

Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies

■ **A Tool for Teachers**

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Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers

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Introduction

The educational community is increasingly focused on the development of students' social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies and the link between SEL and improved educational attainment and achievement. SEL is the process through which students develop the skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions, build relationships, solve interpersonal problems, and make effective and ethical decisions. The significance of SEL continues to grow in the context of policy debates concerning school improvement and individual student achievement. As a result, educators must understand how best to implement the most effective strategies to promote students' development of SEL competencies. They must understand, too, how to build and improve their own SEL competencies, because teachers' social and emotional competencies directly affect how they interact with students on both social and instructional levels.

This self-assessment tool is designed to help educators reflect upon (1) their current teaching practices that impact student SEL, and (2) their own SEL competencies to implement those teaching practices. Essentially, the aims of this tool are as follows:

- To enable teachers to reflect and self-assess on SEL as an integral part of high-quality teaching and learning
- To provide a broad measure of the teacher's ability to promote student SEL through instructional practices
- To provide a mechanism for teachers to reflect on their own SEL competencies and to consider what impact their capabilities have on the implementation of practices that support SEL
- To provide teachers with self-reflective feedback that can be used as part of their professional development plans or educator evaluations

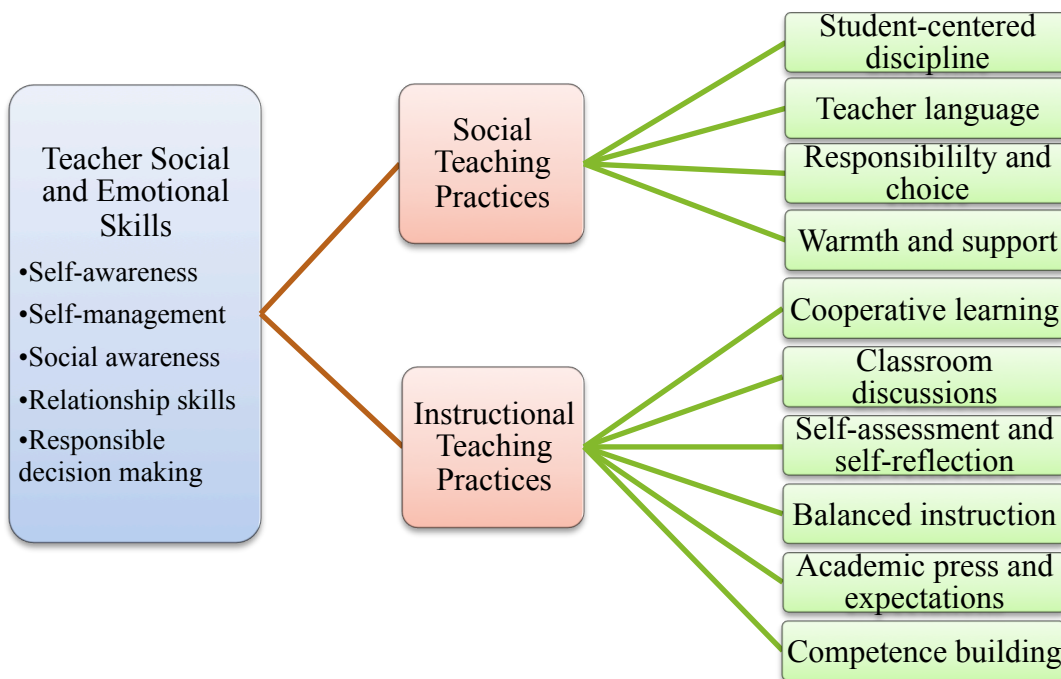
Development of *Self-Assessing Social and Emotional Instruction and Competencies: A Tool for Teachers* began in 2011 with the goal of characterizing and operationalizing teacher social and emotional competencies (SECs). Staff at American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted an extensive literature review of teacher SEC and developed a broad definition of the five teacher social and emotional competencies (see Appendix B for the definitions). In addition, AIR staff interviewed leading experts in the field to obtain their thoughts regarding the definition and operationalization of teacher SEC. In the context of interviews with teachers in the Chicago and Washington, D.C. public schools, AIR staff also used the Critical Incident Technique to identify elements of teacher SEC that help teachers do their work. This work led to the development of the current tool, which has been reviewed by teacher SEC experts and state department of education staff whose focus is on social and emotional learning.

