Central Connecticut State University
School of Education & Professional Studies
Professional Development Offerings
2016-2017

Focus on Social & Emotional Learning in Classroom Settings

What is Social and Emotional Learning?

The Collaborative Association for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as follows:

*Social and emotional learning (SEL) is 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 (http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/).*

The five core competencies of SEL appear below.

**Social & Emotional Learning Core Competencies**

- **Self-Management**: Managing emotions and behaviors to achieve one’s goals
- **Self-Awareness**: Recognizing one’s emotions and values as well as one’s strengths and challenges
- **Social Awareness**: Showing understanding and empathy for others
- **Relationship Skills**: Forming positive relationships, working in teams, dealing effectively with conflict
- **Responsible Decision-Making**: Making ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior

(Image Source: http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/)
The benefits of teaching a structured social and emotional learning curriculum are numerous. Students participating in SEL programs have been shown to outpace their peers academically on a number of measures. These students have fewer suspensions and better overall student attendance (Dymnicki, 2007); earn higher grade point averages (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004); and outperform non-SEL trained peers on standardized tests (Payton et al., 2008). Research also shows that students participating in SEL programs are less likely to engage in high-risk behaviors, e.g., violence or substance abuse, which interfere with learning (Hawkins et al., 1997).

Teachers, classroom environments, and school climate can also be positively affected by SEL training. At present, most educational professionals are not fully prepared to address the social-emotional learning needs of students (Hargreaves, 1998). Indeed, the social-emotional competence of educators is an often overlooked variable with regard to the creation of effective, supportive learning environments (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Through offering professional development in SEL, The School of Education & Professional Studies seeks to support educators as they address the social-emotional learning needs of students.
Why CCSU? Why Now?

On May 4, 2015, President Jack Miller announced that CCSU was declared a “university of compassion” by the Charter for Compassion. This followed a year-long campaign in which departments and student organizations across campus committed to the idea of weaving compassion into the fabric of university life. The campaign culminated in a unanimous endorsement by the Faculty Senate, which recommended appointment of a Presidential Committee to ensure that compassion will remain a dynamic force both on campus and in outreach to our communities.

As a university of compassion, CCSU has a long history of commitment to social justice and to excellence in the preparation of school/community-based professionals. Recent tragic events in Connecticut and throughout the nation have shown us that our public schools are not immune to violence within their walls. These sobering events underscore the need to infuse social and emotional learning in our schools’ curricula. Our project leaders believe that a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach—working hand in hand with CT educators—is the most effective way to address this need.

And so, connecting our campus with our communities is the first and most natural step as the School of Education & Professional Studies (SEPS) launches this professional development initiative. By offering SEL training to local school districts, SEPS aims to help school administrators, teachers, counselors, and other school-based professionals create “Pro-Social” classrooms—emotionally healthy environments that set the stage for positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Our trainings will contribute to multidisciplinary curriculum development and prepare educators to implement curricula, practices, and evaluative procedures tied to the growing body of research on social and emotional learning.

(Image Source: http://compassion.ccsu.edu/html/facts.html)
Project Plan

The School of Education & Professional Studies’ SEL initiative serves as a vital resource to Connecticut educators, families, community service providers, and policy makers by conducting training, research and advocacy in the use of best practices for fostering social and emotional well-being across the life span. Our initial efforts will focus on capacity building in SEL for CT educators and community service providers. Beginning in Spring 2017, both half-day and full-day trainings will be offered onsite at partnering school districts/schools.

Introductory Half-day Training. This workshop will focus on an introduction to the concept of social and emotional learning with an exploration of the core competencies of SEL as identified by Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The presenter will review the benefits of SEL for teachers, students, and overall school climate; participants will also be provided with an overview of SEL tools and assessment practices. The session will conclude with an interactive discussion on how SEL can best be integrated into your school and community.

Full-Day Training. Full-day sessions will offer the introductory session described above in the morning. During the afternoon session, participants will have the opportunity to explore a particular SEL topic in greater depth. The menu of possible topics appears below. However, please note that topics can also be customized to meet specific school-based needs.

- Mindfulness & Emotional Self-Regulation
- Trauma and Stress in Children
- Overview of Structured SEL Curricula
- Assessing SEL in Your School and Classroom
- Integrating SEL into Schools and Communities
- Small group interventions to build SEL competencies
- Selecting/implementing Universal Screening
- Integrating SEL into School-based Mental Health Teams

Summer Training. In Summer 2017, the SEL initiative will offer a Train-the-Trainer Colloquium for identified members of school teams that will:

- provide in-depth exploration of the underlying premises and theory of SEL;
- provide hands-on experiential activities to illuminate each of the 5 pillars of SEL;
- focus on classroom and school-based implementation of SEL;
- examine several assessment tools to measure student SEL competencies;
- underscore the effectiveness of SEL in promoting a sense of interconnectedness in the learning community through a common set of core values based on SEL.

All Colloquium participants will be given access to on-line training modules

In addition, a Summer Institute for School-Based Mental Health Teams is being offered at CCSU, July 17-19, 2017. For further information about this, please email Peg Donohue, PhD, Assistant Professor, Counselor Education & Family Therapy, peg.donohue@ccsu.edu.
Our Project Evaluation Strategies

Research on the efficacy of SEL strategies is an important component in advancing social and emotional learning in classroom settings. As the data below indicate (Durlak et al., 2011), the evidence for the value of SEL is compelling.


In keeping with a commitment to data-driven practice, we have developed the following assessment plan for our trainings which will be implemented during the 2016-17 project year. Data from these assessments will help us to refine and improve future trainings.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Assessment Procedure</th>
<th>Evaluating Body</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determine needs of schools/school districts with regard to character education and social/emotional learning.</td>
<td>Send a priori needs assessment survey to project participants.</td>
<td>Internal Advisory Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop outcomes/objectives for PD trainings and assessment instrument to measure outcomes for teachers, administrators, and other school professionals. Determine overall satisfaction with program.</td>
<td>Administer and analyze outcomes assessment instrument. Conduct item analysis for program improvement. Report results to Advisory Boards and share findings with CT State Dept. of Education.</td>
<td>Internal and External Advisory Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve SEL competencies for students in participating districts.</td>
<td>Review baseline data on the Protective Factor Index (PFI) and compare with post implementation data.</td>
<td>Internal and External Advisory Board</td>
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We hope you will consider becoming a partner with CCSU’s School of Education & Professional Studies. For further information about our professional development offerings in the 2016-2017 academic year, please contact:

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“The New Teacher Center’s 16th national Symposium on teacher induction offered up brain science and research to support what highly effective educators hold true: lasting learning engages both hearts and minds; learning is fundamentally a social exchange; emotions have the power to freeze or free cognition; students must feel safe in order to learn.”

(http://www.jntp.org/blog/social-and-emotional-learning-symposium-2014)
REFERENCES


