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Promoting Students’ Social-Emotional and Character Development and Preventing Bullying

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Educational policy and the responsibility of the school for promoting students’ social-emotional, character, and moral development and preventing bullying: Introduction to the special issue

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The reader will emerge from this Special Issue with an understanding of character education in many of its forms worldwide, why a focus on character education, social-emotional learning, and their variants are essential in any future vision of education in democratic societies, and the reasons why progress in implementation and integration into educational policy has been slow and inconsistent. Every article explicitly addresses the policy implications of the ideas and practices they espouse. Certainly, the articles presented here are not exhaustive of the extensive work being done internationally on the topic. Much is being captured in web sites before seeing the light of day in print: www.CASEL.org, www.character.org, www.6Seconds.org, www.edutopia.org are among the most prominent resources with international reach. And some countries’ extensive work is best gleaned from their education ministry web sites, rather than from publications. This is certainly true in Israel, Australia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, though a research team led by Prof. Neil Humphreys at the University of Manchester has written extensively on the UK’s SEAL (Social, Emotional and Academic Learning) approach. In the United States, where education is highly decentralized, individual states’ Education Departments are valuable sources of information, with Massachusetts, New York, Illinois, Ohio, Washington State, and New Jersey being among the most active. In some cases, individual school districts’ web sites are more advanced than those of their respective states. Anchorage, Alaska may be the best example of this. And in some cases, the terminology will vary: character education, social-emotional learning, school climate, positive youth development, and bullying prevention are among the most common themes.

The lead article by Berkowitz and Bustamante make a case for the preeminent importance of educational policy to reflect what we know about child development. They also show in a compelling...
way how character education is fundamental for effective societal functioning and exercising the responsibilities of citizenship.

Slade and Griffith and Corrigan, Higgins-D’Allesandro, and Brown present alternative perspectives on character education, the Whole Child initiative, and Prosocial Education. A Whole Child focus really is a focus on the school as a socialization entity. Having asked the question, what kinds of schools optimally foster students’ social-emotional, character, and intellectual development, Slade and Griffith provide an answer (schools that are healthy, engaged, safe, engaged, supportive, and challenging) and elucidate the process by which such schools are being created in sustainable ways. Prosocial Education refers to a very wide set of approaches directed toward facilitating student development as productive, caring, civically-engaged citizens, creating effective classroom and school learning environments, assessing and guide the health and productivity of school systems; and contributing to the well-being and success of their students. The authors make a strong case that educational failure is strongly linked to failures of prosocial education.

Articles by Cha and by Cubero and Perez talk about the gap between policy and implementation, and link these to the lack of policy oversight, accountability, and also relevant professional training and support. Circumstances in Korea (erosion of teacher authority, student misbehavior) and its regional neighbors are leading inexorably to the need for clear articulation, support for, and implementation of systematic approaches to character education. In Spain, as in other European nations, there is a look beyond the narrow academic scores in the PISA tests, to acknowledge with growing urgency the connection of academic success to elements of student character and school culture and climate as assessed by the PISA. Looking at educational policies in many of these countries, one would be misled regarding the actual state of their implementation. This is poised to change, however, as there is both philosophical and pragmatic realization that the future of their respective societies depends on cooperation, collaboration, co-creation, and a number of qualities connected with fostering social-emotional and character development and the conditions in school that allow it to thrive.

Cooper and Cefai and Adams remind those concerned with policy and the well-being of children that students with special educational needs are often left out of wider educational policy reforms. Cooper and Cefai show unequivocally that the educational issues of youth with social, emotional and behavior disorders constitute a public health/mental health challenge of considerable proportions and the schools are a locus of solution that has not been the focus of collaborative inquiry and action from the bio-psycho-social perspective. Adams provides inspiration that even in a large and complex urban area like New York City, schools can become focused on improving the social-emotional and character attributes of even the most troubled students, at whatever level those students are encountered.

This Special Issue also includes an empirical study of bulling in Korea. What role do individual studies play in policy making? That is a question being raised explicitly for policy makers by having this article in the Journal. When policy has to be made, the circumstances are not always accompanied by the relevant studies. In fact, sometimes the accumulated evidence is based on studies that tend to be carried out under conditions different from those in which the policy will be applied. Policy makers must look at the context of any specific study and its relationship to accumulated evidence. Sometimes a study serves to provide a tipping point. With regard to how bullying is approached in Korea, Park’s analysis of the issues, and the findings of the pervasively harmful effects of bullying in schools, may spark overdue concerted and sustained reaction. But ultimately, policy must be guided by theory, research, context, and
feasibility. Clear goals with benchmarks must be accompanied by support for high quality implementation support and evaluation, as well as outcome evaluation. That said, educational policy directed toward changing the culture and climate of schools around bullying and related behaviors, that is, the character of the school, takes a long time to come to fruition. Hence, policies need to be create with and supported by short and long-term logic models and corresponding benchmarks.

I invited Jack Benninga, the editor of the leading journal on character education, The Journal of Research on Character Education, recently recognized for a lifetime achievement award in the character education field, to comment on what he felt was the most important direction to address in character education policy. His commentary adds an important dimension implicit in many discussions of character education: importance of character for democratic societies and their institutions to thrive. His ideas evoke memories of John Dewey’s powerful thinking on this topic:

I believe that education is a process of living and not a preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897, p. 78).

Democracy has to be born anew in every generation, and education is its midwife (Dewey, 1915, p. 15).

Dewey believed that the life lived in school, above the subject matter taught in school, strongly influences character and that the nature and quality of democracy depended greatly on the nature of that character. In highlighting this crucial relationship, Benninga locates character education at the heart of both educational and national political policy. Students who are prepared for test-taking academically are not necessarily prepared for the test of life. The challenges involved in applying knowledge are intellectual and ethical. The acts of putting knowledge into practice are inherently social. Repeatedly, we attempt to increase or improve content knowledge at the expense of social-emotional, ethical, and character development. This is a dangerous strategy in societies that purport to value freedom and choice.

In a closing contribution, Elias provides a look forward, summarizing the most prominent and urgent implications of character education and social-emotional learning for educational policy. Echoing Ecclestone’s (2012) concerns that character education might lead to an individualistic and psychologized direction for educational policy, Elias point out that the character of schools is not disconnected from the characteristics of their surrounding communities and are in fact contributors to the potential of those communities and the larger societies within which they are embedded. However, schools also cannot be determined by their surrounding characteristics because, as Dewey has said, schools can create powerful contexts for learning lessons for life and sometimes must transcend their surroundings and inspire their students to do the same. Educational policies should be directed not only toward promoting students’ social-emotional and character development, but also toward creating schools of character and excellence.

References


Abstract

A priority, perhaps the priority, for all schools should be the intentional and effective promotion of student flourishing, or as noted author and educator Hal Urban (2008) calls it, “bringing out the best in students.” For this priority to be authentic, ideally it should be supported and promoted by conceptually and empirically justifiable educational policy. For that to happen, educators and policy-makers need to access and understand theory and research about student development and learning. This paper will summarize that argument and summarize the relevant theory and research that should undergird educational policy, relying upon and presenting a five-element model of effective character education. It will then provide an example of how research has been used to guide policy in Colombia and demonstrate the ways this national educational policy initiative incorporates some of the key elements of research-based practice.

Keywords: character, policy, development, flourishing, PRIME
Introduction

Education in general has three major goals: academic achievement and learning, character development, and civic socialization (Berkowitz, 2012a). In most countries in recent times, the first has taken precedence over the latter two. For the purposes of this paper, character and citizenship will be combined (see Althof & Berkowitz, 2006 for an explication of these overlapping domains). In part, this is because the focus of this paper is democratic societies where the moral character of citizens is central to societal and political thriving. The authors tend to call this field simply “character education” but recognize that others use alternative terms. Whatever term one chooses for this field (e.g., social-emotional learning, character education, citizenship education, moral education, etc.), it is fundamentally about fostering the optimal positive development of students. This includes moral and performance dimensions of their character (Lickona & Davidson, 2005), social-emotional competencies, and civic knowledge, skills and dispositions. Character education has been defined by character.org (www.character.org), a leading professional advocacy group, as methods to increase student understanding, caring about, and acting upon core ethical values.

All societies socialize each subsequent generation of citizens. Ultimately, all societies should desire citizens who are able and willing to participate in the political process toward societal improvement, are able and willing to understand and manage their own emotions and relationships and to understand others, and are motivated and equipped to follow a moral compass. This is especially true in democratic societies (Noddings, 2013) where citizens are required and needed to actively participate in governing (self-governing) the society in ways not narrowly defined by their own self-interest.

An example of national policy for promoting student character that will be expanded on later is that of the Colombian Ministry of Education’s Standards of Citizenship Competencies (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004). It is based on the idea that knowledge (e.g., knowing the Constitution, knowing Human Rights) is not enough to guide “good” citizen action (i.e., knowing Human Rights does not mean that we will necessarily act according to those Human Rights). It is essential to explicitly promote opportunities to develop the abilities needed to turn that knowledge into practice (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004). The standards also address the relation between moral development and citizenship competencies (e.g., empathy is one of the basic emotional competencies the standards seek to promote).

The Colombian Standards of Citizenship Competencies are divided into three main domains: 1) peaceful coexistence / peaceful relationships, 2) democratic participation, and 3) diversity (Chaux, 2009; Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004). Each domain includes standards in four areas of citizenship competencies: 1) cognitive competencies (e.g., consideration of future consequences, perspective taking, and critical thinking), 2) emotional competencies (e.g., anger management and empathy), 3) communicative competencies (e.g., assertiveness and active listening), and 4) integrative competencies (e.g., conflict resolution) (Chaux, 2009; Chaux, Lleras, & Velásquez, 2004; Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004; Ruiz-Silva & Chaux, 2005). In essence, the Standards of Citizenship Competencies are designed to equip students to know how to take citizenship action in real life settings.

When considering the specific developmental outcomes of character education, there is a range of possibility, and the foci vary depending on the specific goals of the policy and the conceptual framework through which it is conceptualized. In the United States, K-12 educational outcome standards are
Currently codified in state level policy rather than federal level policy. For example, the state of Illinois has had social-emotional learning standards for many years (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.), due largely to the presence of the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning in that state. Regardless of whether the locus of policy making is national, regional, or local, common elements in a comprehensive approach to character education and related approaches include: core or focal moral virtues; intrapersonal and interpersonal social and emotional competencies, particularly linked to enacting moral virtues; and civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills. Ideally, educational policy prioritizes and promotes all of these, although such a comprehensive approach (Berkowitz, 2012b) may be too complex for most schools and educators, especially without adequate support for implementation. Most often, however, a common practice in the USA and Canada is for the relevant community or society to collaboratively identify the most important developmental outcomes for their youth.

Evidence-based practice

For schools to promote such developmental ends, they need to understand what actually works in this endeavor. Recent research has demonstrated the effectiveness of a wide range of approaches, but has also shed light on some core strategies. Berkowitz (2009; 2011) has proposed a five-part, research-based model of comprehensive and effective character education. The model is known as PRIME, which represents the model’s five core elements:

1. Prioritizing character education.
2. Strategically and intentionally promoting the development of positive relationships among all stakeholders.
3. Fostering the internalization of values through intrinsic motivation.
4. Modeling of character by all adults in the school.
5. Relying extensively on a pedagogy of empowerment.

Each of these five elements will be examined for empirical evidence and, where available, examples concerning policy decisions will be presented.

Prioritizing character education

Educational innovation is difficult in the best of circumstances, but when it is not an authentic priority of the school or other educational system, it is nearly impossible to do well and extensively in a sustained fashion. Educators, at least in the United States, have become jaundiced about announcements of new initiatives, because they have all seen many previous ones come and go. So one viable strategy for those who are not committed to change is to simply wait for the new initiative to gradually weaken and go away. When Amy Johnston (Berkowitz, Pelster, & Johnston, 2012; Johnston, 2012), as principal of Francis Howell Middle School in St. Charles, Missouri in the U.S., began the adoption and implementation of character education, she said to her staff, “You may think this is going away. Well,
don’t wait for that because this is not going away.” She knew the way teachers think and she knew that as a leader, she had to establish that character education was a priority and would remain so.

Setting organizational priorities is basic to organizational theory and development. Jim Collins (2001) found that leaders who took companies from good to great focused on a single central goal and stayed focused on it as the driving force behind their organizational development and functioning. Those who did not succeed tried to serve multiple goals or did not have consistent goals. Having a clear priority matters.

In educational leadership, the same advice holds true. Wagner and Kegan (2006), in their five-year study of school change and leadership, concluded that, “If we have many improvement priorities, we have none” (p. 202). Their advice was to “choose a priority and stay relentlessly focused on it” (p. 202). Such a focus entails clarity of goals and is based upon core values, ideals or beliefs (Chenoweth & Theokas, 2011; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005), which parallels what Covey (1990) referred to as having a “moral compass” in his model of principle-centered leadership. Successful organizations, including schools, need a singular purpose, goal or priority. And the organizational leader (the principal, the superintendent, the minister of education) is the individual who has to take primary responsibility for shepherding the priorities.

One area of disconnect is between a school or district’s mission and its actual functioning. Argyris and Schon (1974) argued that the secret to professional effectiveness is unlocked by aligning one’s espoused theory with one’s theory in action. What one professes to be one’s priority and understanding should be reflected in how one actually operates (e.g., how one allocates resources). This is rarely so when it comes to school mission statements, which are, after all, statements of purpose or priority.

One school district with which the first author worked had a superintendent who authentically valued character education, but it never was codified as official policy. He did appoint part of an administrative position to overseeing the development of a district-wide character education initiative. However, at the school level, it was delegated to positions below the school leader (e.g., often to a school counselor or lead teacher who had other full-time job responsibilities). Those individuals were becoming frustrated because they were trying hard to implement character education, but they had responsibility without authority and no clear support. Then, two things happened.

First, the district administrator who was leading character education asked to meet weekly with the superintendent. Other administrators heard about this weekly meeting and thought it signified a higher prioritization of character education and asked to join the weekly character education meetings.

Second, every school was required to include character education in their annual strategic planning goals. Furthermore, such goals were required to be measurable and reflected upon in regular progress reports to be made to the school district administration. The frustrated counselors and teachers suddenly found that their colleagues were now willing to join them in their character education efforts because it was an official policy of the district that schools would be held accountable for. Not many years after that, this district was recognized by the character.org as an exemplar, a National District of Character (see www.character.org for more information about designating schools and districts of character).

For character education to flourish, it has to be an authentic priority of the school or district. Ideally it should be a national priority, as in the Colombian example described above and elaborated below. By creating the Standards of Citizenship Competencies and including them into the national evaluations of students, the Colombian Ministry of Education sent an explicit message about the importance of citizenship and civic character education inside schools. The challenge then is to turn those standards
into practice and motivate local institutions to support their implementation.

Regardless of whether the priority is being set at the school level or the national level or somewhere in between, it has to come from relevant leadership and be reflected both in rhetoric (mission statement, espoused theory) and action. It must be singular - or, more realistically, paired with academic success as an intimately intertwined set of goals - and be driven by a moral compass as a core ideal or belief of what a great school should and could be.

Relationships

Character education is as much about human development as it is about education. It is fundamentally about how schools can leverage psychological principles and strategies to nurture the positive development of youth. The single most powerful influence on a child’s development is how people, particularly people who are significant in the child’s life, treat that child and treat others in the child’s presence. When Harry Stack Sullivan (1953) created his “interpersonal theory of psychiatry,” he focused on both the interpersonal needs of human beings and how they changed with each developmental stage. His core argument was that each individual’s nature or character is “constantly being transformed - is brought about, step by step, from very early in life, through the influence of other people, and solely for the purpose of living with other people in some sort of social organization” (p. 5). Human development, including character development, happens largely as a product of our relationships and interactions with others.

Education has long worked under the unspoken mandate to be individualistic and competitive. Students are in isolated competition with each other and are often required to work alone to demonstrate their own understanding, learning and competency. This is antithetical to a relational understanding of character development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005a). Further, it has become clear that a competitive individualistic approach to academic motivation and achievement is not effective (Kohn, 1992; Nicholls, 1989; Shields & Bredemeier, 2009). This is certainly not exclusively a US phenomenon. Education in many parts of the world serves a competitive societal selection function where students compete for scarce positions in selective schools or jobs. Classes are also often large and approaches to education tend toward more of a mass production factory model than a constructivist approach to fostering the growth and learning of each child through interactions both with the physical world and with others. Such models are antithetical to both to character development and to learning.

Perhaps the most well-known and embraced example of an educational approach that is based on interpersonal rather than individual strategies is cooperative learning (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994). An extensive body of research has demonstrated the developmental and academic effectiveness of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 2008). Berkowitz and Bier (2005b) included cooperative learning as a research-supported method in a review of research on character education. By working in small collaborative groups, students both learn more and develop more effective and mature social and emotional competencies. A second example is service learning. Service learning is an approach to learning that promotes academic achievement by connecting the curriculum to real world service projects (Kaye, 2004; Lewis, 1998). Learning is deeper when it has meaning through addressing real world problems; and the involvement of students in thoughtful service to others, often in collaborative
groups, fosters the development of character (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008).

More broadly, we argue that relationships are the foundational building blocks of both good character and good schools (Berkowitz, 2012a). Schools must recognize this and make building healthy relationships an authentic priority if they are likely to be optimally nurtured. It is necessary for the leadership to model this and for all adults to strategically and intentionally promote healthy relationships. This is true both for the general functioning of classrooms and schools, but also for effectively and productively dealing with problem situations. Watson (2007) posits a relationship-oriented model of developmental discipline that is central to effective character education. It focuses on building warm, caring, trusting teacher-student relationships and supporting/encouraging friendly relationships among students.

Effective character educators are those who focus on the school and classroom climate at the start of the school year and the beginning of each school day as the climate is critical to student development (Kriete, 2002; Urban, 2008). Amy Johnston (Johnston, 2012), an experienced school leader, began Francis Howell Middle School’s character education journey by creating a policy requiring that teachers engage in relationship-building activities for the first two days of the school year and refrain from engaging in any academic lessons. Her teachers were appalled at the notion, as they routinely found it difficult to cover all their curricular material in a school year and feared this would hurt academic achievement. Amy sagely expected that it would be about the middle of the academic year when the teachers would experience the value and wisdom of her strategy. She reported that it took only a few months before teachers began coming to her and imploring her to continue the practice every year. They reported that they were moving through their lessons and curricula faster and more effectively than ever before because their classroom atmospheres were so much better and the students were more engaged, self-managed, cooperative, and respectful. They attributed these gains to the two days of relationship-building activities at the beginning of the year.

Amy’s strategy was to make this focus a matter of school policy, rather than a recommendation or option. In that way, all teachers did it and the effects were more profound and widespread. The natural consequences of the strategy won over the skeptics to make it a welcomed school-wide practice. It also serves as an example of how intentional character education practices are congruent with, and indeed essential for, the academic goals of schools.

**Intrinsic motivation**

Ultimately, the goal of character education, and all comprehensive and enlightened education, is for students to become better people (i.e., for them to develop the positive and moral, social, and emotional competencies and motivations that undergird ethical societies). This means that the goal is for them to internalize the corresponding values and motivations so they are disposed to enact their social, emotional, and ethical competences on a regular basis. If they only learn the competencies but do not internalize the motives, they are likely to use them when they see value in doing so (e.g., to avoid punishment, to gain a reward, to impress another person). These are the motivations most schools rely on in their implementation strategies. They rely on reward, exhortation by valued others, and public recognition as the motivators for good character behavior. As has been argued and demonstrated widely (Berkowitz, 2012a; Kohn, 1995), extensive use of such extrinsic motivators are typically ineffective in
increasing character development, and can actually reduce it.

To be effective in promoting character development, schools need to implement policies that promote intrinsic motivation and remove strategies that rely on extrinsic motivators. We have found this to be one of the most vexing and intractable issues for practice and policy reform in schools, at least within the confines of character education-focused reform (Berkowitz, 2012a). When the Character Education Partnership surveyed character educators about their practices and their recommendations, they discovered that character educators rank extrinsic motivational strategies (e.g., reward programs, recognition assemblies) as undesirable yet report that they are the most frequently utilized strategies in their classrooms and schools (Berkowitz, 2012a).

Policy in the U.S. is currently at odds with this recommendation. There is much focus on reducing a range of behavioral problems, such as bullying, using approaches to problem reduction that frequently rely on behavioral reinforcement models. Currently, the U.S. Department of Education and many state departments of education encourage use of Positive Behavior Supports (PBS), a behavioral program that relies upon extrinsic rewards as a primary change element. Because of policies supporting this, schools and districts feel pressure to use PBS as their character education strategy, and therefore end up developing or adopting extrinsic models. When they consider moving to an intrinsic motivation framework, they find that the PBS requirement for use of rewards blocks their path. They also need patience to recognize that among children in particular, transition from an external to an intrinsic orientation takes time and is not likely greeted with enthusiasm.

Given the extent there has been an historical emphasis on extrinsic motivators and a policy climate that supports programs like PBS, it will be difficult for educators to commit to removing extrinsic motivators from their schools. A policy shift emphasizing the research-based promotion of the internalization of positive values and virtues through intrinsically motivating implementation strategies would help support the transformation of schools into places that effectively nurture academic achievement and the development of character. School, district, state or national policy could remove reward and recognition programs from schools, focus on effort and not on results, strategically promote positive relationships, and incorporate curricular elements that promote self-knowledge and goal-setting. However, implementing this policy would need to be done with sensitivity, patience, and persistence.

Modeling

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) provides a strong empirical base for the influence of role models on behavior in general and child development in particular. In a review of the impact of parenting on children’s character development, Berkowitz and Grych (1998) reported that modeling was one of the five key parenting practices empirically linked to multiple aspects of character (e.g., altruism). Whereas the empirical base for the impact of modeling on character is clear, translating that into policy and practice is difficult.

We have frequently heard school leaders claim that a strategic goal is for “all teachers to model good character.” When asked how they intend to realize that goal, they seem surprised and are usually at a loss to answer the question meaningfully. Certainly simply making a policy that all teachers will model good character is too vague and abstract to be effective. Exhortations are not likely to be effective either.
Another early challenge for Francis Howell Middle School (Johnston, 2012) came when, upon considering various taxonomies of character traits, Principal Amy Johnston and her teachers began to question whether they themselves had good enough character to qualify as character educators. This is not to say they were an evil staff, but rather they had the courage and insight to recognize that none of them were perfect. Their response was to delay their foray into educating for student character development while they spent a year engaged in discussion and self-reflection. In a video chronicling the school’s character education journey, one teacher reflected, “I am a better wife and mother because of character education.” In some schools, it may be a preferred practice to first focus on adult character, the adult social climate in the school, and self-study before implementing character education for students (Berkowitz, 2012a; Palmer, 1998; Wagner & Kegan, 2006). Regardless, the character of the adults must be a focus alongside of the character of the students.

Empowerment

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2002) focuses on the study and promotion of autonomy-supported classrooms. This approach to classroom design is justified theoretically by the model that all humans have a fundamental need for a sense of autonomy (i.e., a sense of one’s capacity to operate effectively in the world), something that Erikson (1963) considered rising to psychological prominence before a child even enters school. SDT has amassed a large body of research supporting the importance of autonomy-promoting practices in classrooms and schools for both academic achievement and for child development (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Streight, 2013).

Unfortunately, schools and broader educational systems tend to be authoritarian and hierarchical (Berkowitz, 2012a). This becomes even more ironic and troubling in democratic societies, where the development of civic character requires not just learning about democracy but the direct and authentic experience of democracy (Althof & Berkowitz, 2006; Dewey, 1944). Schools have historically experimented with democratizing practices, such as student empowerment and cooperative learning, both at the whole school level (Mosher, Kenney, & Garrod, 1994; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989) and the classroom level (Developmental Studies Center, 1996), and have reported clear developmental benefits of doing so; e.g., improved moral reasoning capacity, greater compassion and altruism. Nevertheless, educational policies and practices in democratization and empowerment are not the norm.

For both students and democracies to flourish, it behooves education to take more seriously the degree to which school power structures are closer to prisons, or other disempowering and controlling institutions, than they are to democracies (Berkowitz, 2012; Noguera, 2003). A similar metaphor in Latin America is from the movie “La Educación Prohibida” (2012), which compares schools with parking lots for children (parqueaderos de niños). Moving away from oppressive, disempowering educational models and policies would be well served by instituting policies that intentionally empower students, such as authentic empowered student governments, student representation on school committees and school boards, legislative bodies with representatives from all stakeholder groups (i.e., all groups that have an interest in the functioning of the school), and empowering pedagogical processes such as class meetings and student-led parent-teacher conferences.

The Colombian Standards of Citizenship Competencies are also a good example of how a curriculum can enhance empowerment by providing the experiences of democracy as a means to foster
the development of civic competencies. The Colombian focus on citizenship competencies was intended to propose practical pedagogical strategies, as opposed to traditional ways of promoting civic behavior and citizenship (Chaux, 2009; Chaux et al., 2004). The notion of competencies involves both “knowing” and “knowing how”; that is, having the knowledge about citizen rights and duties, and knowing how to take them into practice (Chaux, 2009; Chaux et al., 2004). In other words, practicing the competencies situates the students in the center of the educational process, as opposed to traditional teaching models.

**Taking research and theory to practice at a national scale: The experience of Colombia**

As previously mentioned, to promote the psychological and social development of students, educators and policy-makers have to understand and base their work on sound research and theory. The second author worked with those experts who led this in Colombia, as a researcher and in implementing programs aligned with the national policy. The Colombian experience is a good example of how a national program of education can be (1) built with the help of both research and practical expertise, and (2) intentionally and strategically promoted by governmental institutions as a matter of national policy.

Colombia has suffered high levels of political violence for more than 50 years. The war had dramatically affected the civilian population in large part through the presence of guerrillas, paramilitary groups, and other illegal organizations such as drug cartels ( Humans Rights Watch, 2013). Moreover, high rates of delinquency and violence have also permeated numerous ordinary environments, including educational settings. For instance, Los Andes University and the Colombian government’s secretariat conducted a survey of 87,302 fifth to eleventh grade students in the capital city of Bogota and found alarming results: 14% of the students said that some of their classmates belong to gangs, and 56% said they had been robbed on school grounds (Chaux & Velásquez, 2008).

In 2004, the Colombian Ministry of Education created the National Program of Citizenship Competencies as part of the joint efforts to build a more peaceful society. This program contains the guidelines needed to promote citizenship competencies, understood as the set of abilities and knowledge needed to build and maintain peaceful relationships, participate in a democratic way, and value pluralism and diversity in the country (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2004). The focus was largely on promoting the character and competencies necessary for civic engagement, rather than merely learning about citizenship and democracy.

The National Program of Citizenship Competencies in Colombia was a product of a long and exhaustive process of dialogue between different constituencies. First, the general conceptual frame was designed by a group of experts in the field who took into account rigorous research about the cognitive and social-emotional development needed to break the cycle of violence in difficult contexts (Chaux, 2009). In addition, previous local programs and pilot curricula (e.g., the Program of Citizenship Competencies led by the Secretariat of Education in Bogota and a curriculum about democracy, moral education, and peaceful relationships designed at Los Andes University), as well as the existing national guidelines of math and literacy, guided the process of designing a set of standards of citizenship competencies (Chaux, 2009). Finally, discussion groups, with participants from the Faculties of
Education Association in Colombia, researchers, and teachers from different universities and schools analyzed and modified the standards from their experience and knowledge (Chaux, 2005).

The final products consisted of a set of standards for citizenship competencies and a governmental program to support its promotion inside schools throughout the country (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2012). It is important to note that the Colombian educational system is highly decentralized, but the Ministry of Education can suggest general guidelines to the local educational institutions (Chaux, 2009). In that sense, since 2004, the government has consistently and explicitly supported local institutions’ actions with different strategies, including providing training and technical support to local stakeholders, leaders, and teachers (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2012). Finally, the Colombian Institute for the Evaluation of Education, ICFES (the national government agency devoted to the measurement of academic performance in all schools and universities) began measuring the Citizenship Competencies standards through the national evaluations it conducts (Jaramillo, n.d.).

Two messages can be highlighted from this experience: (1) research and practice can work together to have great impact in public policies, and (2) governmental institutions can explicitly and consistently foster the promotion of positive environments, giving character education (or citizenship education, as it is called in Colombia) the same importance as more traditional academic subject areas like mathematics and literacy.

It is important to note as well that the Colombian policy initiative is a good example of how to include much of the PRIME model of comprehensive character education. It is precisely because the architects of the Colombian policy initiative (1) did not know of the PRIME model, and (2) did not even use the term “character education” as a framework for their initiative that this work is useful in demonstrating how the principles of PRIME are embedded in well-designed national approaches to fostering positive youth development. However, this is also the reason that it does not map directly onto the PRIME framework, and the “I” and “M” of PRIME (intrinsic motivation and modeling) are less explicit in the Colombian initiative.