It should be noted that the tool's current version was developed to help teachers and school staff self-reflect on their social and emotional competencies and to identify professional learning experiences. The tool has not been empirically tested within a teacher evaluation system. If you would like to use this tool for evaluative purposes, we highly recommend that you pilot-test it within your state or district.

Overview

In a recent brief produced by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders (GTL Center), titled [*Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional Practices That Support Social and Emotional Learning in Three Teacher Evaluation Frameworks*](#), the author identified 10 teaching practices that promote social, emotional, and academic skills. These 10 practices can further be divided into two types of teaching approaches: those that focus on **social** teaching practices and those that focus on **instructional** teaching practices (see Figure 1). The GTL Center brief describes how all 10 of these practices can facilitate the development of student social, emotional, and academic skills. In addition, the brief demonstrates how these practices align with professional teaching frameworks used in many educator evaluation systems. Definitions and examples of the 10 teaching practices are detailed in Appendix A and should be applied as baselines when using this tool.

Figure 1. Relationship Between Teacher SEL Skills and the SEL Teaching Practices



To implement these practices successfully, teachers must strengthen their own social and emotional skills. In order to model and encourage positive student interactions, teachers themselves need the social and emotional skills required to communicate effectively with students and to handle stressful situations that can occur in classrooms (Brackett et al., 2009). Teachers who are socially and emotionally competent develop supportive relationships with students, create activities that build on the strengths of students, and help students develop the basic social and emotional skills necessary to participate in classrooms (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This tool focuses on five teacher social and emotional competencies, including self-awareness, self-management/emotion regulation, social awareness, relationship/social skills, and responsible decision making (see Appendix B for definitions of the teacher SECs).

How to Use This Tool

This tool is divided into the following three sections, with Section 1 and Section 2 each divided into two parts:

Section 1. Social Interaction Assessment

Part A. Self-assess implementation of teaching practices

Part B. Self-assess teachers' own SEL competencies

Section 2. Instructional Interaction Assessment

Part A. Self-assess implementation of teaching practices

Part B. Self-assess teachers' own SEL competencies

Section 3. Culminating Activities and Action Planning

Sections 1 and 2, Part A—Educators have the opportunity to self-assess on the teaching practices outlined in Figure 1 above. Section 1 focuses on social interactions, and Section 2 focuses on instructional interactions.

Ratings are based on *how often and how well* educators implement each practice on a scale of **1 to 5**, from “I do not implement this practice” to “I implement this practice extremely well.”

1—I do not implement this practice: I am not implementing these practices.

2—I struggle to implement this practice: I sometimes attempt to implement these practices, and when I do, I have a difficult time implementing them.

3—I implement this practice reasonably well: I attempt to implement these practices and do a reasonable job. I think with more practice and/or some support, I could implement these practices well.

4—I generally implement this practice well: I implement these practices well on a regular basis. These practices are not implemented perfectly, but my students benefit when I implement them.

5—I implement this practice extremely well: I consider these practices to be among my regular practices. I use these practices all of the time, and they are highly successful with my students.

Sections 1 and 2, Part B—Educators consider their own SECs and how their SECs influence their ability to implement (1) social teaching practices, and (2) instructional teaching practices. Teachers will rate their SECs on a four-point scale, from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree”.

Section 3—Total scores are computed, and educators can reflect on their self-ratings with guidance from questions and points provided for further consideration.¹

¹ For additional resources and next steps, please see the professional learning module (PLM) on social and emotional learning on the GTL Center’s website (<http://www.gtlcenter.org/>). This PLM is forthcoming.

Section 1: Social Interactions

Part A. Teaching Practices. Think about how often you implement a variety of practices that influence students’ social, emotional, and academic skills. Think about how often you implement teaching practices that focus on positive social interactions. Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate how often and how well you use these practices.

- 1—I do not implement this practice 4—I generally implement this practice well
 2—I struggle to implement this practice 5—I implement this practice extremely well
 3—I implement this practice reasonably well

1. Student-Centered Discipline		
SEL Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I have discussions with my students about how and why classroom procedures are implemented.		
b. I implement consequences that are logical to the rule that is broken.		
c. I am consistent in implementing classroom rules and consequences.		
d. I respond to misbehavior by considering pupil-specific social, affective, cognitive, and/or environmental factors that is associated with occurrence of the behavior.		
e. I hold class discussions with my students so we can solve class problems.		
f. I ask my students to reflect and redirect their behavior when they misbehave.		
g. I teach students strategies to handle the emotions that affect their learning (e.g., stress, frustration).		
h. I model strategies that will help students to monitor and regulate their behavior.		

