IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES OF SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING ON DIFFERENT STUDENT GROUPS

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WHY IS SEL RELEVANT?

In the last few years, the United States and the world has seen a global pandemic, a polarized election cycle, a rise in hate related crimes, and the possible start to a world conflict with the invasion of Ukraine. With so much dividing people these days I personally think that the best way to combat all the division and misunderstanding is by teaching the future generations better means of conflict resolution and empathetic understanding. With SEL having a heavy focus on empathy and clear communication I believe that it will give our future citizens and leaders the tools that they will need to collaborate and reach peaceful ends using peaceful means by listening and understanding one another.

The reason that I want to learn more about this topic is because all students come from different home lives and backgrounds, which makes implementing a new type of curriculum difficult. When utilized properly, the SEL curriculum has been shown to improve students' empathy, decision making, and self-efficacy. This not only allows for students to work better together, but also gives them the best opportunity to reach their full potential in all facets of their life, from academics to personal relationships.

DECISION MAKING

The use of evidence based SEL programs, at a universal level with scaffolding supports, has the capability of impacting many students by promoting their positive development and preventing negative development and outcomes

Middle level grades are a time when students commonly experience declines in self-regulation, self-efficacy, and social awareness.

- If not addressed, students can experience a prolonged decrease in academic success, social behavior, and self awareness.

If these declines persist, then individuals may have an increase in negative behaviors and coping mechanisms, like drug and alcohol use.

- Zero/light users' group who partook in SEL curriculum saw a 5% decrease in drug use compared to a 6% increase in drug use for the control group.
- The "heavier users" who partook in the SEL program only saw a 4% increase in drug use, compared to a 14% increase in the control group.

TPEP ALIGNMENT:

This topic aligns with criterion five in TPEP which is fostering and managing a safe and positive learning environment. What this means is that the teacher fosters a safe and inclusive learning environment that considers the physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being of their students.

- SEL curriculum is based in 5 main categories and helps build competency in different ways through teaching:
  - Empathy
  - Perspective Taking
  - Decision Making
  - Conflict Resolution
  - Self Awareness
  - Self Regulation
  - Relationship Building
  - Communication

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TOOLS:

One main tool that would help me with implementing an SEL curriculum is the online training that can be found on OSPI website. This training covers the main aspects of SEL as well as ways to implement a more universal design that accounts for different socioeconomic and sociocultural backgrounds as well as ways to make it accessible for students who are learning English and students with disabilities or required supports. This tool can also be very helpful for giving parents insight into what to expect from a SEL curriculum as well as a little knowledge to help support SEL growth outside of the classroom. OSPI has updated the training to address the negative emotional and social effects of COVID.

https://learn.ospi.k12.wa.us/course/index.php?categoryid=18

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND LOW-INCOME

While students who are referred to special education typically require different types of accommodations and supports, it is also true that these students are also more likely to show poor academic and social-emotional outcomes. Students who are referred to special education services are also less likely to be fully integrated into general education classrooms and are therefore separated from their peer group. SEL curriculum has been shown to decrease student referrals to special education for behavioral issues

- Students who went through INSIGHTS (an SEL program) were only referred to special education 6.85% of the time compared to 10.34% in the control.
- This was even more of a drastic difference when looking at low-income students; 8.87% referred after the SEL program compared to 13.46% in the control group.
- There were also similar results when it came to referring to special education for "attention-control" reasons.
- Low-income students had a 9% percent chance of being referred to special education after going through INSIGHTS compared to 13% chance of referral in the control.
- It has been theorized that this is because some SEL interventions allow for students to avoid imminent risk or allow them to take advantage of opportunities earlier.
- This is because the programs equip students with skills and competencies earlier than they would if no intervention was made.
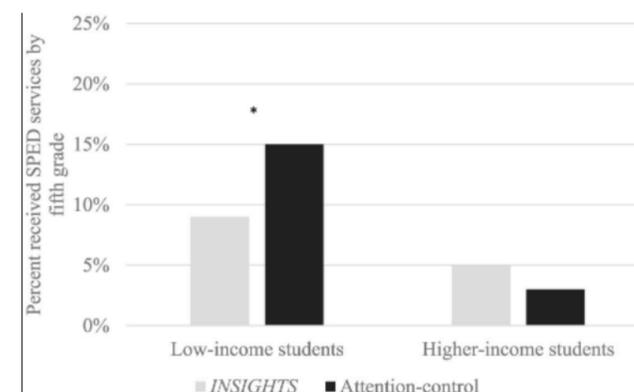

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CLASSROOM ACTION:

When it comes to applying all of this to my classroom there are two very big takeaways from my research. First, I must implement a program that allows me to integrate SEL lessons into weekly class routines. This allows for students to set goals, progress and reflect and further pushes self regulation. Second, I must create variability in the program to allow students to investigate their own competencies, especially those that are applied outside of the classroom. When it comes to the importance of implementing SEL, the data speaks for itself. SEL programs help students build tools and skills that allow for them to better take advantage of opportunities that are presented to them.

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH HOME

While there is an increasing number of evidence based SEL programs being implemented around the country and across the globe, the social competencies are not always universal across sociocultural or socioeconomic groups. Why is this and how can we as teachers address this?

- Working class and poor families tend to have different adult-child interactions than those that are typical in a classroom setting
- Students learn behaviors, values, and attitudes from family, peers, and their community well before they step foot in a school.
- Honor the values, attitudes, and cultural practices that each student brings from their home life.
- Students are apart of many different types of environments, and they learn different types and styles of social-emotional competencies in each environment.

How to address this:

- There are a handful of variables to consider; race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, developmental disabilities, and home/neighborhood.
- Create space for students to investigate their own differences in environments.
- Create a safe and open line of communication with families
- Give space for parents to give input to the curriculum so that emotional needs for all students are met.
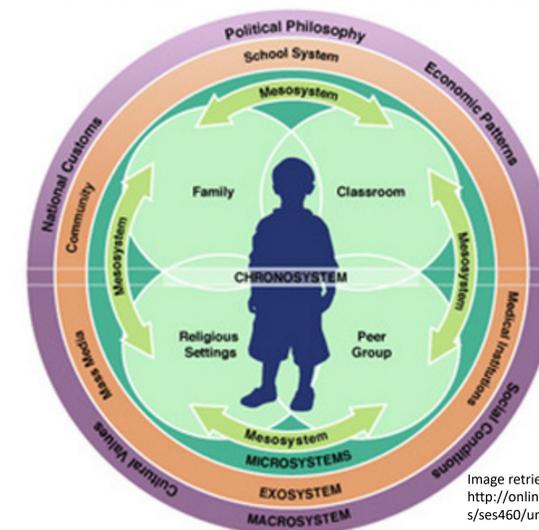

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