

**Core Function: Personalized Learning**

 **Effective Practice** Social/Emotional Competency: Provide instruction, modeling, classroom norms, and caring attention that promotes students' social/emotional competency

**Overview:** Social/emotional competencies include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills; these competencies are important for academic success. Educators can help promote these competencies by explicitly teaching, modeling, and facilitating competencies; establishing classroom norms centered around the competencies; being attentive to students' emotional states and managing their emotions; and using cooperative learning to foster these skills. Professional development in how to address students' social/emotional competency is critical for teachers and any other staff or other adults working with students. Social/emotional competency should be explicitly addressed within curriculum guides, key school documents, and school rituals and routines.

**Evaluate Your Practice:** How are students' social/emotional competencies developed within your school and in individual classrooms? Have members of the school community received training in how to build students' social/emotional competencies? How do school documents, other communications, and routines and rituals reflect or address your students' social/emotional competencies?

*What are social/emotional competencies, and how do they impact student learning?*

Learner-centered or personalized learning refers to “a teacher’s relationships with students and their families and the use of multiple instructional modes to scaffold each student’s learning and enhance the student’s personal competencies” (Twyman & Redding, 2015, p. 3). The student is actively involved with the teacher in co-constructing their individualized learning pathway, and the location, time, and pace of learning may vary from student to student (Redding, 2016). Social/emotional competency, one of four personal competencies within recent personalized learning frameworks, fosters a level of concern and respect for oneself and others, and strengthening skills of self-management and productive decision-making (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015; Educator Competencies, 2015; Redding, 2016). Specifically, social/emotional learning (SEL) helps students use their “sense of self-worth, regard for others, and emotional understanding and management to set positive goals and make responsible decisions” (Carreker & Boulware-Gooden, 2015, p. 2). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013), has developed a framework that identifies five social/emotional competency clusters as critical for young people’s success. The behaviors that characterize these competency clusters are:

- Self-awareness—the ability to identify one’s emotions and how they influence behavior;
- Self-management—the ability to calm oneself down when upset, to set goals and work toward them, and to manage and control emotions;
- Social awareness—the ability to recognize what is appropriate in certain settings and empathize with others;
- Responsible decision making—the ability to make decisions that take into account social standards, consequences, and context; and
- Relationship skills—the ability to communicate well, to listen and respond appropriately, and to negotiate conflict.

Social/emotional competencies can be taught and developed in every type of school and in students of diverse backgrounds and ages, and research suggests that academic achievement, motivation, behavior, and peer relations improve when social/emotional competencies are taught (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Mart, Dusenbury, & Weissberg, 2011). Students who set high academic goals, have self-discipline, self-motivate,

manage stress and organize their approach to work learn more and get better grades (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Research has shown that students who have had training in social/emotional competency are better students, better citizens, and better employees later in life, with reduced rates of negative or risky behaviors and disciplinary issues (CASEL, 2015; Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013).

#### *How can teachers promote social/emotional competencies?*

Students develop personal competencies in part through instruction, but also “through the modeling, encouragement, and caring exhibited by teachers and other people they respect” (Redding, 2014a, p. 7). A teacher’s “relational suasion” refers to their capacity to influence their students’ learning, motivation, and metacognitive and social/emotional competencies through their personal knowledge of and interaction with students and their families (Redding, 2013). Using their relational suasion, teachers can

1. Systematically teach, model, and facilitate the competency behaviors described above, in ways that allow students to apply them as part of their daily repertoires (Weissberg & Cascarino, 2013); evidence-based programs that enhance social/emotional competency should also be adopted (e.g., see CASEL, 2015).
2. Establish classroom norms. Classroom norms are specific expectations that teachers establish for students’ behavior. They are ways of behaving that are established by the teacher and that define the culture of the classroom. Establishing norms in the classroom is part of what brings students together as a single group, developing the interconnections between individuals. This process is one of the most important influences on academic achievement (Schmuck & Schmuck, 1992). Together, teachers and students should establish and define classroom norms (Finley, 2014).
3. Be attentive to students’ emotional states and guide students in managing their emotions. Teachers may need training in trauma-informed approaches that target social/emotional development and problem solving in order to build resilience and hope for the future, particularly for students living in high stress environments (Anderson, Blitz, & Saastamoinen, 2015; Baum, Rotter, Reidler, & Brom, 2009). Teach-

ers also must be well informed about what supports and services are available (e.g., multi-tiered support systems, positive behavioral interventions, and wraparound services) and how best to connect at-risk students to appropriate prevention and intervention services in a timely manner.

