WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

"Nancy Frey, Douglas Fisher, and Dominique Smith believe that we must nurture ourselves first before we can nurture students and the school: if we do not nurture ourselves, we will have compassion fatigue. Each section of this book supports self-care so that we are prepared to develop a plan for students. This mantra remains true in every chapter. *The Social-Emotional Learning Playbook* will certainly engage teachers while discussing the challenging and important work of improving social-emotional learning within the classroom and community."

—**Crystal Wash,** Researcher, CERA, Chicago, IL

"Including the social and emotional component in schools is vital, and the relevance of the book is clear: it is designed to be incorporated into a school or district's SEL initiative. The topic is so very important, especially now, after and continuing the recovery after the pandemic."

—**Lydia Bagley,** Instructional Support Specialist
Cobb County School District, Marietta, GA

"This book is an excellent professional development resource, filled with examples that are culturally relevant and grounded in real-world contexts to help readers understand how SEL can be applied or practiced. I work closely with faculty and students in teacher education and early childhood education programs, and I would recommend this book to them."

—**Jeffrey Liew,** Professor, Texas A&M University, Bryan, TX

THE
SOCIAL-
EMOTIONAL
LEARNING
PLAYBOOK

THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PLAYBOOK

A GUIDE TO STUDENT AND TEACHER WELL-BEING

NANCY FREY
DOUGLAS FISHER
DOMINIQUE SMITH

CORWIN
A SAGE Publishing Company

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

CONTENTS

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Academic learning is impacted by the social and emotional development of young people. In fact, it's impossible to separate social, emotional, and academic learning. Here's an example: a student does not feel a sense of belonging in the classroom. The student's identities are not valued in this place, and the student does not have a lot of coping skills yet. Each of these concerns, individually, will negatively impact the student's academic learning. Taken together, they have a cumulative impact that can prevent learning from occurring.

Importantly, all students need—no, they deserve—opportunities to develop their social, emotional, and academic skills. Social-emotional learning (SEL) is not reserved for students who have already accomplished grade-level learning and need some extra things to do, nor is it an intervention for students who struggle with learning. Social-emotional learning is like any academic subject that students learn in school. Students don't complete the language arts or mathematics standards in elementary school—their learning expands and deepens, year after year. The same is true for social-emotional learning; it should be a given part of the teaching and learning process.

THE CASEL FRAMEWORK

Perhaps the most well-known framework for social-emotional learning in K–12 schools comes from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). This multidisciplinary organization began in 1994 at Yale University as a place to name, organize, and implement SEL in partnerships with local school districts. CASEL has grown to be a nonpartisan, nonprofit leader in assisting schools and districts in evaluating social-emotional learning programs, curating research, and informing legislation.

The five-part framework they have developed focuses on the knowledge, skills, and dispositions young people need to learn, reach their aspirations, and be contributing members of their classroom, school, and local communities. Importantly, this doesn't happen in a vacuum. SEL is not something that we "do" to students. You'll note that the CASEL framework contextualizes SEL as interactions at the classroom and school level, as well as with families and caregivers and communities (see Figure 0.1).

FIGURE 0.1 CASEL FRAMEWORK

The CASEL framework wheel showing Social & Emotional Learning at the center, surrounded by the five core competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Responsible Decision-Making, Relationship Skills, and Social Awareness. The outer rings read: SEL Instruction & Classroom Climate; Schoolwide Culture, Practices & Policies; Authentic Partnerships; Aligned Learning Opportunities. The surrounding contexts are labeled CLASSROOMS, SCHOOLS, FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS, and COMMUNITIES.

