



Promoting Social and Emotional Learning in Preschool: Programs and Practices that Work

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1

Plan for the Presentation

- Define social-emotional learning (SEL)
- Describe its developmental significance
- Discuss and illustrate preschool SEL programs and evidence behind them
- Highlight five key features that boost SEL program impact
- Discuss implications for practice

2

First....

A brief trip down memory lane...

3



Kindergarten, Circa 1961

Adjusting to school: Show-and-tell, play-time, nap-time, story-time

Kindergarten, Circa 2018

Kindergarten is the new first grade. A national survey showed that 80% of teachers now expect children to learn to read in kindergarten (Bassok, Lathan, & Rorem, 2016).



5

Accelerated Early Learning Expectations: Implications for Early Childhood Research and Practice

- **The hope:** Greater attention to early learning will promote high-quality programs and practices that will foster child competencies and thereby reduce the substantial and persistent achievement gap associated with poverty
- **The fear:** A narrow focus on achievement outcomes will undermine developmentally appropriate early learning practices and increase the achievement gap by targeting content without sufficient attention to developing learning skills and processes.

6

What's missing?

A similarly focused effort on building the social-emotional skills needed for school success and life well-being.

They are included in federal and state early learning standards, but rarely receive explicit and strategic focus in the classroom.

7

Definitions of Social-Emotional Learning and Their Developmental Significance

8

Core Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies



www.casel.org



What Kindergarten Teachers Especially Value...

- Can follow directions (91%)
- Takes turns and shares (87%)
- Pays attention (77%)
- Interested in learning (76%)
- Is not disruptive in class (60%)
- Is sensitive to others' feelings (58%)

10

How Developmental Scientists Think About These Multifaceted Processes

The ABC's of social-emotional learning

- (A)FFECT
- (B)EHAVIOR
- (C)OGNITION

Ability to understand and manage your feelings, empathy, emotion regulation → (A)ffective



Social skills, friendship skills, & manners ; Ability to inhibit impulses, and focus goal-oriented behavior and sustain positive social interactions with children and adults

→ Behavioral



Regulation of Cognition

Ability to focus attention, persist at a task, plan ahead, understand cause and effect, and flexibly solve problems

→ Cognitive



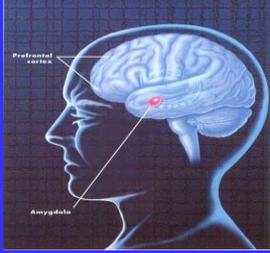
Developmental Course of SEL

■ Age 2-3...



■ Age 6-7?

Rapid Growth in the Prefrontal Cortex (age 3-7)



16

Ages 3-7 Pre-frontal Cortex Development

Self-Regulation –
Social competence and
Learning behaviors

Fundamental to
school readiness

Key Competencies

Forming
Friendships

Engaging in
Learning Tasks

Following Rules

Managing Strong
Feelings

Managing conflicts
Problem-solving

Promoting SEL Is Good for All Children and Especially Important for Children Exposed to Early Adversity

- To reduce rates of behavior problems and other mental health concerns at kindergarten entry (one in five; 20%)
- To foster language development and attention skills (half; 50%)



18

What undermines the development of self-regulatory capacity?



Poverty, stress,
social isolation



Trauma, threat,
insecurity



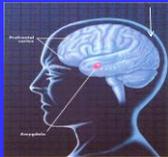
Under conditions of threat, self-protection is prioritized; being vigilant and quick to respond are more valuable than planning and problem-solving.

19

Weak Executive Control & Emotional Distress



Emotional Distress –
“Hijacks” thinking; fuels
self-protective behavior



Early Social-Emotional Skills Promote Resilience in Conditions of Adversity

In a developmental study of children growing up in adversity; social-emotional skills *at kindergarten entry* predicted *at age 25*:

- Higher rates of high school graduation
- Better employment
- Fewer arrests

(controlling for early IQ and achievement and for family risk)

When Valued by Economists:

A one point increase in the emotion regulation of 100 kindergarteners translates to:

- ◆ 4.81 additional high school graduates
- ◆ 2.58 individuals with a job
- ◆ 4.85 who were never arrested



Discuss and Illustrate Preschool SEL Programs and Supporting Evidence:

5 Key Features

1. Promote positive classroom management and high-quality teacher-student interactions
2. Include SEL skill-building for preschool children
3. Use professional development to promote high-fidelity implementation
4. Integrate with academic enrichment
5. Involve parents in effective ways

23

Key Feature # 1 Positive Classroom Management and High-Quality Teacher-Student Interactions

