

## **Chapter 70: The Importance of Teaching Social Emotional Skills**

Manal Salah Alkathiri,

Missouri State University, 901 S National Avenue Springfield 65897, Missouri United States.

### **1 Introduction and Brief Explanation**

In every society, as far as schooling is concerned, the objective is to make schooling productive. Educators, governments, and parents want kids and students to develop wholly (in all aspects of human development) and become the best possible. Schools are the breeding grounds for knowledgeable and responsible adults. For kids to become knowledgeable, they must be motivated and ready to learn and demonstrate the capability of integrating new information into their lives. To become responsible, kids must be able to understand risks and foresee opportunities and be motivated and reasonable to choose and adopt behaviors that serve their interests as well as those of others. To become caring adults, kids and students must see beyond themselves and appreciate the concerns of others. The process of developing these skills is Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Precisely, SEL refers to the process through which kids as well as adults develop or acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes and use them to manage emotions successfully and effectively. SEL is important because it includes a behavioral framework of developing self-control and self-awareness, interpersonal skills that are fundamental for success at school, work, and life in general.

The ability to address and manage emotions effectively is a significant factor that kids need to develop so that they can succeed in their social and academic circles. By understanding their emotions, kids are able to set and achieve goals, feel, understand, and show empathy to others; establish and maintain positive relationships and because proper decisions. Currently, the implementation of SEL in schools is being considered as a fundamental and a game-changer in children's social development and academic outcome. Research on this subject shows that SEL is important that can foster relationship building and school connectedness. Establishing formidable and close connections with adults are one of the key elements of school success. It is an area that educators have been researching to help improve the quality of education and social development of learners. In the United States, the social-emotional learning model has been making significant inroads in the school environment and it has proven to be effective in K-12 classrooms in the past two decades. Schools that have implemented the model have reported improvement in academic performance, improved discipline standards, and a greater understanding of students on how to handle their emotions. The benefits of SEL have been proven and implementing the model is one way of getting the best of students.

The objective of this paper is to discuss how SEL can be implemented in the classroom setting. In particular, the research will discuss how Conscious Discipline (CD) can be used to apply SEL in the classroom. CD is a tested and proven SEL practice and classroom management program, that is founded in current research on the brain and information on child development. It is designed to achieve the objective of social-emotional learning and

self-regulation and its primary goal is to help parents, guardians, and schools encourage the best in their children and nurture productive adults, society builders of the future.

## 2 Implementation Strategies

One of the strategies that are recommended in integrating SEL into the classroom is Conscious Discipline, also known as a brain state model. CD is a written program that involves behavioral and instructional strategies created by Dr. Becky Bailey in 2011. CD is a tested and proven SEL and classroom management program. It is a comprehensive classroom management program SEL curriculum that is founded in current research on the brain, information on child development, and *best practice* practices (Chavez, 2014). CD is designed to achieve the objective of social-emotional learning and self-regulation, and its primary goal is to help parents, guardians, and schools encourage the best in their children and nurture them to become productive adults, society builders of the future. Research shows that CD strategies enhance social-emotional learning in school settings.

The implementation of the CD model entails teaching students the seven fundamental conscious skills including composure, assertiveness, respect, empathy, encouragement, positive intent, choices, and taking responsibility (Chavez, 2014).

Composure helps a person develop integrity and become the person he or she wants others to become. It is an important skill for anger management. Choices enable the building of willpower, self-esteem, developing impulse control, and achieving goals. Assertiveness helps one be able to stand with principles such as saying “no” and “yes” where necessary, establishing healthy boundaries and standing against bullying (Chavez, 2014). As a result, it leads to the development of respect for self and others. Encouragement leads to prosocial skills such as helpfulness, sharing, kindness, and caring. It cultivates optimism, gratitude, and interdependence. Positive intent introduces the spirit of cooperation, oneness, and problem-solving. This conscious skill cultivates compassion and generosity. Through empathy, the student learns how to regulate emotions. As a result, they learn to value diversity and honesty. The last and most important skills is accepting the consequences of actions. People get to learn from their mistakes and accept responsibilities. The skills are derived from the powers of conscious discipline. These powers include perception, attention, unity, free will, acceptance, love, and intention (Chavez, 2014). By teaching students about the powers and skills together, they learn to stay in control of themselves and coexist harmoniously with others. The school family is expected to show a willingness to empower students to learn and internalize the skills.