So far, so good, right? SEL is a set of skills that operate in a variety of venues. But don't overlook the bottom of the figure. In order to operationalize this, adults must be actively engaged in the effort, through the work they do, to

- Teach skills and promote a classroom climate that fosters dispositions
- Work together at the school level to create a schoolwide culture that manifests the ways these skills and dispositions are enacted through policies, procedures, and interactions
- Partner with families in consequential ways
- Coordinate with communities to create alliances and opportunities for children and adults to thrive

In their 10-year report on intensive SEL efforts across the nation, CASEL found that adult SEL is a key factor in its sustainability (CASEL, 2021). Their reason, they explained, is that when SEL is "interwoven into all adult interactions, it becomes part of the larger culture of the district rather than an initiative relying on a single leader" (p. 26). They asked their district partners to reflect on the previous decade of work they had done, specifically inquiring about what they would have done differently. In retrospect, their district partners noted, "they would have prioritized adult SEL sooner."

The research shows that when teachers tend to their own SEL, it decreases stress levels and increases job satisfaction, which helps them foster warm relationships and better outcomes for students. Adults' personal experience of SEL becomes a powerful catalyst, promoting student and staff well-being, and deepening SEL as an integral part of all district work. (p. 26)

Consistent with CASEL, we view social-emotional learning as a contextualized system of habits, dispositions, knowledge, skills, procedures, and policies that inform the way we work and learn together. Throughout the modules that follow, we will call out specific elements of the CASEL framework to make further connections to the work you do.

TRAUMA AND SEL

Of course, some students have had different experiences that have placed them at increased risk. For example, some students have more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) than others. These experiences, and the trauma that goes along with them, impact students in profound ways; social-emotional learning, as well as healing and support systems, goes a long way in helping students recover. The Centers for Disease Control developed a conceptual framework as part of the study on adverse childhood experiences represented as a pyramid (see Figure 0.2). They position adverse childhood experiences in the context of their impact on health and well-being.

> *SEL is like any academic subject that students learn in school. Student learning expands and deepens, year after year.*

In terms of the scope of this problem, the CDC study suggests that 61 percent of adults have experienced at least one type of ACE and that one in six people surveyed experienced four or more ACEs. Just under half of the children in the United States have experienced at least one adversity and 10 percent have experienced three or more ACEs (Sacks et al., 2014). Nationally, 61 percent of Black children and 51 percent of Hispanic children have experienced at least one adversity, compared with 40 percent of white children and only 23 percent of Asian children (Murphey & Sacks, 2019). Exposure to ACEs without adequate support leads to prolonged activation of the body's stress response systems. This sustained activation of stress response systems resulting from ACEs has been shown to cause long-term changes in cortisol reactivity and immune function, and to affect the development of brain structures essential for learning and memory (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014). What, then, are the adverse childhood experiences? The major categories are abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction (see Figure 0.3).

Under the category of abuse, some students suffer physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse. Of course, these are reportable to the authorities and the system attempts to remove the individual from these situations. But the work is not done there. The impact of abuse lasts, and our collective efforts to help students address the trauma that is associated with abuse are critical to their development. The second category is neglect, which is also reportable but is less likely to receive immediate action from social service agencies unless it

is fairly significant and obvious. Like abuse, neglect has lasting effects on the student and our social and emotional well-being efforts can help the student adjust.

FIGURE 0.2   ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs) PYRAMID

Death

Early
Death

Disease,
Disability, and
Social Problems

Adoption of
Health Risk Behavior

Social, Emotional, and
Cognitive Impairment

Disrupted Neurodevelopment

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Social Conditions/Local Context

Generational Embodiment/Historical Trauma

Conception

Mechanism by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences
Influence Health and Well-Being Throughout the Lifespan

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.a.).

FIGURE 0.3   THREE TYPES OF ACEs

ABUSE	NEGLECT	HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION
Physical	Physical	Mental illness
Emotional	Emotional	Incarcerated relative
Sexual		Mother treated violently
		Substance abuse
		Divorce

SOURCE: Copyright 2013. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Used with permission from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The third category of household dysfunction is even less likely to result in attempts to remove the individual from the situation. For example, when a student lives with someone with a mental illness, there is little that social services can do unless the person is harming the child. The same is true for having an incarcerated relative or living through a divorce. Substance abuse concerns are similar; unless the substance abuse is significant or causing neglect, the child is likely to remain in the home living under those conditions. We have lost count of the number of students who report domestic violence in their home but continue to live in that situation because the adult being abused is afraid of reporting to the police, unsure where they would live if action was taken or fearful of retribution if no action was taken. Again, the student is experiencing these adverse experiences that shape their thinking, and without strong social and emotional support and development, these experiences can have lasting and damaging impacts.