The entire Colombian enterprise was a strong statement of priority. By making this a national policy, it becomes a national priority. A somewhat similar phenomenon occurred in the U.S. when the Clinton administration first established the Partnerships in Character Education program in the U.S. Department of Education, thereby setting a national priority. Subsequently, when the Bush administration tripled the funding for this program, it increased the same priority. In Colombia, when accountability and measurement were added to the national guidelines, the government gave further emphasis to this national priority.

Through the choice of pedagogical strategies, the Colombian policy promoted relationship-building strategies. The central use of cooperative learning as a pedagogical emphasis, for example, is a form of education that promotes not only academic achievement, but character development as well through increasing cooperation and relationships in classrooms (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005a, b; Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1994).

Empowerment is also central to the Colombian policy. The primary emphasis on preparation for practical participation in a democracy leads to methods and foci that facilitate the empowerment of student voices and participation in their current educational contexts, and in preparation for their civic roles in Colombian society.
Implications for education policy

When research-based educational strategies, such as those aligned with the PRIME model, are enacted comprehensively, authentically, and effectively by leaders and staff who understand this vision and have the requisite knowledge and skills to implement such strategies, not only do students develop in the ways we have described, but their academic achievement markedly increases as well. Further, research-based educational strategies also reduce a wide range of undesirable behaviors (e.g., bullying, dangerous risk-taking). When students feel valued, safe, and empowered, and when the school is experienced as a caring community that holds students to high academic and behavioral standards, then students are less likely to engage in undesirable behaviors and more likely to work harder and ultimately flourish. Making the five elements of PRIME the focus of enlightened school policy will serve all of these critical elements. Furthermore, when research- and theory-based practices are integrated with policy, whether at the local or national level, their impact is likely to be greater. Colombia offers one example of how character (social-emotional, citizenship) education research and theory (and experts in those areas) can join with policy and other political forces to broadly influence the nature and effectiveness of educational efforts not only to promote academic achievement, but also to promote the positive development of youth, thereby potentially improving society.

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A whole child approach to student success

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Abstract

A whole child approach to education is one which focuses attention on the social, emotional, mental, physical as well as cognitive development of students. At its core such an approach views the purpose of schooling as developing future citizens and providing the basis for each child to fulfill their potential. In 2007 ASCD (formerly the Association for Curriculum Development and Supervision) outlined a whole child approach to education as its core mission. It developed 5 tenets based upon child development theory, which underpins the approach and states that each child in each school and in each community deserves to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged. This framework has been used as the scaffold in the development of a range of school improvement processes that ensures that the approach is integrated and systemized into the processes and policies of the school, district, and community. The framework does not seek to divorce itself from academic development but it does seek to expand what constitutes academic development in the 21st century and aims to refocus attention on all attributes required for educational and societal success.

Keywords: whole child, school improvement, paradigm shift, tenets, 21st century learning
“What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children” (Dewey, 1907).

Seven years ago, ASCD (formerly known as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development) set out to create a comprehensive framework for how schools and communities could align their policies and resources to ensure that all children have the opportunity to be successful learners. It was a process spurred by the following charge from ASCD Executive Director and CEO Dr. Gene R. Carter.

If decisions about education policy and practice started by asking what works for the child, how would resources - time, space, and human - be arrayed to ensure each child’s success? If the student were truly at the center of the system, what could we achieve? (ASCD, 2007, p. 4).

The process began by convening a Commission on the Whole Child, comprising leading thinkers across education, policy, and business which ASCD tasked with reimagining what an education system and its supporting policies and practices would look like if roles and resources from home to school to community were reorganized to ensure the success of each child. Via this Commission, ASCD recast the definition of a successful learner from one that focuses solely on narrowly defined academic achievement to one that promotes the long term development and success of children (ASCD, 2007).

This new definition laid the foundation for the whole child initiative, which advocates for local, national, and international policies and practices that ensure each child, in each school, and in each community, is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Founded in 1943, ASCD is a global education association. While the mission has always been to assist and enhance educational leaders - including experienced teachers, principals, and superintendents - more recently the association’s drive has been in promoting and advocating for a more holistic and progressive approach to education. The organization formally changed its name to ASCD in 2009 as the longer moniker including a focus on “supervision” and “curriculum development” no longer accurately represented the breadth and depth of all that the organization offered.

As opposed to a program or a curriculum, ASCD’s whole child approach to education encourages administrators, policymakers, and educators to think more holistically and comprehensively about providing both academic and non-academic supports for students. It requires policies that affect children’s health to align and complement those that affect their social, emotional, and cognitive development. It is an understanding that children’s growth and development, including academic development, cannot be fully realized without providing a system of supports for their non-academic needs.

ASCD did not invent the term whole child education, but it did define the term as promoting “the development of children who are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged within a sustainable approach to education and community engagement” (ASCD, 2007, p. 3). Toward that end, ASCD has worked to create a system of supports for educators, families, and community members to put a whole child approach to education into practice and a range of policy recommendations and initiatives for policymakers who want to move from a vision about educating the whole child to sustainable and broad-based action. When communities commit to educating the whole child within the context of whole communities and whole schools, they commit to designing learning environments that weave together the threads that connect not only specific content areas such as maths, science, the arts, and humanities,
but also psychosocial aspects of the individual and learning. These are connections that tend to be too fragmented in the academics-above-all approach prevalent in too many countries that emphasize cognitive abilities above, and often to the exclusion of, all else.

A needed paradigm shift

The 21st century demands a highly skilled, educated workforce and citizenry unlike any we have seen before. The global marketplace and economy are a reality and are placing expectations on education systems to develop and train the skills, attitudes, and aptitudes for this century. These skills center around collaboration, teamwork, problem solving, creativity, and living and working in an ever-changing environment (OECD, 2008). Change and innovation have become the new status quo, however too many of our schools, communities, and educational systems use models designed to prepare young people for life in the middle of the last century. School systems in many countries, as highlighted by author Daniel Pink (2011), are based around 19th-century teaching techniques, in 20th-century classrooms, as they try to engage 21st-century students and prepare them for careers that do not yet exist.

We live in a time that requires our students to be prepared to think both critically and creatively, to evaluate massive amounts of information, solve complex problems, and communicate well, yet our education systems remain committed to time structures, coursework, instructional methods, and assessments designed more than a century ago. A strong foundation in reading, writing, maths, and other core subjects is as important as ever, yet insufficient for lifelong success. These 21st-century demands require a new and better way of approaching education policy and practice - a whole child approach to learning, teaching, and community engagement.

ASCD’s work around creating whole child-centered policies and practices came at the time when U.S. federal, state, and local education policy and practice was largely dictated by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB, 2001), President George W. Bush’s reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This was a time when it was not politically expedient to move away from an emphasis on standardized testing and toward a more holistic approach, yet ASCD - with a cohort of educational, social, and health experts - felt such a change in educational focus was both the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

What if the education, health, housing, public safety, recreation, and business systems within our communities aligned human and capital resources to provide coordinated service to kids and families? What if policymakers at all levels worked with educators, families, and community members to ensure that we as a society meet our social compact to prepare children for their future rather than our past? (ASCD, 2010, p. vii)

A national and global perspective

The premise of starting with the child at the center of the equation pushed the Commission on the whole child to redefine what a successful learner is and how success is measured. And this redefinition was not just at the classroom or school site-level, it was a redefinition at the national level. It required
educators and policymakers to ask why do we have education, what is its purpose, and who is it primarily serving?

It was apparent then, and similarly now, that there is a shift in the purpose and understanding of education. There is a growing appreciation of the need to teach and help the development of the whole person as opposed to merely focusing on academic achievement and test scores. Pasi Sahlberg (2010), director general of Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation (CIMO) and one of the world’s leading experts on school reform and the educational and economic success of Finland, puts it this way:

[T]he current practice of determining educational performance by using primarily standardized knowledge tests as the main means of accountability is not a necessary condition for much needed educational improvement; and there is growing evidence that increased high-stakes testing is restricting students’ conceptual learning, engaging in creative action and understanding innovation, all of which are essential elements of contemporary schooling in a knowledge society. Schools and other educational institutions should cultivate attitudes, cultures, and skills needed within creative and collaborative learning environments (Hargreaves & Sahlberg, 2013).

ASCD arrived at a similar conclusion and as a result of the Commission’s work, established the Whole Child Initiative, which, at its core, is based around five key tenets:

1. Healthy: Each student enters school healthy and learns about and practices a healthy lifestyle.
2. Safe: Each student learns in an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for students and adults.
3. Engaged: Each student is actively engaged in learning and is connected to the school and broader community.
4. Supported: Each student has access to personalized learning and is supported by qualified, caring adults.
5. Challenged: Each student is challenged academically and prepared for success in college or further study and for employment and participation in a global environment.

The Commission understood that,

Today’s students must be prepared unlike any generation before to think critically and analytically while acting with innovation and creativity. Children entering school today will engage in careers that have not yet been invented but will become obsolete within their lifetime. Teamwork and shared decision making will be required to resolve complex problems in the workplace and community (ASCD, 2007, p. 7).

Serving to bookend this statement was a key observation that in order for schools to achieve this and allocate time and effort to do it, a change in assessment focus was needed.

Educators and the American public have long agreed that education must both include and go well beyond the academics of reading, writing, and mathematics. Yet for our educational system and communities to develop whole children, we must act, not talk; act in fundamentally different, not marginally different, ways; and act as schools, communities, and nations to ensure a deservedly brighter future for our children (ASCD, 2007, p. 19).

Although this approach was originally launched in the U.S., it has become a widely adopted
initiative with countries across the Americas, Europe, and Oceania using the approach to refocus their educational systems on local, regional, and national levels. However, Asia, the region that is widely touted to be the economic powerhouse of this century, has more frequently begun to actively reinvent its educational systems around educational innovation, 21st-century skills of collaboration and critical thinking, and a more holistic approach to education. For example, while Singapore was adopting its “Teach Less, Learn More” approach earlier this century, the traditional centers of educational leadership the United States and the United Kingdom have been reverting to policies and systems such as NCLB and the English Baccalaureate Certificate that discourage innovation, design, and creativity. What the U.S. devalues or dismisses as soft skills, are, for overseas competitors, the hard-edge entrepreneurial essentials of 21st century success (Hargreaves & Sahlberg, 2013).

Similar endeavors focusing on a Whole Child approach, social and emotional learning, and character education are also underway across the region, including Hong Kong, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Growing attention is being placed on the development of personal, social, and collaborative skills with less emphasis directed solely towards academics.

An economic imperative

A focus on a whole child approach - what has been deemed the right-brain skills and aptitudes of creativity, problem solving, and collaboration - is now not only a moral imperative, but also an economic imperative (OECD, 2008). These are the skills that are needed not only by a functioning society, but also the skills required for economic growth as countries move out of the information age - and into the conceptual age, defined not by what information you possess, but rather how it is accessed and used. We have moved through the industrial age where machines took over many of the manual functions of people and workers. We have more recently passed through the information age an age when both industry and hence education were focused on an ever expanding accumulation of and access to information. We are currently entering the conceptual age an age where the development of knowledge, understanding, and the use and application of information is key. The skills required cannot be learned by rote memorization - rather they can only be learned by engaging in collaboration, cooperation, and interaction; it is these skills that are required and less so the content or information that coincides with their practice.

A school-wide perspective on implementing whole child policy into practice

How are schools to do this? A focus on the fundamentals is essential, though not necessarily the fundamentals of the information age (reading, writing, and arithmetic). The new fundamentals refer to the environment and culture that is established to ensure success - including providing resources, support, and attention to a child’s health (physical, social, emotional, and mental) and safety. This creates a supportive environment that allows for growth and development, and also provides attention
and awareness to elements which impede or promote learning.

Secondly, schools must expand their understanding of what constitutes effective learning and move beyond mere academic measures. If the purpose of a school is to prepare students for society - and an ever-changing society - then effective schools must look toward what skills, aptitudes, and behaviors will be required and in demand. Pink (2011) describes it as being focused around the developing concepts, and using the required skills of empathy, experimentation (play), and creativity. In short, he describes it as needing to think like an artist.

Content knowledge should not be confined to specific subjects, rather it should be synthesized and utilized with other skills and knowledge toward a larger goal or outcomes. Schools will need to be restructured to be more cross-curricular, geared around project-based learning, and adaptable to individual students’ interests, preferences, and learning needs. The skills that will be essential in the future will be those that allow the individual to navigate conceptual learning: social skills of empathy, communication, and understanding; team skills of collaboration, leadership, and contribution; and creative skills of problem solving, ideation, and synthesis.

While the inclusion of social and emotional learning programs into current school settings is needed, and show positive outcomes with regard to teaching and learning as well as reduction in risk-taking behavior, schools need to implement changes that enable all students and adults across the whole school to promote, practice, and refine their social and emotional development - not just as an adjunct to their curriculum, but as a fundamental part of all that takes place in the school.

Whole child, whole school

Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs - developed in 1943 as a theory of psychological health predicated on fulfilling innate human needs formed as a pyramid - places the most essential or basic needs at the bottom - with physiological at the base followed in tiers by safety, belongingness, esteem, and finally self-actualization. The Whole Child Commission used this framework to develop a whole child hierarchy, outlining the key elements or stages needed for successful student growth and development. When students’ basic physiological and psychological needs (safety, belonging, autonomy, and competence) are satisfied, they are more likely to become engaged in school, act in accord with school goals and values, develop social skills and understanding, contribute to the school and community, and achieve academically. Further, when schools fail to meet those needs, students are more likely to become less motivated, more alienated, and poorer academic performers (California Department of Education [CDE], 2005).

A whole child approach to education is an umbrella approach that spans content areas and demands whole school improvement. It engages educators at both the administrative and classroom levels in understanding the links between the five Whole Child Tenets of being healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged in each classroom, each hallway, and the way each school should be focused, organized, and resourced.

The reason for this is two-fold: first, individual programs which address particular skills or aptitudes such as social and emotional learning or character education - while key to developing those particular skills cannot and should not exist in a vacuum. The development of the self cannot be constricted to one
period or one subject area, but must be adopted across the whole school. Therefore, if an approach that focuses attention on the whole child is deemed worthy and educationally advantageous, it should be implemented school-wide.

Consequently approaches such as a whole child approach, to be effective and sustainable, must be incorporated into schools’ improvement planning. School improvement processes can be either piecemeal, “which entails making adjustments to the current paradigm of education” or systemic, “which entails transforming the current paradigm into a different one” (Joseph & Reigeluth, 2010, p. 97). If we wish to have long lasting, meaningful change in the way our schools function and in what they are able to achieve we must strive for systemic change.

Piecemeal change to improve schooling inside a school district is an approach that at its worst does more harm than good and at its best is limited to creating temporary pockets of “good” within school districts. When it comes to improving schooling in a district, however, creating temporary pockets of good isn’t good enough. Whole school systems need to be transformed in a sustainable way (Duffy, 2006, p. 41).

Second, adoption of a program or a curriculum leaves itself open to subsequent rejection. Programmatic change tends to last only as long as staffing and resources, including key personnel or funding, which undermines its effectiveness. Hubbard (2009) describes programmatic change as “tinkering change” or “reforms intended to address a specific deficiency or practice” (p. 746), such as changing how an assessment report is structured, implementing a new program of instruction, or adopting a new or modified curriculum. Programmatic change is often owned by small numbers of key staff and frequently ends when those individuals leave the school or have new roles or alternate funding sources. As a consequence, as stated by Hubbard (2009), “the school as an institution remains largely untouched and unchanged” (p. 746).

In 2012, ASCD took this understanding one step further and cross-referenced the five Whole Child Tenets and their indicators with the key components of an effective school improvement process. These components are:

- **School Climate & Culture**
  Students entering school feel safe, engaged, and connected and see school as a place where they can learn and contribute to the world around them. They receive coordinated and continuous support to strengthen their social and emotional skills and enhance positive character traits.

- **Curriculum & Instruction**
  Students develop critical-thinking and reasoning skills, problem solving competencies, technology proficiency and content knowledge through evidence based, relevant, differentiated instructional pedagogy and comprehensive curriculum.

- **Community & Family**
  Families, community members and organizations, and educators collaborate on shared decisions, actions, and outcomes for children.

- **Leadership**
  Leaders act as visionaries, influencers, learners, and instructional guides to ensure school policies and practices to support a whole child approach.
• Professional Development & Capacity
  Staff demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to ensure each child is prepared for long term success. They are supported by differentiated, job embedded professional development.

• Assessment
  Assessment is varied and timely, conducted to adjust teaching-learning activities to maximize student progress in all areas, and generates meaningful, useful data for decision making.

Aligning the tenets and indicators to these key components of effective school improvement processes formalized the integration of a whole child approach into the systems and policies of the school, taking a whole school, rather than piecemeal, approach to effective school improvement. The whole child framework then becomes embedded in the school improvement process and becomes an integral part of what the schools does in addition to the policies, structures, and processes it develops moving forward.

A focus on the connection of health, positive school climate, and learning

One area in which ASCD’s whole child approach provides a new focus for an old insight is the integration of health as part of a positive school climate in which learning can thrive. Health and education are integrally linked (Allensworth, Lewallen, Stevenson, & Katz, 2011; Basch, 2010; Murray, Low, Hollis, Cross, & Davis, 2007). It has been well established that these two sectors are both foundational and symbiotic. A child who is not healthy is likely not to attend school or attend but not be able to concentrate. Social, emotional, and mental health are more often being viewed as essential to establishing well-being and in conjunction with physical health are critical components in maximizing both educational outcomes and personal development. A child who does not complete high school is more likely in adulthood to have employment problems, lower health literacy, higher rates of illness, and earlier deaths compared to those who graduate from high school (Alliance for Excellent Education [AEE], 2008; Pappas, Queen, Hadden, & Fisher, 1993). By some reports, graduation from high school in the U.S. is said to equate to an increased lifespan of 6- to 9-years (Wong, Shapiro, Boscardin, & Ettner, 2002).

Dropping out of school hampers future employment, and those that do not graduate from high school are subsequently more likely to rely on government assistance for health care, housing, and food. And failure to complete high school can also start a vicious cycle where those raised by families not having completed high school are also less likely to complete high school and be healthy (AEE, 2008). Any solution to the problem of students dropping out of school must incorporate a combination of efforts that align health, family, community, and educational success. No one sector can address the complexity of the interdependent needs of children. Previous studies have found that when the public health and education sectors work together and collaborate with community agencies, students’ academic achievement and health improve (Blank & Shah, 2004; CDE, 2008; ASTHO / SSDPER, 2002).
But catering to the health and wellbeing of students as a foundational aspect of the school does not only provide the basis for every student to attend and partake in schooling. Studies have shown that focusing on health and well-being can both boost academic achievement and also provide environments which support the development of 21st century skills (Basch, 2010; Valois, Slade, & Ashford, 2010).

Schools that work purposefully toward enhancing the mental, social, emotional, and physical health of both their staff and students frequently report results that principals and other school administrators want to hear with regard to outcomes that affect students, staff, and the overall learning environment:

- improved academic achievement (Basch, 2010; Case, & Paxson, 2006; Crosnoe, 2006; Haas & Fosse, 2008; Hass, 2006; Heckman, 2008; Koivusilta, Arja, & Andres, 2003; Palloni, 2006);
- reduced absenteeism (Basch, 2010; Gall, Pagano, Desmond, Perrin, & Murphy, 2000);
- reduced risk-taking behavior such as drug and alcohol use, early sexual activity, bullying, and victimization behavior (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000, Hanson, Austin, & Zheng, 2011; Smink & Reimer, 2005);
- decreased staff turnover (Byrne, 1994; Dorman, 2003; Grayson & Alvarez, 2008);
- greater efficiency (Bergeson, Heuschel, Hall, & Willholt, 2005; Harris, Cohen, & Flaherty, 2008);
- the development of a positive school climate (Basch, 2010; Benard, 2004); and
- the development of a school-community culture that promotes and enhances student growth (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000; Fleming et al., 2005; Klem & Connell, 2004; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Nelson, 2004)

A focus on health - social, emotional, mental, as well as physical - is an integral, foundational part of establishing an environment that not only allows students to learn and grow, but in fact encourages and promotes holistic growth and development of the person.

Global policy recommendations

One of the great lessons of the United States’ focus on test scores during NCLB, is that its singular emphasis on student performance in reading and maths overlooks important aspects of teaching and learning and actually deprives students of essential elements of a comprehensive education.

A world-class, 21st century education goes well beyond reading and maths. Test scores, while important, tell only part of a student’s story. Scores offer little insight into or understanding of achievement in important subjects like science and the arts, of the child’s connection to the school community, of preparation for civic engagement, or of the social and emotional health of the school and its students.

ASCD believes that all children, regardless of background or nation, should be healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged if they are to succeed in the 21st century. The premise of policy based on a whole child approach is that the education systems most effective in preparing students for the challenges of this century will be those whose education systems have been changed to suit the skills and aptitudes required of this century focusing greater attention on creativity, problem solving, collaboration, and teamwork via personalized, cross curricula approaches and less attention to
standardization, memorization, and success measured by test scores.

As educators have begun implementing whole child strategies in their schools, and as awareness of the whole child concept has grown exponentially among parents and the public, ASCD is moving to promote whole child policies at the district, state, and federal levels as the most effective, sustainable, and systemic way to meet the comprehensive needs of students.

Recently ASCD expanded the current U.S. administration’s education goal of college and career readiness to include college, career, and citizenship readiness and the emphasis on international competitiveness which is equally applicable to most other countries has provided a context to present its whole child policy framework.

We, and especially our youth, live in an increasingly connected world where information is transmitted and shared constantly. And yet, to a large extent, the government agencies and offices serving families and children have not kept pace with the opportunities presented by these technologies and are constrained by onerous bureaucratic restrictions and too often work in isolation from each other, reducing their ability to effectively carry out their own missions.

Government agencies at the national, provincial, and local levels must work in concert with each other to best serve the interests of children. Coordinating data among agencies is challenging because of the need to protect confidential information, incompatibility among data systems, and bureaucratic turf battles. But such coordination is essential if systems are to succeed at making sure all children are healthy, safe, supported, as well as academically engaged and challenged.

Modify policies on test scores: A useful servant but a bad master

In the past decade in the U.S., schools, state and federal governments have begun to publish for parents and the public information about how their schools are doing, most of it based on how students perform on standardized academic state tests. Such information is useful but insufficient. Unfortunately too many countries and systems have adopted similar metrics for developing educational policy. If we base our educational progress merely on a finite and stratified set of metrics, we run the risk of adjusting educational policy and practice to suit the test score and not the child. Whether it be the Programme for International Student Assessment rankings organized by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development or state standardized test scores, focusing attention solely on these metrics diverts attention from the holistic development of the child. These tests prove to be, as stated by Peter Mortimore, former director of the Institute of Education, University of London, “useful servants but bad masters” (ASCD, 2013).

For too long, school accountability systems offer only arbitrary and punitive sanctions. It is hard to imagine a better designed scheme to ill-serve students, degrade education, demean schools, demoralize the good work of educators, and mislead the public. Aspiring to a level of the lowest common denominator inevitably leads to a race to the bottom.

The adage that what gets tested gets taught has resulted, in many schools, in a focus on instructional strategies designed to raise test scores on standardized tests, rather than genuine learning. Reading and maths scores valid or not are easy to obtain; measures of engagement, accomplishment and appreciation of the arts, or civic engagement require a different kind of assessment. This information is not as easily
accessible, and is often considered unavailable. Many regional and national systems are not required to collect and publicly disseminate student achievement data in key core subjects, let alone the non-core subjects such as physical education or health education. As a result many school climate surveys and student engagement evaluations are often done at the district or site level only, which while beneficial, limits the ability to validly and reliably examine and compare such information across systems or locations. To measure progress on educating the whole child school systems need to annually assess the health, safety, and education of children and families. An annual whole child report card regional or national would be an important tool, providing a comprehensive look at the circumstances (hunger, poverty, crime, literacy, health, etc.) of children for the public and policymakers about factors that influence student success. Schools are not solely responsible for these conditions nor are they able to ameliorate them on their own. Yet having a clear understanding of the teaching and learning climate is essential for effective planning and improvement. Meeting students’ comprehensive needs requires collaboration and coordination well beyond the schoolhouse doors, and the whole child report cards can help streamline and improve services for children, youth, and families across government agencies and stakeholder groups by publicly identifying concrete opportunities and priorities to improve the well-being of children, to close persistent achievement gaps, and ensure that all students come to school ready to learn. At the very least, it is a reminder to the public that the well-being of children manifests itself in school performance and that improving student achievement is not necessarily about more intensive instruction.

Since 2002, federal law in the U.S. has required states and districts to publish annual report cards with student attendance and dropout data, disaggregated student assessment data in the academic subjects tested for accountability (i.e., English language arts and mathematics), and information about the percentage of highly qualified teachers in core academic subjects. The concept of regularly disseminating school information to the public is a positive development, but is limited in practice to several discrete data points that are narrow in scope and lacking in context as to their meaning.

A small investment to produce a clear, easy-to-digest report available to the public can produce a better informed citizenry and therefore an improved policy environment. Policymakers would be easily able to identify the progress and areas in need of improvement to ensure that all of their children receive the education and support needed for a productive future.

Synchronized whole child policy recommendations

We can no longer afford to develop the range of education and non-education policies affecting children or operate the resulting programs serving them in isolation; we must work to coordinate and integrate them for the benefit of students rather than the interests of adults or bureaucracies. Building this synchronization into policies at the outset will lead to more efficient and effective results for children. More specifically, the public must demand and policymakers should establish explicitly, and codify appropriately, the following recommendations to achieve the overarching goals discussed above:

- Recognize that ensuring all children are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged should be a national priority and encourage parents, educators, and community members to support and
provide a whole child approach to education for each student.

- Develop and support meaningful accountability systems. We have known for a long time that what is tested by the district, province, or region, becomes what is taught in the classroom. In order for a system to implement a whole child approach it must also measure and analyze growth via multiple measures encompassing the multiple intelligences.
- Ensure access to a well-rounded curriculum that is reflected in standards, assessments, accountability systems, and public reporting of achievement.
- Promote comprehensive whole-school and whole-community improvement strategies. Methods to improve student achievement, educator effectiveness, or school quality must be evidence-based; engage all stakeholders, including families and communities; and be grounded in a whole child approach to education.
- Reconceptualize the goals and interventions for chronically underperforming schools from punitive and unproven sanctions to an improvement system of access to and comprehensive support for enriched curriculum with high-quality teaching and learning experiences that involve all students, families, and staff.
- Help educators support students. The classroom teacher and school principal are the two most important in-school factors affecting student growth and achievement. As a result, the foremost strategy and funding priority must be adequate and effective preparation and ongoing professional development for educators to improve student outcomes. In turn educators must be given the respect their position deserves. Marginalizing or scapegoating school-based educators will only harm the profession and hinder the reforms underway.

Ensuring that all children become college, career, and citizenship ready by the time they graduate from high school so that they can lead productive, engaged, and fulfilling lives is an ambitious goal, but one that is both worthy of great nations and necessary for those nations to remain great. Such a goal will require real leadership, national support, new resources, and a renewed commitment to the needs of the whole child.

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A whole child approach to student success

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The case for adding prosocial education to current education policy: Preparing students for the tests of life, not just a life of tests*

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Abstract

This article presents the case for prosocial education as: 1) being the right of every student, parent, and teacher; 2) providing a systemic evidence-based process designed to enhance school attachment, promote social development, and increase academic success; and 3) offering a necessary foundation for effective educational policy. We develop the idea of prosocial education in the context of U.S. education and its challenges; however, we also show how it can be a useful framework to organize school improvement efforts in different nations as well as to inform educational policy for any nation. We illustrate how helping educators create positive, stimulating classrooms and schools, and effectively integrate prosocial ideas into daily practices, develops students physically, socially, behaviorally, ethically, emotionally, and intellectually, providing the competencies essential to become citizens committed to contributing to the common good.

Keywords: prosocial, education, development, evidence, testing

* This paper shares the highlights for the case for prosocial education that is presented fully within the recently published Handbook for Prosocial Education (Brown, Corrigan, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2012), a new reference book from Rowman and Littlefield.
Current problems of education policy

For close to two decades, no matter if we look at test scores using the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP-known as the United States’ “nation’s report card”), Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) assessments based on the individual state standardized achievement tests (adopted under No Child Left Behind), the United States education system has made little to no progress in raising academic achievement scores (Corrigan, 2012). The recent strong focus on testing has not helped the U.S. to perform better internationally. The U.S. has fallen to average or below average in reading and math. As noted by Symonds, Schwartz, and Ferguson (2011), “Unfortunately, the USA’s performance on the four rounds of [the Programme for International Student Assessment] PISA over the past decade has been uniformly mediocre” (p. 18).

Furthermore, as President Obama stated in his January 2011 State of the Union address, “America has fallen to ninth in the proportion of young people with a college degree” (Obama, 2011, para. 34); the U.S. was once number one. In the 1970s, the U.S. was number one in high school graduation and now has fallen to thirteenth, and the U.S. now has the highest college dropout rate in the industrialized world (Symonds, Schwartz, & Ferguson, 2011).