Conscious discipline is best suited for the classroom and has the power to affect every human relationship.

## 3 Annotated Bibliographies

Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). The economic value of social and emotional learning. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 6(3), 508-544.

As SEL is getting traction and prominence in schools, Belfield and colleagues decided to evaluate its value and make a recommendation based on their findings. In this article, which was published in the *Journal of Cost-Benefit Analysis*, they examine the benefits of

implementing SEL in school in relation to the cost of doing so. The article describes an experimental study that was done on SEL on a cost-benefit analysis framework to understand whether it is necessary to be implemented in school or it was a waste of time and resources. The researchers determined that SEL is a beneficial program as far as the development of children is concerned and that it can be a resource in their education. They noted that the cost of \$1 million in implementing and managing the program was estimated to have \$11 million worth benefits. The article concludes by noting that there are many promising areas of SEL in school education. The article will help write the final projects because it has captured important information. For example, I will be able to use material the author has captured to defend and argue for SEL in school settings.

Chavez, A. (2014). *The Effects of the Implementation of the Conscious Discipline Program on Social Emotional Learning in an Early Childhood Classroom.*

This article is a fundamental resource for my project. After hailing the benefit of implementing social-emotional learning, Chavez discusses the effects of using Conscious Discipline on applying for social-emotional learning programs in early childhood class. The authors note that a Conscious Discipline (CD) is an essential tool for implementing and enhancing social-emotional learning by establishing a classroom climate that supports the social development of kids. They note that CD is a teaching strategy that can help educators achieve the ideals of SEL. This article is important because it will help me understand how CD can be used to apply SEL in school/classroom.

Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of educational and psychological consultation, 17*(2-3), 191-210.

Zin et al. start by acknowledging the power of SEL in schools' education mission. They note that SEL integrates the efforts necessary to promote academic, emotional, and social learning. Zin and colleagues state that schools are social places and that learning is a social process because students do not learn alone but do so in collaboration and support of teachers and peers. The authors extol the power of social-emotional learning in building and aggravating academic success in school. The article is important because it will help me understand the specific ways that SEL can help boost academic attainment and success for learners.

Linda Dusenbury, L. & Weissberg, P. (2017). *Social-Emotional Learning in Elementary School: Preparation for Success.*

The authors examine the powers of SEL in galvanizing students' academic success. The authors note that the development of emotional skills marks the beginning of a better academic life as well as a bright future. The article discusses five interrelated competencies that are critical to the development of SEL. The author stresses that the SEL education program cumulatively leads to an improvement in the student's academic success. Further, they discuss the elements of promoting social and emotional

development in children. This article will be essential in developing the final project because it had a detailed explanation on SEL including definition, how it can lead to academic success and how to promote in the school environment. Also, the author talks about the steps of implementing the program in school.

#### **4 Data Collection Instrument/method**

For this study, the researcher collected data from Wilder Elementary School, a school that has implemented SEL programs and is doing well. Before Covid-19, the researcher was observing in that school for two months, participating in the Khebrat program Building Leadership for Change through School Immersion. Unfortunately, the researcher did not complete the program as the school closed down because of Covid-19. The researcher used the interview method to collect information from the target study subjects. These interviews took place virtually through emailed responses to questions posted to the subjects. In particular, the researcher interviewed Wilder Elementary School counselor, Mrs. Judith Miner, and McGregor Elementary School grade 4 teachers, Mrs. Lauren Hoskins. The researcher considered the interview as the most reliable data collection method. For the two months, the great rapport between the students and the teachers and principal and the whole staff was remarkable. The interview questions revolved around SEL and its value in the school environment, specifically among the learners. That is, to understand how deep the teacher understands the concept, its importance, and what she thinks is the best way to implement it in school. The interview questions and responses are available in **appendix A**.

