the cultural contexts in which students live (Gay 2000, 2002).

Effective programs are also comprehensive in that they develop a range of competencies and skills that serve a variety of purposes, including both academic achievement and social adjustment, with specific competencies playing roles individually and collectively (Durlak et al. 2011; Elias 2006; Greenberg et al. 2003; Nation et al. 2003; Payton et al. 2000; Zins et al. 2004). SEL programs are structured to systematically develop a broad range of skills because research and developmental theory emphasize the integration of emotion, cognition, communication, and behavior (Crick and Dodge 1994; Lemerise and Arsenio 2000). Developing skills separately without attending to how those skills interact may reduce program effectiveness and produce only short-term gains (Osher et al. 2013).

Effective Programs Use a Variety of Methodologies to Develop Social and Emotional Competencies and Skills All 23 effective programs demonstrated positive effects on student behavior, and every program promoted all five of the social and emotional skill domains; namely, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (CASEL 2012). However, the methodology through which these competencies and skills were developed varied. Four emerging approaches were identified, with some programs utilizing a combination of these: (a) explicit skill development that occurs through freestanding practice, (b) explicit skill development that integrates with core academic content, (c) skill development that occurs implicitly through teacher practices and pedagogy, and (d) skill development that occurs implicitly through project- or service-based learning (CASEL 2012).

The most common type of SEL program is a free-standing, "out-of-the-box" curriculum with scripted lessons explicitly designed to promote specific skills; 5 of 7

effective preschool-level programs and 15 of 19 elementary programs used this approach (some programs have components for both preschool and elementary levels so are counted twice). These programs address social and emotional skills that can be broadly applied to a variety of situations, such as making friends, working cooperatively with others, coping with stress, making decisions about engaging in potentially risky behaviors, and resolving interpersonal conflicts. They may also cover specific health promotion or problem prevention domains (e.g., engaged citizenry, violence prevention, drug prevention).

Many programs, including some of the aforementioned programs that emphasize explicit skills instruction, provide additional strategies for integrating newly developed skills within core academic content areas or for enhancing teacher practices. Of the 23 effective programs, all but four provided *optional* academic integration strategies. The remaining four programs were intentionally structured to incorporate social and emotional skill development into academic content, and thus were even more integrative (CASEL 2012). The academic content areas most frequently targeted for integration with SEL are English language arts and history, though integration with science, physical education, arts, and mathematics instruction is incipient. It is reasonable to expect that integration of academic content with SEL would be a greater focus at the secondary school level, so that as effective programs are identified at this level, integration will be a more prominent feature.

Another emerging movement among SEL programs is a focus on instructional and pedagogical processes that promote positive dynamics in the classroom or afterschool program to actively engage students in learning while simultaneously supporting social and emotional development. This approach not only creates a climate where young people feel safe and connected but also improves student–teacher relations, thus fostering better conditions for learning (Allen et al. 2011). Research on the quality of teacher–student interactions and the instructional practices that take place within the classroom suggests that they are two critical factors for student academic performance and social adjustment (Hamre and Pianta 2007; Mashburn and Pianta 2006). This approach to SEL involves training teachers in a variety of classroom management techniques, such as using positive discipline or creating shared group norms, as well as how to be emotionally responsive to students' needs.

SEL Programs Provide Opportunities to Develop Skills Through Active Practice It is critical that young people have opportunities to practice and apply developing skills, not only with support and scaffolding from a teacher or other adult, but also in real-life situations, which may be even more important for learning (Bond and Carmola-Hauf 2004; Hawkins et al. 2004; Nation et al. 2003; Weare and Nind 2011). Youth interventions are more successful when they use interactive strategies such as coaching or role-playing, and provide feedback on individuals' progress toward specific goals (DuBois et al. 2002; Tobler et al. 2000).

Skill Development Is Reinforced in a Variety of Settings Skill building occurs not only through active practice but also through generalization and reinforcement of the targeted skills to a variety of settings and aspects of daily life beyond the specific skills instruction time—in the classroom, throughout the school, with families,

and in the community. Durlak et al. (2011) suggest that "interventions are unlikely to have much practical utility or gain widespread acceptance unless they are effective under real-world conditions," and that "interventions that combined components within and outside of the daily classroom routine would yield stronger effects than those that were only classroom based," which is "grounded in the premise that the broader ecological focus of multicomponent programs that extend beyond the classroom should better support and sustain new skill development" (Tolan et al. 1995, as cited in Durlak et al. 2011, p. 407). All 23 effective programs are designed to reinforce SEL in a variety of ways beyond the structured instruction.

Many Programs Incorporate Practices That Extend Program Concepts and Skill Development into the Regular Classroom Routine There is a critical need to balance the focus on academic performance with the development of key social and emotional skills both in and out of school (McCombs 2004). Morning meetings, peace centers, and daily check-ins are routines that help promote relationship building, develop conflict resolution skills, and build trust in the classroom or other setting. SEL programs also make use of similar school- or building-wide practices that foster more and better relationships among students, teachers, staff, and families. These practices can facilitate SEL integration and extend the impact of SEL programs through consistent reinforcement of the target values, beliefs, and behaviors.