2. Teacher Language		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I promote positive behaviors by encouraging my students when they display good social skills (e.g., acknowledge positive actions or steps to improve).		
b. I promote positive behaviors by encouraging my students when they display good work habits (e.g., acknowledge positive actions or steps to improve).		
c. I let my students know how their effort leads to positive results with specific affirmation.		

3. Responsibility and Choice		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I let my students help plan how they are going to learn in developmentally appropriate ways.		
b. I ask for student input when making decisions about how the classroom will operate in developmentally appropriate ways.		
c. I give students meaningful choices (with parameters) on what they can work on.		
d. I make sure students make the connection between their choices and potential consequences.		
e. I arrange experiences that allow my students to become responsible (e.g., classroom aids or jobs, peer tutoring, specific roles in group work) in developmentally appropriate ways.		

4. Warmth and Support		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I demonstrate to each student that I appreciate him or her as an individual (e.g., appropriate eye-contact, greeting each child by name).		
b. I use the interests and experiences of my students when teaching.		
c. I display to my students that I care about how and what they learn.		
d. I let my students know that it is okay to get answers wrong or think outside of the box (e.g., modeling, praising attempts with “good thinking”).		
e. I check in with my students about academic and nonacademic concerns they might have.		
f. I follow up with my students when they have a problem or concern.		
g. I create structures in the classroom where my students feel included and appreciated (e.g., morning meetings, small moments, whole-class share outs).		

Part B. Teacher Social and Emotional Competencies. Now think about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement the *social interaction teaching practices*. Please use the scoring guide below to rate yourself on how your SEL skills influence your *social interaction teaching practices* with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you.

1 = Strongly disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.

2 = Disagree. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice.

3 = Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.

4 = Strongly agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

Self-Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am aware of social teaching practices that I need to improve upon and grow professionally.	1	2	3	4
I can effectively implement social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am aware of how my cultural beliefs and background affect my social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4

Self-Management/Emotion Regulation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement social teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger) when implementing social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
Through the effective management of my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), I am better able to implement social teaching practices , use positive approaches to discipline, and develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	1	2	3	4
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate emotions during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Social Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To effectively implement positive social teaching practices , I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	1	2	3	4
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I successfully support positive emotions and respond to negative emotions during social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students when I implement the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Relationship/Social Skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during social teaching practices , and I have experienced success with this.	1	2	3	4
I use the social teaching practices to help form meaningful relationships with my students and cultivate their SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building meaningful relationships.	1	2	3	4
I use the social teaching practices to help cultivate my students' SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building their SEL skills.	1	2	3	4

Responsible Decision Making

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am effective at considering multiple forms of evidence, such as balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I regularly include my students and/or collaborate with colleagues to solve problems that arise in the classroom related to the social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I stay focused and consistent when I implement social teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
When I implement the social teaching practices , I balance students' emotional needs and academic needs.	1	2	3	4

Section 2: Instructional Interactions

Part A. Teaching Practices. Think about how often you implement a variety of practices that influence students’ social, emotional, and academic skills. Think about how often you implement teaching practices that focus on positive instructional interactions. Using a scale of 1 to 5, rate how often and how well you use these practices.

- 1—I do not implement this practice 4—I generally implement this practice well
 2—I struggle to implement this practice 5—I implement this practice extremely well
 3—I implement this practice reasonably well

5. Cooperative Learning/Group Learning		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I encourage my students to work with other students when they have trouble with an assignment.		
b. I create learning experiences in which my students depend on each other.		
c. I create learning experiences in which my students must apply positive social skills to be successful.		
d. I hold individuals and the group accountable for learning during small-group work.		
e. I provide opportunities for my students to share their work and receive feedback from each other.		
f. I provide space to allow my students to collaboratively process how they work together and monitor their progress toward their goal.		
g. I give students feedback on how they interact with and learn from others during cooperative learning experiences.		