If fact, the impact of these adverse childhood experiences is widespread, including decreased educational attainment (e.g., Hardcastle et al., 2018), increased homelessness as an adult (e.g., Herman et al., 1997), increased cases of lung cancer (e.g., Brown et al., 2010), increased prevalence of adult mental illness (e.g., Merrick et al., 2017), and compromised physical health (e.g., Vig et al., 2020). The list could go on, as the impact of ACEs is profound. Ellis and Dietz (2017) suggest that adverse childhood experiences are combined with adverse community environments, creating a pair of ACEs that have profoundly negative impacts on students (see Figure 0.4).

FIGURE 0.4   THE PAIR OF ACEs

The Pair of ACEs
Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression

Physical and Emotional Neglect

Emotional and Sexual Abuse

Divorce

Substance Abuse

Mental Illness

Incarceration

Domestic Violence   Homelessness

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty   Violence
Discrimination   Poor Housing
Community   Lack of Opportunity, Economic   Quality and
Disruption   Mobility, and Social Capital   Affordability

SOURCE: Ellis and Dietz (2017).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (n.d.b.) noted that there are community actions that can prevent ACEs from happening or re-occurring. The CDC suggests that communities should

1. Strengthen economic supports to families

2. Promote social norms that protect against violence and adversity

3. Ensure a strong start for children

4. Teach skills

5. Connect youth to caring adults and activities

6. Intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms

Of course, as individual educators, we cannot address each of the six recommendations provided by the CDC, but we can help. We can provide a strong start for children, teach them social and emotional skills, connect with our students, and intervene when a student is experiencing abuse or neglect. Specific to schools, Murphey and Sacks (2019) suggest that educators

- Strengthen interpersonal relationships and social and emotional skills

- Support students' physical and mental health needs

- Reduce practices that may cause traumatic stress or retraumatize students

These are the realities of the classroom today, and these realities can cause compassion fatigue. Most of the time, teachers experience compassion satisfaction, which is the pleasure we derive from being able to do our work well (Stamm, 2010). When we feel effective, especially when we see evidence of our students' learning, our compassion satisfaction increases, and we enjoy our work.

> *Compassion fatigue is a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with trauma-related work.*

The other side of this coin is compassion fatigue, a combination of physical, emotional, and spiritual depletion associated with the trauma-related work we do where others are in significant emotional pain and/or physical distress. It's known as the high cost of caring. As Figley (2002) notes, "Compassion fatigue is a state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it can create a secondary traumatic stress for the helper" (p. 1435). As Elliott et al. (2018) write,

> Symptoms can develop over a period of years, or after as little as six weeks on the job. Lowered tolerance for frustration, an aversion to working with certain students, and decreased job satisfaction are just a few of the effects that represent a significant risk to job performance as well as to teachers' own personal, emotional, and physical well-being. (p. 29)

The signs of compassion fatigue include

- Isolation

- Emotional outbursts

- Sadness, apathy

- The impulse to rescue anyone in need

- Persistent physical ailments

- Substance abuse

- Hypervigilance or hyperarousal

- Recurring nightmares or flashbacks

- Excessive complaints about colleagues, leadership, and/or those being helped

The effects of compassion fatigue on mental health are also significant and marked by mood disorders, heightened anxiety, relationship problems, difficulty in concentration, and disconnecting from others. It is likely that the overload, the mounting stressors, the lack of attention to how teachers and school leaders are coping with teaching, are triggering more educators to think about leaving the profession. This is the time to recognize and devote the time and resources needed to attend to these issues. We hope that the design of this playbook contributes to that effort.

WHY ISN'T THIS BOOK JUST ABOUT STUDENT SEL?