According to the Center on Education Policy (McMurrer, 2008), among the consequences of over testing are the prioritizing of a few content areas and the thinning of the curriculum, as well as the loss of music and art courses, recess (play time), and other nonacademic time so that artistic, creative expression, and play are diminished. Additionally, as a result, some U.S. schools operate in a state of high anxiety, as the failure of some students on high-stakes testing could cause their schools to miss the established parameters for achieving what the United States Department of Education refers to as adequate yearly progress. Unfortunately, for many schools, current policy is forcing them to turn what could be an inspiring and enjoyable educational experience for many children into a narrow accountability-driven school culture that is alienating students and parents, and, by preparing students for a life of tests, and not the tests of life (Elias, 2001), demoralizing and driving good teachers away from the profession.

There are other indicators of the failure of the current U.S. education system. More than a quarter of our students on average are choosing to dropout out of school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The high rates of school failure and student dropout that plague many American cities and rural areas have a variety of repercussions. For example, a study of incarcerated black men born between 1965 and 1969 (based on administrative, survey, and census data) estimates that 60 percent of high school dropouts go to prison by the time they are thirty-five years old (Pettit & Western, 2004). As Darling-Hammond (2010) points out, failure in school feeds the school-to-prison pipeline.

Teachers also are affected by the current schooling environment. The U.S. is not retaining its best and brightest teachers. In the U.S., more than a third of new teachers leave the profession within three years of starting. Half of them must be replaced every five years (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 2008). Additionally, a great number of our best and experienced teachers are taking early retirement or leaving to pursue work in another field. Many of these once inspired educators are leaving because they feel under supported, unappreciated, and underpaid. They also report concern with student behavior problems and a dislike for how the current focus on standardized tests affects their curriculum choices, instruction, and classroom climate. Academic success is a worthy goal, but the steps being taken in the U.S. has not accomplished that goal, have not reduced achievement gaps, and have in
fact created unintended negative effects.

Because of the success U.S. higher education has had in producing top scientists and engineers for many years, it may be tempting to believe that this reflects positively on public education policy. The U.S. education system, however, is intended to provide a free compulsory education for all children, not just the children who are good test-takers or have promise to become scientists or engineers. Therefore, policy must guide education to prepare all students, regardless of their potential career or trade, for a fruitful and productive adulthood. Changes in the last decade emphasizing the importance of standardized student assessments as the primary measure of educational achievement have led to an imbalance in policy and practice that may threaten the core of public education.

To the degree that other nations share this one-sided approach to measuring academic outcomes, there may be wisdom in examining the value of prosocial education as a viable means to correct and expand the view of the purpose of education in democratic societies. If we continue to be consumed with standards-based testing as the policy-driven means for improving educational outcomes, we will continue to ignore the significant part that prosocial aspects of student development can have in effective education.

The prosocial education framework: Defining prosocial education

If we accept that education in America is at peril (Ravitch, 2010), what role can prosocial education play in promoting quality education? Education, like a coin, has two sides. In the same way that a coin must have a head and a tail, so too must education realize two goals one, that children learn, become critically knowledgeable, and achieve at a high level (the thrust of USA current education policy and funding), and two, that they develop into mature, productive, and ethical citizens (Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2011a, 2011b; Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989; Roesser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). Prosocial education, as we define it, is a new conceptual and theoretical approach that focuses on the latter goal to help reach both goals.

Although the word, “prosocial” or more specifically, the term prosocial behavior is already in use (Eisenberg & Eggum, 2008), it typically refers to the types of altruistic behaviors indicative of people with good character, a kind heart, or high moral standards. Prosocial education is broader and thus different from the psychological study of prosocial behavior and empathy development. Prosocial behavior is one aspect of human behavior influenced by our social environments, including schools. Research provides rich information about the developing child’s prosocial thinking, attitudes, and behavior (e.g., moral reasoning development, Colby & Kohlberg, 1987; social-emotional regulation, Hoffman, 2009); however, our psychological knowledge of children and young people is only one piece of the puzzle related to why we need to create schools that effectively promote and teach prosocial education.

Our definition of prosocial education is informed by a range of psychological, sociological, developmental, and educational theories and research (see Brown, Corrigan, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2012 for a detailed definition). As such, it is designed to assist policymakers and educators to build more comprehensive educational policies that utilize prosocial education theories, research, and practices to continually inform and guide both the academic and prosocial sides of the educational coin. For us, prosocial education refers to school processes, school climate and culture, and particular programs and
interventions, such as school improvement efforts; school diversity and multicultural education; character, moral, and values education; and civics and democratic education, that promote prosocial understanding and behaviors. More specifically, based on an extensive research review by Brown, Corrigan, and Higgins-D’Alessandro (2012), prosocial education is defined as:

- A critically important complement supporting the academic side of education such that the development of students’ prosocial development and academic learning are simultaneously facilitated (Camilleri, 2012; Schonert-Reichl & O’Brien, 2012).
- An educational view that embraces the call for a comprehensive approach to development that promotes children’s health and welfare, which includes intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, and civic development.
- An educational approach that creates improved learning environments (and promotes teachers’ and administrators’ development) so that students feel safe, respected, recognized and motivated so more are able to succeed academically (e.g., Elias, DeFini, & Bergmann, 2010; Gettinger & Stoiber, 1999).
- An educational effort that sets positive developmental trajectories for each student that enable them to live healthy, productive adult lives (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003; Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007; Sameroff, 2009).

It is a basic tenet of prosocial education that the dual goals of academic learning and the development of prosocial attitudes and behaviors should be united; thus, all education should facilitate and enhance learning as well as positive changes in students’ social abilities, ethical competence, and personal attributes that have long-term consequences for adult life. Education should also support and enhance not only teachers’ pedagogical understanding and skills but also their own development and autonomy as professionals and moral role models. The preoccupation with using standardized testing results to assess and guide the health and success of our school systems inhibits educators from focusing on the historic goals of U.S. public education that have made our system a successful part of the democratic experiment—that is, to create contributing citizens and a determined workforce with the skills and character to move our nation forward (Kidron & Osher, 2012; Straub, 2012).

How prosocial education works

The theoretical framework of prosocial education demonstrates the working facets of prosocial education as a new umbrella term that encompasses all that educators do to: (a) facilitate student development as productive, caring, civically-engaged citizens; (b) create effective classroom learning environments and positive school climates; (c) assess and guide the health and productivity of their school systems; and (d) contribute to the well-being and success of their students.

In the U.S., schools are social incubators where children often spend more than 8 hours a day. Such conditions mandate that schools provide the most positive learning and developmental environments possible. The supports at the heart of prosocial education are particularly important for students from stressed communities and home environments, students with disabilities, and students with limited
proficiency in the language of the country in which they reside. Although it has not been as apparent for nearly a century in the U.S., communities, neighborhoods, and informal apprenticeships used to carry much of the burden for socializing young people. In the past, it was common for the family, faith communities and early job experiences to offer them guidance and skills in teamwork, citizenship, moral decision making, and seeing the world from many points of view. Today, it becomes more and more the place of the school to do this work-to prepare young people for life (Greenberg et al., 2003; Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

Schools’ attempts to meet this challenge more recently during the last decade have for the most part not been successful because teaching life skills has no real place in a narrow, academic-only view of education (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Focusing on life skills means helping students think about what they want to achieve in life. It requires helping them think through the steps to successfully graduate from high school, what they want after graduation, and how they want to live as adults. Ultimately, this is the greatest source of equity.

What is included in prosocial education

Prosocial education is both a theoretical framework and an umbrella term. Under this umbrella we include any approach, process, intervention, or program that has as its main focus promoting and/or teaching the emotional, social, moral, and civic capacities that express character and develop increased autonomy, responsibility, sense of connectedness, sense of self, and sense of purpose. The extent of development and the full expression of these capacities from infancy to adulthood are heavily dependent upon the kinds of supportive and stimulating environments provided (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002; Dunn, Brown, & Beardsall, 1991; Eccles, Wigfield, Harold, & Blumenfeld, 1993).

Therefore, prosocial education includes conscious efforts to maximize aspects of school environments that positively affect and optimize the development of such capacities. The development of such capacities theoretically leads to deeper and broader expressions of attitudes, judgments, skills, and actions. Prosocial education utilizes socialization processes-such as trusting and respectful relationships and cooperative activities-building positive norms and expectations, perspective taking, and challenging discussions of civic and personal responsibilities, values, and dilemmas, to create both positive school climates and cultures and to promote student and teacher/staff development (Danielsen, Wiium, Wilhelmsen, & Wold, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Baratz-Snowden, 2007; Higgins-D’Alessandro, Guo, Sakwarawich, & Guffey, 2011; Weinstock, Assor, & Broide, 2009).

Prosocial education does not recommend a specific learning or teaching program or a set of learning or teaching strategies. Research on highly effective education (Corrigan, Grove, & Vincent, 2011) as well as educators’ stories of success (Brown, Corrigan, & D’Alessandro, 2012) document how best practices are most often intertwined with numerous interventions and active strategies, such as small group work, active discussion, experiments and active discovery learning, student led exercises, and other efforts. This is not an accident.

Prosocial educators know that active learning and teaching strategies are necessary for children and adolescents to use the social and personal strengths they are taught as well as to comprehend and reflect on them, thus strengthening the chance of using them in future situations. Therefore, these educators
believe that academic knowledge is only truly comprehended when it is debated and critiqued, and its implications are drawn out and connected to daily life, historical examples, or compared cross-culturally. Rote memory plays a small role; but it is the most widely used approach to teaching, especially for test preparation. Of greater importance is teaching students to think critically in scientific inquiry and mathematical analysis, to read well and insightfully, and to recall history correctly and comprehend how historical events play multiple complex roles in shaping current societies and thought.

Evidence of the effectiveness of prosocial education

The potential contribution of prosocial education to better educational outcomes is grounded in research. From the 1980’s until recently, most school-based intervention research in the U.S. was focused on preventing or reducing negative behaviors such as aggression, disruption, truancy, and others. A review of 73 studies about universal school-based, social information processing interventions focused on reducing aggressive and disruptive behavior of school-age children reported overall positive effects from the interventions for students (Wilson & Lipsey, 2006a). Similar results were reported in a review of 47 studies of social information processing interventions implemented as pullout services for at-risk students and students with chronic behavior problems (Wilson & Lipsey, 2006b). A research synthesis found that, in general, such programs are effective at reducing the rates of bullying incidents (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

A meta-analysis by Garrard and Lipsey (2007) focused on conflict resolution education (CRE) programs, covering the period from 1960 to 2006 and including both published and unpublished studies, showed consistent declines in antisocial behavior regardless of whether the students were exposed to direct CRE skills instruction, embedded CRE curriculum, or some form of peer mediation. An earlier published meta-analysis of 38 studies of social skills training programs showed an overall moderate positive effect on student outcomes (Ang & Hughes, 2001). Other research shows how service-learning projects offer students the opportunity to contribute to the school and the larger community. By giving back to their communities, students also build their own social-emotional skills, perspective-taking, and character values. Benefits of service learning may include better ethical reasoning, character values, higher self-esteem, and healthier life habits and choices (Deakin Crick et al., 2005; Irby, Ferber, & Pittman, 2001; Lerner, Lerner, Phelps, & colleagues, 2008; Michelsen, Zaff, & Hair, 2002). Also, social-emotional learning supplemented by a classroom environment and school climate that are sensitive to race, gender, and cultural factors and that promote bonding to school as well as personal growth have consistently shown promise in developing student self-discipline (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010).

Considerable research evidence suggests that educators and decision makers have meaningful choices when selecting, adapting, or designing school-based programming to improve student behavior. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (Payton et al., 2008) conducted a meta-analysis of evaluations of 180 universal (programs for any and all students) social-emotional learning programs. Students demonstrated increased social-emotional skills, more positive attitudes toward self and others, more positive social behaviors, fewer conduct problems, lower levels of emotional distress, and better academic performance. These researchers also conducted a meta-analysis
of 80 evaluations of indicated programs (programs for special populations of students). Results showed that the magnitude of the positive effects was larger for all examined outcomes when compared to universal programs. In other words, tailored interventions for students who are most in need for support appear to be effective for helping troubled students adapt and become more prosocial.

According to the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) at the U.S. Institute of Educational Sciences, rigorous research on character education programs generally shows a statistically significant positive impact on a variety of student-level outcomes, including prosocial behavior, moral and ethical reasoning, and values. Another research review by Berkowitz and Bier (2006) showed an even more promising picture of evidence for prosocial education. Of 33 programs reviewed, 26 were rated as having moderate or strong evidence for the positive impact of one or more prosocial competency outcomes. Moreover, nearly two-thirds of these 26 programs with positive effects on prosocial competencies showed an impact specifically on prosocial behaviors and attitudes such as sense of social responsibility, keeping commitments, respect and tolerance, caring and concern for others, teamwork and cooperation, helping others, empathy, and sharing.

The Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (2013) at the University of Colorado at Boulder designed and launched the Blueprints for Violence Prevention Initiative in 1996 to identify and replicate effective youth violence prevention programs. The positive outcomes from the programs studied include higher-quality relationships with parents and peers, better school attendance and homework completion, significant improvements in the social climate of the class improved understanding of emotions, increased ability to tolerate frustration, use of more effective conflict-resolution strategies, and improved thinking and planning skills (Tolan & Guerra, 1998).

A final example of research on prosocial education is the life skills training approach that has been extensively evaluated in a number of studies utilizing rigorous research designs, including several large-scale, multisite randomized and controlled trials. These studies have shown consistent positive effects, both immediate and long term (Botvin, Griffin, & Nichols, 2006; Spoth, Randall, Trudeau, Shin, & Redmond, 2008).

In summary, research on different kinds of interventions focus on a generally shared set of student outcomes; this is evidence of the need and usefulness of adopting the prosocial concept as an organizing umbrella term and interpretive framework. For instance, this short summary from diverse interventions highlights their shared positive results, thus creating a stronger basis for educational policy than any one kind of intervention can demonstrate on its own.

**Parent involvement**

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the group that administers the PISA interviewed the parents of 5,000 students in 18 countries about how their children were raised. The OECD study found that the prosocial education variable of parent engagement is strongly associated with better performance on PISA (OECD, 2011, p. 1). Even when comparing students of similar socioeconomic backgrounds, those students whose parents regularly read books to them when they were in the first year of primary school scored 14 points higher, on average, than students whose parents did not. They also found that students did better in school when their parents care
enough to ask how their child’s day was as well as discuss with their children political or social issues, books, movies, television programs, or school activities. The more involved the parents were, the smaller the test score gap between those of lower socioeconomic status and others.

According to the University of New Hampshire (2008), in order to experience the same achievement results gained by parent involvement, schools would have to increase per-student spending by more than 1,000 U.S. dollars. Such an increase cannot be paid by most countries, and is quite unrealistic in the U.S. as well. Research suggests that there is a significant, positive relationship between parent involvement and student educational experiences, including improved academic outcomes (Barton & Coley, 2007; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

Parent and community involvement activities associated with student learning have a greater effect on academic achievement than general forms of involvement (e.g., volunteering in school, event attendance) (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). More specifically, parental involvement has an even greater impact when the involvement revolves around specific academic topics such as mathematics (Sheldon & Epstein, 2005). Such increased parental involvement has an impact on secondary students (Tonn, 2005) and an even greater impact in some circumstances on elementary students (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2003; McNeal, 1999).

Research also shows that parents or guardians who are more involved in their child’s education better understand the social-emotional learning and socialization challenges their children encounter and can meaningfully complement teachers’ efforts to get students to be more engaged and reduce behaviors that create barriers to effective instruction and learning (Spoth, Randall, & Shin, 2008). As Boethel (2003) explains, “Relationships are the foundation of parent involvement in schools” (p. 71). Focusing on evidence-based practices related to the many social variables such as parental involvement is what prosocial education aims to bring to the educational practice and policy table a way to bring the social side of education once again to the forefront of educational efforts. The prosocial conceptual framework has the power to align a wide array of educational efforts through strong evaluation methods to identify effective mechanisms that undergird and promote positive classroom and school environments, teaching effectiveness, parental involvement, and optimal student development and learning.

Policy recommendations

If citizens truly want their nations to have schools that support the development of compassionate, engaged, and productive adults they must consider embracing and adding to current education policy what research shows to be sound directions that support educators helping students and their families experience success in preparing students personally and socially, as well as academically, to thrive and contribute to their societies. Focusing on prosocial education to improve aptitudes and attitudes essential to higher achievement means focusing on the development of the whole child, creating safe and socially and emotionally supportive climates, and engaging parents and communities to become more involved.

This is a formula that evidence shows will work, especially if coupled with efforts to eliminate the inequities in access to educational resources that also lead to poor schooling outcomes. Increasing the sophistication and quantity of standardized testing is an inadequate strategy for directing educational reform and supporting gains in student academic achievement. If policy makers continue this strict focus
on testing without re-engaging common sense and placing an equal focus on prosocial education, it is not only likely that student achievement goals will be unreachable, but also there is a risk that the broader developmental needs of children will not be met.

In order to take advantage of the transformative power of the prosocial side of the education coin to drive comprehensive school reform, the following are key points and recommendations for action (Brown & Elias, 2012):

- All educational policies should foster schools that are safe, humane, respectful, and caring for both students and school staff because all human beings have intrinsic worth and should be treated with dignity, not be abused, neglected or over controlled.
- All educational policies should promote, not hinder, the fullest development of each child’s social, emotional, self-regulatory, and cognitive abilities and skills.
- Educational policies must be based on scientific evidence.
- Schools should adopt a collaboratively shaped and coherent prosocial mission.
- Prosocial education should be embraced as a critical and integral part of all school reform and renewal efforts.
- Education policy and practice must acknowledge and support the importance of school and classroom climate in achieving both whole child development and academic achievement.
- Prosocial education implementation strategies should be linked to measurable developmental outcomes, among them, self-regulation, reflection, perspective taking, empathy, and personal and interpersonal problem-solving.
- Pre-service teacher preparation and continuing education should be provided for educators, school staff and administrators based on theory, research, and evidence-based practices that are foundational for both social and academic development.

Contemporary debates regarding control of educational policy in the U.S. and many other countries draw their intensity from a complex mix of history, politics, and economics, relatively uniformed by research or validated practice. Prosocial education seeks to reverse this trend. It has a solid foundation in research and requires a renewed commitment to providing educators time to focus on broader goals of child development, with the resulting policies less focused on compliance centered on achievement scores (Brown et al., 2012).

For the good of civilization, the goals of prosocial education are worth pursuing. If the moral and social development of the world’s children are not as worthy of attention as our often parochial drive for academic success in the service of economic productivity, we will inadvertently foster the kind of cultural impoverishment and ethical misconduct that undermines the ability of our nations to thrive and to cooperate for a more healthy and peaceful world. Why should we settle for anything less than what is appropriate for our children to thrive in the 21st century and beyond?
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References


Restructuring the concept of character education and policy in Korea

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Abstract

Raising children with good character has been a major goal for public education for the past 60 years in Korea. Contrary to their excellence in academic achievement, Korean students are at risk in their character development, including social and emotional skills. The primary purpose of this paper is to suggest the new concept of character education and strategies to implement policies successfully. To do so, the paper examines historical contexts of character education and related policy, and previous concepts of character education. Then, the paper globally explores what key competencies are considered important in constructing the new concept of character education and suggesting applicable policy strategies. A new concept of character education is proposed, consisting of three dimensions and six elements; social awareness and interpersonal skills in the social dimension, self-awareness and self-management for the emotional dimension, and core value awareness and responsible decision-making for the ethical dimension. Finally, policy implications for the newly-defined character education are suggested, including competence-based curriculum reform, improvement of the teacher training system, strong partnerships among schools, families, and communities, and modification of high school and college admission systems, as well as the hiring system.

Keywords: character, character education, social and emotional skills, ethical competence, school violence
Introduction

Korean students are known worldwide for their intellectual excellence in international tests. The results of the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA 2009) of the OECD, for example, show that Korean students have high intellectual levels, ranking first in reading, first in math, and third in science (OECD, 2010). Contrary to their academic excellence, students’ attitudes toward learning and social-emotional interaction skills show quite a different picture. Korean students approached their math and science studies with less interest and confidence in spite of their high scores, ranking lowest in learning attitudes in PISA 2009 (Kim, Si, et al., 2010). In addition, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study placed Korean students 35th out of 36 countries in the ability to live harmoniously with diverse neighbors (Kim, Jang, Jo, & Park, 2010).

Many other statistics give a warning signal that Korea’s education is failing in raising democratic citizens with good character. For example, 12.3% of students were victims of school related violence; 46% of these victims suffered from physical violence, verbal abuse, and extortion of valuables, 34.9% experienced cyber bullying, and 20.7% received sexual insults (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MEST], 2012). What is more problematic is that students have a tendency to use violence for fun or remain silent even after witnessing violent scenes. Regrettably, the collapse of teacher authority has accelerated so seriously that more teachers may face violence, harassment and verbal abuse from their students (Ko, 2012). In addition, suicide was the primary cause of mortality among young people, 209 students left school permanently every day, 40% of teenagers were exposed to harmful media contents, 10.4% showed symptoms of internet addiction (Statistics Korea, 2012), and 80.3% of students have used swear words or threatening expressions at least once or twice a day (Jang et al., 2011).

In response to this crisis in Korean education, the government introduced policy measures to strengthen character education and to reduce school violence, such as the Character Enhancement Plan in 2011, Schools with No Violence and Bullying in 2011, and others. In reality, however, most schools neglected character education or did it perfunctorily, at best. Students are still at risk of poor character development, as reflected in the latest statistics. Why have government policy efforts not been successful in building good character and preventing school violence?

Earlier literature insisted that such failure was strongly associated with the particularity of Korean socio-culture. Korean society emphasizes educational background and academic ability (Cha, Kwak, Park, & Choi, 2012). Given such a socio-cultural context, schools are forced to give less priority to character education and students also are indifferent to their character development because it is not an important factor in admissions decisions for their subsequent educational institutions. Schooling focuses on preparing for the college entrance exam and Korean students battle to get higher scores for the better universities (Lee & Shouse, 2011). In addition, teachers tend to avoid taking on student discipline, corresponding with the demise of teachers’ authority at school (B. Kim, 2012). Families and the community also tend to treat students according to the level of their grades, rather than the level of their character development.

On the other hand, little is known about whether the concept of character education to guide school education and policy development would be appropriate in terms of key competencies that are believed to be critical for a successful life in 21st century Korean society (Cha, 2012). Indeed, an absence of agreed meaning of character education contributed to the ineffectiveness of its implementation in
schools and to the coherence of policy efforts. As a result, the contents of character education vary
according to schools and teachers, and even teachers tend to confuse character education for discipline
(Cha, 2012; Lee, 2012). Many schools and teachers regard character education as checking students for
appropriate dress or hairstyles.

Given this diverse understanding, the primary purpose of this paper is to suggest a new concept of
character education to guide policy development for better and more uniform character education in
schools. To provide basic directions of, and strategies for successful policy implementation, the paper
first examines historical contexts of character education and policies. This is followed by an exploration
of the key competencies essential for a new concept of character education, and concludes with a set of
policy implications.

A background of character education and policy in Korea

Character education has been a key goal of the national curriculum for the past 60 years since the
liberation from Japan’s colonial rule. However, what it has been called has varied: “humanitarianism,”
“human education,” “whole-person education,” “creativity and character education,” etc. In particular,
the so-called May 31st Educational Reform of 1995 presented explicitly that the primary goal of
elementary and middle school education was to develop every student’s potential and talents by creating
education systems that increase one’s character (moral, social, and emotional) and creativity, and value
one’s individuality (Y. Kim, 2006; Shin, 2005). The 2009 National Curriculum also placed great
emphasis on creativity and character education by presenting 4 models; developing one’s own career
path and character, displaying one’s creativity with new ideas and challenges, making one’s own life
while respecting cultural diversity, participating in a local and global society with the spirit of caring and
sharing (Hur, 2012).

Under the revised national curriculum, every school in Korea includes character development in its
educational goals. However, there were shortcomings in how character education was carried out. In
general, it was mainly performed in lecture-oriented classes, usually in social studies or ethics (Cha, 2012).
Students were taught concepts such as caring for others, cooperation, honesty, and responsibility, but failed
to adopt and embody them. Because of its unimportance in students’ admission to secondary and tertiary
education, both teachers and students are likely to regard character education as dull and trite.

In addition, there were too many virtues taught in character education in schools, and their
meanings were often ambiguous. More than fifty virtues have been taught in classes under the name of
character education; for example, honesty, trust, care, share, communication, cooperation, empathy,
sympathy, academic curiosity, devotion, efficacy, freedom, challenge, criticism, tolerance, respect,
patience, flexibility, peace, equality, responsibility, creativity, harmony, independence, adaptability,
justice, sensitivity, uprightness, citizenship, generosity, participation, coexistence, fairness, sincerity,
diligence, and so on (Cha, 2012). This resulted in much variation in the content of character education.

Recently, some students were killed from school violence and bullying (Koo, 2011). The entire
country was shocked and a joint committee reporting to the Prime Minster came up with a comprehensive measure, General Measures to Eradicate School Violence, in 2012 (Joint Committee of School Violence, 2012). The measures include how to deal with aggressors and victims of school violence, establishment of emergency “117” calls and closed-circuit television in schools, and deployment of counselors and police officers in schools. Although the comprehensive policy was enacted, school violence did not decrease, and character development was not achieved as expected. Heavy criticisms were levied that the measure was a short-term response, focusing on administrative processing procedures for school violence cases (Lee, 2012). In other words, the policy lacked a long-term plan to cultivate good characters of democratic citizens for our future society.

Under these contexts, many educators and policymakers in Korea have claimed that character education should be fundamentally restructured. The first step should be a thorough review of previous concepts of character education (Cha et al, 2012). It should also include what competencies are considered most important for future societies globally.

Lessons from previous concepts of character education

Defining character is the first step in discussing character education. Character has been used interchangeably with individuality, personality, humanity, human nature, and morality. Some scholars put more emphasis on psychological attributes, such as individuality and personality, and others stress humanity and character reflected in beliefs, culture, and values (Hyun, Choi, Cha, Ryo, & Lee, 2009). In the 1990s, such virtues as civic consciousness, respect for others, self-respect, work ethics, and patriotism were included in a range of character elements (Greenawalt, 1996; Jo, Kim, Lim, Shin, Jo, & Kim, 1998). Early in 2000, the Josephson Institute, a nonprofit organization in the U.S. devoted to youths’ character education, presented the six pillars of trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship (Josephson, 2002).

More recently, Kang and colleagues (2008) categorized character as relationship skills, morality, well roundedness, spirituality, creativity, and democratic citizenship. Their view is consistent with that of Davidson, Lickona, and Khmelkov (2008), who contributed the conceptual terms ‘moral character’ and ‘performance character.’ The first means “qualities needed for successful interpersonal relationships and ethical conduct,” while the second means “qualities needed to realize one’s potential for excellence in any performance environment” (pp. 373-4). For example, performance character includes such qualities as diligence, perseverance, self-discipline, and a positive attitude; moral character includes justice, respect, cooperation, caring, and the like. Much variation in the definition and its elements of character comes from disagreeing on a set of character attributes that should be possessed by individuals as a function of particular times, contextual events, or societal histories. However, it could be agreed that there are character qualities useful to society in general, and emphases on these could be changeable through education as circumstances dictate.

Unlike controversy in the concept of character, character education appears to be loosely defined as deliberate efforts to help children internalize core ethical values and behave in socially acceptable ways (Table 1).
Table 1. Existing definitions of character education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research</th>
<th>Definitions of character education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lickona (1993)</td>
<td>Character education is the deliberate effort to develop good character based on core virtues that are good for the individual and good for society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoge (2002)</td>
<td>Character education involves a conscious effort to influence the development of desirable individual qualities or traits. There are widely shared core ethical values that schools must explicitly encourage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davidson, Lickona, &amp; Khmelkov (2008)</td>
<td>Character education is defined as the intentional integration of excellence and ethics—the systematic effort to develop performance character, moral character through every phase of school life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Department of Education (2008)</td>
<td>Character education is a learning process to make students understand core moral values such as respect, justice, civic virtue, and responsibility and behave in such a way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hyun, Choi, Cha, Ryo, &amp; Lee (2009)</td>
<td>Character education is teaching thoughts and behaviors that help one live and work together as a member of family, friend, neighbor, community, and country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of content areas, earlier concepts of character education were focused on transmitting core moral values. Core moral value-oriented character education, however, has some limitations. First of all, as implied earlier, it is hard to reach agreement as to which qualities are taught. In this regard, Cha (2007) criticized character education in Korea as focused on personal/psychological-oriented character. He argued that students should be trained to infer and behave appropriately, based on the facts and evidence of ethical and civil problems. Furthermore, there is little agreement on the appropriate level of particular virtues and the extent to which they should be taught. It is also hard to measure effectiveness of character education programs when character lacks behavioral definition.