6. Classroom Discussions		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I help my students identify how to listen (e.g., tracking the speaker, making mental connections).		
b. I help students learn how to respond to and learn from their peers’ contributions during a discussion.		
c. I help my students learn how to effectively communicate their points of view (e.g., elaborate on their thinking).		
d. I hold in-depth discussions about content with my students.		
e. I ask my students to listen to and think about their peers’ opinions and whether they agree with them.		

7. Self-Assessment and Self-Reflection		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I tell my students the learning goals for each lesson.		
b. I have my students reflect on their personal academic goals (e.g., make connections to the lesson goals).		
c. I provide my students strategies to analyze their work (e.g., using performance rubrics, peer reviews).		
d. I create opportunities for my students to monitor and reflect on their progress toward their learning goals.		
e. I create opportunities for my students to monitor and reflect on their social learning.		
f. I help my students develop strategies to make sure they meet their learning goals.		
g. I provide my students opportunities to reflect on their thinking and learning processes (e.g., using graphic organizers or journals).		
h. I ask my students to think together to provide feedback on the effectiveness of learning activities (e.g., debriefing tool, feedback form, simple survey).		

8. Balanced Instruction		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I use an appropriate balance between providing students opportunities to directly learn new information, as well as actively engage in the material.		
b. I have my students work on some extended projects that require at least one week to complete.		
c. I require my students to extend their thinking when they provide basic answers (e.g., ask multiple follow-up questions).		
d. I use multiple instructional strategies to keep my students engaged in learning.		
e. I make sure that my activities are not just fun, but represent one of the best ways for students to learn the content.		
f. I ask students to work on products (e.g., Web pages, skits, or posters) that are meant to be shared with multiple audiences (e.g., parents, community members).		

9. Academic Press and Expectations		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I give my students more challenging problems when they have mastered easier material.		
b. I ensure that my students feel responsible for accomplishing or failing to accomplish their academic work.		
c. I teach my students the connection between effort and results, and I expect my students to put in full effort.		
d. I give my students work that has more than one right answer and ask them to defend their answers		
e. I support my students socially and emotionally while challenging them with new or higher levels of learning.		

10. Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, and Coaching		
SEL Instructional Practices	Self-Rating	Comments
a. I model and practice new learning with my students before asking them to perform independently.		
b. I demonstrate a concept using a variety of tools (e.g., modeling, demonstrations, mini-lessons, or texts).		
c. I conference with my students on ways to make their work better.		
d. I use multiple strategies with my students until they have figured out how to solve the problem (i.e., graphic organizers, leveled text, checklist, verbal cues).		
e. I give my students frequent specific feedback to let them know how they are doing in my class (academically and socially).		
f. I have my students correct their mistakes (academic or social) based on feedback from me or their peers.		
g. I provide specific feedback that is focused on the academic task at hand.		
h. I use student misconceptions to guide my instruction without singling the student out.		

Part B. Teacher Social and Emotional Competency. Now think about your own social and emotional competencies and how those competencies influence your ability to implement the *instructional interaction teaching practices*. Please use the scoring guide below to rate how your SEL skills influence your *instructional interaction teaching practices* with your students. Consider each statement and score yourself according to where each statement holds true for you.

1 = Strongly disagree. I have a difficult time with this practice. I know I do some of the things mentioned, but I do not necessarily find them relevant to my teaching.

2 = Disagree. I demonstrate some of these skills with my students. I think with more practice and/or more support, I could demonstrate these skills more to improve implementation of this practice.

3 = Agree. I am strong in this area. I know I do a good job modeling these skills for my students. I use these skills most of the time when I implement the instructional practices.

4 = Strongly agree. I am very strong in this area. I am able to use these skills when I am implementing the instructional practices.

Self-Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am aware of instructional teaching practices that I need to improve in order to grow professionally.	1	2	3	4
I can effectively implement instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I am usually aware of how my emotions, culturally grounded beliefs, and background are precursors to my emotional reactions, and I understand how they impact my instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I understand how student responses (positive and negative) affect my emotions and my behaviors during instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am aware of how my cultural beliefs and background affect my instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4

Self-Management/Emotion Regulation

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I continuously refine my personal goals about how I will best implement instructional teaching practices with my students.	1	2	3	4
I effectively use multiple strategies (e.g., breathing techniques and mindfulness) when I have a strong emotional reaction in the classroom (e.g., stress, anger) when implementing instructional practices .	1	2	3	4
Through the effective management of my emotions (e.g., use of stress reduction techniques), I am better able to implement instructional teaching practices and to develop a positive learning environment that is free from bias and prejudice.	1	2	3	4
I model behaviors (e.g., form guidelines, set boundaries) to help students learn to regulate emotions during instructional practices .	1	2	3	4

