Chapter 19

EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

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Historically, early childhood education focuses on developing knowledge in literacy and mathematics to prepare children for skills they need to become informed and productive members of society. Although few will argue against the inclusion of literacy and mathematics skills in school curriculum, social and emotional competencies are increasingly being recognized and valued as essential for children’s school and life successes (Duncan et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008; Raver & Knitzer, 2002). In the current era of standards-based accountability, it is understandable why curricula often emphasize academic (e.g., literacy and mathematics) over “nonacademic” (e.g., social-emotional and self-regulatory) skills. However, the distinction between academic and nonacademic learning may be grounded in tradition rather than evidence-based research. In fact, emerging evidence from developmental and educational research indicates that social-emotional, self-regulatory, and academic competencies are often intertwined and complementary to the development of one another (e.g., Blair & Razza, 2007; Howse, Calkins, Anastopoulos, Keane, & Shelton, 2003; Liew, McTigue, Barrois, & Hughes, 2008; McClelland et al., 2007). In order to nurture motivated and competent learners, curriculum and teaching practices need to reflect and work with the synchronous development of the whole child.
Curriculum development has become increasingly sensitive and responsive to the fact that children enter formal school from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of skills (Winsler et al., 2008). School readiness is a broad concept which makes it difficult to reach a consensus on its definition. However, there appears to be little disagreement that school readiness is essential before entering school to ensure that students, particularly those from low-income or ethnic minority backgrounds, are equipped with the necessary readiness for learning and school (Kagan, 1992). School readiness is comprised of multiple domains of capacities and skills that have been classified into readiness to learn and readiness for school. Readiness to learn is viewed as the “level of development at which an individual (of any age) is ready to undertake the learning of specific materials,” and refers to the age at which the average child has the specified capacity to start learning (Kagan, 1990, p. 273). In contrast, readiness for school specifies cognitive and linguistic skills (e.g., being able to draw a square or identify shapes and colors) with less emphasis on developmental readiness. When learners enter schools without adequate readiness for learning or for school, any early (even if small) differences often accumulate to result in meaningful or large differences over time in students’ learning and achievement (Ramey & Ramey, 2004). Although there are disagreements regarding both the specific skills that are required for successful transition into formal schooling (e.g., readiness for school) and the age by which such skills should be developed (e.g., readiness to learn), emerging evidence indicates that abilities to manage emotion, attention, and behavior and to form positive peer relationships are prerequisites for school readiness and academic success (Blair, 2002; Denham, 2006; Payton et al., 2008; Raver & Knitzer, 2002). Accordingly, curriculum at the preschool level should attend to such social and emotional skills in order to fully develop readiness for school and learning.

CHILD TEMPERAMENT AND SCHOOL READINESS

Children’s social-emotional and self-regulatory skills facilitate school readiness (Bierman et al., 2008; Denham, 2006). In the next section, we will review relevant empirical research that explicates the linkages between individual differences in social-emotional or self-regulatory skills and school success. In the study of emotion, attention, and self-regulation in early and middle childhood, child temperament has been linked to individual differences in abilities to manage emotions and behaviors as well as social and peer competencies (e.g., Blair, Denham, Kochanoff, & Whipple, 2004; Eisenberg et al., 2005; Liew, Eisenberg, & Reiser, 2004; Rothbart & Jones, 1998). Temperament has been viewed as the basic emotional, behavioral, and self-regulatory building block that provides the developmental foundations for complex behaviors, personality, adaptation, and adjustment (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). Temperament can be defined as a person’s emotional, attentional, and behavioral styles that appear early in life and remain relatively stable across the lifespan, but are shaped by experience (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997). In particular, the findings that temperament is not entirely fixed in nature, but has dynamic qualities which are influenced by the environment, are highly relevant to curriculum development.