#### **5 Procedures**

Having been observing at Springfield public Schools, the researcher found it was easy to decide on the subjects to interview. An email was sent to the school counselor to Mrs. Lauren Hoskins. Before interviewing them, a message was sent requesting them to be part of research program. They were requested to participate as interviewees on SEL related matter and none declined the request. Questions were emailed; they responded and then resent their responses after one day.

The school counselor was interviewed because of her position and service in school. A school counselor is a certified official/ professional who works with students to guide them in addressing their academic, behavioral, social, and emotional needs. I saw the counselor as the best candidate for the interview because she is tasked with the responsibilities of helping students and schools address the social, emotional, and consequently academic needs of the students. While teachers are at the center of SEL, the counselor can tell its success because most of the time they offer counseling services from which they are able to learn and understand the impact of SEL on students. Being tasked to perform the duties of a counselor, means she understands and can tell if SEL has been impactful. In other words, a counselor is in a position to tell whether SEL has been fruitful or not. Besides, her role is more what SEL is set to achieve and because she works with the target group, students, it makes her even more suitable for the interview. Also, the views of the teachers on SEL had to be considered. Because of time and available resources, only one teacher was chosen to represent the others.

#### **6 Data Analysis**

The interview was successful because it yielded fundamental information regarding socialemotional learning and its value at both Wilder Elementary School and McGregor Elementary School. Both the teacher and school counselor were supportive of SEL programs arguing that it is of great value since it had transformed the students' academic and social life. They stated that SEL has made school life better and enjoyable because people know how to communicate and to get along well with colleagues and peers. They mentioned that it had introduced self-awareness, better decision-making skills, self-control, and reduced

indiscipline cases. The interviewees' responses were clear and looked sure of what they were saying. From their responses, it was clear that SEL has indeed transformed Wilder Elementary School and McGregor Elementary School.

## 7 Discussions

The interviewees revealed how important and transformative SEL has been in their schools since it was implemented. They noted that there has been a tremendous change in so many things in the school environment. The school has been successful in its educational mission. For instance, there have been reduced cases of indiscipline. Judith Miner, the school counselor, noted that since the school implemented the SEL program, her work has reduced *significantly* because the majority of students get along well and have no hard issues between them. She added that the number of students coming to her because of stress and/or depression issues had reduced significantly. The majority of students are able to handle stress, to avoid situations and scenarios that would lead to stress development and avoid actions that would affect others.

Mrs. Hoskins noted that the program has been a game-changer not only in students' education but also in discipline-wise. The school has recorded an improvement in prosocial behaviors and improved student attitudes toward school. The teacher noted that the majority of students behave more maturely than they did before, stating that there was commendable improvement in interpersonal skills between them. Also, the teacher stated that the majority of them are very responsible and sensitive to how they make decisions. The greatest achievement of the SEL program in the school has been enabling students to become social and emotionally competent. One thing about emotions is that they can either be a threat to students' success or facilitate the same depending on how they managed them. In other words, she said that emotions can be a hindrance or a facilitator of their academic success in school. There was a general consensus between the interviewees that SEL has promoted academic, social, and emotional learning and development of students. Students have become social and emotionally competent and the same has been manifested in the academic output.

The information I derived from the interview was the same what I had obtained from the articles. Zin et al. (2007) stated that SEL is effective in promoting social and emotional behaviors among students as well as boosting the academic output of the students and school at large. They consider SEL programs as a unique tool that is capable of turning around the school environment from hard to manageable and aligned for success. Further, they noted that SEL is an integral element in students' education and that a great number of schools are now turning into the SEL programs to improve learning and school environment. The responses by the school counselor are well captured by Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) and Belfield et al. (2015). The authors note that SEL enables students to become emotionally and socially competent. It helps improve their ability to handle and manage emotions. It enhances self-awareness, self-management, boosts social awareness, and helps students develop relationships skills. In the long-term, SEL programs help schools produce positive long-term benefits to students, particularly in academic development. In their article, Dusenbury and Weissberg (2017) state that students who receive SEL programs perform conclusively better than those that do not. "They showed an 11 percentile-point gain on measures of academic achievement and similar significant improvements in conduct and discipline, prosocial behavior, and/or emotional distress" (p 38). The interviewees also stated that

SEL programs had led to a massive improvement in students' academic performance.