In a meta-analysis of 73 character education programs for the prior 25 years in the U.S, Berkowitz and Bier (2007) found that only 33 programs were effective in reducing risky behaviors, improving prosocial behaviors, skills for school, and social and emotional skills. They also found that 27 of the classified effective programs had some form of main curriculum related to social and emotional skills, problem-solving and decision-making, with fewer explicitly grounded in core moral virtues. Berkowitz and Bier also found that effective programs had delivery strategies in common, such as interactive teaching methods (versus a predominance of lecturing), integrating character education and competencies into other subject areas or programs out of schools, professional training for a school program coordinator, and attempts to secure participation of family and community.

Character competencies required in the 21st century and beyond

Futurists and entrepreneurs commonly point out that future society demands not only intellectual capacity, but also key competencies, such as caring for others, cooperation, communication skills, empathy, honesty, responsibility, creativity, and passion. According to Daniel Pink (2005), the 21st century is for people who have “high concept and high touch,” for example, creative people, people with empathy skills, people who can give meaning. The former CEO of Apple Inc., Steve Jobs, emphasized teamwork and sincere responsibility in a Smithsonian interview in 1995:

“In our business, one person can’t do anything anymore. You create a team of people around you.
You have a responsibility of integrity of work to that team. Everybody does try to turn out the best work that they can” (Beahm, 2011, p. 72).

In addition, the Defining and Selecting Key Competencies (DeSeCo) project, carried out by OECD from 1997 to 2003, suggests three skills using tools interactively, acting autonomously, and interacting in heterogeneous groups as key competencies to be successful in family and school life, and in the work place (OECD, 2005).

Global trends toward a competence-based curriculum

Based on the results of DeSeCo project, some countries and states have implemented competence-oriented curricula (Table 2). Competencies of interest appear to be similar across the globe. Intellectual competencies are included, and social and emotional competencies are emphasized. Basic learning, thinking skills, application of numbers, using language, symbol, and text problem-solving could be classified into intellectual competence. Interpersonal skills, communication skills, cooperation with others, and cultural attainment belong to social competence. Self-awareness, self-management, feeling and expression fall into the emotional competence domain.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/State</th>
<th>Key competencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Communication skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Application of numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information-technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Learning and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bremen, Germany</td>
<td>Personal competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-awareness and talent development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling, expression, and creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Methodological competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basic learning competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural attainment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning, organization, and execution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Career and lifelong education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication and sympathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Respect, care, and teamwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using information-technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Active inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking and problem-solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal and social competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quebec, Canada</td>
<td>Methodological competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communication competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>Using language, symbols, and text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria, Australia</td>
<td>Interpersonal relationship development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information-technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thinking skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lee, Jeon, Huh, Hong, & Kim, 2009, p. 103.

Furthermore, Kansas, Illinois, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Iowa in the U.S. are striving to present curriculum standards of social, emotional, and character development. In particular, the social
and emotional learning (SEL) standards of Illinois have been developed in partnership with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (cf. www.CASEL.org for information about SEL standards in the United States).

Social and emotional learning skills

More emphasis is being put on practice-oriented character education rather than intellectually-oriented education as bullying, suicide, dropouts, and delinquency are increasing in the U.S. In addition, building social and emotional learning competencies is being stressed to solve everyday school behavior and mental health problems, and guarantee some accountability (Zins, Payton, Weissberg, & Utne-O’Brien, 2007). Shelton and Stern (2003) pointed out that many of the problems at schools are caused by the disharmony of social and emotional skills and, as a result, too many students have suffered. Hence, more prevention is needed.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2003) has identified five key competencies of social and emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Self-awareness refers to recognizing one’s emotions and values, as well as one’s strengths and having self-efficacy and confidence; self-management refers to managing impulse, stress and setting goals and motivating oneself to achieve them; social awareness means showing understanding and empathy for others; relationship skills are cooperating and communicating with others; and responsible decision making is assessing and reflecting on oneself and behaving responsibly. Broken down into more specific social and emotional competencies, healthy character development and success in life require: “Knowing and managing one’s emotions, listening and communicating carefully and accurately, recognizing strengths in self and others, showing ethical and social responsibility, greeting, approaching, and conversing with diverse others, taking other perspectives, perceiving others’ feelings accurately, respecting others, setting adaptive goals, solving problems and making decisions effectively, cooperating, leading a team and being an effective team member, negotiating and managing conflicts peacefully, building constructive, mutual, ethical relationship seeking and giving help” (Elias, 2009, p. 834).

It is encouraging that social and emotional learning programs based on these competencies are implemented in over 1,400 schools in 8 states in the U.S. at the time writing, with the number still growing dramatically. It appears that SEL programs are effective not only in reducing such school problems but also improving academic achievement (Elias, 2009). Internationally, Singapore, England, Israel, Austria, Sweden, and the Netherlands are participating in these efforts (cf. www.CASEL.org).

These global efforts to raise democratic citizens with key character competencies have begun to inspire Korean educators and policy makers to gather public opinion on directions and strategies of character education to prepare society for the future. For example, Lee et al. (2009) conducted research on this topic with the support of the Korean government. Based on a Delphi survey with 52 experts on curriculum, three domains and 10 core competencies were identified: self-management, basic learning, career development (personal competence), communication, citizenship, interpersonal relations, understanding cultural diversity(social competence), creativity, problem-solving, and information-technology (intellectual competence).
Restructuring the concept of character education

Since human beings do not live in isolation, the concept of character should include competencies that are required to live in harmony with others. This is an area that Korea’s education has neglected.

Based on the above review of character and character education, the study proposes several elements as critical to a new definition of character education. It should be focused on social, emotional, and ethical dimensions of competencies, contrary to knowledge-and virtue-oriented character education in the past. Unlike learning about universal values and ethics as a subject, character education should be focused on practical teaching of the key competencies required to succeed in school, family, community, work, and the global society.

Core competencies should be teachable and measurable. This suggests that character education programs should be developed by grade or age and character development level of students. The effectiveness of the programs should be assessed in reliable and valid ways. Furthermore, character achievement should be used as a criterion for admissions when students advance to another school. Finally, the new definition of character education should be accountable for reducing school problems such as bullying, school violence, delinquency, and maladjusted behaviors. In addition, it should contribute to making a safe school environment and a positive effect on academic achievement, and helping develop creativity.

Based on these guidelines, the new definition of character education, as seen in Figure 1, is composed of three dimensions-social, emotional, and ethical-with each dimension further categorized into two elements. These elements are not exclusive, but are mutually related.

The social dimension is made up of social awareness and interpersonal skills. Social awareness indicates competence in understanding other people’s thoughts, emotions, and perspectives in various places and situations. For example, students with social awareness are able to know and perceive the feelings of others by looking at faces or talking with them, and to understand and respect differences of race, gender, academic background, and socioeconomic status. Students with interpersonal skills are able to communicate, negotiate, and cooperate to maintain satisfactory relationships with others, and to recognize a problematic social situation and look for possible causes and optimal solutions. It is expected that social awareness and interpersonal skills help with the development of virtues such as empathy, communication, caring, cooperation, trust, respect, service, generosity, manners. Particularly, considering the excessive competition, school violence, and intense polarization of income in Korean society, communication and empathy should be emphasized and developed in the social dimension.

The emotional dimension is composed of self-awareness and self-management. Self-awareness refers to understanding accurately and appropriately expressing one’s own thoughts and emotions in various situations and recognizing one’s own strengths and weaknesses, interests and abilities. Self-awareness is the key element of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). Self-management refers to managing stress, controlling impulses, and setting goals and controlling one’s thoughts and behavior to achieve them. Korean students are not willing to show their emotions under the Confucian culture and they also are suffering from their heavy load of study and stress from examinations. Under these circumstances, it is crucial initially to build emotional competencies and develop such virtues as autonomy and positive attitudes. Meanwhile, self-awareness and self-management are prerequisite skills to empathize with others and maintain good relationships. In turn, emotional competencies are likely to be positively reinforced through rich experiences of good social relationships. As stated earlier, the skills within and between the social and emotional dimensions are mutually related and interactive.
The ethical dimension is made up of core value awareness and responsible decision-making. Core value awareness refers to the competencies of understanding and recognizing moral values required at school, in the family, and at the workplace like honesty, sincerity, and respect. Responsible decision-making is reflected in the competencies of avoiding risky and unethical behaviors, making reasonable and moral decisions, and taking responsibility for one’s own judgments and decisions. One may want to cheat on an exam to get good grades, or one may want to bully or steal. In these situations, moral judgment is needed to make the right decision, which would be developed through training to develop such competencies. Moreover, the competencies in the moral dimension are necessary to help one properly and ethically use social and emotional skills. For instance, one has the ability to recognize other people’s emotions, but could misuse that ability by bullying or cheating them, if one lacked moral competence. Although there are many virtues related to the moral dimension, the present study puts more emphasis on honesty and responsibility, considering grade- and exam-oriented school life. The three dimensions, competencies, and core values discussed above are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3. The dimension and element of new character education in Korea

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Competencies</th>
<th>Core values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Social awareness</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>Autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical</td>
<td>Core ethical value awareness</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. A new concept of character education in Korea
Policy implications of newly-defined character education

Character education in schools and policy measures have been unsuccessful to date in Korea. Many statistics show that more and more students are at increasing risk for difficulties in character development. What would be necessary to put the newly defined perspective on character education into actual and effective practice? We now present some key strategies to do so.

First, the current 2009 national curriculum needs to be reformed to reflect the new concept of character education. To do so, character competencies should be gradually integrated as subject knowledge within all academic subjects, where possible, including Korean language, arts, social studies and ethics. Ultimately, a separate subject area that is fully devoted to character education should be established at each grade. This will allow students to learn and develop their character competencies systematically and continuously. In addition, the new curriculum should include national standards of the curriculum and programs so that students’ progress in character development could be evaluated with reliable and valid measures. In doing so, each student’s character development could be used in the admissions process for high schools and universities.

Second, pedagogical methods must be changed. The new concept of character education would not be successful with the existing knowledge-, lecture-, and teacher-centered classes during the course of the school day. Practice- and experience-, and student-centered classes in and out of school are essential. Character education and programs should provide a variety of live experiences in everyday life situations. As Berkowitz and Bier (2007) identified, students will learn better through practical experiences with helping, caring, solving problems, respecting, reconciling, and cooperating in home, school, and community.

Third, the Korean teacher training system should be modified and fit for the new curriculum and instruction in character education. Teacher training institutes should establish a series of courses for prospective and current teachers, drawing upon approaches being developed by CASEL and the Center for Human and Social Development at the College of Saint Elizabeth in the United States (www.cse.edu). Teachers will learn content knowledge, pedagogical methods, and evaluation related to character competencies. These courses should be compulsory to get a teacher certificate and promotion.

Fourth, strong partnerships among schools, families and communities are essential so that students could put what they learn in schools into action in their lives (Epstein, 2001). To do so, respectful relationships among students, parents, and teachers should be established, considering the serious collapse of teacher authority in Korea. For example, some programs that teachers attend with students and parents, and with teacher-parent consulting sessions, either in person or online will be useful to improve relationships. In addition, community resources maps can be made to locate and access outreach programs in the community for character development.

Last, high school and college admissions and hiring systems should take into consideration character development as a vital element. Now, approximately 7% of high schools, 62.5% of four-year colleges, and a few companies include character development as a criterion of evaluation (Ministry of Education, 2013). This needs to improve. Recently, some self-directed learning admissions systems for high schools and admission officer systems for universities have been instituted in Korea. These admissions systems were designed to select students by putting more weight on their potential and character development than academic reports at middle school and college scholastic aptitude tests. In the self-directed learning admissions process, the weight of character development element is usually up
to 20% of the total score. In addition, 12% of the students were selected through the college entrance officer system in 2012. The number of high schools and companies that consider character development and emphasize its weight in admission and hiring process should be extended to intensify the new concept of character education in Korea.

In conclusion, character education is one of the biggest challenges Korea’s education faces today. Despite government policy efforts, there is little evidence that school violence was reduced and furthermore student’s character development was improved. A new concept of character education and policy strategies suggested in the study would be expected to solve the crisis of character education and prepare for the future society.

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References


Restructuring the concept of character education and policy in Korea


Promoting emotional, social and civic competencies: Educational policies in Spain

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Abstract

This article analyzes Spain’s educational policies in terms of emotional, social, and civic competencies. The need to teach these competencies at school is justified socially and pedagogically, and the way in which these competencies are implemented in Spanish and European school curricula is described. Spain’s main political actions to promote social-emotional education are then described. The article concludes that for these programs to be effective, they must overcome a double challenge related to the practical implementation of competence-based curricula and transversal competencies assessment. Consequently, Europe as well as Spain must redouble their efforts (economic, instrumental, and in terms of assessment) to achieve their educational goals.

Keywords: comprehensive education, social-emotional competencies, civic competencies, learning for well-being, educational policy
Introduction

School and the activities carried out within it are meant, in theory, to promote a person’s development as a whole. From its very origin, school was conceived as a social institution in charge of educating younger generations in a comprehensive way. This training was meant to foster human development by educating people intellectually, morally and civicly. That is to say, comprehensive education was meant to cultivate personal and social maturity in young people.

School is influenced by other social systems operating at various ecological levels. These include direct agents, such as family and teachers, and more indirect agents, such as the State, with its political actions. Also influential are social networks, media, and new and evolving means for accessing information.

While school assumes responsibility, in theory, for promoting and structuring learning opportunities that will lead to the social and personal maturity of children and young people, today’s schools are limited in their ability to satisfy this educational objective due to cultural changes in 21st Century society. This means that comprehensive education, in practice, is often reduced to a mere declaration of principles, and political-educational objectives are not easily translated into something practical. A clear example of this is learning to become humanized in the modern sense of the term. That is to say, to ensure all students are provided with the types of learning that are most closely related to the construction of individual, social, and moral character, which is the goal of social, emotional, and civic development (SECD), or, using the terminology that is becoming more common in Europe and Spain: “learning for well-being” (L4WB) and “emotional, social and civic competencies” (ESCC).

Traditionally, Western schools have not delved into or focused enough on educating moral feelings and human emotions, mostly due to cultural reasons. On the contrary, education in Western countries has focused more on a person’s intellectual and academic training, following the scholastic model of Western European culture.

School as a Western institution has been faithful to rationalism. It comes as no surprise that the education model that has been practiced in Europe from modernity onwards has prioritized the education of reason over and above emotion or feelings. Likewise, it comes as no surprise that by being faithful to its rationalistic logic, it has prioritized logical intelligence over and above intuitive intelligence. In the same way, in accordance with the values of Western culture, it has prioritized personal autonomy and responsibility values in the education of character, while underestimating the values of cooperation and co-responsibility. Thus, the way comprehensive education has been carried out since the onset of modernity has neglected affective and moral education in favor of intellectual education. Paradoxically, it has also reinforced individualism by focusing excessively on the “subject” at the expense of inter-subjective and relational experience, which is so important in terms of a person’s social and civic maturity.

The sphere of social, personal, and moral development has always been present at school as an educational objective. Likewise, educating the character as a whole is an educational goal that has been mentioned explicitly in education legislation. Nevertheless, putting this into practice has often been left to the teachers and the school’s good will. Thus, comprehensive character education has been more of an intention than a reality (Darder Vidal & Bach Cobacho, 2006; Núñez Cubero, Bisquerra Alzina, González Monteagudo & Gutiérrez Moar, 2006). However, comprehensive character education is now a
necessity, due to the educational and other challenges posed by today’s society. These challenges arise from the new social dynamics in our Society of Knowledge, which affect teaching and learning, well-being, lifestyles, civic life, and the labor market. These challenges more than justify the need to systematically incorporate an education model that promotes human development by focusing on emotional, civic and moral education (Ten Dam & Volman, 2007).

ESCC/L4WB and social outcomes

According to various International and European reports, we need to pay more attention to this other form of education that deals with young people’s volitional, moral, and emotional dimensions. The Delors Report (Delors, 1996) by UNESCO proposed an holistic and integrated vision of education, based on the paradigms of lifelong learning and the four pillars of learning:

- Learning to know, by combining a broad knowledge with the opportunity to work in depth on a small number of subjects.
- Learning to do, to acquire occupational skills and the competence to deal with many situations and work in teams.
- Learning to live together, by developing an understanding of other people and an appreciation of interdependence, learning to manage conflicts, in a spirit of respect for the values of pluralism, mutual understanding and peace.
- Learning to be, by being able to act with autonomy, judgment and personal and social responsibility.

The relevance of emotional, social and civic learning to compulsory schooling also was highlighted by the OECD in 2003 as a positive way to increase the sense of belonging and engagement of students towards school and learning. The OECD, through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) concluded that in every country, there was a substantial number of youths who were disengaged from school at the critical period when they were completing their final years of compulsory schooling (OECD, 2003). Some disaffected students are disruptive in class, and exert a negative influence on other students. To the extent that a sense of belonging and participation is important to schooling and positive social outcomes, OECD suggested different ways that school policy and practice could reduce student disaffection, such as through stronger practical literacy skills, school-based prevention programmes based on emotional skills, and school policies and practices that increase the sense of belonging and participation of disengaged students (OECD, 2003).

In 2010, the OECD published the International Report “Improving health and social cohesion through education” (OECD, 2010). The report found that education has the potential to promote health as well as civic and social engagement. Education may reduce inequalities by fostering cognitive, social and emotional skills and by promoting healthy lifestyles and participatory practices and norms.

More recently, the OECD has insisted on the importance of education in promoting well-being and social progress (OECD, 2012a, 2012b). It noted, “education empowers individuals by increasing their knowledge and their cognitive and emotional skills, as well improving attitudes towards lifestyles and active citizenship” (OECD, 2012a, p. 93) and foundations skills have a profound relationship with
economic and social outcomes across a wide range of contexts and institutions” (OECD, 2012b, p. 4).

That requires curricular reform based on essential competencies, such as basic cognitive skills, positive attitudes, healthy habits and personal attributes like patience, self-efficacy and self-confidence (OECD, 2012a, p. 93).


1. “Development of indicators for measuring the personal perception of well-being by children and young people.
2. Draft a policy glossary to provide a conceptual and strategic framework as well as the basis for a common language for policy makers at all levels in Europe.
3. Design and organize conferences for European and international institutions, national governments, foundations, business and NGOs to support the EU agenda towards the well-being of children.”

In general terms, the ESCC or L4WB proposals fall within the new paradigm based on human flourishing. They argue for comprehensive education based on a person’s distinctive strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), educating a person’s character, and teaching interpersonal skills (Cohen, 2006; Elias, 2009; Howard, Berkowitz & Schaeffer, 2004), as well as teaching the attitudes and skills people need to lead their own lives and become active citizens, having a positive influence on their social and political environments (Nussbaum, 1992, 2011).

According to these International and European reports, education plays a significant role in social progress as well as psychosocial well-being. Moreover, these reports create an imperative to strengthen social-emotional and civic competencies starting at a young age, especially during schooling. There is empirical evidence of the close relationship between education, quality of life, happiness, vital satisfaction, and psychosocial well-being (Banati & Alexander, 2012; Bywater & Sharples, 2012; Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben, & Gravesteijn, 2012), and the close relationship between education and mental health (Stengard & Appelqvist-Schmidlecher, 2010).

Consequently, these reports encourage policy makers to redouble their efforts, particularly regarding this other education (ESCC/L4WB), since we have scientific evidence of its impact on social and personal progress (Bywater & Sharples, 2012; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, Schellinger, 2011). We now have unprecedented favorable conditions for the effective incorporation of social-emotional education at school, especially in Europe, as we will now explain.

ESCC in European countries: The education policy framework

There is now impetus for promoting the alignment of educational and training systems in all the countries in the European Union. The strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and professional training for 2020 (ET2020) (EU Council, 2009a) establishes four strategic objectives for Europe to face the educational challenges posed by the Society of Knowledge and to make the principle of permanent learning a reality. Two of the four objectives are particularly relevant because
they deal with social-emotional and civic competence. These are “promoting equality, social cohesion and active citizenship,” and “increasing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all educational levels” (EU Council, 2009a, p. 2).

With these strategic objectives in mind, by the year 2020, the educational and training systems in Europe aspire to achieve “personal, social, and professional fulfillment of all citizens” and “sustainable economic prosperity and employability, while at the same time promoting democratic values, social cohesion, active citizenship, and inter-cultural dialogue” (EU Council, 2009a, p. 3).

The concept of “key competencies” has gained a lot of support in Europe, at a political level as well as in schools. National and regional educational European policies have been developing and implementing key competences in coordinated ways through the KeyCoNect project (http://keyconet.eun.org/welcome). This is a European Policy Network focused on identifying and analyzing emergent strategies in implementing key competencies into European education reforms. A number of initiatives related to Key Competence Development (KCD) are being implemented in various national contexts across Europe (http://keyconet.eun.org/project-results). Recent reports have been published about KCD in school education in Europe (Gordon, Rey, Siewiorek, Vivitsou, & von Reis Saari, 2012) and with regard to assessment of key competencies (Pepper, 2012).

The European Reference Framework on Key Competencies for Life-long Learning (EC, 2007) describes the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to succeed in a society of knowledge. Achieving the goals of European education and of the two strategic objectives we have pointed out depends, among other things, on the level of social-emotional and civic competence that European citizens manage to attain. Europe has an active interest in creating reformed plans to improve competencies (Halasz & Michel, 2011). With these reforms, Europe encourages schools to incorporate educational programs and actions that explicitly promote personal as well as collective health and well-being. Promoting active involvement in social and political life beginning from a young age is also part of the European agenda for educational policy.

The European Reference Framework also explicitly includes social and civic competence (EC, 2007). The European Commission defines social and civic competencies as “the entire set of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behavior that enable a person to participate effectively and constructively in social and inter-personal life, and when necessary, to resolve conflict” (EC, 2007, p.9). These generic competencies include personal, inter-personal, and inter-cultural competencies. Elements of social and civic competencies according to the European point of view are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Social and Civic Competencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Competencies</th>
<th>Civic Competencies</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicating constructively in different environments.</td>
<td>Interacting effectively in the public sphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Showing tolerance, expressing and understanding different points of view.</td>
<td>Showing solidarity and interest in resolving conflicts that affect the community (local or wider)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating constructively inspiring confidence.</td>
<td>Critical and reflective skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy.</td>
<td>Creative abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with stress.</td>
<td>Participating constructively in neighborhood or community activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerating frustration.</td>
<td>Decision-making skills in the local, national, or European sphere, particularly by voting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive emotional expression.</td>
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In most official European documents, emotional competence is not explicitly listed as a key competency in its own right. This does not mean that it is not valued enough to be part of Europe’s education policy agenda, since the European Commission has prioritized certain key competencies to meet its educational goals. In official documents on key competencies for permanent learning (EC, 2006, 2007), social competence is more closely linked to the personal and interpersonal sphere and connected to educational goals of personal, social, and professional fulfillment. This competency is more directly geared towards the development of personal resources (attitudes, values and skills) that allow a person to function optimally in the sphere of personal and interpersonal development. Civic competence, on the other hand, is linked to the public sphere and connected to the educational goal of socialization because it contributes to social cohesion, active citizenship, inter-cultural awareness, and democratic values. This competency is more directly related to mobilizing personal and interpersonal resources for a person to function optimally in a community. For example, the new Education Organic Law recently approved in Spain (LOMCE, 2013) includes in the explanatory memorandum that:

This Organic Law considers essential preparing young people toward active citizenship and the acquisition of social and civic competencies contained within the European Parliament Recommendation of 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning. (Section XIV)

In a similar way, OECD (2012b) highlights the importance of educating people in social and civic competencies throughout their lives. These competencies contribute to the improvement of social and economic progress, quality of life, and human development. There is evidence of a strong relationship between the mastering of these competencies and the quality of a person’s social and personal life. As OECD (2012b) points out,

Skills affect people’s lives and the well-being of nations in ways that go far beyond what can be measured by labor-market earnings and economic growth. For example, the benefits of skills to an individual’s health are potentially great. Skills also relate to civic and social behavior as they affect democratic engagement and business relationships. Institutional trust, for example, is vital for the functioning of democracies; and without trust in the rule of law and in others, business relationships function less efficiently (p. 11).

Emotional competencies and learning for well-being (L4WB): An alternative European theoretical framework for policy makers

Emotional competencies appear explicitly in more recent European documents linked to Europe’s third strategic objective for 2020: “promoting equality, social cohesion, and active citizenship” (EC, 2009). The European Council published a report in 2009: “Well-being for all. Concepts and tools for social cohesion” (EC, 2009b). In this report, the European Council described well-being as a universal human right (termed, “Well-being for All”), meant to encompass individual well-being as well as social and global well-being, extending to future generations.

Europe’s discourse and political strategies are gradually incorporating a preventive philosophy that encourages human development. Additionally, its discourse is starting to emphasize the relational and participatory nature of well-being and to consider it a strategic objective for attaining social cohesion.
In 2009, a group of European foundations decided to establish the “Learning for Well-being” Consortium of Foundations (Learning for Well-Being’ Consortium of Foundations, n.d.), in partnership with other agents of society. This Consortium appeared at the same time as the Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in the field of education and training. The L4WB Consortium’s general objective was to inspire and engage people to make all environments more conducive to L4WB for children and young people (Kickbusch, 2012).

The creation of Learning for Well-being was inspired by resolutions adopted by major international organizations. The World Health Organization (WHO) described well-being as a state to be achieved by defining health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO, 1986, p. 2). The United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) emphasized in article 12 that all member States need to guarantee certain conditions during childhood, such as children’s rights to form their own opinions, to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, and to ensure that those views and opinions are taken into consideration (UNCRC, 1989). UNICEF has focused on the responsibility to advocate for the protection of children’s rights and to help meet their basic needs and expand their opportunities to reach their full potential (UNICEF, 1946). The Delors report (1996), which was supported by UNESCO, established as basic educational pillars for the 21st century, “learning to be and learning to live together” together with “learning to know and learning to do” (p. 37).

The Consortium sees L4WB as a new educational paradigm whose prime objective is “to ensure that education and health lead to well-being. It emphasizes the need for a change in mindsets and, particularly, a fundamental paradigm shift in the way we educate and care for children and young people” (Gordon, 2010, p. 29).

This new paradigm assumes a holistic view of a person, the educational process, and the systems with which a person interacts in a dynamic way throughout his or her entire life. According to this movement, L4WB is the educational philosophy that should inspire European reforms aimed at children and young people in terms of education, health, and social cohesion. Thus, this is a systemic and positive approximation to human development that prioritizes all the processes and contexts that promote young people’s distinctive strengths, enabling them to lead autonomous and civic lives, and that recognize each person’s potential in a personalized way.

The L4WB Consortium has drawn up the first policy glossary on young people’s education for well-being, and it is developing a powerful line of research to create a system of indicators that will assess their subjective well-being (Kickbusch, 2012). The studies they are undertaking will provide rigorous information on the distribution and development of well-being in youth at a global and European level, as well as facilitating political decision-making in the future.

Based on the capabilities approach and Nussbaum’s core capabilities (2011), the Consortium and the Universal Education Foundation (UEF) have proposed a core capabilities framework that has allowed them to carry out international assessments on different well-being dimensions (individual, interpersonal, and civic) 18-24 year olds (Awartani, Vince, & Gordon, 2008). Furthermore, as an associate member of KeyCoNet, the L4WB Consortium also analyzes approaches to the implementation of social and civic competencies in school education. As noted earlier, it is implementation that ultimately must be addressed successfully if policy is to become standard practice.
Social and civic competencies in Spain: Curriculum policy

Spain has been one of the first European countries to include in its education legislation the key competencies proposed by Europe. The timing of the recommendations on European cooperation regarding key competencies (EC, 2006) and the new Organic Education Law approved in Spain that same year made it possible to include these competencies in the basic mandatory education curriculum from the very beginning (Tiana, Moya, & Luengo, 2011).

As we have pointed out earlier, emotional competencies are not reflected explicitly in European recommendations and policies, which does not mean that they are not taken into account. Rather, they are integrated within Europe’s social and civic competencies. Consequently, their incorporation into the Spanish school curriculum will follow the same logic. Emotional literacy will appear in the Spanish school curriculum as part of social and public competence. We perceive that, in Spain’s case, emotional competence is reduced to learning social skills and learning to deal with emotions that are tied to harmonious coexistence and the constructive resolution of conflict. Although these are important things to learn during the school years, it is a restricted interpretation of emotional competence, associated with a limited number of contexts (interpersonal and school) where school children normally coexist and where they carry out active citizenship (community).

However, learning emotional competence also occurs in personal situations and is an inherent part of building a positive sense of self. It is closely linked to self-consciousness, psychological well-being, and personal fulfillment, which is mentioned explicitly in European policies and Spanish education legislation as an educational goal.