Social Awareness

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
To effectively implement positive instructional teaching practices , I usually understand the perspectives of my students and can pay attention to their emotional cues during classroom interactions.	1	2	3	4
I try to understand why my students are or are not actively participating, and I am usually successful at providing my students the necessary skills to participate in the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I successfully support positive emotions and respond to negative emotions during instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I address the commonalities and differences (e.g., racial, ethnic, cultural) that exist among students when I implement the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4

Relationship/Social Skills

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I clearly communicate behavioral and academic expectations in a manner that addresses students' individual needs and strengths when implementing instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I am comfortable helping my students resolve interpersonal conflicts that come up during instructional teaching practices , and I have experienced success with this.	1	2	3	4
I use the instructional teaching practices to help form meaningful relationships with my students and cultivate their SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building meaningful relationships.	1	2	3	4
I use the instructional teaching practices to help cultivate my students' SEL skills, and I am usually successful at building their SEL skills.	1	2	3	4

Responsible Decision Making

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am effective at considering multiple forms of evidence, such as balancing the needs and the behaviors of my entire class, while implementing the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I regularly include my students and/or collaborate with colleagues to solve problems that arise in the classroom related to the instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
I stay focused and consistent when I implement instructional teaching practices .	1	2	3	4
When I implement the instructional teaching practices , I balance awareness of students' emotional needs and academic needs.	1	2	3	4

Section 3. Scoring, Reflection, and Action Planning

1. In the box below, indicate the score you received for each of the 10 instructional practices. In order to create a final score for each practice, take the average of the scores under each practice.

Instructional Practice	Your Score/Total Possible Points	Average Score
1. Student-Centered Discipline	_____/35	
2. Teacher Language	_____/15	
3. Responsibility and Choice	_____/25	
4. Warmth and Support	_____/35	
5. Cooperative Learning	_____/35	
6. Classroom Discussions	_____/25	
7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment	_____/40	
8. Balanced Instruction	_____/30	
9. Academic Press and Expectations	_____/25	
10. Competence Building	_____/40	

2. Reflect on your scores.

1. On which SEL practices did you score the highest? Why?	
2. On which SEL practice did you score the lowest? Why?	
3. What evidence do you have to support the self-rating you selected for your highest SEL practice? Your lowest SEL practice?	
4. How do these behaviors and practices look in your classroom?	
5. How do you think your students would rate you?	
6. How does your school culture affect your self-rating?	
7. What professional learning experiences could facilitate improvement in your lowest SEL practices?	
8. What can you do to ensure that you are implementing these practices fully?	

3. In the box below, indicate the score you received for each of the teacher social and emotional competencies. To create a final score, take the average of each competency for each set of teaching practices.

Social and Emotional Competency	Your Score/Total Possible Points	Average Score
1. Self-Awareness	_____/40	
2. Self-Management/Emotion Regulation	_____/32	
3. Social Awareness	_____/32	
4. Relationship Skills	_____/32	
5. Responsible Decision Making	_____/32	

4. Reflect on your scores.

1. On which social and emotional competency did you score the highest?	
2. On which social and emotional competency did you score the lowest?	
3. What evidence do you have to support the self-rating you selected? What skills do you possess that support the self-rating you received?	
4. What professional learning experiences could facilitate improvement in areas in which you scored lowest?	

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Appendix A. Ten Teaching Practices That Promote SEL

Social Teaching Practices

1. Student-Centered Discipline

Student-centered discipline refers to the types of classroom management strategies teachers use in their classrooms. In order to be effective at student-centered discipline, teachers need to use disciplinary strategies that are developmentally appropriate for their students and that motivate students to want to behave in the classroom. Such discipline occurs when students have opportunities to be self-directive and have some say in what happens in the classroom. Teachers should not attempt to overmanage their students, nor should they use punitive measures to get students to behave. Furthermore, students and teachers should develop shared norms and values in the classroom. This strategy allows students to connect the rules to the overarching vision of how the classroom is run and increases student buy-in.