Based on the interview findings and results from the articles, SEL is a fundamental tool for improving and enhancing educational outcomes. It is a resource that schools should look forward to implementing if they are committed to students' academic success. Teaching should not only be focused on building academic knowledge and base for students but also should focus on helping them to become socially and emotionally competent (Chavez, 2014). Teaching should be an allround activity that targets the complete development of students. Educators, school heads, educational management officers, and curriculum developers need to come together and rethink the best teachings programs. They need to implement teaching programs that address the social and emotional development of students because it has been proven that such programs are effective in molding better students.

### **8Summary**

SEL is a fundamental tool for bettering students' education outcomes. Based on the research and interview, SEL helps develop socially, emotionally, and academically competent students. The interview questions revolved around the importance of Social Emotional Learning in school and how it can help the school achieve its education agenda. In other words, apart from understanding the meaning of SEL, from the perspective of the interviewees, the interview also sought to explain how the program can be implemented in school, and how it looks like in the classroom. The interview revealed that emotional development and support is what students need to succeed academically as well as in their later life as adults. The interviewees argued that SEL programs equip students with skills and knowledge to handle and deal with emotions as well as boosting interpersonal communication skills. Cumulatively, the interview revealed that students who receive SEL instructions do better academically and discipline-wise than those who do not. Because the purpose of school is to nurture students to succeed in all spheres of life by enforcing an-all round development, then educators and school curriculum planners and developers should rethink about implementing SEL in school programs. Apart from the interview findings, the research articles reviewed have also revealed similar results. The articles referred SEL programs as the way toward the agenda of education transformation.

### **Chapter Three: Recommendations**

Because of the said benefits of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), implementing this program in my school will be of great importance. It will help mold *students socially, emotionally, and academically* as they look forward to becoming future citizens. SEL has tangible benefits. As noted from the interviewees, it has the power of equipping students with interpersonal skills above self-awareness, - control, and -management skills. The literature review has revealed similar findings arguing that SEL programs are game changers in academic, social, and emotional development of students. It increases students' academic performance and equips them with prosocial behaviors such as kindness, mindfulness, empathy, love, care, sharing, respect, and integrity. Since the primary goal of schools is to nurture and mold responsible students, the future builders of society, implementing programs that will help achieve that cause would be the wisest thing to do. For these reasons, implementing the SEL program in my school will be of great benefit to students' education and social life.

At a time like now that schooling has been hampered by the novel Coronavirus pandemic, it is important to ensure that students are empowered to cope up with their new learning

environments and help them adjust to the new reality that they have to deal with, hopefully from now moving forward as no one knows whether the pandemic will come to an end any soon. As

educators continue to focus on how to teach the students remotely, they should not shy off from engaging them from the SEL angle because it is what they need to help them manage the coronavirus anxiety they are experiencing. They need to be put in check so that they can control the feelings of uncertainty that most of them are having now. A majority of the students could be wondering whether they will ever get to school and what will happen to their education progression if they stay at home for months or even years. This worry could affect students emotionally and addressing it is vital. SEL is needed to ensure that students remain in shape and focused more than ever. Teachers should try psychological distancing techniques in which they try to tell learners to stop thinking about themselves and instead figure out how they can think about helping others avoid and reduce the impacts of Covid-19. That would enable them to develop empathy skills.

Also, teachers can ask their students, virtually, to rate the social-emotional attributes exercised by their leaders at this trying time of Covid-19. By doing so, they can learn about what the leaders are doing well to help others and what they are doing wrong and possibly what they should improve on. Educators should continue fostering self-awareness, responsible decision making, selfmanagement, and social awareness.