Many programs have structures for collaboration, whether that be by planning activities across different groups or grade levels or by engaging nonteaching personnel in activities they would not otherwise take part in. Research suggests that when school principals and other administrators endorse the use of SEL practices throughout the school building and model those behaviors themselves, implementation is stronger and more effective (Elias et al. 2006; Kam et al. 2003). Every youth–adult interaction is a potential opportunity to model skills and reinforce positive social behaviors, from the front office staff to the bus driver, from classroom teachers to paraprofessional staff.

Family and Community Involvement Can Be Supported in Multiple Ways Communication with parents and caregivers occurs in a variety of ways: Letters for home with updates and information about the daily or weekly lessons, as well as suggestions for home practice; parent/caregiver workshops that increase awareness and may even promote skill development; and homework activities and suggestions for how students can practice skills in "real life." Involving families ensures that social and emotional competencies and skills—which cannot be taught in isolation (Mart et al. 2011)—are consistently reinforced in both the school and home environments (Albright and Weissberg 2010).

Only 4 of the 23 programs contained opportunities to connect with the community via community service and awareness activities such as visits and guest presentations, volunteer work, or community projects. Service learning is increasingly being viewed as a complementary activity that may increase the effectiveness of SEL programming (Billig 2000). Billig (2000) notes that the act of service without the learning lacks impact for youth. It is when service is integrated with socially and emotionally relevant activities (e.g., reflection) that it becomes effective.

Effective Programs Are Implemented with Fidelity and Provide Support for Implementation The most critical component of an effective SEL program is appropriate implementation (Abbott et al. 1998; Aber et al. 2003; Battistich et al. 1996; Durlak et al. 2011; Greenberg et al. 2005). The most effective programs provide support for implementation, including ongoing professional development, technical assistance, and training (Botvin et al. 1990; Ringwalt et al. 2002; Ross et al. 1991; Tappe et al. 1995). As Durlak et al. (2011) pointed out in their meta-analysis, programs produced positive effects only when they had SAFE features and were implemented with fidelity.

Many programs offer initial training for frontline staff that will be implementing the programs, and some programs also offer training specific to principals, paraprofessionals, and other staff who support the program. Ongoing and follow-up training, along with additional supports (hotlines, online forums, e-mail reminders), may also be offered throughout program implementation. Especially those programs that focus on teacher training and improving pedagogy offer a deep and detailed professional development series designed to increase understanding, build familiarity, and strengthen social and emotional skills in the adult implementers.

Ongoing Assessment and Evaluation Promote Continuous Program Improvement It goes without saying that a key means for ensuring that any type of education or prevention program remains effective is to structure implementation in a way that promotes continuous program improvement through ongoing assessment and evaluation. Ongoing evaluation is critical for program monitoring and identifying whether and how to adjust programming to ensure that it is having the desired effect (Cohen 2006; Nation et al. 2003). Many SEL programs recommend a continuous improvement process and offer tools for monitoring implementation and measuring youth outcomes. These may involve formative assessments conducted over the course of the program, pre- and post-implementation youth surveys, or fidelity checklists for teachers or staff to complete during the course of implementation.

14.4   SEL in Practice

As we mentioned before, hundreds of prevention and intervention programs ranging in style, focus area, and implementation are available in the market, and the majority have been evaluated, with many demonstrating success. How then does one determine whether SEL is the way to go? The reasons vary from teacher to teacher, school to school, and even district to district.

14.4.1 Respect and Responsibility Program: A Homegrown SEL Initiative

In the case of Community Consolidated School District 181, in a southwestern sub-urb of Chicago, Illinois, the decision to focus on developing social and emotional skills was a much-needed positive response to increasing problems with bullying. In 2001, a few years after the mass shooting at Columbine High School, a group of parents started paying attention to the climate of their elementary school. They had begun to notice a change in the mood of the school and the ways students treated one another, particularly that bullying was occurring at earlier ages. In response, a small group of parents joined together, developed a set of lessons they called the "Respect and Responsibility Program," and started to implement it. Calling them-selves "Kindness Ambassadors," the parents came into the classrooms each quarter and conducted workshops focusing on social skills like making friends and deal-ing with bullying. The Kindness Ambassadors focused on keeping these lessons positive, upbeat, and strengths based, because they believed this was the best way of getting through to students. They also sent notes home about the importance of social and emotional skills and how parents could help.

The Kindness Ambassadors chose the route of developing social and emotional skills instead of focusing solely on bullying prevention because they felt that pro-moting social skills was a positive approach to prevention, unlike the approach of the other drug and violence prevention programs being implemented in the district, with little effect. The parents also valued an approach that offered a variety of tools and strategies that students could learn and practice regularly in order to deal with challenges in a constructive way. The Kindness Ambassadors' workshops were ef-fective in creating a caring learning community, and their efforts soon came to the attention of the district superintendent, who decided to expand the Respect and Responsibility Program into a district-wide initiative.