Again, “learning to be” is not able to rise above the level of political intention; therefore, in our opinion, its implementation in schools will remain deficient due to its low visibility. This statement is confirmed by the low weight carried by content related to self-knowledge and self-esteem, assertiveness, autonomy, and personal responsibility, compared to content related to understanding social reality and the values and attitudes held by democratic societies. This is probably due to the lack of experience assessing “soft,” or non-academic, competencies in Europe, as well as in Spain. The underlying philosophical affinity toward rationalism will not be quick to depart.

Social and civic competencies in Spain’s core curriculum: Elements and dimensions

The Royal Decrees (RD) that regulate educational matters corresponding to Elementary School (Ministerio de Educación [MEC], 2006a), Junior High, and High School (MEC, 2006b), describe social and civic competencies as:

[The capacity to] understand the social reality one lives in, facing conflicts and dealing with others using one’s ethical judgment based on democratic values and practices, and participating in active citizenship by acting according to one’s own criteria, contributing to peace-building and democracy, and maintaining a constructive attitude, fulfilling one’s civil rights and obligations with solidarity and responsibility (MEC, 2006b, p. 688).

Spain’s Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports implemented a territorial cooperation program to
bolster the integration of basic social, emotional, and civic competencies in the curriculum. Known as the Curricular Integration of Basic Competencies (COMBAS) Project, it was started in the 2010 school year with the purpose of consolidating basic competencies as an essential element of the school curriculum at all levels. Since the Spanish school system is widely decentralized, this program allowed different regional education administrations to work in a coordinated way to achieve a common reference model regarding the elements and dimensions of the eight basic competencies. The COMBAS Project concluded in 2012. The Organic Education Law recently approved in the summer of 2013 in Spain (Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa [LOMCE]) has built upon this work and will bring about important changes in Spain’s educational system. Two basic objectives of this educational policy are to contribute to the acquisition of key skills by reinforcing the learning of core subjects at all stages and to reduce the drop-out rate. Its strategy for practice is based upon these elements:

- Simplification of curricular development to provide sound knowledge of contents, guaranteeing the effectiveness of basic skills
- Interdisciplinary vision of the contents
- Greater teaching autonomy and a more personalized education

During this academic year (2012), Spain is developing, within the Development of General Competencies (Centro Nacional de Innovación e Investigación Educativa [CNIIE], 2012) and building upon the previous COMBAS Project, a component with the object of ensuring and improving basic competencies for learning, as well as recognizing them and assessing them. The first diagnostic assessments for social competence and citizenship in elementary and secondary education were organized at a national level in 2009 as a specific activity of the COMBAS Project (MEC/Instituto de Evaluación, 2010). These diagnostic assessments were developed at a regional policy level once a year, but COMBAS has concluded. Therefore, one of the biggest difficulties of a curricular approach based on competencies—the difficulty in determining indicators of assessment and developmentally linked levels of progress reached by school children when mastering basic competencies—remains unresolved. This difficulty is even greater when we refer to social and civic competencies.

Large and small policies of Emotional Competencies Education (ECE) in Spain

As we have pointed out in previous pages, teaching and learning emotional competencies is present in the Spanish school curriculum as part of social and civic competencies. These competencies are streamlined transversally in the school curriculum. Spain’s de-centralized educational policy allows regional governments to develop their own instruments according to their political priorities. Thus, ECE pilot programs in Spain have not been established on a national scale, although there are some on a regional and local scale.

The main government actions that deal with emotional education on a regional scale rely on positive action policies. They are strategies based on a capacity building approach (Vesely, 2012), mainly aimed toward teacher-training and educational innovation. Nevertheless, there are regional initiatives that have developed pilot programs that are being applied in numerous schools in different Spanish autonomous communities. Such is the case of the Responsible Education program designed by the Botín Foundation in cooperation with Cantabria Government’s Education Council. This program is
being carried out in 100 schools in that region, with 900 teachers and 20,000 students and families participating. The program has been carried out in Cantabria (Spain) since 2004. It is based on a comprehensive process (research, formation, training, implementation, maintenance and evaluation) offering educational resources and techniques to facilitate and foster emotional, cognitive and social development from childhood, using a plan of action that engages families, schools and communities (Botín Foundation, 2012).

In a similar manner, other regional governments have designed guidance programs that can be used by school teachers to work on emotional competencies in different curricular areas. Guipuzcoa’s Regional Government, for example, has designed an emotional intelligence guidance program for all pre-university education levels, the Emozioak Program, which was launched in 2004. It was inspired by intervention approaches that rely on the holistic view of Social-Emotional Learning adopted by The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2013).

Other regional education administrations have chosen to foster emotional education through innovative education projects. In doing so, the regional government’s role is to offer financial and logistical support to enable communication and information exchange, as well as good practices between the educational centers and the teachers who participate in the programs. For example, the Network of Emotional Intelligence Schools in the Extremadura Region is a social support and innovative education network composed of more than twenty schools that are committed to developing Social-Emotional Learning programs that will be sustained over time. Being a member of the Emotional Intelligence School Network is very prestigious for an educational center.

In Spain’s case, it is convenient to distinguish between political actions promoted by government policy-makers (Policy) and the actions carried out by other social agents (policy) to achieve state or regional educational objectives (Vesely, 2012, p. 327). In Spain’s map of emotional competence education we can see both types of policies, although the latter are more common.

Regional governments are frequently the promoters of the design and assessment of emotional education programs through their education administration, by providing financial support and by asking university research groups or NGOs to assist. In this sense, the broad experience of Málaga (Spain) University’s Emotional Laboratory, headed by Fernández Berrocal, merits highlighting. Since 1996, they have been promoting lines of educational research and intervention on Emotional Intelligence in childhood and adolescence funded at the state level. They are responsible, on a regional level, for a project on preventing classroom violence and psychosocial imbalance through emotional intelligence education, which was conducted from 2009 to 2011, based on the work of Salovey and Mayer (1990). Approximately 2,000 Andalusian students between the ages of 12 and 18 have spent 12 hours a year participating in this project. One thousand of them received an emotional intelligence training program designed by this research team (Andalucía Innova, 2011). The program has recently been published (Ruiz Aranda et al., 2013).

In other cases, schools request the cooperation of university research groups directly, and the help of NGOs for counseling, stimulation, intervention, or assessment of their Emotional Education practices. The University of Barcelona’s Psycho-pedagogical Research Group (GROP), led by Rafael Bisquerra, promoted a research and educational intervention line on emotional education in 1997. They were pioneers in Spain in terms of the theoretical foundations for emotional education. This group collaborates with a wide number of educational centers and education administrations in matters of consulting and research, and by spreading information on emotional education.
Likewise, University of Seville’s Research Group on Emotional Education and Drama (GRIEED), led by Luis Nunez, is developing its own work on emotional education (http://grupo.us.es/grieed). GRIEED has signed cooperation agreements with various educational centers in Seville, which allow it to carry out its line of work on emotional education over time. They have designed a Pilot Program called Integral Education, which is a program for teaching social, emotional, and creative competencies in junior high (see Marcelo Spinola Jr. School, n.d.) and high school (see Preuniversity School, n.d.).

The first phase of the program began in the 2012 school year, and is geared towards students. This program provides training on emotional, social and creative competencies and takes place as an extra-curricular activity outside of school hours, throughout the school year. More than one hundred students are participating. This Integral Education program has also been conceived as a collaborative research program with teachers and as a program for developing parents’ competencies. These other two lines of intervention will be implemented during the next academic year in the two schools that are acting as pilot centers. The working philosophy of the “Integral Education” Program is inspired by L4WB philosophy and a whole approach. GRIEED normally uses experiential and role-play methodologies to work on these competencies.

Inspired by the CASEL approach, Saint Estanislao Kotska educational institution (SEK) is soon going to implement an emotional management program in its classrooms using Resolving Conflicts Creatively (RCC), in cooperation with Camilo José Cela University (Madrid). CASEL collaborator Linda Lantieri will lead the RCC program in Spain.

Thus, policies characterize the bulk of emotional education programs and initiatives in Spain. Fortunately, there are many on emotional education. University research groups, Foundations, and NGO’s are normally responsible for these policies. Other non-governmental social institutions also stimulate educational programs on social and emotional competencies and educating in values. The Children’s Villages NGO (Aldeas Infantiles) has been collaborating since 1998 with various Spanish regional education administrations by implementing their emotional education programs and educating in values programs. More than 3,750 public schools and 256,000 children from different Spanish cities and regions have participated in these programs. The programs focus on self-esteem, school bullying, emotional control, altruism, social justice, tolerance and participation.

Conclusions and recommendations for policy

This article has described the general guidelines and strategic lines of European educational policy in terms of teaching emotional, social, and civic competencies. Likewise, it has outlined the national and regional strategies developed in Spain to improve the teaching and learning of these competencies.

The recent Eurydice Report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012) on the development of European key competencies in the school context shows that, despite significant achievements, there are challenges still pending related to the practical implementation of competence-based curricula. The challenge is greater when we refer to transversal challenges (such as digital, personal initiative, and entrepreneurship), to say nothing of social and civic competencies.

In effect, despite these competencies being present in the school curricula of all European countries, not all have developed a national strategy to implement them in their schools. Digital competencies and
basic academic competencies (reading, math, science, foreign languages) are an exception, because most European countries have national strategies for dealing with these.

The first conclusion we can reach from this information is that those responsible for educational policies at the national and regional level must face this challenge. For a transversal approach to put into practice the strategic and curricular objectives that have been formulated in policy, additional political instruments are required. One of the most effective instruments is teacher training, as well as creating instruments and resources for teaching these competencies.

An additional need is comprehensive approaches for assessing students’ competence. The Eurydice report (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2012) points out that competence assessment represents a political challenge in itself. To assess in a rigorous and objective way how competent their students are, teachers need clear and precise assessment tools. Educational institutions could lead the assessment process by developing internal mechanisms, with the support of the regional and national evaluation agencies and researchers. There are a wide variety of assessment methods, such as standardized tests, attitudinal questionnaires, performance-based assessment, portfolio assessment, and teacher, peer and self-assessment practices (Pepper, 2012). Both, national and regional assessment agencies, together with educational institutions and teachers in collaboration with researchers, could design specific assessment tools according their summative or formative purposes.

The second conclusion we have reached is related to implementing educational programs on emotional, social, and civic competencies in schools. Currently, there are ESCC programs available to develop these competencies, which have been empirically verified. We have mentioned some of them, created by Spanish research groups. However, as Bywater and Sharples (2012, p. 404) point out, “choosing a programme that works is not enough to guarantee success: implementing the programme with fidelity takes time and resources.” And this statement is valid for both Policies and policies.

The evidence, as well as our own experience as counselors and educators in the realm of emotional development, shows us that time and available resources are the Gordian knot that now constrains the success of these programs. Social-emotional education programs and character education programs, as opposed to “academic” programs, deal with “non-instrumental learning.” They deal with “education for life,” which leads to attitude and axiological changes not only in students, but also in teachers and schools. These types of learning promote systemic changes in classroom culture and in the classroom environment. We cannot educate students emotionally without educating teachers emotionally, as well. Likewise, we cannot educate in civic commitment without bolstering community experiences within the school itself.

These programs are more effective if they continue through time, if they adopt a whole school approach (Stoiber, 2011) and if they take place in environments where school children “learn by doing,” as John Dewey (1938) supported. Thus, the second challenge faced by educational Policies and policies is to achieve the continuity of these programs, to foster the relationship between schools and the local community, and to adopt a mid- to long-term political approach.

Finally, since time is money, according to political and economic ways of thinking, and an investment, according to educational rationale, these programs must also be assessed from a cost-benefit point of view (Bywater & Sharples, 2012). The effectiveness of ESCC programs has been demonstrated by strong evidence, so a cost-benefit assessment related to social, educational and health outcomes could contribute to investment in the wellbeing of youth and societies in Spain and Europe by bringing well-thought out policies into widespread and systemic implementation.
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Evidence-based approaches to social, emotional and behavior difficulties in schools

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Abstract

Mental health problems across the lifespan represent a significant international health burden, the consequences of which are often underestimated by policy makers. Education services can make a significant contribution to the promotion of positive mental health through school-level preventive and remedial interventions targeted at social, emotional and behavioral difficulties (SEBD). Issues of particular concern include the qualities and skills of effective teachers and teaching in relation to SEBD, and the need for front line educators’ understandings of SEBD to be located within a biopsychosocial paradigm. Various empirically validated psychologically-based interventions (e.g., behavioral, cognitive-behavioral and ecosystemic), along with strengths-based approaches (e.g., resilience and positive education) provide a valuable basis for the continuing development of policy and practice.

Keywords: social-emotional behavioral difficulties, interventions, best practice, social-emotional learning, character education
Introduction

The aim of this paper is to highlight the important contribution that education services for children and adolescents can make to improving national responses to mental health problems in populations throughout the world. In the opening section, we argue that public policy responses to mental health problems are universally inadequate. We then go on to suggest the important role that schools can play in preventing and remediating social and emotional problems that, without intervention, are likely to develop into more serious mental health problems. The third part of the paper presents evidence from studies of interventions in schools. We close with recommendations for policy.

Responding to mental health problems

Mental health problems represent one of the most significant health challenges faced by modern humans, accounting for 28% of time lost to ill-health, disability or premature death (Collins et al., 2001), with an estimated 25% of people throughout the world being affected by mental health problems at some point in their lives (World Health Organization [WHO], 2001a). Mental Health problems are often associated with serious difficulties in the area of emotional and behavioral self-regulation, and include, among others, debilitating problems associated with the regulation of mood (depression and anxiety), conduct disorders, psychosis, eating disorders, and substance abuse disorders. When experienced to a high degree of intensity, problems such as these interfere significantly with the individual’s social, emotional and behavioral functioning, in turn leading to serious disruption to personal relationships, performance at work, and the individual’s own sense of self-worth. Consequently, individuals with mental health problems experience severe impairments to their quality of life, rendering them at serious risk of unemployment, broken relationships, social problems (including social isolation and delinquency), physical ailments, and premature death (WHO, 2010). One of the problems associated with mental health difficulties is their capacity to remain hidden. For example, mental health problems can lead to a deterioration in self-protective behaviors, thus amplifying the risk for certain communicable and non-communicable diseases (such as HIV/AIDS and substance abuse). Mental health problems are also significantly associated with crimes against property and persons (Prince et al., 2007). Such consequences of undetected mental health problems are all too easily misunderstood as ‘lifestyle choices’ that are met with punitive, rather than therapeutic, responses.

Yet, in spite of the fact that the burdens of mental health problems have risen in recent years, particularly among young people (Perou et al., 2013), and have long been predicted to continue rising in the coming decade (Prince et al., 2007), there is longstanding concern over the adequacy of the policy response. Over a decade ago, the WHO stated that:

A lack of urgency, misinformation, and competing demands are blinding policy-makers from taking stock of a situation where mental disorders figure among the leading causes of disease and disability in the world. Currently, more than 40% of countries have no mental health policy and over 30% have no mental health programme. Around 25% of countries have no mental health legislation.
The magnitude of mental health burden is not matched by the size and effectiveness of the response it demands. Currently, more than 33% of countries allocate less than 1% of their total health budgets to mental health, with another 33% spending just 1% of their budgets on mental health (WHO, 2001).

There is little evidence of significant improvement in the past decade. The problem is greatest in low- and middle-income countries, which account for 80% of the world’s population, but access only 10% of the world’s resources for the treatment of mental health problems (WHO, 2008). Even in rich countries, however, the response to these problems is often seen to be inadequate, with only 10% of health expenditure being directed at mental health in the USA (Kleinman, 2009), where 26.2% of the population is estimated to suffer from a mental illness (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2013). In the UK, it has been estimated that almost 50% of the health burden involves mental health issues, whilst only 13% of government health expenditure is devoted to this issue, leaving an estimated 75% of sufferers without treatment (Centre for Economic Performance’s Mental Health Policy Group [CEP], 2012).

In Asian countries, estimated prevalence rates tend to be significantly lower than they are in the West. For example, a substantial study of adults (n = 63,004) in Mainland China (Qingdao [Shandong Province] and Zhejiang Province) estimated that 17.5% of adults have psychiatric disorders. A recent pilot community study of Chinese adolescents (n = 541; mean age 13.8) in Hong Kong, which employed individual detailed standardized clinical interviews with adolescents and their parents (Leung et al., 2008), found a prevalence rate of 16.4%, with Anxiety Disorders being found to be most prevalent (6.9%), followed by Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD) (6.8%), AD/HD (3.9%), Conduct Disorder (CD) (1.7%), Depressive Disorder (DD) (1.7%) and Substance Use Disorder (SUD) (1.1%). Females were found to exhibit a higher rate of anxiety disorders than males, in a ratio of 4:3. These figures suggest that the prevalence of common mental disorders among Hong Kong adolescents fall within the lower bounds of what might be expected on the basis of the international literature. For example, international prevalence rates for AD/HD (the most common of all child and adolescent behavioral disorders) have been shown to range between 2.4% and 19.8%, with the higher prevalence rates tending to be between 10% and 12% (Faraone, Sergeant, Gillberg & Biederman, 2003). An earlier small scale Hong Kong study produced a prevalence rate of 6.1% (Leung et al., 1996), which is still cited in recent clinical literature (Lam & Ho, 2010).

Some commentators have urged caution when interpreting prevalence rates in Asian countries. There is a relative lack of resources directed at this problems in Asian countries (Yueng, 2010). There are also significant cultural factors affecting the possible accuracy of such figures. For example, it has been suggested, that in China and Hong Kong, mental illness has been traditionally labeled as an untreatable “moral weakness and the product of faulty upbringing” (Dennis, 2004, p. 697), leading to the stigmatization of sufferers and a tendency to recast mental health problems in alternative guises. It has also been observed that there is a tendency in many Eastern cultures for mental health problems to find expression in psychosomatic form, and in internalizing symptoms rather than externalizing forms (Rutter & Smith, 1995). Furthermore, one recent study, which found an increase in levels of internalizing problems among Chinese adolescents since 1994, has attributed this finding to a perceived shift in Chinese culture from collectivist to a more individualistic orientation (Liu, Zhou, & Li, 2012).
These authors argue that what are now perceived as symptoms of internalizing disorders, such as shyness and anxiousness, have been viewed traditionally as positive character traits that were viewed, at best, as irrelevant. Others also suggest that such traits may have been encouraged through certain child rearing practices, such as the widespread use of shaming in the regulation of young children’s behavior (Fung, 1999).

**Mental health in schools**

In the context of this article, “Social, Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties” (SEBD) is taken as a descriptive term that can be applied to individuals who exhibit problems in the effective regulation of their social interactions, behavior and/or emotional functioning. The term is commonly used in the UK and other parts of Europe and usually in educational settings. SEBD are distinguished from the occasional behavioral aberrations and/or emotional upsets that all students experience by their persistence over time and the detrimental impact that they have on educational and social engagement (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). In this sense, SEBD are to be distinguished conceptually from Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, which, by definition are pervasive across different areas of an individual’s life, and usually require the application of a diagnosis. Diagnosed disorders (such as AD/HD) may be implicated in SEBD, but this is not a necessary association. Clearly, there are times when a disorder is a major contributory factor in SEBD in school. Other times, however, it may be possible, for a diagnosed disorder to be managed from outside the school in such a way that it has minimal impact on the student’s functioning within the school setting. On the other hand, there are times when a student’s SEBD may fall short of diagnosable conditions and exist only in relation to the school setting.

SEBD are commonly associated with disruptive behavior in classrooms; interpersonal conflict with teachers and peers, including bullying of peers and being victimized by peers; extreme withdrawn behavior, which may also lead to truancy; and serious disaffection with schooling. SEBD can be a reaction to influences emanating from the student’s relationships with others, within or outside the school setting (Olsen & Cooper, 2001), a reflection of a significant existing mental health problem, or the precursor to a future mental health problem (Rutter & Smith, 1995). SEBD is signaled by the student’s presentation as someone who is disengaged from, or in conflict with, what teachers perceive as important aspects of school to a degree that goes beyond what might be termed routine indiscipline or occasional lapses in compliant behavior. In keeping with the educational focus of SEBD, interventions for prevention and remediation encompass both psychological (see below), and pedagogical approaches, including adjustments to the learning environment, the curriculum and curriculum delivery methods.

Students presenting with SEBD pose enormous challenges to schools. The UK government has suggested that 10% of children in UK schools have diagnosable psychiatric disorders (Department for Children Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008). This would appear to be in keeping with the more authoritative British Medical Association’s claim that 10-20% young people in the UK experience a mental health problem at some point (British Medical Association [BMA], 2006). These figures also appear to be in keeping with the world wide prevalence rate of 10-20% for ‘clinical psychiatric disorders among school students (Willman, 2013). U.S. figures indicate that 12% of children experience significant behavioral disorders, with 37% - 39% of young people experiencing such problems at some point in their development (Forness, Kim, & Walker, 2012).
From an educational point of view, these figures must be seen as representing the tip of the SEBD iceberg, given that serious mental health problems do not tend to arrive fully formed; but rather they develop over time (Rutter & Smith, 1995). For every person with a diagnosable mental health problem, there are several people progressing towards such problems, and even more who are deemed at risk of developing mental health problems. It should be noted that the issue of prevalence is fraught with controversy, partly driven by serious concerns about the dangers of pathologizing certain types of behavior for purposes of social control through the process of labeling (Slee, 2013). Such concerns are not to be ignored or dismissed lightly. However, if the tendency towards minimizing prevalence rates leads to misinformation about the extent of the problem then action to correct this situation is essential. Efforts to deny the actual extent of SEBD are counter-productive, resulting in missed opportunities for preventive and remedial interventions. Furthermore, such neglect is likely to lead to more significant problems later in the life course, with concomitant individual, social and economic burdens on individuals, communities and societies at large.

There are two main reasons why SEBD among the school age population of all countries of the world needs to be high among policy makers’ priorities. The first reason is that SEBD are a major cause for concern for many teachers and parents, with strong evidence suggesting that SEBD is perceived as being a significant obstacle to effective teaching and learning in inclusive education settings (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath, & Page, 2006; OECD, 2009). Classroom teachers tend to prefer students with other forms of special educational needs such as physical or intellectual disability, than students with SEBD (Avramadis & Norwich, 2002; Baker, 2005). For example, in Hong Kong, mainstream school teachers and parents have raised concerns about the practical feasibility of catering for students with SEBD and other disabilities in mainstream classrooms (Chen, Jin, & Lau, 2006). So whilst many teachers perceive the problem of SEBD to be worsening, they also frequently complain about their lack of preparation for dealing with the phenomenon. This leads to a situation whereby students with SEBD are put at risk of being ‘criminalized’ through punitive, exclusionary (legal and illegal) processes (e.g. Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2013) because policy makers too often prioritize the support of academically able students over those with special educational needs (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). In contrast, the education of these children is often placed in the hands of sometimes untrained Teaching Assistants and other paraprofessionals, the consequences of which too often are disastrous (Blatchford et al., 2009).

The second reason why SEBD needs to be prioritized in policy terms is because there is strong evidence available to suggest that with appropriate support there is a great deal that can be achieved by schools to meet and deal effectively with SEBD when teachers are given appropriate support and training. When appropriate measures are taken to prevent and address SEBD, in the context of sound curricula and pedagogy, schools are more cohesive and effective as social organizations; their students and staff are more socially and emotionally competent and educational performance is optimized (Layard & Dunn, 2009; Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). In turn, these successes benefit society at large in ways discussed above.

The rest of this paper is devoted to a review of some of the evidence of what can schools can do to deal effectively with SEBD.
Key theoretical underpinnings to the prevention of and intervention with SEBD

As we have noted, the problem of SEBD is widespread and has serious negative consequences. However, as we have already pointed out, it is counterproductive to wait until problems arise before taking action. This means that strategies for promoting positive social-emotional engagement for all students in schools are an essential feature of proactive responses to the problem of SEBD. Recent approaches such as positive psychology, asset development/strengths-based practice, social capital and educational resilience have very important roles to play. These approaches tend to focus less on deficit and disadvantage and more on the promotion of growth and healthy development despite risk and difficulties. These approaches underline the need for proactive strategies that strengthen and promote children’s healthy development and, thereby, seek to prevent difficulties from developing in the first place, even in the face of risk and disadvantage, by making use of the children’s strengths and assets while providing enabling and protective contexts (e.g., Cefai, 2008; Pianta & Walsh, 1998).

Resilience may be defined as successful adaptation in the face of adversity and environmental stressors, a process of successful adaptation and transformation despite risk and adversity (Masten, 1994). It underlines the development of strengths and assets instead of focusing on deficit and risk. The literature has identified three major school factors that have been found to protect vulnerable children and young people, and support their academic and social development, namely caring relationships, meaningful engagement and high expectations (Rees & Bailey, 2003). As we show below, when teachers and schools implement these processes effectively, all students benefit through improved resilience, and social-emotional problems are minimized. The most effective approaches to promote resilience in school are those that integrate resilience principles and practices into the daily mainstream classroom activities, rather than through one-off programs (Pianta & Walsh, 1998; Waxman et al., 2004). Teachers in particular need to appreciate that their behaviors and interactions with their students have a cumulative influence on students’ mental health and resiliency. There are attributes that develop from sustained exposure to supportive ecological contexts, and not the products of inoculation or other short-term, discrete interventions.

It is important to realize, however, that prevention/resilience building and remediation are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Prevention and remediation must go hand in hand, so long as there are students in schools who experience SEBD. With this in mind, we emphasize that the psychological approaches outlined below are all based on theories of social and emotional development and learning. As such, they are not simply approaches to ‘therapy;’ they are also powerful tools for understanding positive human development and how this might be achieved.

Historically, there are five main psychological ‘families’ of approaches to understanding, preventing, and intervening in SEBD:

1) Psychodynamic approaches focus on the ways in which early interpersonal relationships influence personality development and social-emotional engagement with others (e.g., Bowlby, 1975; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2004). They provide important insights into the ways in which psychological health can be promoted. They do this through the development of relationships that enable
individuals to overcome problems associated with foundational unmet emotional needs by providing experiences that meet these needs and thus enable interruptions to development to be overcome.

(2) Humanistic approaches focus on ways in which self-concept is influenced by social and interpersonal relationships. Interventions based on this approach, such as Rogers’ (1951) person-centered approach, emphasize the value of affirming relationships characterized by unconditional positive regard, empathy and honesty.

(3) Behaviorist approaches are based on the ways in which behavior can be understood in terms of involuntary responses to external stimuli. Behavioral interventions exploit this theory by encouraging desired behaviors and extinguishing undesired ones through the manipulation of the stimuli that precede target behaviors and the consequences that follow from them.

(4) Cognitive approaches and those based on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) are concerned with the ways in which the relationship between external stimuli and target behaviors can sometimes be mediated and moderated by thought processes (Meichenbaum, 1977). The aim of CBT is to encourage the development of functional ways of behaving by challenging and changing dysfunctional ways of thinking.

(5) Systemic approaches focus on the ways in which an individual’s functioning can be understood as a function of the social systems in which he or she is embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Systemic interventions combine features of the above approaches and are designed to seek ways of enabling individuals to continue to participate in key social systems, such as families, partnerships and work places, in ways that are functional in relation to their mental health (e.g. Selvini-Palazzoli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978).

In the following sections, we show that considerable attention has been given to behavioral, cognitive behavioral and systemic approaches in the recent and contemporary interventions literature. We therefore, focus on these three areas of intervention. However, we acknowledge that psychodynamic and humanistic understandings provide powerful explanations for the apparent effectiveness of relational approaches to dealing with and preventing social, emotional and behavioral difficulties. We, therefore, devote the opening section on interventions to this area. The major difference between these relational approaches and the approaches described in subsequent sections is that the latter deal with formal intervention programs that are often explicitly located within a particular psychological tradition, whilst the discussion of relational approaches is based on descriptive, naturalistic research studies that emphasize interrelationships between teacher qualities and student outcomes. These studies offer valuable insights into the ways in which schools and teachers have been shown to contribute to positive student engagement and resilience.

Relational approaches to SEBD: Teacher-student relationships

The teacher-student relationship stands at the heart of the formal educational process. This view is evident in approaches to teaching and learning that stress the central importance of social interaction in the learning process (Bruner 1987; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). Research showing the association...
between aversive relationships with teachers and negative student outcomes has a long tradition, revealing, for example, long-term intensification of problem behaviors in those children who experienced a negative relationship with a teacher (Myers & Pianta, 2008). Similarly, teachers who teach in schools with high levels of suspensions have been found to be more likely to self-report that they have bullied students (Twemlow & Fonagy, 2005), echoing findings from seminal studies that associate coercive teaching with student deviance and disaffection (Cefai & Cooper, 2010; Reynolds & Sullivan, 1979; Shostak, 1982; Tattum, 1982).

**Teachers’ personal warmth**

On the positive side, teachers who demonstrate emotional warmth have been shown to improve the social-emotional well-being of students. Teacher emotional warmth helps children with both externalizing and internalizing behavioral problems to develop non-conflictual relationships in classrooms (Buyse, Verschueren, Doumen, Van Damme, & Maes, 2008). Similarly, high school students in the US who reported that their teachers were supportive were more likely to report a healthy school climate and lower drug use, greater social belonging and lower levels of depression than those who did not attribute these qualities to their teachers (LaRusso, Romer, & Selman, 2008).