Of particular relevance to school success is self-regulation. Self-regulation is part of the temperament system, and self-regulatory processes have been distinguished as those that are relatively under a person’s volitional control, in contrast to those that are reactive and
involuntary (Derryberry & Rothbart, 1997). It is important to note that volitional and reactive processes often operate simultaneously, and it is often challenging to definitively separate one from the other (Derryberry & Rothbart). One important aspect of temperamental self-regulation is effortful control. Effortful control refers to the volitional aspect of self-regulation and is defined as the ability to voluntarily inhibit a dominant response to activate a subdominant response (Rothbart & Bates, 2006). Effortful control is linked with executive attention and executive functioning (Sheese, Rothbart, Posner, White, & Fraundorf, 2008) and has been used to describe the volitional or willful aspect of self-regulatory processes. For example, children would demonstrate effortful control by doing something they need to do over something they prefer to do, such as studying for an exam rather than going outside to play. As early as preschool or kindergarten, the importance of self-regulation and effortful control to school adjustment is evident (Raver & Knitzer, 2002).

**THE ROLE OF EFFORTFUL CONTROL DURING EARLY SCHOOL YEARS**

As children transition from preschool to kindergarten, the need for self-regulatory skills increases and continues to increase throughout schooling. In a national study of 250 kindergarten classrooms, children experienced structured or teacher-directed instruction for 43% of the school day (Rimm-Kaufmann, LaParo, Downer, & Pianta, 2005). In more highly structured and teacher-directed classroom environments, children with poor self-regulatory skills tend to have difficulties meeting school demands and are prone to experience peer rejection and conflicted relationships with teachers (Denham et al., 2003; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995). For example, early self-regulatory problems as manifested in aggression, impulsivity, inattention, noncompliance, or social reticence may interfere with children’s availability for instructional time as well as with their development of important social skills such as peer play that contribute to learning in the preschool or kindergarten classroom.

By first grade, traditional instructor-centered classrooms require children to comply with teachers’ requests and classroom rules, to work independently at their desks for extended periods, and to cope effectively with the negative emotions or frustrations that are often elicited by social and academic challenges. Generally, abilities to self-regulate are not only expected, but required, in order for children to progress and succeed from grade school into higher education. Of particular relevance to curriculum development and educational equity is that promoting self-regulatory capacities may minimize achievement disparities amongst students from disparate socioeconomic backgrounds if effortful control contributes to academic achievement independent of economic adversity (Liew et al., 2008).

**EFFORTFUL CONTROL AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

Although often observed by educators in classrooms, a growing body of empirical evidence confirms a definite linkage between effortful control and academic achievement in young school-aged children, including children from low-income and ethnic minority backgrounds (e.g., Blair & Razza, 2007; Liew et al., 2008; McClelland et al., 2007). In a
study of preschoolers enrolled in Head Start programs (designed for low-income children and their families), children’s abilities for effortful control contributed to their emergent mathematics and literacy skills (Blair & Razza). Similar results were found in a study with preschoolers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds where behavioral self-regulation was significantly associated with early mathematics and literacy skills (McClelland et al.). Beyond the preschool years, evidence indicates that effortful control continues to play an important role in academic achievement throughout the elementary school years. For example, in a longitudinal study of first through third graders who were predominantly from low-income and ethnic minority families and assessed by their school district as entering first grade with below-average literacy skills, effortful control predicted literacy achievement of 2 years later (Liew et al.). In middle childhood, effortful control predicted grade point averages in a sample of 7- to 12-year-olds above the effects of grade point averages from the previous semester and teacher-student relationship quality (Valiente, Lemery-Chalfant, Swanson, & Reiser, 2008).

EFFORTFUL CONTROL IN SCHOOL CONTEXT: A CHILD IN CLASSROOM PERSPECTIVE

Although children bring unique temperamental qualities (e.g., abilities for effortful control) into the classroom that may contribute to their learning and achievement, the learning environment, including the curriculum, plays a integral role in students’ achievement and in shaping students’ social and emotional strengths. One aspect of the learning environment that has been identified as important for students’ achievement is the quality of teacher-student relationships. Teachers are important socializers and sources of support outside of the home environment for children, and teacher-student relationships that are positive, supportive, warm, and low in conflict are linked to students’ positive school outcomes (Goodenow, 1993; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Ladd, Birch, & Buhs, 1999; Palermo, Hanish, Martin, Fabes, & Reiser, 2007; Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2003). A supportive teacher may play a compensatory role for children with self-regulatory difficulties by providing them an external source of motivation or regulation (Liew, Chen, & Hughes, 2009). In support of this view, evidence suggests that the link between positive teacher-student relationships and academic outcomes may especially be pronounced for students with self-regulatory difficulties (Hughes, Cavell, & Jackson, 1999; Liew et al., 2009; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997).