Similarly, teachers should enact proactive classroom management strategies (compared with reactive strategies). This approach is evident when teachers use management strategies consistently, and those strategies are related to the norms and visions of the classroom. If a student happens to break a rule, the consequences should be logical in relation to the rule that was broken. For example, if a student pushes another student in line, that student should have to line up last for the rest of the week rather than lose gym or recess for the week, a consequence that is not related to the incident. Through the development of these consistent and logical rules and consequences, students begin to learn how to regulate their own behavior and problem-solve difficult situations that arise in the classroom. Programs and scholars that discuss student-centered discipline include Caring School Communities; Raising Healthy Children; Responsive Classroom; Christenson and Havy (2004); Hawkins, Smith, and Catalano (2004); Johnson and Johnson (2004); and McCombs (2004).

2. Teacher Language

Teacher language refers to how the teachers talk to students. Teachers should encourage student effort and work, restating what the student did and what that student needs to do in order to improve. For example, teacher language should not be simply praise (e.g., “You did a great job”) but should encourage students (e.g., “I see you worked hard on your math paper. When you really think about your work, and when you explain your thinking, you get more correct answers”). In addition, teacher language should encourage students how to monitor and regulate their own behavior, not just tell students how to behave (e.g., “What strategies have we learned when we come across a problem that we are not sure how to do?”). Programs and scholars that discuss teacher language include Responsive Classroom and Elias (2004).

3. Responsibility and Choice

Responsibility and choice refer to the degree to which teachers allow students to make responsible decisions about their work in their classroom. The teacher creates a classroom environment where democratic norms are put into place and where students provide meaningful input into the development of the norms and procedures of the classroom as well as the academic

content or how the academic content is learned. Democratic norms do not mean that everything the students say gets done, but the teacher provides structures so that the students have a voice in the classroom. Teachers give students controlled and meaningful choices. In other words, teachers should not give students a “free for all” but provide specific choices students can select from during lessons and activities, in which students are held accountable for their decisions.

Other ways to get students to feel responsible in the classroom are peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, or participating in a service-learning or community service program. When students extend their learning to help others, they often feel more responsible in the classroom. Programs and scholars that discuss responsibility and choice include Caring School Communities, Responsive Classroom, Tribes Learning Community, and Hawkins et al. (2004).

4. Warmth and Support (Teacher and Peer)

Warmth and support refers to the academic and social support that students receive from their teacher and from their peers. The teacher creates a classroom where the students know that teachers care about them. Teachers can demonstrate that they care about their students by asking students questions (academic and nonacademic), following up with students when they have a problem or concern, providing the teacher’s own anecdotes or stories, and acting in ways in which students know that taking risks and asking questions are safe in the classroom. In addition, teachers need to create structures in the classroom where students feel included and appreciated by peers and teachers. Teachers can do this through morning meetings, small moments throughout the day or class, or projects in which students get a chance to share what they learn. Programs and scholars that discuss warmth and support include Caring School Communities, Responsive Classrooms, Tribes Learning Community, Christenson and Havsby (2004), Hawkins et al. (2004), and McCombs (2004).

Instructional Teaching Practices

5. Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning refers to a specific instructional task in which teachers have students work together toward a collective goal. Teachers ask students to do more than group work; students are actively working with their peers around content in a meaningful way. To implement cooperative learning effectively, teachers include five basic elements: (1) positive interdependence, (2) individual accountability, (3) promoting one another’s successes, (4) applying interpersonal and social skills, and (5) group processing (the group discusses progress toward achieving a goal). When implementing cooperative learning, teachers should have an element that requires collective accountability as well as individual accountability to ensure that everyone participates in the learning task. In order for this to have an impact on student learning, as well as social and emotional skills, students need to collaboratively process how they work together and monitor their progress toward their goal. Programs and scholars that discuss cooperative learning include Caring School Communities; Raising Healthy Children; Steps to Respect; Tribes Learning Community; Elias et al. (1997); Hawkins et al. (2004); Johnson and Johnson (2004); and Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, and Walberg (2004).

