Integrating SEL & Literacy: Co-Teaching a Curriculum of Care

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In 2013, shortly after the Newtown, CT tragedy, we began co-teaching our English Education and School Psychology students to create SEL-infused literacy lessons. We felt that efforts to prevent future tragedies and create caring citizens must be both ***collaborative*** *and* ***proactive****.*

(Ongoing) Questions Guiding Our Work: How might we re-imagine content classrooms as places where all children learn to care for themselves and each other, and, in effect, teach the *whole* child? How do we assess (and thus value) the teaching and learning of care in classrooms? How might pre K-12 and graduate schools re-envision interactions among teachers and support professionals to collaboratively teach care in the classroom? How can school psychology and teacher preparation programs prepare future practitioners to advocate for a holistic curriculum of care in schools?

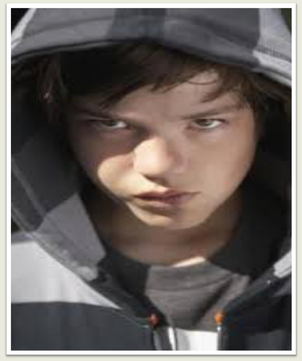
What is Social-Emotional Learning?(SEL)

- SELF AWARENESS
- SELF-MANAGEMENT
- SOCIAL AWARENESS
- RELATIONSHIP SKILLS
- RESPONSIBLE DECISION-MAKING

(http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/)

Why focus on SEL?
Barriers to Learning & Teaching

- Individual mental health challenges
- Student disengagement
- Unsafe school climate
- Individual learning difficulties
- Poverty and homelessness
- Violence



SEL Addresses The Barriers

- Children who have participated in SEL programs:
- Demonstrate improved academic performance on standardized tests up to 11-17 percentile points
- Have better school attendance records
- Demonstrate less disruptive classroom behavior
- Like school more
- Perform better in school
- Accrue fewer suspensions or other discipline issues
- Have better social relationships
- Show increased attachment to school and motivation to learn
- Have less anti-social, violent, and drug-using behaviors
- (Retrieved from: http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning)

NEW FEDERAL INITIATIVES PROVIDE FUNDS TO SUPPORT SEL

- H.R. 497 (January 22, 2015). Supporting Social and Emotional Learning Act
- H.R. 850 (February 10, 2015). Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Act of 2015
- S. 897 (April 13, 2015). Jesse Lewis Empowering Educators Act

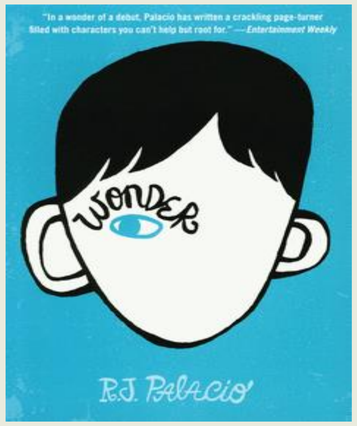
Best Practices in SEL Teaching

- The best learning happens in the context of supportive relationships
- Two sets of educational strategies:
  1. Teaching, modeling, and facilitating social-emotional skills
  2. Establishing safe, caring, and highly engaging learning environments involving children and families in school-wide community building
     - * Co-teaching models supportive relationships
     - * SEL teaches the skills necessary to promote supportive relationships

Outline of Collaboration Class

Students worked in integrated small groups to:

- Choose a Theme/Issue as the focus for the lesson.
  e.g., Understanding disabilities
- Identify SEL and literacy skills associated with this theme.
  e.g., What does it look like to demonstrate understanding of someone who has a disability?
- Select SEL g& CCSS Standards to work with:
  - SEL: *Recognizing the feelings and perspectives of others; recognize individual and group similarities and differences; use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.*
  - English CCSS: *Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text; determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.*
- Brainstorm activities, discussion questions, writing prompts, scenarios, role plays, etc. to help students to meet both sets of objectives.
- Present a "walk-through" of the collaborative lesson.