Research indicates that positive teacher-student relationships are consistently linked with increased academic motivation, positive self-concept, and achievement (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Howes, 2000; Hughes, Gleason, & Zhang, 2005; Hughes & Kwok, 2006; Palermo et al., 2007; Pianta et al., 1995; Ryan, Stiller, & Lynch, 1994). For example, kindergarteners with supportive teachers performed better than those with less supportive teachers on standardized measures of reading and mathematics skills (Graziano, Reavis, Keane, & Calkins, 2007). Preliminary evidence also suggests that positive teacher-student relationships may protect children from negative home environments (O’Connor & McCartney, 2007). In addition, Rimm-Kaufman et al. (2002) found that 15-month-olds who were classified as socially bold were more academically engaged as kindergarteners when paired with sensitive teachers than similar children with less sensitive teachers. Consistent with the view that child temperament
interacts with the learning environment to influence learning or achievement, Liew et al. (2009) found that child effortful control and positive teacher-student relationships interact with one another to contribute to future child academic achievement on standardized tests of reading and mathematics. Specifically, results suggested that supportive teachers play a compensatory role for students with self-regulatory difficulties by creating a positive and low-conflict learning environment that promotes future academic achievement. In addition, child effortful control may serve as a protective factor for achievement in learning environments where students may be receiving or needing little support from the teacher (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). For students with self-regulatory difficulties, such as low effortful control, being paired with emotionally and instructionally supportive teachers was important for their future academic success (Liew et al.).

In summary, teacher-student relationships are critical in the promotion of academic and social emotional growth. A flexible curriculum that is designed to allow and encourage teachers to be responsive and adaptive to children’s needs facilitates the development of strong teacher-child relationships.

FROM SCIENCE TO PRACTICE: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL) IN SCHOOLS

As summarized in previous sections, a growing body of research shows that capacities for self-regulation and effortful control in childhood make significant contributions to concurrent and future positive school outcomes such as positive social and behavioral adjustment, achievement, and improved standardized test scores on achievement measures (e.g., Blair & Razza, 2007; Liew et al., 2008; Liew et al., 2009; McClelland et al., 2007; Payton et al., 2008; Valiente et al., 2008). Thus, it is imperative that school curriculum integrate activities that promote the development of social-emotional and self-regulatory skills with academic instruction. Particularly when educational practices emphasize high-stakes, standardized testing to assess educational accountability and student achievement, students’ abilities to pay attention, inhibit their impulses, and regulate emotions or cope with stress become core skills for academic success. Resources are available to help schools identify, select, and implement social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, including Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader’s Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Programs that reviewed and compared 80 programs (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003). One example of such programs is the PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) curriculum which has shown success in long-term improvements on children’s school adjustment (Greenberg, Kam, & Kusche, 2004; Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995).

Although Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs have been shown to be effective in improving students’ social and academic outcomes (Payton et al., 2008), their inclusion in schools has been relatively limited for multiple reasons. First, despite the fact that a number of SEL programs have been proven to be efficacious and the value of programs’ benefits exceeds their costs, schools rarely adopt these programs (National Advisory Mental Health Council Workgroup on Child and Adolescent Mental Health Intervention Development and Employment, 2001; National Institute of Mental Health, 1996). Additionally, although
implementation is highly predictive of program effects, the fidelity of program implementation often is poor when schools adopt SEL programs, particularly because of a lack of personnel trained in SEL approaches. Even in the best case scenarios, when programs are adopted and implemented with fidelity, programs are often not integrated with academic curricula and not continuously sustained as children transition across grades (Kam, Greenberg, & Walls, 2003).

Several factors contribute to poor implementation and sustainability of SEL programs. When programs are not integrated with academic instruction, SEL programs are often viewed by administrators and teachers as “lost instructional time” rather than as contributing to the mission of educating the whole child. Additionally, training and staff support to effectively implement the programs are often lacking. In such cases, when teachers are not engaged as active collaborators in the development and implementation of the programs and inadequate attention is paid to teacher perception of need for change, there will be limited incentive or motivation for teachers to deliver SEL programs with fidelity or continuity. Thus, sustained implementation of SEL programs often depend on both curriculum development that integrates academic and SEL objectives and the support and enthusiasm of school administrators and teachers who implement the curriculum and programs. A critical reason underlying these problems and preventing SEL programs from “traveling well” from science to practice is the belief that SEL programs are simply “things” or “products” that school districts can buy and put into classrooms with minimal impact on “nonprogram” aspects of classrooms. Because classrooms are incredibly complex and dynamic contexts, curriculum development that integrates SEL into academic programming needs to acknowledge and understand such complexities.