Consistent with the CASEL framework, you will notice that in each module we start with the self. That means you. For each of the tenets of social-emotional learning we profile in this playbook, we offer evidence-based advice for you and your social and emotional development. Remember, social and emotional learning is a lifelong endeavor, to paraphrase authors Romero et al. (2018) who note in their book about trauma and resilience that "knowing oneself precedes teaching students" (p. 36). You likely have more skills in this area than the students in your classroom or school, but our learning is never done.

We carry trauma with us. As Van der Kolk (2015) noted, "The body keeps score." By that, he meant that traumatic experiences inevitably leave their traces on our minds, emotions, and even on our physical health. We all have those traces, and some of us have yet to address the impact. That's why social-emotional learning needs to continue with adults and should not end upon graduation from high school. In addition, the global pandemic and the increasing understanding of the impact of racism may have challenged some of your social and emotional skills. So, we start with the self.

> *Social and emotional learning is a lifelong endeavor; our learning is never done.*

Each module then moves to our students. For each of the tenets of social-emotional learning, we include ideas for teaching students the skill, whether that be focusing on strengths, building resilience, or regulating emotions. In this section of each module, we provide tools that you can use in your classroom and school to develop this aspect with and for students. In doing so, you will increase your impact on students, both academically and socially.

You will notice that we often provide an effect size. These come from Hattie's Visible Learning® (www.visiblelearningmetax.com), which is a collection of meta-analyses regarding influences on learning. A meta-analysis is a collection

of studies that allows for the identification of an overall effect size, or the overall impact of the specific influence. Hattie notes that the average effect size for more than 300 influences on learning is 0.40. Thus, when we report an effect size greater than 0.40, it's an above-average influence on learning. The focus of the Visible Learning database is impact on academic learning, and you will see that many of the topics we address in this book have a direct impact on academic learning. Of course, it's also worthy to note that learning is not limited to academics. As Durlak et al. (2010) noted in their meta-analysis of social-emotional learning, the effect size on social and emotional skills was 0.62. In other words, when teachers teach SEL, students learn. The Durlak study also noted that integrating SEL into the classroom had a moderate impact on academic learning, with an effect size of 0.34. In other words, focusing on SEL is beneficial for students' well-being and does not harm their academic learning, but rather contributes to it.

Finally, each module moves from the self to the students to the school. There are implications for larger groups of people in each of the tenets we discuss. You may not have the authority or ability to implement all the recommendations in the school section of each module. But you can start with a coalition of the willing—colleagues who are interested in their own as well as their students' and colleagues' well-being and social-emotional learning. Perhaps, with your advocacy and support, schoolwide change and implementation can be accomplished.

You'll note a few features in each of the modules. First, you'll see a word cloud based on the contents of that module. Take a look at the terminology, as it is vocabulary we hope you will develop. Having words for concepts is part of the process of learning. and the words allow you to share your thinking and understanding with others. Next, we'll provide some background knowledge on each topic before turning to a vocabulary self-awareness task. This was developed by Goodman (2001) and is useful in monitoring the understanding of specific terms.

> *Only 7 percent of educators surveyed felt prepared to address the social and emotional needs of students.*

From there, we will provide information at the level of self, then students, and then school. In each of these sections, you will find a feature called "Case in Point" that will allow you to analyze a situation and make some decisions. You will note that there are many right ways to think about these cases.

We also include multiple opportunities in each module for you to work alongside the text. This playbook is meant to be interactive. It's meant to be yours. So write in it. Use it to the fullest so that you, your students, and your entire school community benefit.

As noted in a *Forbes* article (Sanders, 2020), only 7 percent of educators surveyed felt prepared to address the social and emotional needs of students. They argue that "SEL can help students better understand and identify their emotions; it can help them develop empathy, increase self-control and manage stress. It also helps them build better relationships and interpersonal skills that will serve them in school and beyond, helping them succeed as adults." We hope that this playbook helps you address the social and emotional needs of students—and, equally important, that it provides you with tools to engage with your colleagues and to continue your social-emotional learning journey.