SAMPLE Social Emotional Learning Standards:

- Predict others' feelings and perspectives in a variety of situations
- Analyze how one's behavior may affect others
- Analyze how personal qualities influence choices and successes
- Analyze how making use of school and community supports and opportunities can contribute to school and life success
- Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others
- Use communication and social skills to interact effectively with others
- Recognize individual and group similarities and differences

SAMPLE English Common Core Standards:

- Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character or provoke a decision;
- Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development;
- Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text;
- Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take;
- Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it;
- Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Integrated Literacy & Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Sample Lesson Plan
Text: *Wonder*, R. J. Palacio
Grade Level: 7
SEL Objectives: Students will be able to predict the feelings and perspectives of others; students will be able to analyze how one's behavior may affect others
Literacy Objectives: Students will be able to analyze how the author develops the points of view of different characters in the novel; students will be able to write narratives from multiple points of view.

Lesson Development/Learning Activities:
(For each component of the lesson plan, identify the role of the school psychologist and English teacher)

Initiation: School psychologist leads a brief discussion about what it means to put yourself in someone else's shoes and discusses the concept of empathy. Together with English teacher, explain plan for the lesson, which is to analyze and rewrite a scene from the text, reflecting more empathetic choices on the part of particular characters.

Modeling: English teacher and school psychologist role play cafeteria scene and then lead discussion of the various perspectives in the scene and how this scene could be rewritten to reflect better, more empathetic choices.

Guided Practice: Both teachers will circulate room as students work in 3's to select and rewrite a scene to demonstrate better empathy on the part of the characters.

Independent Practice: Reflect and write about a conflict you experienced because you didn't put yourself in the other person's shoes. Reflect on how the other person saw the event, and how it might have played out differently had you put yourself in their shoes.

Closure: Both teachers lead discussion of the following: When can you use your perspective-taking skills? Who is in most need of empathy?

Assessment: Students' stories will be read to assess their ability to identify and articulate someone else's point of view and to describe empathetic actions in writing. Class discussion will assess their understanding of empathy and perspective.

Collaboration Outcomes

Challenges

- Merging two people's ideas into one lesson
- Additional time it takes to co-plan and develop a relationship
- Being self-conscious about lack of knowledge of other's discipline
- Striking a balance - "making sure both disciplines were respected"
- "Narrowing down ideas"
- "Making sure there was good flow through the lesson"
- "Picking [complementary] standards"

Benefits

- "The collaboration is really a natural fit and I think it can really help students comment on a deeper level with reading."
- "The benefits for students to receive tools for success that combine academic learning with social/emotional development."
- "We would be looking at the novels as if they had fewer dimensions."
- "We would not have the level of creativity in generating activities using the text."
- "We would not have produced as well structured a lesson, because we would not have been able to tie our purpose in it to broader social ends."
- "Benefits for students are increased in SE skills without the need for pull out, no time taken away from the schedule, and ability to reach all students. Also seeing how books can teach skills that relate to their lives."

Take-Aways

- Collaboration is both necessary and doable
- Value added of having both disciplines, knowledge and perspective to design the lessons
- New ideas and strategies for teaching
- Deeper more meaningful engagement with the literature
- Increased understanding of colleagues' work

Heather's Conceptual Unit Plan: In-Crowds & Outcasts

Curriculum unit designed for English Methods course

"I hope to engage students in reflecting on the concepts of [in-crowds and outcasts] and the impact such social hierarchies have on them and others.

At the same time, I hope to guide them as they develop perspective-taking skills, not only through the characters in their reading, but through their own experiences, with the aim of helping them become thoughtful, kind and open members of their communities." (Heather)

Stacie's SEL-infused English lesson

Lesson objectives: 1) Understanding characters' diverse perspectives during an episode of conflict in Romeo and Juliet. 2) Demonstrating awareness of others' emotions and perspectives.

"Before our collaborative class, I knew the more traditional way to teach SEL lessons was for support staff to push into the classrooms, but that takes time away from classroom instruction and isn't enough SEL for students. Collaborative lessons are a no-brainer, getting twice the information in the time it takes for one lesson." (Stacie, writing about her internship experience)