We believe that the power of SEL programs resides not so much in the program itself, but in how the program produces changes in teachers’ attitudes and behaviors that then translates to positive teacher-student relationships and affects children’s everyday interactions and behaviors in the classroom. As such, teachers need professional, emotional, and autonomy support in making adaptations that fit each of their classrooms and teaching philosophies, so that they “own” the knowledge and skills and apply them as part of their teaching “style” or identity (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000). Changed teacher behavior, which emerges in part through the implementation of SEL program, is the key to creating positive social and emotional contexts for learning. We view SEL curricula that complement academic curricula and is implemented in ways that do not diminish teacher authority, self-efficacy, and professionalism as a promising avenue in maximizing students’ learning and achievement.

In the following sections, we describe ways that the two approaches to learning can complement one another within the interconnected areas of assessment and mastery benchmarks. To illustrate how this could be done within the classroom context, we provide examples using literacy development and the assessment of such skills (see McTigue, Washburn, & Liew, 2009). We focus on assessments because we feel that what we choose to assess have implications for curriculum development.
INTEGRATING SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING INTO CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENTS

In regards to the types of assessments used and their roles in education, there is a stark contrast between curriculum driven by primarily academic achievement objectives and by primarily human development objectives. In the following sections, we present how both the academic and social needs of the students should be considered when selecting and interpreting assessment.

Academic achievement objectives

When curriculum is driven primarily by academic achievement objectives, assessments tend to take the form of frequent and standardized testing with norm-referenced instruments. Such tests are used to gauge or document students’ progress towards a pre-determined (e.g., state-wide) benchmark. Standardization is important in order to serve as a common metric for the basis for comparison. Comparisons can document student growth and compare students’ performances across schools, districts, and states. Furthermore, students’ test performances on standardized assessments often become the basis for determining the efficacy and funding of school programs, school systems or districts, and states.

Although standardized achievement assessments are valuable methods appropriate for large-scale summarization and comparisons (Cizek, 2001), it is important to note that they are less appropriate for use with individual students’ learning and progress (Paris, Lawton, Turner, & Roth, 1991). When used with individual students, standardized tests may offer information on which students are or are not meeting set criteria or benchmarks without offering much information on how to move students towards that goal. Additionally, the heavy reliance on high-stakes, standardized tests may inadvertently endorse developmentally inappropriate educational practices in early and middle childhood (Paris et al.). In response to meeting state testing requirements that start as early as first grade, schools often feel pressured to narrow the curriculum to focus on a specific set of regimented mathematics and literacy skills. Yet, young children need time for creative, autonomous, and social play which is a form of cognitive and social-emotional learning (Bjorklund & Brown, 1998). For example, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (NAEYC, 2009) Guidelines for Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment in Programs Serving Children Ages 3 Through 8 emphasizes play as an essential method of learning which simultaneously fosters cognition, self-regulation, and social competence.

Human development objectives

In contrast to a heavy reliance on high-stakes, standardized testing described above, assessments driven by human development objectives acknowledge the need for achievement while also attending to the needs to develop social-emotional skills in order to educate the whole person. Thus, achievement measures driven by human development objectives tend to encourage the use of “authentic assessments” (such as naturalistic observation that considers
the learner in context) and lessen the role of standardized testing. Naturalistic observations can document both the academic performance of students and the social-emotional aspects of learning, such as persistence or frustration. The emphasis is less so on norm-based comparisons, and more so on *ipsative* growth or progress over time by comparing to a person’s past performance (Armstrong, 2006). The use of informal assessments that are responsive to individual students’ needs allows teachers to offer immediate feedback and to make appropriate adjustments in instructional materials and teaching practices. For example, if a young reader is showing signs of frustration with decoding words with short and long vowels, the teacher can adapt by providing a chart with key words and pictures that can be used as a reference until the student internalizes the spelling patterns.

