

## Editorial comment

This special issue of the *Journal of Research in Innovative Teaching & Learning (JRIT&L)* focuses on social and emotional learning (SEL), education and life success. SEL has become an increasingly conscious and innovative addition to the PK-12 curriculum development in the past two decades. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2019), SEL can be defined as:

The process 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.

Throughout multiple broad-viewed understandings of the term, SEL consistently refers to awareness and management of emotions and relationships to acquire life skills. Emotions can affect what and how we learn. Since social-emotional awareness can be taught (i.e. SEL skills can be developed), it is the focus of education to bring to light strategies to teach social and emotional skills to mastery. The accumulation of knowledge through academic processes is complemented by decision-making skills and abilities that help us form and maintain relationships, which come about in the context of human interactions as an accumulated advantage. These three dimensions outline intrinsic ingredients for life success. Inadvertently, social and emotional learning impacts academic performance, health, happiness, self-creation, and, ultimately, the citizenship formation of an individual.

This special edition gathered excellently crafted manuscripts that view SEL, education and success interdisciplinarily. The work in this issue acknowledges the effort that states legislators, researchers, education administrators, teachers and parents make for a harmonious development of our future generation. The National Conference of State Legislatures (2018) notes that although all states in the USA have adopted legislation to implement SEL standards in preschool, only eight states continue to implement SEL for elementary students, and eight more target SEL development for K-12 grade students. Despite the limited state legislation advocating for SEL benchmarks in public schools, there has been tremendous support for SEL implementation in the private schools as well. The research of SEL implementation and impact is still young, but promising. The *JRIT&L* efforts aim to contribute to this empirical literature.

An innovative editorial practice is introduced in this issue: the editorial board welcomed expert comments (or commentaries), which are brief critical analyses (about 700 words) discussing SEL-specific research results, reports or future trends. The first commentary in this journal issue discusses the next step in the effort of incorporating SEL into schools. Co-authored by Dr Roger Weissberg, Board Vice-Chair and Chief Knowledge Officer for the CASEL, the commentary suggests that SEL be propelled (by adopting “an improve-it to move-it approach”) in real-world settings and at grand scale. To this end, a framework of change is required to integrate SEL research into practice, to implement multi-systematically



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and multi-disciplinarily and to re-evaluate its impact. The second commentary pertains to incorporating mindful decision-making strategies in K-12 education. The third commentary discusses how SEL competencies are effectively implemented within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) framework to improve learning and behavioral outcomes for all students. The last commentary is a call to action to incorporate self-regulation when teaching Social Studies to develop mindful citizens.

The articles are success stories of SEL implementation at various levels: school-wide SEL policies, teacher-practices in an elementary school and parental strategies to foster SEL. The original studies selected under this issue can be grouped into two categories: the macro-implementation of SEL in schools and a micro perspective to enhance children's SEL skills. The first article is written by faculty at Johns Hopkins University and it examines the implementation of the Sanford Harmony Social-Emotional Program and the circumstances that contribute to its success in five elementary schools in the Western USA. The second article analyses data collected on SEL strategies implementation from ten middle schools with a majority diverse population (the so-called "outlier schools") from California. The next article consolidates three successful frameworks into one, namely a culturally responsive social-emotional and behavioral supports approach, aimed to transform students' lives. The fourth article seeks to provide insights into how well do teachers from three elementary schools in New Zealand understand and apply SEL in their classrooms. The last article examines the effectiveness of the Conscious Discipline curriculum when is also carried over into the child's home, and implemented by the parents.

The Editorial team trusts that these works will be useful to the researchers and practitioners. The growing research interest in SEL as it impacts children has been reflected in the overwhelming number of submissions *JRIT&L* has received to the initial Call for Papers. In an attempt to honor high-quality research on the topic, Sanford College of Education and the Editorial Board of the *JRIT&L* at National University have decided to follow-up with another special issue. This supplemental edition of the Journal will explore SEL's impact on dynamic development, where the child is viewed as a cohesive system in which all psychological processes cooperate to make us uniquely human.

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## References

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