### **School Implementation Plan**

As mentioned above, SEL program will be of great benefit if implemented in my school. It will be a critical tool for molding students socially, academically and emotionally. The implementation of the program will require that the school is prepared for the same. The first step to undertake would be by integrating teaching SE skills into my classes' daily lessons and documenting which strategies have the best results. The following semester, I will teach one or two more dedicated teachers the strategies that worked for me. I may collaborate with other

Khebrat teachers. The following year, we'll examine the effectiveness of the SE skills then collect and analyze the data through a survey of teachers in the program, through test results, and through counselor's observations. After determining that teaching SE skills were helpful and successful in our classes, we will begin training other teachers in my school and city with the assistance of Training Center. Note that in order for the program to be effective, teachers should be trained on what it is, why it is necessary, and what they need to teach students. A conference meeting will be held with all teachers to induct them on the program. Since training them requires a lot of work, I will collaborate with Khebrat colleagues "Dream Team" Kholoud Aljahdali, Zainab Fallata and Fatimah Alahmari. We will carry out training sessions for at least two days. Further, I will need the support the school management to mobilize the teachers to embrace the program and attend the induction workshops. The training will focus on skills and

SE skills strategies. These skills include composure, assertiveness, respect, empathy, encouragement, positive intent, choices, and taking responsibility (Chavez, 2014). The training will focus not on making the teachers understand the meaning of this terms or skills but on how they can help students master and practice them in their daily lives in schools and outside the school environment.

### **Audience/Participants/ key players**

I and my colleagues (Dream Team), will direct the programs. The Program will bring together all stakeholders in student education or rather all stakeholders in the school system. Teachers, counselor (especially lower grade teachers), and parents will be important participants. Parents are needed because they also spend time with students while they are not in school. Also, the school administrator is needed because the success or failure of the program depends on the administrator's support.

### **Timeline and Material**

The project is planned to commence implementation from next year, at the start of the first school term. Because of the current crisis of Covid-19, virtual meeting will be prioritized. Technology that would support virtual learning would be needed. For example, Zoom, skype and other video technologies are necessary. Also, the social media platform and/or website is needed so that teachers can collaborate

effectively and exchange ideas where necessary. If at all schools will have resumed by that time, big classes (rooms) will be needed as containment measure for Covid-19. If room will not be available, training can be done in phases. Posters, power point slides should be availed to teachers. Also, if Covid-19 will still be an issue by the time the implementation phase commences, teacher training can be done virtually through agreed video programs/and or software.

### **Estimated Cost and Funding**

The project cost is relative as it will depend on the population of schools and teacher availability. The school management will help in purchasing SEL study materials and posters for teachers. It will be expected to facilitate training of teachers by equipping them with all material and resources that would be needed. For example, it will bear the cost of facilitating virtual training if it will not be possible to do them physical due to Covid-19.

### **Location and scope**

The projected will be implemented in 38 High School in Mecca. It will be implemented for students in grade one to grade three.

### **Presentation and Visuals**

The training will be done using PowerPoint slides, posters and handouts will also be issued for people to read in detail during the free time. Also, videos from other countries such as the United States where the program has been implemented successfully shall be presented to teachers and the SEL implementation committee so that they can understand how the program is delivered.

### **References**

- [1] Belfield, C., Bowden, A. B., Klapp, A., Levin, H., Shand, R., & Zander, S. (2015). The economic value of social and emotional learning. *Journal of Benefit-Cost Analysis*, 6(3), 508-544.
- [2] Chavez, A. (2014). The Effects of the Implementation of the Conscious Discipline Program on Social Emotional Learning in an Early Childhood Classroom.



- [3] Dusenbury, L. & Weissberg, P. (2017). Social-Emotional Learning in Elementary School: Preparation for Success.
- [4] Elias, J. M. (2016). How to Implement Social and Emotional Learning at your school. Retrieved from <https://www.edutopia.org/blog/implement-sel-at-your-school-elias-leverett-duffellhumphrey-stepney-ferrito>
- [5] Zins, J. E., Bloodworth, M. R., Weissberg, R. P., & Walberg, H. J. (2007). The scientific base linking social and emotional learning to school success. *Journal of educational and psychological consultation*, 17(2-3), 191-210.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix A**

An interview with Judith Miner of Wilder Elementary School Counselor

**What is Social emotional learning?**

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is education people so that they are better able to understand and manage their emotions, make positive decisions and create and maintain positive relationships with others

**• Why is Social emotional learning important?**

All aspects of life are affected by our social emotional learning. How we “see” ourselves and how we feel about our self-worth affects every aspect of our life. We need to learn how to build and maintain relationships with family, friends and coworkers. SEL helps us do that. Life is all about being able to make good decisions for ourselves and families. This is something that can be learned through SEL classes.