6. Classroom Discussions

Classroom discussions refer to conversations students and teachers have around content. During classroom discussions, teachers ask more open-ended questions and ask students to elaborate on their own thinking and on the thinking of their peers. When classroom discussions are done well, students and teachers are constantly building upon each other's thoughts, and most of the dialogue is student driven. In order to have effective classroom discussions, teachers should develop students' communication skills. More specifically, teachers ensure that students learn how to extend their own thinking and expand on the thinking of their classmates. Students need to be able to listen attentively and pick out the main ideas of what classmates are saying. Teachers also must make sure that students have enough content knowledge in order to do this, in addition to having the skills necessary to hold a substantive discussion. Programs and scholars that discuss classroom discussions include Caring School Communities, Raising Healthy Children, Tribes Learning Community, Elias (2004), and Elias et al. (1997).

7. Self-Reflection and Self-Assessment

Self-reflection and self-assessment are instructional tasks whereby teachers ask students to actively think about their own work. In order for students to self-reflect on their work, teachers should ask them to assess their own work. This does not mean that teachers simply provide the answers and students look to see if they got the answer right or wrong. Students need to learn how to assess more rigorous work against performance standards that have either been provided by the teacher or co-created in the classroom. The process should not stop there, however; students also need to think about how to improve their work on the basis of their self-assessment. In order to assist students with this process, teachers need to develop goals and priorities with students. If students do not know what they are working toward, how to accomplish those goals, or when those goals have been accomplished, students will be less invested in the classroom. Along with goal setting, students need to learn how to monitor the progress toward meeting their goals. In addition, when students self-reflect, they also need to learn when and how to seek help and where to search for resources. Programs and scholars that discuss self-reflection and self-assessment include Caring School Communities, Steps to Respect, Tribes Learning Community, Elias (2004), and Elias et al. (1997).

8. Balanced Instruction

Balanced instruction refers to teachers using an appropriate balance between active instruction and direct instruction, as well as the appropriate balance between individual and collaborative learning. Through balanced instruction, teachers provide students opportunities to directly learn about the material as well as engage with the material. Balance, however, does not mean an equal split between the types of instruction. Most programs and SEL scholars promote active forms of instruction in which students interact with the content in multiple ways, including games, play, projects, and other types. Although active forms of instruction are typically engaging for students, these activities should not just be for fun; teachers should use strategies that represent one of the best ways for students to learn and engage with the content.

An example of an active form of instruction is project-based learning. In project-based learning, students are actively involved in solving a problem, which could be completed collaboratively or

independently. Even during independent projects, students typically have to rely on others to find information. During the project, students should plan, monitor, and reflect on their progress toward completion. Programs and scholars that discuss balanced instruction include Caring School Communities; Christenson and Havy (2004); Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011); Elias (2004); Elias et al. (1997); Hawkins et al. (2004); and Zins et al. (2004).

9. Academic Press and Expectations

Academic press refers to a teacher's implementation of meaningful and challenging work, and academic expectations focus on the teacher's belief that all students can and will succeed. Students should sense that academics are extremely important, that the teacher wants them to succeed, and that they have to exert effort in challenging work in order to succeed. However, this academic rigor should not cause teachers to be too strict with their students. Teachers should ensure that students feel pressure to succeed, as well as feel responsible for accomplishing or failing to accomplish their academic work. In order to be successful with this practice, teachers must know what their students are capable of doing academically and how they will emotionally respond to challenging work. Programs and scholars that discuss academic press and expectations include Caring School Communities, Tribes Learning Community, Cristenson and Havy (2004), McCombs (2004), and Zins et al. (2004).

10. Competence Building—Modeling, Practicing, Feedback, Coaching

Competence building occurs when teachers help develop social and emotional competencies systematically through the typical instructional cycle: goals/objectives of the lesson, introduction to new material/modeling, group and individual practice, and conclusion/reflection. Each part of the instructional cycle helps reinforce particular social and emotional competencies, as long as the teacher integrates them into the lesson. Throughout the lesson, the teacher should model prosocial behavior (i.e., positive relationship skills) to the students. When students are participating in group work, the teacher is encouraging positive social behaviors and coaching students on how to use positive social behavior when they practice their prosocial skills in a group setting. The teacher also provides feedback to students on how they are interacting with their peers and how they are learning content. If problems arise between students in guided practice or if problems arise with content, the teacher guides the students through problem-solving and conflict-resolution strategies. Programs and scholars that discuss competence building include Responsive Classroom, Raising Healthy Children, Steps to Respect, Christenson and Havy (2004), Elias (2004), Elias et al. (1997), McCombs (2004), and Zins et al. (2004).