- ◆ Emphasize:
 - ◆ Warm, secure adult-child relationships
 - ◆ Predictable routines and rules
 - ◆ Positive behavioral supports
 - ◆ Corrective feedback (non-punitive consequences)



Note: Program examples included here represent programs with rigorous randomized-trial evaluations

24

Example: Incredible Years Teacher Training Carolyn Webster-Stratton

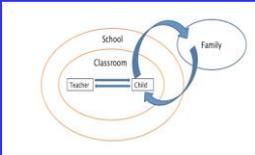


Classroom-Based Model
6 days of training in small groups
Coaching recommended

- 1- Teacher Attention, Encouragement, Praise
- 2- Motivating Children With Incentives
- 3 -Preventing Behavior Problems
- 4- Decreasing Students' Inappropriate Behaviors
- 5 – Building Positive Relations With Students, Problem Solving

25

Example: BEST in CLASS Conroy, Sutherland, & Colleagues



Child-Focused Model
1-day group workshop; extended
personalized coaching

- 1- Establishing Rules
- 2- Preventing Problems with Instructions and Guidance
- 3- Increasing Opportunities to Respond
- 4- Using Behavior Specific Praise
- 5 – Providing Corrective Feedback
- 6 – Providing Instructive Feedback

26

Examples: Focus on Teacher-Student Interaction Processes and Relationships

My Teaching Partner (CASTL)

Focused on improving student-teacher interactions as defined by the CLASS (video examples, web-based personalized coaching)

Banking Time (Pianta & Hamre)

One-on-one play sessions for teachers and individual children with challenging behaviors/mental health needs.

27

Key Features 2 & 3. Skill-building SEL programs combined with professional development for teachers

28

SEL Curriculum-Based Programs

Comprehensive SEL programs use explicit instruction, modeling, and practice activities to build child skills in the ABCs of SEL: (A) emotional understanding and regulation; (B) social skills and self-control; (C) language, attention, and flexible problem-solving

Example: The Preschool PATHS Curriculum Domitrovich, Greenberg, Kusche & Cortes (1999)

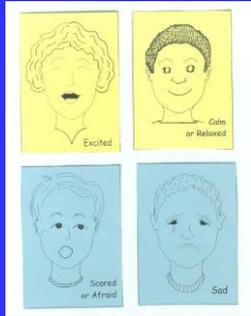


30

PATHS: (A) Focus on Emotion Knowledge

■ Emotion knowledge

- ◆ Capacity to identify and label emotional states
- ◆ Feelings of empathy and compassion for others



Why Teach Emotion Talk? The Pink Coat Story



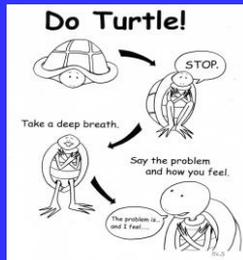
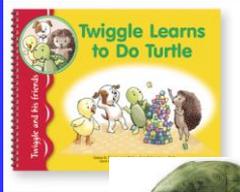
32

PATHS: (B) Focus on Social Skills - Sharing, Caring, Friendships

Compliment List	
From My Teachers:	
From My Friends:	
From Myself:	
Other Family Members:	



PATHS: (C) Focus on Intentional Inhibitory Control and Problem Solving



Other Examples of Preschool SEL Curriculum with Evidence of Positive Impact

- Al's Pals
- Second Step Early Learning Program
- Incredible Years Dinosaur School

35

Knowing the Ideas is Not Enough....



One and done won't work...

Overheard at a Meeting...



Me: What experiences have you had with these programs?



Center Director: We bought one of each and the teachers used the parts they liked best... Did not seem to have much effect...

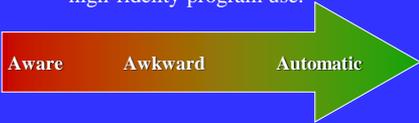
37

Complex Skill Acquisition Requires Learning Progressions and Repeated Practice

Children need developmentally-sequenced lessons with multiple practice opportunities and generalized support throughout the day.



SEL Curriculum work best with PD and coaching for teachers to promote high-fidelity program use.



38

Key Feature # 4: Integrate SEL with academic enrichment and
Key Feature # 5: Involve parents in effective ways

39

Misinformation: Preschool Programs Must Emphasize SEL OR Academic Skills

Excerpt from an advice column for parents



- Play-Based Programs are child-centered: children choose activities based on their interests.
- Academic Programs are didactic and teacher-directed. Classroom time is devoted to learning letters and sounds, shapes and colors...