It is important to note that these qualities of personal warmth and supportiveness are also associated with positive academic outcomes. Students tend to be most socially and academically engaged when they feel supported and respected by their teachers, and when they expressed a sense of trust in their teachers (Battistisch, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004; Cooper & McIntyre, 1996). These teacher qualities have also been found to be associated with effective language skill acquisition (McDonald Connor, Son, Hindman, & Morrison, 2005). Additionally, teachers who are skilled communicators, ask meta-cognitive questions, and who mediate learning in a social-constructivist manner (such as through the use of scaffolding) are most successful in enabling students to achieve success in reflective thinking (Gillies & Boyle, 2008), a skill that is important in both higher level academic development and social-emotional problem solving. Other studies emphasize the importance of teacher reflexivity in classroom interaction, whereby they monitor and adjust their emotional responses to students and adjust their communications accordingly (Flem, Moen, & Gudmundsdottir, 2004; Kremenitzer, 2005; Poulou, 2005).

These findings suggest that strong attention should be paid to the personal qualities of individuals who are accepted into teacher training. Such matters should also be a priority in the initial training programs and in job selection procedures. Education providers should also be careful to protect and nurture these qualities in their teachers through professional supervision and in-service training.

**Teacher management of physical conditions in classrooms**

One of the ways in which teachers take account of their pupils’ needs is through their management of the physical environment of the classroom. Teachers’ choices often have an impact on the quality of students’ experience and sense of self-worth (Cooper 1993; Cooper, Smith & Upton, 1994; Cooper & Tiknaz, 2007; Savage 1999; Weinstein 1992). The spatial structure of the classroom, which involves patterns of student seating, the physical proximity of students to teachers, routes of physical circulation, and the overall sense of atmosphere and order, can have a significant effect on student engagement.
Teacher use of student peer influence in classrooms

Where disruptive students serve as role models they can promote classroom disruption (Barth, Dunlap, Dane, Lochman, & Wells, 2004), undermine interventions designed to address these problems (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999) and promote ‘deviancy training’ (Gottfredson, 1987). Other negative aspects of negative peer influence include ‘grassing’ and ‘tattling’ (Skinner, Neddenriep, Robinson, Ervin, & Jones, 2002). Grassing and tattling involve informing on pupil misdeeds to authority figures to invoke punishment. As such, they are malicious acts aimed at marginalizing targeted persons. On the other hand, positive peer reporting (PPR) has been shown to reverse the negative effects of ‘grassing.’ PPR involves students being rewarded for reporting on peers’ positive behavior, and has been shown to be effective in increasing positive peer interaction, and in increasing peer acceptance of children with SEBD (Bowers, Woods, Carlyon, & Friman, 2000; Ervin, Miller, & Friman, 1996; Jones, Gottfredson, & Gottfredson 1997; Moroz & Jones, 2002).

One of the most strongly evidenced behavioral interventions for academic progress in children with SEBD is peer-assisted learning, which addresses academic outcomes for children at risk through peer-assistance and increased opportunities to respond (Beaumont, 2009; Damon 1984; Pigott, Fantuzzo, & Clement 1986; Sutherland, Alder, & Gunter 2003; Topping 2005). One of the best known of these strategies is class-wide peer tutoring, in which learners are paired to increase rates of reciprocal response between learners. This approach has been adapted for use in a wide range of educational settings. To date, the strongest evidence for its effectiveness is in kindergarten and first grade levels (DuPaul & Henningson 1993, Hall, Delquadri, Greenwood, & Thurston, 1982; Karagiannakis & Sladeczek, 2009). Interventions to enhance teachers’ skills

The previous section dealt primarily with teacher and student qualities, and the ways these can be exploited to positive effect. This section discusses theoretically grounded approaches that are often made available in the context of more formalized interventions and that can be accessed through professional training programs.

Behavioral programs

Behavioral interventions, as noted earlier, are primarily concerned with the manipulation of surface behavior through the management of external stimuli. There is now a long history of their use in educational settings, where, when employed appropriately, they are often perceived to be cost effective and to combine minimal training requirements with ease of implementation and effectiveness (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Embry (2004) and Embry and Biglan (2008) have identified and described 52 strongly evidence-based behavioral strategies, which they term ‘kernels.’ These are specific strategies, such as response cost, verbal praise and ‘time out,’ that are commonly embedded in more elaborate
schemes and interventions approaches. There is strong evidence to suggest that if employed appropriately, competently and with sufficient frequency they can produce significant and lasting behavioral change. All of these kernels are supported by strong empirical evidence (Embry & Biglan, 2008).

One of the most powerful ‘packaged’ applications of behaviorist principles to problem behavior in classrooms is the good behavior game (GBG) (Barrish, Saunders, & Wold, 1969). European and North American studies have long demonstrated its success for a wide range of social, emotional and behavioral difficulties and in a wide range of educational settings with students aged 4 to 18 years old (Nolan, Houlihan, Wanzek, Jensen, 2013; Tingstrom, Sterling-Turner, & Wilczynski, 2006). Longitudinal studies (e.g., Kellam & Anthony, 1998) indicate that its positive effects can endure over time.

The purpose of the GBG is to promote positive behavior by following selected behavioral rules. It is a team game in which participants are rewarded for the aggregate performance of their team, thus encouraging collectivist, as opposed to individual, effort. The GBG has been found to have a significant impact in reducing aggression and preventing externalizing aggressive behavior and anxious internalizing behaviors (Dolan et al., 1993; Kellam & Anthony, 1998; Kellam, Rebok, Ialongo, & Mayer, 1994; Poduska et al., 2008). It has also been found to decrease classroom symptoms of ADHD.

Another empirically tested behavioral approach is functional behavioral analysis (FBA) (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968). FBA involves assessing the child’s relationship to the environment and makes note of the rate and frequency of problem behaviors, as well as their antecedents and consequences. In this way, the approach eschews explanations of behavior that appeal to the internal states of individuals (including psycho-medical accounts, which might invoke diagnostic categories such AD/HD, CD or ASD) in favor of a focus on the search for the stimuli that reinforce behaviors in a specific setting. The purpose of FBA, therefore, is to determine the fitness of specific interventions and assist selection from the wide array of options. FBA, when carried out rigorously, is highly effective in promoting behavioral change across a wide range of SEBD (Bowers, Woods, Carlyon, & Friman, 2000; Lewis & Sugai, 1996; Sutherland, Wehby, & Copeland, 2000; Umbreit, Lane, & Dejud, 2004). FBA is usually most effective when carried out by school professionals who have been formally trained in the method. While teachers trained in the techniques can achieve positive effects (Chandler, Dahlquist, Repp, & Feltz, 1999), they sometimes find it difficult to implement this complex and time consuming approach effectively while carrying out their other classroom responsibilities (Acker & O’Leary, 1987; Blood & Neel 2007; Scott et al., 2005). A recent and welcome contribution to this debate is the ‘Keystone’ skills approach (Ducharme & Shecter, 2011), which recognizes the challenges classroom practitioners face in relation to FBA, and offers instead a highly focused approach. A limited range of target areas for change are identified and then become the focus of cognitive and behavioral ‘compliance’ strategies (e.g., reinforcement). This means that practitioners do not need to engage in full FBA.

Cognitive Behavioral (CB) strategies for acting-out behavior

CB approaches are concerned with the ways in which the relationship between external stimuli and target behaviors can sometimes be influenced by thought processes. The aim of CB intervention is to encourage the development of functional ways of thinking by challenging and changing dysfunctional ways of thinking. A wide body of research attests to the efficacy of CB interventions to promote cognitive flexibility (Amato-Zech, Hoff, & Doepke, 2006; Rhode, Morgan, & Young, 1983), self-
monitoring difficulties among children with AD/HD (Reid, Trout & Schartz, 2005), self-control among children with ODD and CD (Altepeter & Korger, 1999; Fonagy & Kurtz, 2002; Kazdin, 2002), anxiety disorders (Fonagy & Kurtz, 2002; Kearney & Wadiak, 1999; Schoenfeld & Janney, 2008), and depressive disorders (Fonagy & Kurtz, 2002).

A particularly interesting feature of several of these and other similar studies (e.g., Hoff & DuPaul, 1998) is the apparent success that they are able to achieve with students diagnosed with AD/HD, a condition that is commonly treated with stimulant medication (Greenhill & Ford 2002; National Institute for Clinical and Health Excellence, 2008). In the studies cited here, students diagnosed with AD/HD were often being prescribed medication before the onset of a CB intervention. This suggests that CB may have a significant value-added effect when combined with medication (Kazdin, 2002). It may also be the case that CB and systemic strategies competently applied at the initial onset of AD/HD symptoms may reduce the need for medication (Young & Amarasinghe, 2010).

CB techniques have also been found to be highly effective in dealing with anger management problems (De Castro, Bosch, Veerman, & Kooper, 2003; Kellner, Bry, & Colletti, 2001) and social skills development (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, Solomon, & Schaps, 1989), often through the use of self-instruction techniques.

CB strategies for internalizing problems

There is a strong tendency for educational approaches to SEBD to focus on acting-out behaviors to the neglect of internalizing problems. This is in spite of the widespread prevalence of acting-in problems, as well as evidence of their serious impact on educational functioning (Schoenfeld & Janney, 2008). CB interventions, including modelling, in vivo exposure, role-playing, relaxation training, and contingency reinforcement, when used with middle school aged children with anxiety disorders, enable children to recognize anxious feelings, clarify their cognitions in such situations, implement coping strategies such as positive self-talk, and administer self-reinforcement where appropriate (Kendall, 1994).

Applications of mindfulness training

Mindfulness is a relatively new form of cognitive therapy, with its roots in Buddhist practice, in which individuals are trained to focus on their immediate situation and thoughts in an accepting and non-judgmental way. Its effect is to produce a heightened sense of wellbeing and reduced levels of stress associated with concerns about future or past events. The approach has been shown to be highly effective with adults who have internalizing problems, such as anxiety and depression (Baer, 2003). A recent successful application has been demonstrated in its application to the parents and teachers of students with Special Educational Needs (Benn, Takiva, & Arel, 2012), leading to significant reductions in levels of stress and anxiety, as well as increases in their levels of self-compassion, and empathic concern and forgiveness qualities that are noted for their impact on positive adult-child relationships. A recent study in which mindfulness interventions were applied to adolescents with AD/HD and their parents, found significant improvements in adolescents’ performance, in sustaining attention, reductions in behavioral problems, and improvements in their executive functioning (a core deficit for many
individuals with AD/HD), and parents reported reduced parenting stress (van de Weijer-Bergsma, Formsma, de Bruin & Bogels, 2012).

These studies are particularly interesting because they recognize the systemic importance of parents and teachers in relation to childhood SEBD and show the beneficial effects of the interventions for all parties.

**Systemic interventions**

Space does not permit anything more than a cursory reference to the extremely important areas of wider systemic interventions and parenting interventions. Dishion (2011) calls for a ‘systemic concatenation of empirically-based approaches’ that draw on a wide range of proven strategies that focus on the need for school-based teacher behavioral management strategies and systems of parent support, coupled with the kinds of strategies cited above aimed at promoting students’ social-emotional and behavioral well-being. It is argued that such approaches need to be embedded in a context of effective school leadership that ensures the provision of appropriate support and engages in rigorous assessment of process outcomes. A systems approach recognizes that human behavior is subject to proximal and distal influences. These influences operate in complex and often convoluted patterns, rather than in simple lineal ways, which means that change in any part of a system can have sometimes unpredicted consequences in other parts the system. This makes the approach particularly useful with apparently intractable problems that have resisted well-tried conventional approaches directed at the individual student who is perceived to be at the center of the problem (Cooper & Upton, 1990). A systemic analysis, therefore, considers not only the individual who is perceived to be ‘the problem’ but the wider circumstances in which she operates.

In the case of school students, these wider circumstances will include classroom (e.g., relational matters involving teacher and peer group factors); school level issues (i.e., cultural and organizational factors), as well as medical, family and community factors. Such analyses often lead to the identification of unmet need, which may, for example, include the identification of learning needs, unintended consequences of school rules, material deprivation or family dysfunction that can be addressed through social services involvement, and medical needs. An educational intervention that has been shown to have a positive impact on behavior is the Success for All (SFA) program (Chamberlain, Daniels, Madden, & Slavin, 2007), which involves measures to engage parents in supporting their children’s developing literacy skills. An unintended consequence of engagement in the program is an improvement in parent and student relationships, which leads to improvements in students’ attitude toward, and engagement with, schools. Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST), developed by (e.g. Henggeler et al, 2002), often involves explorations of the medical, family and community sub-systems as well as the school. This approach has been highly effective with adolescent Conduct Disorder (Eyberg et al., 2008).
Implications for policy: The importance of a bio-psycho-social approach

It follows from the previous section that school-based interventions will be all the more effective when linked to a wider, integrated multi-disciplinary network (Hernandez & Blazer, 2006). A properly informed understanding of SEBD cannot be gained without some engagement with psycho-medical understandings. The research evidence we have reviewed on effective interventions for SEBD has, at times, emphasized psycho-social (particularly psychological) interventions (such as cognitive behavioral approaches), which are sometimes associated with a biomedical paradigm. As we have also shown, however, the educational sphere is a major site frequently implicated in the development, remediation and prevention of SEBD. Academic success is an important protective factor and the effectiveness of psycho-social interventions is often enhanced when they are delivered in schools, rather than clinics, and when they are embedded in the curriculum, where appropriate.

We have also suggested that certain psychological interventions are most effective when they are delivered by teachers rather than other professionals. However, there is a limit to what one can expect teachers to implement, particularly in the classroom, where a number of students have particular SEBD issues. Psychologists and medical professionals, including school nurses, where they are deployed, therefore have two important roles in school interventions. The first is a training role and the second is as a provider of interventions, both as a consultant to school staff and in direct intervention with students.

It is very important for both educational and health professionals to reflect on the ways in which they can combine their efforts and go beyond multi-professional approaches to embrace trans-professionalism (Hernandez & Blazer, 2006). Trans-professional approaches require professionals to step outside their narrowly defined and sanctioned professional roles to absorb, rather than simply engage with, some of the knowledge and understandings of representatives from other professions. SEBD in schools is, arguably, one of the most fruitful targets for such an approach. As it stands, the evidence base shows that some members of the teaching profession have demonstrated conspicuous success in adopting and applying psychological approaches to SEBD that are informed by understandings of the underpinnings of SEBD. These successes need to be built on. This aspiration will be advanced if medical professionals learn more about the potential that educational approaches have for remediating and preventing SEBD and contribute to the development of these approaches.

We therefore argue for a bio-psycho-social approach (Cooper & Jacobs, 2011). This approach integrates the individual biological and intra-psychic dimensions with the interpersonal and social dimensions. This makes the approach truly holistic and lends itself well to understandings of the complexities of SEBD and its concomitant interventions. The bio-psycho-social approach is, therefore, a valuable theoretical framework within which to locate a fully trans-disciplinary approach to SEBD. The importance of this approach is that it emphasizes a contextualized view of SEBD that suggests that the perceived problem may well be amenable to social and educational accommodations that go well beyond simplistic disciplinary procedures to embrace psycho-pedagogical interventions.

This discussion relates to the broader issue of problems that can arise from different disciplinary cultures and languages. We have noted in our review the importance attached by some commentators to ‘the rejection of the medical model’ in the historical development of inclusive education policies and
practices. A potentially negative consequence of this might be to create problems in the all-important area of inter-disciplinary working. Our suggested solution to this potential problem is the adoption of a bio-psycho-social framework that will incorporate and give equal respect to the contributions of different disciplines.

This has important implications at the policy level for education and related services concerned with children and young people, as well as the training needs of professionals working in these areas. Policy should be conceived within the context of understandings about children’s social-emotional competence and influences that lead to SEBD, as well as the ways in which the environment can be manipulated to promote overall well-being. Clear messages can be gleaned from the literature regarding the kinds of attitudes, understandings and skills that teachers and other professionals require. These messages need to be imported into the training and selection processes of professionals who work with children and young people. Crucially, policy and training must strive for a stronger emphasis on trans-professionalism that works towards the optimal integration of diverse professional perspectives to yield a comprehensive approach to the social-emotional well-being of troubled youth.

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The application of social-emotional learning principles to a special education environment

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Abstract

Social-Emotional Learning plays a uniquely important role for students with special needs and the staff that serve them. This paper examines the strengths and challenges of students in two categories of special education: students classified as Emotionally Disturbed (ED), and students classified with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in the social-emotional domain of functioning. In addition, the paper will present a model of incorporating Social-Emotional Standards and development through a school-wide approach in a large special education district in New York City and present policy implications for both general education and special education environments. The impact of this model on behavior, social-emotional skill development, and school practices is discussed.

Keywords: social-emotional learning, emotional disturbance, autistic spectrum disorder, special education, social skills
Special education in the United States was granted statutory rights by Public Law 94-142 (Education of All Handicapped Children Act) (Abeson & Zettel, 1977), later codified as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975 (US Department of Education, 2008). This act, which required public schools to provide a “free and appropriate education” to all children, ushered in a new era in public education in America. While the way schools go about meeting the requirements of this act is constantly evolving, one thing remains clear, challenges in the social-emotional domain of functioning is often a challenge for students receiving special education services. Therefore, explicitly attending to students’ social-emotional development is an important foundation of any program educating students with disabilities.

### Emotional disturbance and autism spectrum disorders

According to IDEIA (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), students can be classified with an Emotional Disturbance if they exhibit one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a child’s educational performance:

- (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(http://idea.ed.gov, 2013)

A review of the definition for Emotional Disturbance points to difficulties that lie primarily in the student’s social-emotional and behavioral domain of functioning. Across all age groups, students with ED make up 8.6% (6.2% elementary/middle school; 11.2% secondary school) of the special education population (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Within this context, research generally concludes that children classified as ED have the worst prognosis in terms of high school graduation, academic achievement, and future problems with anti-social behavior (Landrum, Tankersley, & Kauffman, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 2008; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005).

The challenges of students with ED are influenced by a number of characteristics that have an effect on their educational success. Compared to all other students receiving public education, children with ED are more likely to be economically disadvantaged (33.2%), male (80%), and from single parent households (38%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). Additionally, many students classified as ED have significant difficulties with language. A number of researchers have established the link between anti-social behavior and language-related variables. Language, behavior, and social skills overlap in early development, with each domain contributing to emergent competence in the others (Guralnick & Neville, 1997; Kaiser, Hancock, Cai, Foster, & Hester, 2000). Benner, Nelson, and Epstein (2002) identified two principal findings of relevance to this discussion. First, children with receptive (understanding language) problems are at a higher risk for anti-social behavior than children with speech disorders or speech-language disorders these students were rated the most aggressive by parents and teachers. Second, difficulty in initiating and maintaining interpersonal relationships has been suggested as a mediating variable in the association between language deficits and anti-social behavior, with
aggressive children using less verbal communication and more direct physical actions to solve interpersonal problems (Benner et al., 2002).

When applied to students classified with ED, the estimation of prevalence rates of language deficits range from 66% to 91%, in addition to an estimated 71% having difficulty in pragmatics (rules related to language use in a social setting such as speaker-listener relationship, turn-taking, eye contact etc.). Up to 90% of language deficits in students classified as ED are undiagnosed (Benner et al., 2002). Indeed, students with ED often come from a convergence of factors known to have a negative impact on social-emotional development. However, it is not just students with ED that demonstrate a concordance of social-emotional and language difficulties.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) are a group of developmental disabilities that often are diagnosed during early childhood and can cause significant social, communication, and behavioral challenges over a lifetime. Students with ASD share some similar symptoms, such as problems with social interaction, problems with communication, and highly focused interests or repetitive activities (Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 2012). While not considered one of the high incidence disorders (Specific Learning Disabilities, Speech/Language Impairments, Intellectual Disabilities, and Emotional Disturbance) that comprise more than 90% of all children in special education programs, the rapid increase of children diagnosed with ASD (78% increase from 2002-2008) warrants special attention to understand the strengths and challenges of working with this group of students from a social-emotional framework (Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring Network, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

There is no medical test for ASD. It is diagnosed based on structured observations by medical or psychological professionals. While children with ASD demonstrate a wide range of strengths and challenges (62% of children on the Autism Spectrum have typical IQ scores), there are some shared characteristics that characterize students with an ASD diagnosis. With regard to language, students with ASD often have challenges with receptive language (they struggle to comprehend spoken language, gesture, facial expression and other social nuances), expressive language (children with autism who can speak will often say things that have no meaning or that seem out of context in conversations with others or repeat words he or she has heard repeatedly), and language pragmatics (difficulty with language rules in the social context) (Wilkinson, 1998). In the interpersonal domain, students with ASD have difficulties with initiating interactions, maintain reciprocity, sharing enjoyment, taking another person’s perspective and inferring the interests of others (Bellini, Peters, Benner, & Hopf, 2007). Considering that the large cognitive range of students on the Autistic Spectrum, it is deficits in social-emotional domains of functioning (impairments of social interaction, social language and communication, and social imagination) that characterize students with ASD (Mundy, 2007).

Interventions

Treatment approaches for students classified as ED and ASD often rely on direct instruction around the skills that impair their social and emotional functioning. Literature reviews and meta-analysis of the literature identified four major concerns with social skills interventions as applied to students classified as ED (Chen, 2006; Forness, Quinn, Kavale, Mathur, & Rutherford, 1999). First is a concern around maintenance and generalization students do not use the skills in different settings with different people.
across time. Second are concerns around time, intensity, and opportunity to practice in natural settings the length and depth of packaged social skills programs is often lacking, considering the severity of the social problems of the students. Additionally, the skills are often not practiced in the settings in which they are expected to be put to use. There is also a concern with the failure to discriminate between social competence and social skills students who master skills but fail to employ them reflect a performance deficit, not a skill deficit. Last, is a concern around the process used to identify skills to remediate in practice, the targeting of social skills for instruction is often subjective, with little or cursory empirical justification of their need in identified students (Chen, 2006).

Although the etiology of the disorders are different and there is a wider range of developmental ability, students with ASD and students classified as ED must both be able to identify and adhere to a similar set of social-emotional expectations in order to be independent and contributing members of society. As such, social-emotional interventions for students with ASD share broadly common outcome goals and characteristics, as well as common critiques, as those for students classified as ED.

Interventions for students with ASD often include a mix of speech supports, focused on communication and language, and social skills supports. As noted above, there is a reciprocal relationship between these competencies. Indeed, the science of teaching social skills to students with ASD is robust and while there have been many achievements in teaching social skills to students on a one-to-one basis, a meta-analytic review of social skills training on a classroom level yielded a wide variety of results, ranging from ineffectual to highly effective (Bellini et al., 2007). Rao, Beidel, and Murray (2008) and Bellini et al. (2007) identified several weaknesses that mirror the instructional challenges for students classified as ED:

- A lack of a common definition of social skills makes it difficult to compare skills across studies.
- Low frequency and intensity of social skills training in the school setting lowered the effectiveness of the interventions.
- Failure to produce adequate maintenance and generalization effects occurred because training often takes place in decontextualized locations.
- Failure of many interventionists to match the social skills strategy to the type of skill deficit presented (performance versus acquisition).

A comparison of these two reviews reveals similar concerns around outcomes of social skills programs for students classified as ED and ASD. The next section of this paper will present a model developed in the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) designed to address these challenges for students receiving special education services in self-contained classrooms.

Social emotional learning for special education students

The NYCDOE is the branch of municipal government in New York City that manages the city’s public school system. It is the largest school system in the United States, with over 1.1 million students taught in more than 1,700 separate schools. In the U.S., school districts often form cooperatives to educate students with the most severe disabilities in order to pool expertise and reduce costs. Within the
NYCDOE, District 75 is the administrative district that provides academic, social-emotional, behavioral, and other support services (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, etc.) to its 56,000 students with a wide range of challenges, including students on the autism spectrum, students who have significant cognitive delays, students who are severely emotionally challenged, and students who are sensory impaired and/or multiply disabled, whose needs are not able to be met within a community school setting. The district operates 58 school organizations in 300+ sites throughout the city and serves the most challenging students within the NYCDOE.

Social-emotional supports in District 75 are organized around a three-tiered model of intervention. At the primary support level is an effective behavioral system and school-wide SEL programming. Given the relationship between language and social-emotional functioning, many schools in District 75 with a predominance of students classified as ED use the RULER Approach as the foundation for their students’ social-emotional development. The RULER Approach has a strong emphasis on the development of students’ language and communication skills around the recognition and labeling of emotions (Rivers & Brackett, 2011). Additional SEL skills, such as relationships, perspective-taking, and decision-making skills, are integrated into the school environment and supported through other programs and approaches (see Figure 2.)

At the secondary support level, students may be placed in small group settings around a specific behavioral or social-emotional challenge that is targeted through assessment. At the tertiary support level, one-to-one counseling supports and behavioral assessments for students are used to develop skills and performance around a specific area of need. A deeper understanding of this model will be gained by reviewing some of the concerns identified in the literature and how District 75 works to address these challenges in practice.

Lack of common definition

Although discussions around the verbiage used to describe constructs such as social-emotional learning can sometimes seem frivolous, the language used to frame a student’s social and emotional functioning has real implications with regards to creating a shared understanding and framework around a student’s growth. In practice settings, language can create bridges and collaboration or encourage isolation and fragmentation. Students in special education often receive an array of supports from speech, to counseling, to academics, with each focusing on their individual contributions to the student’s development. Each field uses specialized vocabulary that often obscures the overlap in outcomes each respective service is trying to achieve. Using a broad common framework to understand students’ social-emotional development increases the likelihood of a targeted and coordinated approach subsequently.

In order to achieve this goal in District 75, participating schools have adopted SEL Standards that were modified from the Anchorage, Alaska Standards in order to organize the language and programming around the social-emotional development of our students. The Anchorage Alaska Standards are based on the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2005) framework that form the basis of the state standards adopted by the state of Illinois. The Anchorage Standards were chosen for implementation in District 75 because the organization of standards around “self”, “social” awareness” and “management” with accompanying sub-standards provided the most parsimonious framework from which to communicate student social emotional development to staff. In addition, the Anchorage Standards were adapted by Intermediate District 287, a consortium of 12 school
districts based in Minnesota, USA, to reach back to the sensory-motor stage of development in order to maintain a common framework for social-emotional development at a range of developmental levels. In practice, schools using an SEL approach to student development are able to use the SEL Standards to articulate the developmentally appropriate desired social-emotional outcomes for students across a range of disabilities, programs, and support services using a common language that focuses on student results. Nesting SEL skills in a broader social-emotional framework provides a context for these skills in the larger world and clarifies their relationship to each other.

For example, many programs identify active listening (a communication technique that requires the listener to feed back what it is heard to the speaker) as a skill that students should develop. Schools using an SEL approach to student development however would identify that developing active listening skills is an important aspect of how students understand others (Social Awareness) and more specifically, is an important aspect of building relationships and understanding the roles and perspectives of others. Teachers, counselors, and service providers (speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, etc.) would all be familiar with the language and able to identify any potential overlaps in their work with the student around active listening. Through this process, a shared understanding of the student’s social-emotional functioning is developed and opportunities for collaboration and cooperation are increased. This collaboration is important when considering the challenges around maintenance and generalization of skills.

**Maintenance and generalization**

Bellini et al. (2007) highlight the fact that the delivery of social-emotional programming in pull-out sessions and other de-contextualized venues hampers the ability for the skills to be maintained or generalized. In District 75, the model developed to address this concern focuses on conceptual consistency and integration of skills across the school environment. When educators have a clear understanding of the outcomes they are influencing, instruction becomes more focused. Curriculum-based social-emotional instruction is provided in the classroom by the classroom teacher or with the classroom teacher present. This means that the student is taught the skills in the setting and with the people with whom the student spends the majority of the day. Instruction is often integrated into English Language Arts (ELA), and, in most cases, the language and artifacts around social-emotional learning are shared throughout the school and infused in the school culture. Additionally, all school staff and administration are trained on the standards as well as the curricula designed to meet them, and a school team meets on a consistent basis to review the implementation and fidelity of programming. When students and staff share a language and common understanding around social-emotional development, students are exposed to a consistent message around social-emotional skills that supports the generalization of skills across contexts. It is also important to recognize that explicit social-emotional instruction through a curriculum is not the only opportunity for students to learn and practice social-emotional skill sets.

In District 75, participating schools complete a logic model to make connections across programs and approaches to students’ social-emotional development. The document uses the adopted SEL standards to articulate a specific theory of action around a program or approach and a student’s outcome in the social-emotional domain. The logic model contains four columns and is program centric. The first column is a description of the program (what is the program). The second column asks for intended outcomes of the program in the social-emotional domain, as referenced by the SEL Standards (what are
the outcomes). The third column is the theory of action. This column makes the explicit connection between program activities and program outcomes (how does the program or approach achieve these outcomes). To attain this, schools identify if the program or approach is teaching an SEL skill or reinforcing it, and then reference specific program activities that align to the SEL standards that demonstrate how the skill is being taught or reinforced. For example, schools clubs [program] reinforce [teach, vs. reinforce] a student’s sense of personal responsibility [SEL standard] by providing opportunities to demonstrate how taking personal responsibility can lead to success [theory of action].