Appendix B. Teacher Social and Emotional Competencies

1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness refers to the ability to assess one's feelings, interests, values, and strengths accurately, and to maintain a well-grounded sense of self-efficacy (Payton et al., 2008). In the classroom context, teachers are not only required to understand one's own attitudes and opinions, but also are expected to recognize the limitations of self and how different self-aspects influence their teaching. Socially and emotionally competent teachers understand that their behaviors are influenced by multiple personal factors, such as their background experiences, personality, emotions, knowledge base, opinions, and attitudes. They also are aware that their students' behaviors are influenced by equally distinct personal factors and that teachers must bridge differences with their students to build strong interpersonal relations and engage students in learning.

2. Self-Management/Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is often defined as the ability to manage emotional arousal successfully and possessing the skill to change emotions, including the valence, intensity, or time course of the emotions (Gross, 1998). Although the expressions of positive and negative emotion are both regulated, the need for managing emotion is the greatest when negatively valenced emotions occur (Barrett, Gross, Christensen, & Benvenuto, 2001). Teachers, like other adults, do not experience the same emotion under the same social situation and vary in their ability to regulate such emotion. For example, one teacher may be furious and show anger when a child does not do the work, while another teacher may feel sad but does not display it. They also may use different strategies when regulating their emotions. Because teachers are expected to regulate their own emotions and emotional displays as well as the emotions of their students constantly, teachers with higher emotional regulation capacity may be better equipped to handle the emotion-provoking demands of teaching than teachers with a lower capacity for doing so.

Socially and emotionally competent teachers can identify their own positive and negative emotions in interactions with students, parents, and colleagues, and manage their emotions as necessary to promote classroom differences. In particular, socially and emotionally competent teachers recognize that perspectives differ according to age, gender, and social, ethnic, educational, and economic backgrounds. They recognize and appreciate the commonalities and uniqueness that exist among their students and colleagues. They manage students' prosocial behaviors and focus on learning. They model behaviors to help students regulate their own emotions, establishing guidelines and setting boundaries for students to enable them to do this.

3. Social-Awareness

Social awareness refers to the awareness of others, including social perspective taking (see also Zins & Elias, 2006). This construct involves viewing the world from another's perspective (Selman, 1971) and making inferences about other people, including their capacities, attitudes, expectations, feelings, and potential reactions. Social awareness refers to one's ability to take the perspective of and emphasize with others and to recognize and appreciate individual and group similarities and differences. In particular, socially and emotionally competent teachers recognize

that perspectives differ according to age, gender, and social/ethnic/educational/economic backgrounds. They recognize and appreciate the commonalities and uniqueness that exist among their students and colleagues.

4. Relationship/Social Skills

Interpersonal skills are another important dimension of SEL. Positive social interactions flow from strong interpersonal skills. Social skills are a specific class of behaviors that an individual exhibits to complete a social task successfully (Gresham & Elliott, 2008). They are often manifested in prosocial behaviors, cooperation, empathic responses, social engagement, respect for others, as well as the absence of problematic interactions (Cooper & Farran, 1991; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Socially and emotionally competent teachers establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. They are able to prevent, manage, and resolve interpersonal conflict between themselves and students, parents, and colleagues, and deal with conflict among students, through exhibiting prosocial, cooperative behaviors and respecting and being empathic to others.

5. Responsible Decision Making

Decision making is a process in which an individual scans an array of options and tries to decide which option is the best way to produce some desired outcome. Teachers must often make split-second, in-the-moment decisions that govern their interactions with students and reactions to other factors inside and outside of the classroom. Decision making is a multistep process, which in classrooms is often enacted in the moment as teachers consider and process clues, draw information from long-term memory, and make a “decision” that is “enacted” through words and behavior. One influence of teachers’ decision-making process is their ability to “attend to the needs and behaviors of an entire classroom while also trying to remember and implement a lesson plan” (Feldon, 2007, p.123). Feldon’s analysis of several studies of veteran and novice teachers suggests that veteran teachers retain the capacity to filter out extraneous stimuli and focus on pertinent social cues (Swanson, O’Connor, & Cooney, 1990). Socially and emotionally competent teachers use multiple forms of evidence to make decisions about instruction, classroom management, and interactions with students, students’ parents, and colleagues. They objectively consider the well-being, needs, and academic goals of individual students and of their class(es) as a whole, and they balance awareness of students’ emotional and academic needs when making both long-term plans and in-the-moment decisions.

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