40

Integrating SEL and Academic Enrichment Programming Across Home and Preschool Settings

- Example: Evidence from the REsearch-based, Developmentally-Informed REDI Program



41

REDI Intervention Components

- Social-Emotional Curriculum: Preschool PATHS
 1. Prosocial friendship skills
 2. Emotional understanding
 3. Self-regulation
 4. Social problem-solving



INTEGRATED WITH

- Language & Literacy Curriculum:
 1. Interactive or dialogic reading
 2. "Sound Games"
 3. Alphabet Center



Language & Literacy Components were Added

- Dialogic reading – narrative skills, vocabulary
Wasik, Bond & Hindman, 2006; Whitehurst, Arnold et al., 1994.
PATHS themes, prompts for discussion & key vocabulary
- Sound games – phonological awareness
Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998
10 minute games with a developmental sequence; listening,
rhyming, alliteration, words and sentences, syllables
- Alphabet Center – letter knowledge
Center activities with a developmental
sequence; spot checks on skill acquisition.



43

REDI Integration and Implementation Supports

- Weekly themes linked PATHS Curriculum topics with books used in interactive reading
- Coaches helped teachers use the program and customize it for their classrooms and students

44

Added a REDI-Parenting Program (REDI-P)



- Expanded Head Start home visits to include REDI evidence-based interventions targeting child social-emotional & language-emergent literacy skills
- Provided support across the transition gap between Head Start and Kindergarten

45

REDI-P Activity Boxes and Home Learning Curriculum:

- 1) Scripted books to support interactive reading and parent-child conversation
- 2) Games to practice letter learning, writing, sound identification, and counting
- 3) PATHS feeling face games and character stories to promote social-emotional learning and self-regulation.

10 home visits in pre-K; 6 booster sessions in K



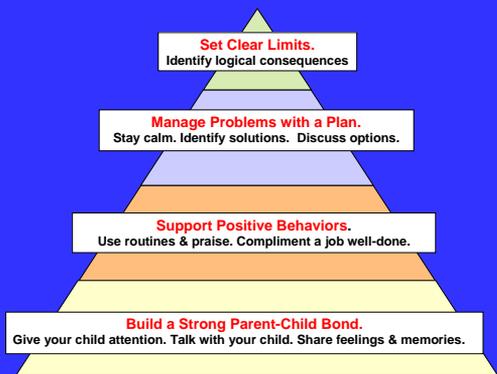
Coaching in REDI Parenting Strategies



- Providing positive support— warm involvement and positive limit-setting
- Emotion coaching - modeling feeling talk, reflecting feelings, supporting self-control
- Conversation - questions, active listening
- Planning and problem-solving dialogue.

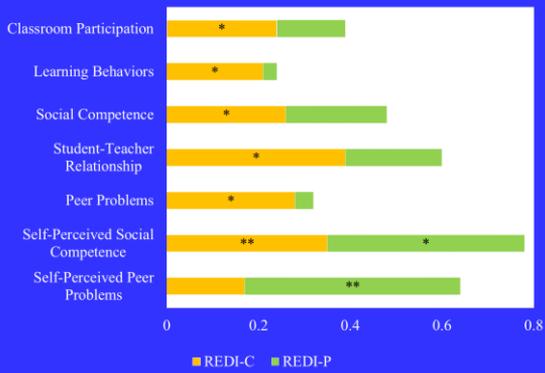
47

REDI Program: Positive Parenting Pyramid

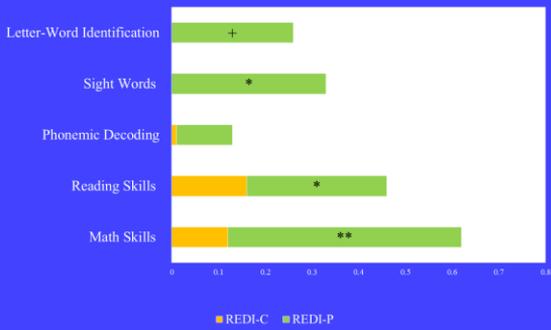


48

REDI Effects on 2nd Grade Social-Emotional Outcomes



REDI Effects on Academic Outcomes



Additional Parent Program Examples

- Parent Corps
- Incredible Years Parent Program
- Let's Play in Tandem

*Importantly, all of these effective programs involve coaching parents in positive teaching strategies extended over time (not just providing information, orientations, visits)

Summary: 5 Keys to Promoting SEL

1. Positive classroom management; high quality teacher-student interactions
2. Use evidence-based approaches to SEL skill-building
3. Foster high-fidelity implementation with coaching
4. Integrate with academic enrichment
5. Involve parents in effective ways

Important Resources

<https://casel.org/prek-resources/>

52

Questions and Comments



53

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54