The last column asked the school to identify what data are being collected that reflects the intended program outcomes (how do we know). The data collected should align to the program outcomes articulated in the second column. See Figure 1 for an example.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Approach</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
<th>Social Emotional Learning Standards</th>
<th>Connection</th>
<th>Data Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debate Team</td>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>Self Awareness - 1B. Students demonstrate an awareness of their personal traits.</td>
<td>Debate Team teaches students awareness of their strengths and weaknesses by giving opportunity to reflect upon the personal qualities they possess that make them successful members of the debate team. It teaches students to describe and prioritize personal skills and interests they want to develop.</td>
<td>Student survey to capture perceptions of school community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Management - 2A. Students demonstrate ability to manage their needs and emotions.</td>
<td>Debate Team teaches students to manage their emotions by giving students opportunities to set goals, analyze outcomes, and learn from experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Management - 2D. Students demonstrate increasing levels of independence and the ability to set and achieve goals.</td>
<td>Debate Team teaches students to set and achieve goals by giving students opportunities to set goals, analyze outcomes, and learn from experiences.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Self Management 4A. Students use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.</td>
<td>Debate Team teaches students communication and social skills by giving students opportunities to demonstrate cooperative behaviors in a group goals and attentive listening skills.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Sample Social Emotional Learning Log Model
This approach allows the school to rationalize their programming designed to promote students’ SEL skills and to identify social-emotional skills that may be secondary to the program or approach (i.e., a physical education program’s primary purpose may be exercise, but the weekly setting and monitoring of goals speak to children’s self-management skills). Schools also complete a Program Matrix which flows from the logic model. Instead of listing the programs and connecting the SEL standards, the matrix looks at the SEL standards and arranges programming around them. This provides the school with an understanding of what program and approaches teach various social emotional competencies. See Figure 2 for an example. As a framework, the program matrix clarifies for schools the skills the students are exposed to over a wide range of programming, which in turn means the educators can create more meaningful opportunities and supports for the those skills across the school environment. The language of the SEL standards indicates to schools that the ideal end state of student functioning is one where students have internalized the skills and dispositions that reflect effective functioning in society, as articulated through the SEL standards, and can calibrate their behavior from this internalized understanding.

**Performance vs. knowledge of skills**

Both Chen (2006) and Bellini et al. (2007) identified the lack of distinction between challenges around the performance of a skill vs. knowledge of a skill as an area of concern. In addition to the Program Matrix, which as discussed above, explicitly asks schools to identify if the program or approach is teaching or reinforcing skills, participating District 75 schools combine behavioral approaches with instruction in the social-emotional domain to ensure that the learning environment actively reinforces intended student behavior while supporting the student to internalize these behaviors over time. Most schools use the Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach to achieve this balance.

PBIS is an operational framework that guides selection, integration, and implementation of the best evidence-based academic and behavioral practices for improving important academic and behavior outcomes for all students. It is characterized by an emphasis on data collection, positive reinforcement techniques to shape behavior, a tiered support model with increasing supports towards the top, and the communication of clear expectations for behavior (Sugai & Simonsen, 2012). PBIS works to support positive social behavior by developing practices on a school and classroom level that serve to create a structure that clarifies behavioral expectations and reinforces them in a consistent and positive way. At the broadest level, PBIS is concerned with the interaction between the student and the environment and places an emphasis on creating environments that reinforce positive behavior. At the most intensive level, a Functional Behavioral Analyses (FBA) is completed. Data taken on the context around students’ focal behaviors lends insight into the interactions between the student and the environment that may influence a child’s performance of learned skills.
The application of social-emotional learning principles to a special education environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Emotional Learning Standard</th>
<th>Programs(s)/Frameworks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness (I am): Recognizing who I am, what I need and how I feel relative to the world around me</strong></td>
<td>- RULER Approach&lt;br&gt;- Counseling&lt;br&gt;- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)&lt;br&gt;- Resolution Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1A. Students demonstrate awareness of their needs and emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Management (I can): Manage my behavior in pro-social ways</strong></td>
<td>- PBIS&lt;br&gt;- Behavior Matrix (RPS)&lt;br&gt;- Point Sheet&lt;br&gt;- School Store&lt;br&gt;- Clubs&lt;br&gt;- RULER Approach&lt;br&gt;- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)&lt;br&gt;- Resolution Room&lt;br&gt;- Counseling&lt;br&gt;- Drama Workshop&lt;br&gt;- Debate Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2A. Students demonstrate ability to manage their needs and emotions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Management (I will): Interact with others in meaningful and productive ways</strong></td>
<td>- RULER Approach&lt;br&gt;- Clubs&lt;br&gt;- PBIS - Assemblies&lt;br&gt;- Drama Workshop&lt;br&gt;- Culinary Workshop&lt;br&gt;- Student Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A. Students demonstrate awareness of their people’s roles, their emotions and perspectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness (I care): Demonstrate an awareness of the role and value of others in the greater community</strong></td>
<td>- PBIS&lt;br&gt;- Behavior Matrix&lt;br&gt;- Clubs&lt;br&gt;- Assemblies&lt;br&gt;- RULER Approach&lt;br&gt;- Mighty Milers&lt;br&gt;- Culinary Workshop&lt;br&gt;- Debate Team&lt;br&gt;- Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4A. Students use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Abridged Sample Program Matrix.
Targeting social-emotional skills to develop

Chen (2006) reflects that the connection between behavior and the underlying skills sets, such as social-emotional competencies, that serve as the foundation for such behavior is often poorly understood in practice settings. As such, the identification of social-emotional skills for student development on an individual level often lacks a clear theory of action. For any type of effective instruction to take place, teachers and students must understand what is to be taught, the relevance of the instruction to prior knowledge and the gap between the current and the intended functioning. In District 75, this is addressed through the use of assessments and instructional plans around social-emotional functioning that combine classroom instruction with small group or one to one instruction through counseling supports.

For students classified as ED, District 75 is piloting the use of the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) a 72-item, standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social-emotional competencies that serve as protective factors for children in kindergarten through the eighth grade (Naglieri, Goldstein, & Lebuffe, 2010). The assessment relies on CASEL’s framework for the organization of its scales, which connects the assessment to the standards and instruction. Since the DESSA is strength based, it allows educators to identify what the student should be doing and to create instructional plans to close the gap between the student’s current and intended level of functioning.

Teachers complete the DESSA three times a year: November, January, and late May. After the teachers complete the DESSA, the counselors and teachers meet to discuss the results. Counselors then review the outcomes with students to help improve self-awareness and as an opportunity to self assess. Next, teachers and counselors use a backward design instructional approach, in which instruction is planned after assessment determines the desired outcomes, and plan their counseling sessions to remediate any skill gaps that a student may have that is making it difficult for them to meet the behavioral indicators articulated in the DESSA around effective functioning. In the classroom, in addition to using the RULER Approach as their curriculum, teachers create opportunities for the student to practice the skills they are developing and build structures that help to support skill acquisition. For example, a counselor may be teaching about personal responsibility in her sessions, and in the classroom the teacher may create classroom jobs and ensure the student is praised for independent completion of such jobs. The students’ progress is monitored in the classroom domain through discussions between the counselors and the teachers and formally re-assessed at the end of a three-month intervention period. After this re-assessment, counselors and teachers review the data to determine whether or not the student has made enough growth on the area of concern to move to another need or to continue working on the area of concern identified in the initial evaluation. For students with ASD, a similar model is used with variations in assessments (Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory, Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills, Brigance Inventory of Early Development) and instructional foci based on the child’s developmental level of functioning along with visual supports as necessary.

Impact

The introduction of an SEL framework to schools in District 75 has had a significant impact on student outcomes. In a Manhattan high school that serves many students with ASD, 76% of students met...
their teacher-generated social-emotional goals written into the IEP in 2011-2012. In 2012-2013, the school introduced indicators from the SEL Standards, incorporated SEL Standards into the curriculum map and asked teachers to reference SEL in their lesson plans (addressing lack of common definition, targeting of social skills to develop, and the low frequency and intensity of social skills training). Currently, 98% percent of students are on track to meet the social-emotional goals written into the IEP.

In a Bronx, New York City high school that serves students with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and students with autism, the introduction of a SEL framework school-wide was related to important effects on student outcomes. In counseling, counselors used the SEL Standards to identify gaps in student functioning in the social emotional domain and create plans in collaboration with the classroom teacher to improve their skills (targeting social skills to develop). One counselor asked teachers and school deans to rate three of his students in counseling on indicators from the SEL Standards around students’ ability to understand other people’s emotions and perspectives. One student made great gains through the focused work, originally being rated an average of 1.3 on a one (Never) to four (Frequently) scale on the question, “Over the last month, how often have you seen your student demonstrate an understanding of how their behavior effects the emotions of others?”, scoring an average of 3.4 after six months of focused intervention. At the school-wide level, the introduction of an SEL framework was concurrent to a decrease in behavioral incidents in the school. There were 324 behavioral infractions recorded in 2010-2011, 297 behavioral infractions recorded in 2011-2012 and after a full year of focus on school-wide SEL, 81 behavioral infractions recorded in 2012 -2013 (maintenance and generalization).

In another Bronx middle school that serves students with ED, when asked whether the DESSA helped to make teachers more aware of their students’ social-emotional needs, teachers (n = 6) averaged a 3.71 response on a one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree scale). A Manhattan middle school serving students with ED introduced SEL lessons in classroom aligned to school wide needs reported from the DESSA and recorded small gains in teachers’ perceptions of students social emotional functioning in a pre and post- test ($M = 40.69, SD = 7.69$) vs. ($M = 41.61, SD = 9.02$) as per the DESSA’s composite SEL score in a four month intervention period (targeting social skills to develop). Anecdotally, feedback from schools in the Bronx and Queens, New York (another borough of New York City) reported that the use of the DESSA and the corresponding model was a “great dialogue tool between students, counselor, and parents”and that it served as “important link between the classroom and counseling”(maintenance and generalization). Lastly, using a logic model, one Manhattan school serving students with ED determined that a video game club that was designed to cooperation skills was rated by the students as an area where social-emotional skills were “rarely” or “never” practiced, prompting the team to review the theory of action and how it was translated into practices during the club (maintenance and generalization).

While these findings are far from conclusive, they represent the feasible efforts schools can undertake and use for program and policy development. The accumulated experience to date in District 75 has some important policy implications for those concerned with extending the paradigm of character education and social-emotional learning to students with special education needs.
Policy implications

Although District 75 reflects a special education context with regard to the social-emotional development of students, it operates within the larger NYCDOE. Consequently, a large percentage of students currently in District 75 started either within a general education class or within an integrated classroom in a community school. As such, the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional supports offered in general education schools in New York City, and in many urban environments generally, have a considerable impact on the student’s baseline level of functioning when placed in a more restrictive special-education only setting. Indeed, many of the challenges faced by students classified as ED in District 75 fall along the same spectrum of challenges as those faced by students in general education settings, only manifested with greater frequency, intensity or duration. Since the majority of students in special education have spent time in general education environments, policy recommendations must also span both contexts to be meaningful.

Recommendation #1: Social-emotional functioning of all students should be measured and reported by schools.

For social-emotional learning to become an integral part of the educational landscape, valid, reliable, and actionable measures of social-emotional functioning for students must be incorporated and reported out to relevant stakeholders in the school community. This is likely to be equally important outside of the U.S. if SEL and related areas of functioning are to be viewed as essential aspects of education. In general education, highly effective systems in for screening and responding to social-emotional challenges could reduce the escalation of those identified challenges in many students so that referrals to a more restrictive environment like District 75 are less likely to be necessary. In addition, unlike behavioral data that often focuses on behavioral infractions, measurement of student social-emotional functioning allows students to identify strengths in their profile, as well as areas of need. Finally, the ongoing measurement of social-emotional functioning creates opportunities for schools to effectively and efficiently monitor interventions being tried to see if they are indeed working or need modification.

Recommendation #2: Students at risk for social-emotional difficulties should be measured on their language fundamentals (Receptive language, expressive language, pragmatics, etc.).

As discussed above, language skills, social skills, and behavior are intimately related, especially in early childhood. However, the language deficits of students with challenging behavior are often overshadowed by the behavior itself (Guralnick & Neville, 1997; Kaiser, Hancock, Cai, Foster, & Hester, 2000). Language and communication deficiencies can impair social-emotional skill performance, and mislead educators into thinking that SEL skills have not been adequately learned. Students with behavioral challenges should have their language skills assessed concomitantly with assessments of social-emotional functioning.
Recommendation #3: All schools should develop or adopt social-emotional learning standards and complete a logic model (Program matrix) to articulate how programming creates desired outcomes.

The Common Core Curriculum Standards are nation-wide standards recently adopted throughout most of the United States to ensure that school districts’ curricula create “college and career ready” students. (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) While these standards have many strengths, in the introduction of these standards, their limitations are discussed:

While the ELA and content area literacy components described herein are critical to college and career readiness, they do not define the whole of such readiness. Students require a wide ranging, rigorous academic preparation and, particularly in the early grades, attention to such matters as social, emotional, (emphasis added) and physical development and approaches to learning (NGACBP & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010, p. 6)

Although there are opportunities for social-emotional development in the Common Core Standards (e.g., an emphasis on cooperative learning), the lack of articulated nation-wide standards for social-emotional learning means that social-emotional development is often considered ancillary to the intellectual development of their students. Notwithstanding the long-standing evidence showing how social-emotional skills supports academic achievement (Coie & Krehbiel, 1984; Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Branden-Muller, & Sayette, 1991), or that when asked what skills young people need to succeed at work, businesses across the United States have long identified personal qualities such as individual responsibility, self-esteem, sociability, self-management, and integrity among the three foundational skills of workplace competence (United States Dept. of Labor Secretary’s Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills, 1992), the mission of public schools is not only to prepare children for college and work, but to foster the skills and behaviors citizens need to govern themselves and contribute to the public good. Adopting SEL standards brings this goal into sharp focus. It provides the language for schools to incorporate the planning of such skills into their academic programming and recognize the multiplicity of their mission as public institutions. This is particularly important for at risk students, who tend to have a high degree of mobility from school to school.

However, standards are only as useful as their translation into instruction and supports in schools. Utilizing a program matrix to achieve social-emotional goals that align with SEL standards (or even the social-emotional goals within a particular school) increases the likelihood schools can apply a SEL framework to programs and activities inside and outside of the classroom that will prepare them to be productive members of society.

Policy summary

Social-emotional development is an important component of special education programs and the general education schools that feed them. Policy decisions should reflect an understanding of the extent to which deficiencies in the social-emotional domain are common to many students receiving special
education services, especially those with ASD and ED classifications. This suggests the need for explicit instruction and supports regarding these skills before students reach a special education program; and the importance of this only accelerates after they are placed. Additionally, the needs of special education students require added intensity, coordination, and consistency in social-emotional skills development efforts. Measurement, tied to standards and related to program goals, intervention procedures, and supports also must be essential to any discussion around policy and social-emotional learning.

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Differential correlates of bully/victim status and bystander roles of school violence with school adjustment in Korea

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the differential associations of school violence experiences with school adjustment by specifying bully/victim status and bystanders’ roles. A total of 1516 primary (67.4%) and middle (32.6%) school students in Korea were administered a series of psychological instruments. Mean differences showed that students without bullying experiences were better adjusted at school than those of bully, victim or bully-victim status. Victim helpers were better adjusted at school than bully helpers or passive observers. Regression analyses showed that students were better adjusted in schools if they had higher levels of empathy, lower levels of hostile attribution, no experiences of school bullying, or being victim-helpers. Policy implications are discussed for prevention and intervention of school bullying in Korea.

Keywords: school violence, school adjustment, empathy, hostile attribution, bystanders
Introduction

Bullying is one of the most prevalent and serious problems for primary and middle school students in Korea (Ban & Kim, 2011; Moon et al., 2009). It is considered a detrimental factor to physical, psychological, and mental health, as well as to school adjustment (Barker, Arseneault, Brendgen, Fontaine, & Maughan, 2008; Bouman et al., 2012; Isaacs, Hodge, & Salmivalli, 2008; Nabuzoka, Ronning, & Handegard, 2009; Reijntjes, Kamphuis, Prinzie, & Telch, 2010), and the negative impact of school violence persists over time (Sourander, Helstela, Helenius, & Piha, 2000). A 30-year longitudinal investigation carried out by Gibb, Horwood and Fergusson (2011) showed that school violence victimization in childhood led to behavioral problems and psychological maladjustment in adulthood, even after controlling for individual and family-related factors. Bullied children suffer academically, with poorer grades and higher rates of absenteeism than their non-bullied peers (Hanish, & Guerra, 2002; Srabstein & Piazza, 2008).

School violence increases from childhood through early adolescence and decreases in adolescence (Nansel et al., 2001; Olweus, 2010; Park & Chung, 2005; Park, Chung, & Park, 2006; Park et al., 2011; Seals, & Young, 2003). School violence is more prevalent in male students than in females (Berger, 2007; Cook, Williams, Guerra, & Kim, 2010; Kim, Kamphaus, Orpinas, & Kelder, 2010; Park et al., 2011). However, indirect or interpersonal school violence occurs as frequently in females as in males (Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992).

Graham and colleagues (2006) studied an ethnically diverse sample of 6th grade students, using peer nomination procedures to identify students into subgroups with reputations as victims, aggressors, aggressive victims, and socially adjusted (neither aggressive nor victimized). The first three subgroups encountered more school adjustment problems compared to their socially-adjusted classmates. School violence influences psychological adjustment and academic performance in not only aggressors and victims, but also uninvolved classmates (Bouman et al., 2012; Card & Hodges, 2008; Rothon, Head, Klineberg, & Stansfeld, 2011).

The Social Information Processing (SIP) Model explains the socio-cognitive process by which children act aggressively (Crick & Dodge, 1994). They suggested the 6 steps of SIP as the following: encoding of cues, interpretation of cues, clarification of goals, response access or construction, response decision, and behavioral enactment. They also suggest that aggressively rejected children are more likely than their non-rejected peers to attend to aggressive cues from peers, to interpret ambiguous behavior as having hostile or aggressive intent, and subsequently to react immaturely and emotionally, often in the form of reactive or retaliatory aggression.

Schwartz and colleagues (1997) have proposed a model whereby deficits in children’s socio-cognitive processing skills lead to victimization by peers, which, in turn, predicts changes in behavioral tendencies, including an increase in aggressive behavior. They suggest that frequent victimization may also have a pernicious impact on a child’s behavior through its influence on underlying social cognitive structures when bullied. Bully victims react aggressively because anger has been triggered by accumulated hostile biases.

Bullying, one of the most prevalent and pervasive forms of school violence, can be regarded as a group process (Espelage, Holt, & Henkel, 2003). This means that one or more bullies initiate the harassment of one or more victims (Sutton & Smith, 1999). The bullies are often assisted by students...
who actively help and support them (e.g., catching the victim), and are reinforced by students who provide them with positive reactions (e.g., laughing, cheering). Some students can also act as defenders by helping victims or trying to make the bullies and their assisters stop (Karna, Voeten, Poskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010; Sainio, Veenstra, Huitsing, & Salmivalli, 2011). Most students are passive bystanders; they observe that classmates are being victimized but do not intervene.

Severity or frequency of school violence can be influenced by classmates’ reactions as well as their thoughts or beliefs (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Pozzoli, Gini, & Vieno, 2012). Pepler and Craig (1995) found that when a bystander expressed disapproval in a bullying incident, bullies would be more likely to stop harassing victims. A promising approach for preventing bullying is that bystander students play an active role in decreasing school bullying, becoming “upstanders.”

Participant roles in the group process of bullying have been found to be related to children’s characteristics (Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, Österman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Boys tend to take bully-helping roles, whereas girls are more likely to play the roles of defenders and outsiders (Menesini & Camodeca, 2008; Salmivalli, 2010). Younger children are more likely to intervene when they see bullying happen than older children (Park & Chung, 2005; Park et al., 2006; Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

Defending in bullying situations means actively intervening to stop the bullying, helping or consoling the bullied schoolmate, or asking for adults’ intervention, and it is also associated with social skills, perspective-taking and empathy (Caravita, Di Blasio, & Salmivalli, 2009, 2010; Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoro, 2007, 2008; Pozzoli, & Gini, 2010; Poyhonen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010). Empathic feelings and good theory of mind skills are positively associated with defending.

A few studies have been conducted to understand what individual correlates differentiate defenders from passive bystanders. The major factors that differentiate the two groups are social-cognitive (e.g., perspective-taking, self-efficacy) or emotional (e.g., empathy) (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; Caravita et al., 2009, 2010; Gini et al., 2007, 2008; Poyhonen et al., 2010; Warden & MacKinnon, 2003). Gini et al. (2007) found that affective empathy positively predicted a student’s likelihood of helping a victimized classmate.

This study aimed to explore the differential associations of school bullying experiences with school adjustment by specifying those who were directly involved as bullies, victims or bully-victims or indirectly involved as bully helpers, victim helpers, or bystanders. The study is guided by three research questions: (a) How prevalent are the bully/victim statuses? (b) Are any significant mean differences between psychological characteristics and school adjustment in the 4 bully/victim status and 3 bystander groups? And (c) what are the significant predictors that explain school adjustment and the strength of these predictors?

Methods

Participants

A total of 1,516 students attending primary and middle schools participated in this study. These schools three primary and three middle schools were located in medium-to-small cities and the countryside in Gyeonggi-do and Jeolla-do provinces. These schools were selected by the voluntary
participation of teachers who attended school violence prevention workshops.

67.4% of participants were in primary school, with the remaining 32.6% in middle school (Table 1). 47.7% were male students and 52.3% were female. 5th graders were the largest age group (47.5%), followed by 6th, 9th, and 7th graders.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1,022</td>
<td>67.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>723</td>
<td>47.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>52.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>302</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,516</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures

School bully/victim status and bystanders’ roles.

A revised version of the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ; Olweus, 1996) was used in this study. Based on Solberg and Olweus (2003), we classified bullies and victims as such if their behaviors occurred at least two or three times a month in a given period. Using two global measures, students who had been bullied were classified as victims, and those who bullied others as bullies. Students who were categorized as both bully and victim were considered bully-victims. Although some students had not been bullied or had not bullied others, they might witness peer aggression or victimization. They were classified as bystanders into the no-experience group.

A question in the OBVQ was used to identify students (bystanders) who were not directly involved in the bullying incident but had witnessed it. The questionnaire asks, “When you observed or noticed that other students harassed a student, what did you do?” We placed students into the following categories based on their responses to the bullying incident in the classroom: (a) If the student answers, “I was thinking to help or actually helped the victim,” we categorized him/her as “victim helper,” (b) If the student answers, “I helped bullies or supported them,” we categorized him/her as “bully helper,” and (c) If the student answers, “I did not care about the incident or just observed it without doing anything,” we categorized him/her as “passive bystander.” Students who reported that they did not witness the incident were not included in the further analysis of bystanders’ roles, because they cannot be defined as bystanders. Some bullies or victims may be also be included in one of the bystanders’ roles, because the two questions regarding bullying status and bystanders were separate from each other.
Bryant’s Empathy Scale (Revised).

The Index of Empathy for Children and Adolescents (IECA; Bryant, 1982) is a 22-item questionnaire to assess the degree to which a child feels empathy in response to hypothetical situations. Each item of the questionnaire, for example, “I get upset when I see a girl being hurt” or “Seeing a girl who is crying makes me feel like crying?” is answered with “yes” or “no.” The range of each item is 0 to 1 and the range for total scores is 0 to 22. The reliability estimates for the scale range from .54 to .79 (Bryant, 1982). We revised 10 items to accommodate cultural differences. In addition, the rating scale was changed into a 4 point rating scale to increase variation. These items were summed to create a scale. Scores of empathy can range from 10 to 40. The alpha coefficient for Empathy was .65.

Hostile Attribution Measure.

We assessed hostile attributions of participants using a questionnaire containing 7 stories and a question for each story. The story depicts a peer provocation situation in which the intent of the provocateur is ambiguous. The stories were borrowed from past research (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986; Quiggle, Garber, Panak, & Dodge, 1992) and revised according to the participants’ culture and age. Follow-up questions to each story gauge the attribution of the provocateur’s intent. Children were asked to rate the degree of hostile intention in each story. Children’s responses to hostile attribution across 7 stories were summed to create a scale. Scores of hostile attribution can range from 7 to 28. A pilot test for the Hostile Attribution Measure-Korean was carried out to test the reliability (Park, 2003). The alpha coefficient for Hostile Attribution Bias was .90.

School Adjustment Measure.

We assessed school adjustment for participants with the Adjustment Scale of School Life (ASSL; Kim, 2003). The ASSL consists of 4 dimensions of school adjustment: teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, instruction, and school rules. There were a total of 32 items, with each dimension having 8 items. Each item was rated a 5-point Likert scale. A couple of example items include, “I have many friends to share with in school” or “I understand most of what I’ve learned in class.” These items were summed to create a scale. Scores of school adjustment can range from 32 to 160. Alpha reliability coefficient in the current study was .80 for school adjustment.
Results

Prevalence of group membership by sex and grade

1,480 students completed the two global measures of the Olweus Bully/Victim questionnaire. 4.7% were victims, 2.8% were bullies and 1.3% as bully-victims. Prevalence of bully/victim status was not
significantly different between male and female students ($X^2 = 6.17, df = 3, p = .104$). However, grade levels were significant to the outcomes ($X^2 = 47.64, df = 9, p = .001$); the higher the grade levels in each school level, the greater bully rates. Victims or bully-victims were highest in the 7th grade and next highest in the 6th grade (Table 2).

Table 2. Prevalence of Bully/Victim Status by Grade and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bully-Victim</th>
<th>Bully</th>
<th>Victim</th>
<th>No Exp</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N(%)</td>
<td>19 (1.3)</td>
<td>42(2.8)</td>
<td>69(4.7)</td>
<td>1,350(91.2)</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>11(1.6)</td>
<td>27(3.9)</td>
<td>33(4.7)</td>
<td>626(89.8)</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>8(1.0)</td>
<td>15(1.9)</td>
<td>36(7.5)</td>
<td>724(92.5)</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>1(0.1)</td>
<td>11(1.6)</td>
<td>22(3.2)</td>
<td>655(95.1)</td>
<td>47.64</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>8(2.7)</td>
<td>6(2.0)</td>
<td>18(6.1)</td>
<td>265(89.2)</td>
<td>47.64</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>6(3.0)</td>
<td>9(4.5)</td>
<td>19(9.5)</td>
<td>167(83.1)</td>
<td>47.64</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>4(1.4)</td>
<td>16(5.5)</td>
<td>10(3/4)</td>
<td>263(89.8)</td>
<td>47.64</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 1,464 students who completed the questionnaire of whether they noticed or recognized school bullying, 538 (36.7%) students witnessed school bullying in the previous year and 926 (63.3%) students did not. The students who witnessed it were divided into three groups by their reactions to violence incidents: 4.5% (24) as bully helpers, 25.8% (139) as victim helpers, and 69.8% (375) as bystanders.

Male students were more likely to help bullies or victims rather than females ($X^2 = 8.10, df = 2, p = .017$; Table 3). Most female (75.0%) students did not actively intervene in bullying incidents. Grade levels were significantly associated with each of the bystanders’ reactions ($X^2 = 17.95, df = 6, p = .006$). While victim helpers decreased, passive bystanders increased with age. Bully helpers were the most prevalent in the 7th grade.

Table 3. Prevalence of Bystanders’ Roles by Grade and Sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bully Helper</th>
<th>Victim Helper</th>
<th>Passive Bystander</th>
<th>$X^2$</th>
<th>$p$ value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N(%)</td>
<td>24(4.5)</td>
<td>139(25.8)</td>
<td>375(69.7)</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>16(6.0)</td>
<td>79(29.7)</td>
<td>171(64.3)</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>8(2.9)</td>
<td>60(22.1)</td>
<td>204(75.0)</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>.017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>6(3.2)</td>
<td>67(35.6)</td>
<td>115(62)</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>6(3.4)</td>
<td>33(23.7)</td>
<td>100(71.9)</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>7(7.9)</td>
<td>16(18.0)</td>
<td>66(74.2)</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th Grade</td>
<td>5(4.1)</td>
<td>23(18.9)</td>
<td>94(77.0)</td>
<td>17.95</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Mean differences of psychological characteristics and school adjustment

ANOVA tests were conducted to locate mean differences of psychological characteristics and school adjustment in the four groups of school violence status (Table 4). Although empathy levels did not differ among the groups ($F = 1.56, p = .199$), hostile attribution levels of the groups were significantly different ($F = 6.69, p = .001$). Pair-wise comparisons confirmed that the victim group had higher levels of hostile attribution than students not involved, although the level of the victim group did
not statistically differ from that of bully or bully-victim groups. Relative to students involved in school violence, students who did not experience bullying were better adjusted in school \( (F = 15.06, p = .000) \). Students who were involved as bully, victim or bully-victim showed no significant different levels of school adjustment.