**. Why is SEL needed?**

**• What skills are taught in SEL programs?**

Self-awareness, communication, decision making, empathy, coping skills, respect for self and others.

**• What does SEL look like in the classroom?**

I teach classes regularly on these topics. Teachers reinforce and teach these things as well. Helping students process things in their lives is important. Everything for how you treat yourself to how you treat friends and family. How to cope when things do not go your way is important.

**•How can I help my children with SEL from the first day of the school, everyday and during the year?**

Fostering open communication and modeling good SEL yourself. Taking time out of the day to talk about how we communicate, how we make good decisions, how we feel about things is important. Morning meetings are a good time to do mini lessons for SEL.

**.In what way is SEL important in the school system? And during crisis difficult time?!**

SEL helps prepare people to handle difficult times. School systems work better and learning is better able to take place in an environment where people know how to communicate, how to get along and how to look at other people’s side of the story.

**.Does it involve the parents?**

Ideally yes. Sometimes, parents have not learned these skills themselves. When parents have these skills, their children are more likely to have them as well.

**. Does it have any relationship on students academic achievements?**

Studies have shown that SEL increases achievement.

## Appendix B.

Conscious Discipline interview with Grade 4 teacher, Mrs. Hoskins

Hi Manal,

I am doing well! I hope you are too!

Yes, I really like Conscious Discipline! Conscious Discipline is a social-emotional learning and classroom management program. It is backed by a lot of research on the brain, children's emotional and social learning, and the skills adults and children need to address our social-emotional needs.

I went to a seven day training last summer with several other McGregor teachers that was very beneficial. The 2019 – 2020 school year has been the first year we adopted using Conscious Discipline as a school. We have been working with one of the trainers throughout the school year. There is a lot to the program and I am definitely not an expert, but have implemented several pieces into our classroom.

Every morning in our classroom we start with a Brain Start Smart morning meeting.

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/shubert/reception/brain-smart-start/>

Our school family unites together using a song or game ("Unbelievable Brain Break PowerPoint"), we connect through our Wish Well Board, (each student has a picture on the board and we wish students who are absent well. Students also wish family members and friends well) practice our breathing exercises, and make a commitment of a skill we want to work on throughout the day. I attached the PowerPoint presentation I use each morning. Diaa can walk you through the Brain Start Smart- he knows all the parts! ☐

This routine has been very beneficial in building a strong classroom community and connecting students together each morning. I have seen students build empathy for each other as they listen to each other's stories, who they are wishing well, and practice this daily.

Past that, I have worked on using what Conscious Discipline calls, "noticing language" with students.

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/creating-the-habit-of-noticing/>

There are a lot of great video resources for parents and teachers on their website.

<https://consciousdiscipline.com/free-resources/video-gallery/>

Manal,

We were really grateful that Springfield Public Schools adopted this program so we could attend trainings!

1. Can CD used with all ages?

Yes, Conscious Discipline can be used with students in elementary through high school

2. Are there any posters for CD?

There are a few posters that have been provided by CD, but I didn't get them up before the end of the school year. There are four main breathing exercises with CD and I have those printed and posted in the room as a reminder. <https://consciousdiscipline.com/resources/safe-place-breathing-icons/>

- 3- Any CD social media accounts?

<https://www.instagram.com/consciousdiscipline/?hl=en>

- 4- How did you apply CD from a distance?

All throughout distance learning I was able to continue our Brain Start Smarts by uploading my presentation into the Canvas Conferences. The only piece we did not use was the Uniting song/dance. We still practiced the breathing exercises, wished others well, and made commitments for while we were home. Using the noticing language with students can still be used during virtual learning.

I hope this helps!

Thank you,

*Lauren Hoskins*

4<sup>th</sup> Grade

McGregor Elementary