**Complementary roles of standardized and individualized assessments**

In the aforementioned examples, standardized achievement tests and individualized, informal assessments serve unique purposes in educating the whole child and evaluating the curriculum. However, of greater importance is the manner in which they serve a complementary role. For example, within the area of literacy development, standardized measures that have been shown to be both valid and reliable are needed to document the efficacy of a school’s literacy approach or to screen students in order to identify those who may be at-risk for reading difficulties. Relative to standardized achievement tests, informal assessments typically produce information on students with greater variability, and thus with lower reliability, because the goal is to assess *ipsative* growth more so than to assess mastery according to standardized benchmarks. To illustrate with an analogy, if one is trying to maintain a healthy weight, it may be helpful to collect weekly measurements using a weighing scale (similar to informal assessments). These measurements provide instant feedback regarding daily progress that could be used as information to make immediate individualized, short-term goal setting. However, to maintain a healthy weight, it is also important to know how one’s weight compares to healthy individuals of similar gender, age, and height using criteria such as Body Mass Index (BMI), in order to assess personal progress relative to similar others. Without comparing oneself to a standardized criterion, it is difficult to know when one is within a healthy range in regards to weight for her or his age and height.

Additionally, the very nature of the format of standardized tests allows measurement of a certain type of learning. For example, on standardized reading tests (e.g., National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP] from the US Department of Education) reading comprehension is measured through the use of reading passages with comprehension questions, which measures a students’ independent reading ability in an unsupported environment. To illustrate with an example, if a student, Malcolm, performs well on the NAEP reading comprehension, teachers and parents can be fairly confident that Malcolm has sufficient reading skills for this level of text. However, the limits to standardized reading tests are numerous. For example, if a student, Walter, perform poorly on reading comprehension passages from the NAEP, the test results cannot provide teachers with a diagnostic reason as to why. Possibly, Walter could not decode the words, or could he read the individual words but his fluency was so slow that comprehension was impaired? Or maybe he could decode the
words but was unfamiliar with the topic and the key vocabulary words. In short, poor performance on a standardized reading test can rarely inform a teachers’ instruction. When useful diagnostic information is not readily available from the results, teachers and schools may resort to generic test-preparation practices to improve test scores. Additionally, a standardized reading test provides no measure of Walter’s effort and persistence or motivation on the task - perhaps he gave up halfway through the test. Recent evidence suggests that personality traits are critical for reading success (Niemi & Poskiparta, 2002). Some leaders in the field of reading education even advocate screening for such social-emotional skills in reading (e.g., Johnston, 2005).

Therefore, for even the most achievement-oriented teacher, individualized, informal assessments of reading such as “Running Records” and student observations are compulsory for responsive teaching. For example, by using the informal approach of “running records” a teacher listens to a student read while observing the rate and prosody of reading as well as any miscues. The teacher also observes for signs of frustration and stress, which serve as indicators of whether the student is matched with the appropriate level of learning materials. Ideally, school curriculum would provide enough freedom to teachers so they could select from a “toolbox” that includes a variety of assessments that would serve the diverse (achievement and social-emotional) needs of students in their classrooms. Unfortunately, there are few available assessments, formal or informal, to specifically assess social and emotional aspects of literacy learning (McTigue, Beckman, & Kadaravek, 2007). This lack of readily available measures for teachers to assess students’ social and emotional development remains an area requiring additional research. In summary, a balanced curriculum must include both standardized and informal measurements which focus on academic and social-emotional growth.

**Standardized benchmarks versus individualized goals**

As the goals and objectives that underlie both standardized achievement testing and individualized, informal assessments are understood better, it becomes apparent that each serves a function in the education of the whole child: Standardized testing ensures that students are meeting yearly benchmarks determined to be prerequisites for skill mastery, individualized. Informal assessments ensure that students are making daily progress toward the yearly benchmarks. Consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of zone of proximal development and scaffolding, teachers can help student toward daily progress by providing responsive and appropriate feedback and assistance when individualized assessments signal learning difficulties. Thus, we believe that the success of students on high-stakes standardized testing partly depends on their daily progress necessary to build toward meeting standardized benchmarks. Thus, achievement and human development objectives and goals must work synchronously to maximize learning.