4. Use cooperative learning methods that encourage questioning, seeking help from peers, and offering help to peers. Cooperative learning methods involve students working together in small groups to help each other learn academic content (Slavin, 2015). Effectively working in these groups requires some student mastery of relationship skills (e.g., active listening/communicating, negotiating conflict constructively, asking for help, etc.; Weissberg, Durlak, Domitrovich, & Gullotta, 2015). Teachers must first enlist a variety of ideas by enabling learners to ask questions of one another and the teacher (Sharan, 2015); these opportunities build students’ confidence in the value of their opinions and ideas and set the stage for successful cooperative learning (see Sharan, 2015 for further description of cooperative learning methods).

#### *How can students’ social/emotional competency be further enhanced within the school community?*

Schools must implement the building of students’ social/emotional competency on a school-wide basis; research suggests that lack of student interest is correlated with less of a school-wide emphasis on social and emotional learning (Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013). States and districts can prioritize this emphasis through policy and inclusion of social/emotional competencies within learning standards and guidelines. Teachers must also explicitly address social/emotional competency within their curriculum guides and lesson planning. By purposefully planning out ways to help students manage their emotions, build relationships with others, set goals for themselves, and make responsible decisions, these behaviors will become more embedded into the instruction and culture of the school. However, many teachers report little or no preparation for teaching and supporting the development of social/emotional competencies (Bridgeland et al., 2013); therefore, professional development in promoting social/emotional competency within both the classroom and when working with families is imperative. Where appropriate, social/emotional competency training should be extended to all school staff as well co-curricular staff (e.g., after-school and summer programs),

parents, and school volunteers in order to ensure that everyone within the school community strives to build students' competencies (Redding, 2016).

Social/emotional competencies should also be reflected within key school documents and communications. These documents may include the school's mission statement, compact with parents, school improvement plans, staff employment manuals, and student handbook. Documents should clearly describe how social/emotional competency is promoted in the school and should be posted on the school's website and used as a planning guide for supportive school rituals and routines (Redding, 2014b). Technology can further be used to recognize and celebrate social/emotional competency through social media networks and in-school chat groups and can communicate anti-bullying guidelines for both face-to-face and virtual interactions (Redding, 2014b).

<b>Indicators to Support the Effective Practice</b>
The School Community Council ensures that all parents understand social/emotional competency and their role in enhancing their children's growth in (1) understanding and managing emotions, (2) setting and achieving positive goals, (3) feeling and showing empathy for others, (4) establishing and maintaining positive relationships, and (5) making responsible decisions.
The School Community Council ensures that all volunteers understand social/emotional competency and their roles relative to its enhancement in students.
All teachers and teacher teams plan instruction with a curriculum guide that includes objectives for social/emotional competency.
All staff conducting co-curricular programs fulfill the purposes of the programs including appropriate elements of social/emotional competency.
The school selects, implements, and evaluates evidenced-based programs that enhance social/emotional competency.
The school's key documents explain the value of social/emotional competency and how it is enhanced through specific roles and relationships.
The school promotes social/emotional competency in school rituals and routines, such as morning announcements, awards assemblies, hallway and classroom wall displays, and student competitions.

<b>Indicators to Support the Effective Practice</b>
All teachers teach and reinforce positive social skills, self-respect, relationships, and responsibility for the consequences of decisions and actions.
All teachers establish classroom norms for personal responsibility, cooperation, and concern for others.
All teachers are attentive to students' emotional states, guide students in managing their emotions, and arrange for supports and interventions when necessary.
All teachers use cooperative learning methods and encourage questioning, seeking help from others, and offering help to others.

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