### Table 4. Mean Differences in Psychological Characteristics and School Adjustment by Status

ANOVA tests were carried out to find group mean differences of psychological characteristics and school adjustment in the 3 groups of bystanders’ roles (i.e. bully-helper, victim-helper, passive bystander; As seen in Table 5). Although mean differences of empathy were significant \( (F = 3.94, p = .020) \), pair-wise comparisons did not reach significance.

### Table 5. Mean Differences in Psychological Characteristics and School Adjustment by Roles

While hostile attribution levels were significantly different in the 3 groups \( (F = 6.35, p = .002) \), hostile attribution levels of victim helpers were lowest. Similarly, victim helpers were better adjusted in schools than the other two groups \( (F = 13.61, p = .000) \).

### Hierarchical multiple regression analysis

We conducted a series of linear regressions to predict school adjustment in students. Predictors included: (a) the demographic variables of sex and grade; (b) child characteristics of Empathy, and Hostile Attribution; and (c) Bully/Victim Status (Bully, Victim, Bully-Victim, Non-Experience) or Bystander Roles (Bully-Helper, Victim-Helper, Passive Bystander). In addition, interaction terms between sex/grade and bully status/roles were included in the regression analysis models.

After controlling for students’ sex and grade, school adjustment was significantly explained by empathy, hostile attribution, and bully/victim status \( (F = 89.49, p = .000, R^2 = .30; \text{Table 6}) \). Students were better adjusted in schools if they had higher levels of empathy \( (\beta = 0.31, p = 0.00) \), lower levels of hostile attribution \( (\beta = -0.27, p = .000) \), and were not being involved in bullying (i.e. victim, bully, bully-victim; \(-0.010 < \beta s < -0.045, ps < .05\)).
The interaction of bullying status with sex was significant ($F = 63.99, p = .000, R^2 = .31$), with bully-girls being less adjusted in school than the other groups ($β = 0.09, p = .014$; Figure 1). Although bully-victim girls were least adjusted at school, the interaction term of bully-victim by sex did not reach significance ($β = 0.07, p = .055$). School adjustment levels of bully status were also different across grades ($β = 0.22, p = .031$).

Another regression analysis was carried out to predict school adjustment with bystanders’ roles (Table 7). After controlling for students’ sex and grade, empathy, hostile attribution, and bystander role were significant ($F = 31.45, p = .000, R^2 = .264$). Students were well adjusted at school if they had higher levels of empathy ($β = 0.30, p = .000$), lower levels of hostile attribution ($β = -0.30, p = .000$), and took a victim-helper role ($β = 0.09, p = .022$).

### Table 6. Hierarchical Multiple Regression of School Adjustment Explained by School Violence Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step1 B</th>
<th>Step2_A B</th>
<th>Step2_B B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male = 1)</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.34</td>
<td>-0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Attribution</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
<td>-0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: Bully-Victim</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: Bully</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status: Victim</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Status: Bully-Victim</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender*Status: Bully</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender*Status: Victim</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade*Status: Bully-Victim</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade*Status: Bully</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade*Status: Victim</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>0.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F/R2</td>
<td>89.49</td>
<td>63.99</td>
<td>63.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 7. Hierarchical Multiple Regression of School Adjustment Explained by Bystander’s Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Step1 B</th>
<th>Step2_A B</th>
<th>Step2_B B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male = 1)</td>
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<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.24</td>
<td>-0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile Attribution</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>-0.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role: Bully-Helper</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role: Victim-Helper</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
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<td>Gender*Role: Bully-Helper</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade*Role: Bully-Helper</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade*Role: Victim-Helper</td>
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<tr>
<td>F/R2</td>
<td>31.45</td>
<td>23.73</td>
<td>24.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The interaction between the victim-helper role and grade was also significant ($β = 0.36, p = .030$). While younger victim-helpers in primary school were better adjusted than older helpers, in middle school, younger victim-helpers were less adjusted than those who were older.

**Conclusion and policy implications**

The purpose of this study is to understand the psychological characteristics and overall school adjustment of students directly involved in school bullying as well as students around them. Participants were Korean primary and middle school students, who were categorized as bully, victim, bully-victim, and uninvolved, based on their experience with school violence, and as bully-helper, victim-helper, and passive-bystander, based on their observance of and reaction to school violence.

Data analyses revealed that victims had higher levels of hostile attribution than bullies or those with no experience of school violence, and that students directly involved in school violence had significantly lower levels of school adjustment than those with no involvement with school violence. Furthermore, victim-helpers had significantly higher levels of empathy than bully-helpers and passive-bystanders, while their hostile attribution level was low and their school adjustment levels were high.

This study contributes to better understanding about bystanders as well as students directly involved in bullying in Korea. The findings suggest that school violence prevention is best viewed as a school-wide matter. Strengthening students’ empathy and attribution skills, as well as their prosocial, “upstanding” skills, is likely to improve both individual student and the overall adjustment of the school, and to prevent bullying.

**Limitations and suggestions for future research**

There are several limitations to this study. First, the sample consisted of a limited number of schools from three regions in Korea, recruited through teachers with some interest in violence prevention. This may limit generalizability to other schools and regions. Future research should include students with varying ages in a wider variety of locations. Second, self-report measures were used to categorize bully/victim status and bystanders’ roles, and thus it is not possible to know whether their reports are accurate and valid. However, the students’ perception be at least as important as the objective reality of what they have experienced. Finally, further refinement in definition and assessment of bully/victim status and bystanders’ role should take place to allow for more holistic assessment and for each student to be appropriately categorized on some relevant dimension.

**Implications for policy**

Current approaches to prevent and respond to school bullying in Korea place major responsibilities and burdens on teachers and are harshly punitive for bullies. In addition, comprehensive measures for prevention of school violence include raising students with good character (Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology 2011, 2012). This study suggests that empathy and engagement with one’s classmates in positive ways are key aspects of character. School policies in Korea, as well as overall...
educational policy, should emphasize “good character” and prepare and support students’ willingness and motivation to be prosocially involved in addressing bullying incidents that occur. Additionally, encouraging schools to establish and/or recognize “guardian angels” defenders of (potential) victims in each class could contribute to reductions in school violence. This would be in line with tenets of “Character Education” or “Moral Education” (Eisenberg, Neumark-Sztainer, & Perry, 2003).

Many researchers criticize that the current policy and system for school violence prevention and intervention in Korea and elsewhere focus on symptom-based treatment (e.g., Moon et al., 2009). This study, combined with prior research, suggests that future policy for school violence should consider a complex group process and overall school atmosphere as the focus of prevention and response regarding school violence (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O’Brennan, 2009; Espelage, & Swearer, 2010). School atmosphere and culture can be positively shaped with active interventions of empathetic and moral upstanders.

Ultimately, it is important for students to be motivated, happy and well-adjusted at school (Buhs, Ladd, & Herald, 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2003). This creates an alignment between the goals of general education and the fundamental approach to preventing school violence, which is to create caring and prosocial school atmospheres where students are more likely to reinforce positive peer affiliation, increase school engagement and feel enhanced academic motivation (Kim, 2008; Lehr, & Christenson, 2002; Orpinas, Horne, & Staniszewski, 2003; Resnick et al., 1997).

References


social status on involvement in bullying. *Social Development, 18*, 140-163.


Bullying and school adjustment


The fundamental connection between education for democracy and character education

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Abstract

Like America, South Korea seeks both to maintain and enhance its democracy and our public schools are the logical venues for such perpetuation. But debate exists in both countries about primary purposes of public education, with many believing schools exist mainly to foster student academic achievement (see for example, Ripley, 2013). The latter view is voiced in other democracies as well, and such a perspective may not truly serve national interests.

To be sure, a democracy needs a well-educated citizenry. We need students to read well, with the ability to synthesize and evaluate complicated literary and informational text, and we need to ensure students possess a sophisticated understanding of content and practice in mathematics and the sciences. But how does a focal emphasis on academic achievement serve national interests? The answer must go further than simple economic progress and individual successes. If we can’t go deeper than this, then what distinguishes our schools from those in less democratic countries such as Venezuela, China or Iran Schools in those countries focus on high student achievement as well.
Public education in democracies

An historical purpose of education in America has been to educate students to build and perpetuate our democratic system. Our schools taught students about the rights of a free people, including the rights of free speech, free expression and dissent (Ravitch, 2006, p. 581). Such lessons were infused into the curriculum, and as the issues we confront change, those fundamental lessons must be continually emphasized. To do so our schools must focus on democracy and its meanings and practices. As John Dewey (1939) wrote,

If we want individuals to be free, we must see to it that sustainable conditions exist. [We must] get rid of the ideas that lead us to believe that democratic conditions automatically maintain themselves, or that they can be identified with fulfillment of prescriptions... (pp. 34-35).

Expounding on Dewey, Roger Soder (2001, pp. 188-193) described sustainable conditions for democracy that are not limited to, but do include, the following:

- trust (without it, no collaboration is possible)
- exchange (giving, receiving and repaying; balancing exchange)
- social capital (social/political skills to understand problems and create solutions)
- respect for civil discourse
- recognition of the need for e pluribus unum (literally, from the many, one the glue that holds the whole together)
- recognition of the tension between freedom and order.

The challenges

In America, we are not meeting this charge. A review of the literature on the teaching of American identity (Malin, 2011) found evidence that in this country, our young people distance themselves from their role as American citizens; they are distrustful of their government, social institutions and their fellow citizens; are not proud of their American citizenship, and are disconnected from their identity as American citizens. Such findings are buttressed by results from the National Assessment of Student Progress that only one-quarter of U.S. students scored "proficient" in knowledge of U.S. citizenship, and a U.S. Department of Education study finding less than 10% of U.S. high school students able to cite reasons to participate in a democracy or why it benefits a country to have a constitution (Damon, 2011). These findings should create a sense of caution and concern.

My own State of California is an example of how democratic literacy has declined over time. California requires its students to study American history and government in grades 5, 8, 11 and 12. At a minimum, these academic courses should provide students with the content of the principles and institutions of democracy. In fifth grade, students are to study the development of America up to 1850, with the establishment of the colonies and our founding principles. But history in the 5th grade is not part of the assessment system, so most teachers find little time for it.
In 8th grade, the focus is the American Constitution. No topic is more foundational, and until recent years, in my local school district, students were not to be promoted to 9th grade if they didn’t pass the 8th grade Constitution Test. But today, that requirement has been dropped. In 11th grade, students spend a year on modern American history and in 12th grade they study American government. There are assessments in the social sciences for 8th and 11th graders, but in reality, not reaching proficiency on the 8th grade or 11th grade assessments in the social studies carries few ramifications. If the intent of social studies standards in American schools is to prepare students for democratic citizenship, the goal is not being met.

The Bonner Center for Character Education and Citizenship that I direct sponsors an award program to recognize exemplary schools of character. Schools in California’s Central Valley apply for the award, finalist schools are identified, and their representatives—parents, teacher, administrators and students—are interviewed. As part of the written application, schools were asked to explain why the school leadership believed character education to be important. Our coordinating committee believed this question would allow schools an opportunity to describe a “larger picture” of the purpose of public education—that is, its role in preparing future citizens. But, in reality, education for democratic understanding in American schools was a topic generally absent from school conceptualizations. When the word “America” did appear in applications for the award, and that was rare, it was in the context of an identity (such as African-American) or a school program (i.e. Read Across America, Great American Smokeout, American Cancer Society). Not one of the applications for the award mentioned the purpose of education to involve teaching about democracy or a democratic society. When citizenship was mentioned, it was usually in the context of being a citizen of the school.

As a result of such lack of perspective, many potentially good student experiences and rituals are overlooked that could enhance character and citizenship (Benninga & Quinn, 2011). For example, at one elementary school I visited, the daily duty of raising and lowering the American flag was the custodian’s. Students were not involved. The neglect of this and other rituals, like learning and understanding the national anthem and national songs like “America the Beautiful,” is a missed form of participation and a missed opportunity for meaningful transmission. Planned opportunities for students to participate in civic activities are crucial if we care about democratic perpetuation and the character of those who maintain democracy.

Civic education and civic engagement

The Carnegie Corporation of New York and the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), issued an important report (2003), The Civic Mission of Schools. In it, they defined civic education as the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that prepare young people “to be competent and responsible citizens” (Carnegie Corporation of NY & CIRCLE, 2003, p. 10). The report also identified six school-based approaches to civic education that include both formal instruction in American government, history, law and democracy, as well as opportunities to apply those concepts. The report’s recommended program of civic engagement endorsed activities for engaging students in civic action, such as classroom discussion of current issues and events, service programs linked to the curriculum, student participation in school governance, and student involvement in ongoing school
activities. Similar activities are recommended by Lickona and Davidson (2005) with regard to the promotion of student ethics and character in high schools.

Citizens of democratic societies share an obligation to be concerned about the education of the next generation for character and citizenship. Of course we want our students to be academically proficient. But economic strength through school achievement is a limited vision for our public schools. In addition to achievement goals, our schools must set clear expectations for openness and freedom, of respect for equal justice under the law, civil discourse, and a working understanding of our foundational documents. And they must provide students with opportunities to practice civic engagement through which these commitment become solidified.

Implications for educational policy

In a short but pointed section in his classic The Transformation of the School, Lawrence Cremin describes a central mission of American education in the early 20th century. At the time, Americanization of students was a “burning national issue” (Cremin, 1961, p. 74). Indeed, wrote Cremin, “from its earliest years the public school was viewed as an instrument par excellence for inducting newcomers into the responsibilities of citizenship” (p. 66). A century later, the National Alliance for Civic Education reported that, over several decades, from the late 1960s till at least 2000, the American public maintained that “preparing people to become responsible citizens” was the number-one purpose of the nation’s schools (Wichowski with Levine, 2002). Why has this changed?

All democratic societies need to review their educational and public policies to ensure that they have provisions to systematically educate students for civic participation and character.

References


The fundamental connection between education for democracy and character education

The character of schools, the character of individuals, and the character of society: Creating educational policy to reflect this inextricable interconnection

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“Education should develop intellectual character, moral character, civic character, and performance character, along with the collective character of the school”
(Shields, 2011, p. 49).

At this moment, early in the 21st Century, education has embraced what Flowers (2007) refers to as “economic mythology” that leads to students being seen more as consumers than as citizens and to teachers being seen more as service providing technicians than as educators. When this happens, we “risk the loss of a sense of significance- or even of personal significance” (Flowers, 2007, p. 13). The focus on standardized test scores is an actuarial extension of this myth and is leading to concomitant (negative) effects on students and on educators (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2008). The fields of character education and social-emotional learning would seem to be an antidote to this condition, but instead, they are in a paradox. Their champion organizations, the Character Education Partnership (www.character.org) and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (www.CASEL.org), have not captured the imagination of the public and their recommendations have not penetrated educational policies worldwide, though certainly in some locations more than others. Yet their messages are gaining increasing research support (Berkowitz & Bier, 2006; Durlak et al., 2011) and are complemented by increasingly widespread and well-recognized intervention examples from preschool through high school (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning [CASEL], 2013; Character Education Partnership, 2010; www.edutopia.org; Elias & Arnold, 2006).

Educational policy with regard to character education and related areas has been victimized by failures to conceptualize deeply and adaptively and commit to a long-term strategic plan, to implement and monitor implementation with integrity, and to create networks of practice to ensure the spread of success. These failures are replicated at the level of individual schools and programs, thus creating the
mixed picture that is found in empirical studies even while proponents of character education and social-emotional learning are growing more confident, and justifiably so, in the data supporting their suppositions. Reversing each of these failures is not only important to the field of character education, but it is also important to the success of education in the 21st Century.

Equally important, however, is recognizing the inextricable connection between the individual student, the school, and the community within which both are embedded. Social inequities create barriers to students’ progress in school and in life. While waiting for these inequities to be addressed, which is the purview of policies wider than education, many children are living lives of lost or diminished potential. Nonetheless, education policy has the capacity to save lives and create positive trajectories by increasing its focus on promoting students’ social-emotional and character development and the relevant supportive conditions in schools. In what follows, how character education and related efforts can improve, the importance of wider social conditions to the functioning of schools, and the need to optimize conditions within schools to support learning and social-emotional and character development will be outlined.

Meet the challenge of a providing a common focus

There is no consensual terminology used to refer to the broad area of character education and social-emotional learning, and policy and practice are affected by language and communication. The Biblical parable of the Tower of Babel is instructive here. Early civilizations wanted to build a tower to the sky so that they could confront God directly. At that time, there was only one shared language. When God saw that they were cooperating and that their efforts might eventuate in their success, God created languages and gave all of the groups their own distinct tongues. Needless to say, the Tower was never completed in the conflict and confusion that followed, even though their common goal had not changed. So it is with character education: it is being held back by a Torrent of Babble.

Right now, the work of promoting social-emotional and character development is known as character education, SEL (Social-Emotional Learning), SEAL (Social, Emotional, and Academic Learning) in the UK, SEE (Social and Emotional Education, in a forthcoming book by Carmel Cefai of the University of Malta), Moral Education (Nucci, Krettenauer, & Narvaez, 2014), Emotional Intelligence, Emotional Literacy, Life Skills, Civic and Service Education, Positive Behavior Supports, School-Based Prevention, Learning Supports, Non-cognitive Factors, Grit and Resilience, Mindset, Perseverance, Moral and Performance Character, Ethics and Excellence, Positive Youth Development, Whole Child Education, School Culture and Climate, Multicultural Education, Prosocial Education, Citizenship Competencies (in Colombia, Berkowitz & Bustamante, 2013), Learning for Well-Being and Emotional, Social and Civic competencies (in Spain and other parts of Europe, Cubero and Perez, 2013) and the list is not complete. While all of these terms are not equally well known in all countries, almost all are in active use in the United States. (The reader is free to search for any and all of these terms on the Internet.) The landscape is further complicated by many approaches to violence prevention, bullying prevention, bystander intervention, substance abuse prevention, depression prevention, suicide prevention, and so on. Every one of these terms has its impassioned advocates and devotees, and each one would be more than happy to defend their nuance against all comers, supported by theory, data, and
history that they could cite with integrity.

Accordingly, it is difficult for those charged with educational policy to make sense of even a few of these variations. In fact, it is beyond reasonable expectation. The issue is not that there are many names and “brands”; rather, the problem is that there is no superordinate effort indeed, sometimes it seems just the opposite for these alternatives to put forward clear commonalities, overlaps, and common tenets, and not focus on relatively minor differences. The current situation is a clear example of lack of synergy, when synergy is exactly what is needed. This is a limitation within the field and its solution resides within the leadership of the field. Even those who have moved to position whereby they no longer care about terminology still must confront the reality that the field needs a coherent way to communicate about its theory, research, and practice to those who make policy and allocate resources.

**Actions that educational authorities can take now**

Policy makers have another option rather than waiting for the field to organize itself. Every educational authority should decide the single term that they will use to refer to efforts to promote social-emotional and character development and a supportive school climate and culture within its jurisdiction. To adopt a single term would not mean to adopt a specific model. Having a unifying term will bring greater coherence. Educational authorities also should establish parameters for how much formal instruction should be provided in systematic social-emotional skill building. The best current guidance is a minimum of half hour per week. Finally, educational authorities can require that the area of character and life skills be included in assessment. This would occur at three levels: monitoring of implementation, periodic assessment of school culture and climate, and providing specific feedback on individual student progress via report cards or their equivalent. The latter has considerable value in changing conversations between teachers, students, and parents because aspects of these competences are of indisputable educational and social important and are visible in everyday interactions (whether as discrete skills such as following directions and managing strong feelings of upset, disappointment, or frustration, or willingness to help classmates needing help with or without prompting, or acting responsibly or being fair to diverse others). Considerable guidance exists in each of these areas (e.g., Cohen et al., 2009; Moceri et al., 2012; Ferrito, Elias, & Moceri, in press).

**Create systems for sustainable policy implementation**

It is not uncommon in education policy, exemplified in social-emotional and character education policies, to find a gap between rhetoric and action even when a policy is clearly formulated. Examples can be found world-wide (Cha, 2013; Cubero & Pérez, 2013; Faria, 2011; http://casel.org/policy-advocacy/sel-in-your-state/) of legislation and regulation that is unaccompanied by widespread and high-quality implementation. It is no secret that what Kress and Elias (2006) refer to as a system of sustainable implementation (SSI) is an essential aspect of creating successful educational policy. An SSI is a network of processes that have been demonstrated by their presence as fostering success in educational innovation and change, or as constituting barriers to implementation when not addressed.
There is an extensive literature on this (e.g., Berkowitz, & Bier, 2006; CASEL, 2005; Commins & Elias, 1991; Elias, 2007; Elias et al., 2003; Greenberg et al., 2003; Ji et al., 2008; Kress & Elias, 2013). Four examples from these citations of elements of an SSI are:

1. Ongoing assessment of both implementation quality and extensiveness and staff and student receptivity and responsiveness to interventions, followed by increasing emphasis on assessment of outcomes, including impact on school-wide climate/perceived environment.
2. Ongoing staff development and continuing hand-on support as implementation is taking place, particularly over the first three years of an innovation.
3. Creating an infrastructure, consisting of a school team focusing on Culture and Climate, Social-Emotional and Character Development, College and Career Readiness, or other over-arching framing, based on distributed leadership, to foster continuity and integration of programming focused on aspects of character and competence schoolwide.
4. Providing for expert consultation to be available around district-wide, school-wide, and/or program-centered implementation so that eventual adaptations to programs can be made with fidelity and guided by what has been successful in feasible practice in similar contexts.

Systematic gathering and leveraging of existing expertise into supportive networks is perhaps the most essential element of an SSI and the overall element most important in bringing policy into reality in sustainable ways.

**Educational policy can save lives: Reverse the underestimation of the national importance of Character Education, SEL and related fields**

The Role of Schools in Addressing Inequity and Providing Opportunity

“Poverty and injustice are not only great human evils in the suffering that they cause, but also pose threats to the cultivation of virtue. A child who grows up amidst poverty and despair; who lacks opportunity, lacks stability, lacks education, and lacks hope; who feels neglected, alienated and despised within her own household and own nation, and who thus is threatened with being eaten up from within by anger, despair, and hatred of both herself and others? how are we to expect such a child to grow up virtuous?” (Cherniss, 1991, p. 31)

While Cherniss (1991) goes on to note that it is possible “for extraordinary individuals to triumph over poverty and despair,” it is nevertheless highly unlikely and cannot be a basis for public or educational policy. Yet, this is what we implicitly expect of students in disadvantaged circumstances. There is no doubt about the impact of economic conditions on educational attainment (Rothstein, 2004). But these conditions also exercise tremendous influence within schools and foster inequities both within and between schools. In some policy circles, there is a view that individuals should easily rise up above their circumstances and to not do so is indicative of poor or weak character (Haberman, 1991; Kozol, 2005). This is a dangerous notion from a policy perspective that should be focused on children’s well-
being. “Blaming the victim” is an attribution that those who do not rise up lack “motivation” or, worse, capacity. This perspective is useful for maintaining the status quo and keeping existing arrangements for power and privilege intact. It allows myriads of reforms to be heralded without fundamentally changing the underlying conditions that maintain inequity. While it is beyond educational policy to reverse all conditions of societal inequity, schools have a vital role to play in reversing inequity for many individuals, or at least to not contribute to the maintenance, or expansion, of those inequities.

Create school cultures and climates in which learning can thrive for all

Character education and SEL and related fields focusing on the social-emotional, character, and civic development of students are integral to education and to the creation of a school culture and climate in which learning can thrive for all. Why those concerned with educational policy have not embraced this is an ongoing mystery and source of frustration. Nations that appear to be educationally successful are those who understand the inherent interconnection of academic achievement and the character of the community and the school. This may be the most important conclusion that can be derived from looking at the PISA international testing results in their totality (OECD, 2003, 2010). Shields’ (2011) quote at the start of this article reflects the growing realization that academic accomplishment not to be confused with high test scores is the outcome of the operation of intellectual character in concert with the other elements of character he mentions. The habits of mind and patterns of thinking that we bring to academic and other life tasks matter greatly. They include curiosity, open-mindedness, reflection, strategic and systemic orientation, skepticism, and truth-seeking and these capacities must be developed in schools. There is no absolute list, and clearly these attributes incorporate a number of skills, but also something beyond accumulations of skills. Attention must be paid to the direction in which intellectual acumen is directed, and this of course refers to one’s character, ethics, civic responsibility, and orientation to action. And Shields’ other point is that the character of the school matters, as well.

James Comer (2003) believes that children cannot be taught character, but rather “catch” it from the adults around them and the nature of the interactions they directly and indirectly experience. If they are to become “infected” with sound character, children need to be exposed to the conditions that are more likely to lead to a strong ethical compass and the skills and fortitude to follow the directions being pointed to. Hence, both moral and performance character, or, if one prefers, social-emotional and character development, must be a focus of policy and practice (Character Education Partnership, 2010). Dewey (1915) forged a strong link between democracy (as an organizing principle for ethical conduct) and education (as one potent source of ethical experiences) because he recognized that schools are places where values and action can co-exist in a secular context. One need not prescribe to particular religious views to embrace the existence of a set of values or virtues that can be seen as hallmarks of civilized life and have been seen as such for millennia (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). Schools, districts, communities, states and provinces, regions, and nations can decide which particular values are of preeminent importance that school life and procedure should be organized around them. But without doubt, such choices are essential if we wish for our children to have an enduring set of guiding principles as the basis for their decisions and actions and the application of the knowledge they gain in school.

Indeed, the nature of socialization within schools becomes a critical focus for educational policy.
Democratic societies, or any societies determined to grow in overall character, must seek to build the capacities for their citizens to excel and create the conditions that will allow this to take place for all. Flowers (2007) maintains that ultimately, for the sake of the well-being of the majority of those on our planet, the current emphasis on economic growth must be conceptualized as the growth of goodness, not buildings, material wealth, or possessions. True and lasting growth comes from the growth of character, of caring and empathy, of humility, of responsibility and wisdom, of health. The greatest economic engine is fueled ethically, by the growth of ingenuity and the commitment to share its products. All of these can and must be modeled and nourished within schools. Schools shape the future by shaping the individuals whose collective actions will determine the future.

And what is the vision of the future that can be reached by fostering a melding of character and academic accomplishment? Consider Sargent Shriver’s vision of America, extrapolated here to all nations (speech to the Community Action Partnership Convention, Sept. 3, 2004, www.sargentshriver.org):

In my vision of this planet, everyone is necessary, and everyone has the opportunity to participate. We must create a world:

• in which the concept of ‘working poor’ is an anachronism.
• that allows an individual to work full time and earn the money to raise a family and live in safe, decent, affordable housing.
• where an individual is able to afford access to the highest quality of health care this nation is capable of providing.
• that strengthens the social safety net for children, the elderly, and the most vulnerable among us.
• of equal opportunity, and the strength to repair the errors of the past.
• whose neighbors help neighbors, and we seek a balance in our lives between our commitments to self, family, community, nation and the world.

In Sargent Shriver’s vision, justice, freedom, respect, caring for self and other and the environment, and dignity are fundamental values. These are the ethical coordinates to drive learning and the actions toward which that learning is directed. We need the commitment to prepare our all of our youth from all socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and regardless of their array and combination of abilities and disabilities— with the set of social-emotional competencies that will allow them to succeed optimally in school and life. The locus of that commitment is educational policy.

Schools historically have been powerful engines of social and economic change. They need not be helpless captives to wider social forces. In fact, they can lead society toward social justice, engagement, civic participation, a desire to learn, collaboration, invention and creativity, and higher ethical standards by leading our children in that direction and in so doing, leading parents and educators the same direction, as well (Brown, Corrigan, & Higgins-D’Allesandro, 2012). While efforts to reduce inequity proceed at the societal level, educational policy can promote the conditions within schools that will allow more students to be better prepared for productive lives.
Concluding thoughts

Internationally, educational policy should ensure that all facets of educational systems are as prepared to foster social-emotional and character development and engagement with the world as they are to foster cognitive-intellectual development. This requires a perspective in which schools are seen as both in communities and as communities, and classrooms are seen within their school communities and as communities in themselves. Policies also must recognize that in areas beset by economic and social disadvantage, efforts to build social-emotional, character, and academic development will of necessity have to be stronger, continuous, more consistent and persistent, and better coordinated and integrated into school life and the curriculum in order to have a measurable and pragmatic effect. No single blueprint can or should guide educational policy across nations, but there is a set of common principles outlined herein. Foremost among them is to focus on the child as a learner and as a developing human being in all aspects- social, emotional, ethical, civic, artistic, scientific, technological, physical, cognitive, and academic.

References

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