Toward that end District 181 engaged CASEL in 2002 to provide guidance around implementing and scaling up the program. CASEL's primary recommenda-tion to the district was to implement an evidence-based program that would not only enable the district to increase the number of students who participated in program-ming but would also offer a variety of supports for implementation, such as stan-dardized materials, training, and evaluation materials. CASEL staff worked with members of the district team to review evidence-based programs (CASEL 2003) and identify one that was a good match for the district's needs. The district selected the Lions Quest program based on a variety of factors (e.g., current implementation of the Respect and Responsibility Program, feasibility of implementation, cost, and fit with the district's students). Although the program has changed over the years, the district is still implementing Lions Quest at the time of this publication.

Around the same time, the Illinois Children's Mental Health Act of 2003 was enacted, leading shortly thereafter to the establishment of state learning standards for SEL—the first such standards in the country. This was a time of rapid expan-

sion for SEL in Illinois, and District 181 was ahead of the curve. The legislation and standards served to support the work they were already doing and to guide its evolution and strengthening over the subsequent decade.

14.4.2   The Humanware Initiative: A Systemic Approach to SEL

Since 2002, SEL has seen many advances, particularly in terms of how we think about implementation. What was once a field of mostly classroom-based, off-the-shelf SEL curricula emphasizing direct skills instruction is now characterized by systemic efforts, standards, and rigor. There is increasing evidence that SEL is most effective and longest lasting when implemented systemically—that is, not tied to a specific program, classroom teacher, or school but rather aligned and integrated at every level from pre-K through secondary school and with support from a variety of stakeholders (Devaney et al. 2006).

Research on systemic SEL is still limited, but a notable development is the CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative, a demonstration program in eight urban school districts around the country. The initiative began in 2011 with an initial cohort of three districts (Anchorage School District, AK; Austin Independent School District, TX; Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), OH), and in 2012 a second cohort of five districts was added (Chicago Public Schools, IL; Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools, TN; Oakland Unified School District, CA; Sacramento City Unified School District, CA; Washoe County School District, NV). The main goal is for these districts to strengthen their capacity to promote SEL for all students through providing administrative leadership, improving instruction, and building a culture of connections and continuous improvement to support SEL (CASEL 2013). These districts have gone beyond the standard program-based approach to SEL to establish SEL standards, allot dedicated planning time for SEL, and integrate SEL into academic instruction throughout the school day.

CMSD, which is now a member of the CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative, had begun making drastic changes to school policy and conditions for learning in favor of promoting SEL as early as 2007. Like District 181 in Illinois, CMSD officials chose SEL in response to what they saw as a climate issue, in this case a school shooting that rattled the district. The superintendent increased security measures and developed a district-wide school safety strategy that included a comprehensive evaluation of the conditions for learning. The evaluation, conducted by the American Institutes for Research (AIR), identified eight factors that contributed to unruly student behavior and negative school climate: chronic poverty, lead poisoning/effect, harsh and inconsistent approaches to discipline, reactive and punitive approaches to discipline, unclear and inconsistently implemented disciplinary codes, poor adult supervision and role modeling, limited school and family connections, and student mental health needs that exceeded the school's capacity to provide services (Osher et al. 2008).

The findings of this evaluation led CMSD to launch its districtwide "Humanware" initiative in 2008 (see CMSD n.d.). Humanware—conceived as the opposite of hardware—focused on increasing student safety through promoting positive social skills. Humanware fosters four conditions for learning in all schools: "a caring environment where students are connected to others in learning; social and emotional instruction, promotion, and support; positive behavioral supports; and engaged instruction, using high-academic standards and inclusive supports for all" (CMSD 2000–2014). Shortly after implementation of the Humanware initiative began, CMSD joined the Collaborating Districts Initiative to address the social and emotional instruction core component of their conditions for learning (CASEL 2013).

One of several strategies supporting CMSD's Humanware Initiative, which spans all grades across the district, is implementation of the Promoting Alternative THinking Strategies (PATHS) program in the elementary grades. Findings from a recent implementation and outcomes evaluation indicate that CMSD students receiving PATHS improved in both social and emotional competence and improved attentiveness in each of the school years from 2010 to 2012. Furthermore, students' level of improvement was associated with how well teachers implemented the program (Faria et al. 2013). Efforts like those in District 181 and in Cleveland show that educators are at the forefront of what works in SEL, and that SEL works even under the less-than-ideal conditions of the "real world."

14.5   Conclusion

Youth will need to know and be able to do many things if they are to thrive in our fast-changing, complex, and interconnected world, and it is clear that social and emotional skills are a critical part of what they will require. There are a variety of ways effective SEL can promote social competence while reducing antisocial behavior (Durlak et al. 2011). Evidence-based SEL programs and systemic SEL programming are proven methods of positively influencing youth attitudes, behaviors, and skills. The experiences in Community Consolidated School District 181 in Illinois and CMSD in Ohio suggest that it is possible for SEL to be implemented on a wide scale, with the potential to help communities organize and coordinate their educational efforts in strategic ways that prepare youth for success in the future.

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