*Example of benchmarks in literacy development.* In literacy development, fluency (i.e., reading with speed and prosody) is a critical skill (Samuels, 2004) because it provides a necessary condition for skilled comprehension. States operationalized research findings to determine fluency goals for students at varying grade levels. For example, state standards in
Texas dictate that first graders should be able to read at a rate of approximately 60 words a minute (wpm) by the end of first grade. Such guidelines allow teachers to pace instruction so students are making daily progress that will allow them to meet this benchmark by the time they graduate from first grade. State-wide benchmarks help insure that regardless of school district, each student will aim for a similar level of competency.

However, the benchmark of 60 wpm may be an inappropriate goal to use with all students because children advance best when challenged just beyond their current level of mastery. If a student is reading at 20 wpm and nowhere near the benchmark, focusing only on the success or failure in meeting standardized benchmarks would likely lead to the student feeling discouraged and frustrated and developing a negative self-concept. If a student is already reading at 60 wpm, focusing only on the success or failure in meeting benchmarks may foster a sense of complacency, and the student may stop putting forth effort and persistence to develop his or her learning potential. Therefore, to produce the highest level of academic achievement, school curriculum must acknowledge the benefits as well as limitations of high-stakes standardized testing and benchmarks.

Creating developmental goals in alignment with benchmarks. To help motivate students to learn and progress toward meeting benchmarks, goals should be set with specificity, proximity, and difficulty in mind if students are to experience raised self-efficacy (Schunk, 2003). A specific goal is individualized and targeted on learning a certain skill or completing a particular task. Similar to effective feedback, the achievement of specific goals is more likely to raise self-efficacy because they are much easier to evaluate than a general goal (i.e., “Do your best”) (Schunk). In literacy development, achieving fluency is a specific goal because it sets a measurable criterion to achieve. In order to reach the criterion, daily and short-term goals (including goals that could be met within 15- to 30-minute sessions) result in greater motivation and higher self-efficacy (Schunk). Rather than being proximal goals, benchmark standards such as the 60 wpm goal for reading is a long-term goal for students entering first grade because it is to be achieved by or before they reach the end of their school year. Therefore intermediary goals must be set in the journey towards that goal. This leads to the final criteria of difficulty. Following “Goldilock’s Wisdom of Difficult” and consistent with Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of zone of proximal development, it is important to think about setting goals that are neither too easy nor too hard for a student to attain.

Therefore, returning to the fluency benchmark, an example of a developmentally appropriate goal is that students will be able to read a familiar book at their instructional reading level, at a rate that is 10% more than their current speeds. For example, if Sarah is reading at 30 wpm, she will increase her rate to 33 wpm. In turn, Jane will be challenged to increase her rate from 50 to 55 wpm. Therefore both learners will be aiming for a different rate, but the incremental change will be similar in difficulty. By meeting developmental and benchmark objectives that consider the learner in context, all students will be on their own trajectory to meeting the minimum goal of 60 wpm by the end of the year. In summary, an effective curriculum will maintain high standards of achievement in the role of benchmarks, but also allow teachers to adapt to the needs of individual learners for the purpose of goal setting.
CONCLUSION

In summary, we believe that the needs of the whole child (including academic and social-emotional learning) must be considered and aligned throughout the process of curriculum development. Although traditional school curriculum typically focuses primarily on academic proficiency, we feel that inclusion of SEL competencies with the formal base curriculum will nurture students to develop into educated and psychologically- and emotionally-healthy members of society. Additionally, we believe the developmental and academic achievement needs and objectives of learners must be integrated into school curriculum, so that one is not simply considered as an “add on” to the other. Such integration may be the most efficient and effective approach to promote academic success and social-emotional health. Time spent on SEL development should not be considered as “lost instructional time” because effective SEL development will promote academic learning as evidenced in increased achievement and standardized test scores. Furthermore, assessments need to reflect such principles by embracing both standardized and individualized tests of learning and progress. As of 2007, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) launched its Whole Child Initiative to ensure that all children are healthy, safe, engaged in learning, supported by caring adults, and academically challenged. Curriculum development plays a vital role in carrying out such initiatives by inclusion of efficacious, evidence-based teaching practices and instructional materials in classrooms while ensuring that each school district could decide from these resources those that best match their needs and circumstances.

REFERENCES


