

The need for high-quality pre-service and inservice teacher training in social and emotional learning

Successful implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs leads to positive student outcomes such as increased social and emotional skills, decreased problem behaviors, improved attitudes toward school, and increased academic performance (Durlak *et al.*, 2011). Whereas a national survey shows that teachers believe SEL is effective and can be taught (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013), many teachers also report limited training and confidence in their abilities to support SEL in their students, as well as a lack of school- and district-level support (Bridgeland *et al.*, 2013; Zinnser *et al.*, 2016). One potential source of these insecurities is the fact that SEL training for teachers is often lacking in dosage, quality, and emphasis for pre-service and inservice teachers (Jennings and Frank, 2015; Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2015). We argue that providing high-quality SEL instruction to students is extremely difficult without first teaching the teachers how to provide this instruction effectively; therefore, work in the field should be geared toward increasing and improving SEL teacher training for pre-service and inservice teachers.

Teacher social and emotional competence is a key factor to address in both pre-service and inservice teacher education in order to prepare teachers to effectively provide SEL content to students. However, not a single state includes teacher education standards that address a comprehensive set of SEL competencies for teachers and only 33 percent of state standards address a comprehensive set of SEL competencies for students (Schonert-Reichl *et al.*, 2015). Development of teachers' own social and emotional skills is critical because these skills equip teachers to handle student behavioral needs, develop relationships with students, effectively manage classrooms, and model these skills; these skills are also associated with reduced teacher burnout and turnover (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). It would be beneficial for educators, current and aspiring, to regularly self-assess and develop their own social and emotional skills (Yoder, 2014). Additionally, assessments of teacher social and emotional competency could be incorporated in teacher training programs and professional development (PD) to help assess and monitor growth in these areas.

Educators also would benefit from greater knowledge about student social and emotional development, facilitating supportive classroom environments, and designing instruction that infuses SEL. The teacher knowledge of student social and emotional development is essential in forming positive classroom environments, developing positive student–teacher relationships, and fostering pro-social student development (Jennings and Greenberg, 2009). Increased educator knowledge of child development has also been cited as a necessity in prioritizing SEL initiatives (NCSEAD, 2019).

As noted above, PD opportunities tend to be inadequate in preparing teachers to incorporate SEL into their classrooms. SEL PD is often delivered as a “one-shot” workshop approach, which lacks continuous support for implementation (Jennings and Frank, 2015).

© Dana Murano, Jason D. Way, Jonathan E. Martin, Kate E. Walton, Cristina Anguiano-Carrasco and Jeremy Burrus. Published in *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>



Consistent support, goal setting, progress monitoring, and frequent collaborative sessions during which participants can actively practice approaches must be included in order for PD to successfully support implementation. Metro Nashville Public Schools serves as an example in prioritizing SEL improvement in that the district has designed and implemented comprehensive evaluation rubrics for SEL initiatives. These rubrics cover school-wide environment, which includes a display of vision and mission, adult attitudes and general atmosphere, classroom environment, which includes classroom rules, student behavior and student voice, and instruction, which includes lesson plans, teacher feedback, and student reflection (Metro Nashville Public Schools, 2017). These rubrics, or ones like them, could be used for informing PD targets and progress in these areas. PD opportunities can also be improved through solutions such as university–district partnerships, online training, development of internal capacity among senior teachers and counselors to provide peer coaching, and through the use of professional learning communities organized for SEL lesson study and data analysis. While obstacles including monetary and time constraints certainly exist, schools can leverage these practices to provide PD opportunities that are embedded within schools' larger operating systems, build teachers' own social and emotional skills, and transmit relevant developmental knowledge and strategies for implementation to teachers.

Incorporating SEL into pre-service teacher education programs, as well as ongoing reform and development of PD opportunities with inservice teachers, clearly communicates the value of SEL, and reinforces the notion that SEL training is pivotal for all teachers, not simply an “add on.” The time has come for educational leaders at every level to work toward high-quality training opportunities for teachers, and to advocate for SEL pre-service and PD efforts to be treated with the same importance as mathematics or science training.

Dana Murano and Jason D. Way

Center for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning, ACT, Inc., Iowa City, Iowa, USA

Jonathan E. Martin

ACT, Inc., Iowa City, Iowa, USA, and

Kate E. Walton, Cristina Anguiano-Carrasco and Jeremy Burrus

Center for Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning, ACT, Inc., Iowa City, Iowa, USA

References

- Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M. and Harihan, A. (2013), *The Missing Piece: A National Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning can Empower Children and Transform Schools*, Civic Enterprises, Washington, DC.
- Durlak, J.A., Weissberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D. and Schellinger, K.B. (2011), “The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: a meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions”, *Child Development*, Vol. 82 No. 1, pp. 405-432.
- Jennings, P.A. and Frank, J.L. (2015), “Inservice preparation for educators”, in Durlak, J., Domotrovich, C.E., Weissberg, R. and Gullotta, T.P. (Eds), *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning*, The Guilford Press, New York, NY, pp. 422-438.
- Jennings, P.A. and Greenberg, M.T. (2009), “The prosocial classroom: teacher social and emotional competence in relation to student and classroom outcomes”, *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 79 No. 1, pp. 491-525.
- Metro Nashville Public Schools (2017), “MNPS SEL Walkthrough 2017-2018”, available at: <http://selforteachers.org/metro-nashville-public-schools/> (accessed January 18, 2019).
- National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (2019), *From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope: Recommendations from the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development*, The Aspen Institute, Washington, DC.

-
- Schonert-Reichl, K., Hanson-Peterson, J.L. and Hymel, S. (2015), "SEL and preservice teacher education", in Durlak, J., Domotrovich, C.E., Weissberg, R. and Gullotta, T.P. (Eds), *Handbook of Social and Emotional Learning*, The Guilford Press, New York, NY, pp. 406-422.
- Yoder, N. (2014), *Self-assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers*, Center on Great Teachers & Leaders at American Institutes for Research, Washington, DC.
- Zinsser, K.M., Christensen, C.G. and Torres, L. (2016), "She's supporting them; who's supporting her? Preschool center-level social-emotional supports and teacher well-being", *Journal of School Psychology*, Vol. 59, pp. 55-66.

About the authors

Dana Murano is Research Scientist in the Center for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning at ACT, Inc. She is completing her PhD in Educational Psychology with a specialization in Learning, Development and Instruction at the City University of New York. Her research interests include the development and assessment of social and emotional skills. Dana Murano is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: dana.murano@act.org

Jason D. Way has PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology and works in the ACT Center for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning. His research focuses on the social and emotional learning skills that contribute to academic and work success.

Jonathan E. Martin is Director of K12 Consulting Services for ACT. He has spent 15 years as a K12 Principal in California and Arizona. His work focuses on educational innovation, next-generation assessment, social-emotional learning and school improvement.

Kate E. Walton is Principal Research Scientist in the Center for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning at ACT, Inc. Prior to joining ACT, she was Associate Professor of Psychology at St. John's University. Kate has expertise in personality assessment, and her research interests include personality development and latent structure models of personality and psychopathology.

Cristina Anguiano-Carrasco is Research Scientist in the Center for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning at ACT, Inc. She completed her doctoral dissertation in Research Methods and Psychometrics from the University Rovira I Virgili, Spain in 2013. Her research focuses on noncognitive skills, response biases and improving measurement and assessment.

Jeremy Burrus is Senior Director of ACT's Center for Social, Emotional and Academic Learning. His main research interests are in developing innovative assessments of social and emotional learning skills, cognitive biases, and cross-cultural competence. He has over 40 journal articles, book chapters, research reports and books either published or in press.