CHAPTER 15

School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs

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From the late 1990s schools have been inundated with well-intentioned prevention and promotion programs that address such diverse issues as bullying, HIV/AIDS, alcohol, careers, character, civics, conflict resolution, delinquency, dropout, family life, health, morals, multiculturalism, pregnancy, service learning, truancy, and violence.

At the same time, the year 2002 marked the passage of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which placed a strong emphasis on test scores as the most important and tangible outcome of educational achievement. School funding was tied to progress in test performance, and educators quickly found themselves faced with a dilemma. The needs that had generated the proliferation of prevention-related programs had not abated. However, their accountability structure changed in ways that seemed incompatible with the continuation of those programs.

Signs of this dilemma were evident over a decade ago (Elias, 1995, pp.12–13):

The continuing undercurrent of emphasis on basic academic skills is probably driven more by economic and workplace forces—both domestic and international—than by a genuine concern with the well-being of our nation’s children and youth. For if the latter were the case, compelling statements about the inextricable bond linking personal, social, affective, and cognitive development would be more in the forefront. Arguments have been made that “Placing an overlay of strong academic demands on the current educational climate is likely to result in few increases in learning and instead exacerbate current stress-related problems and lead to further alienation among our student population.” (Elias, 1989, pp. 393–394)

What was previously described as an undercurrent has now become a riptide, and the stress-related sequelae of trying to meet the academic and psychological demands of students in the schools are drowning both students and teachers alike. Efforts to redress these problems by returning attention to the bond across developmental areas have not been absent during this time, but they have undergone both conceptual and practical reformulations. Concomitantly, our understanding of what is required to implement these efforts—most specifically, what is being demanded of those who are expert consultants to implement interventions in schools—has become more sophisticated.

How have schools attempted to respond to growing demands to implement effective educational approaches

References
that promote academic success, enhance health, and prevent problem behaviors? Unfortunately, many child advocates, educational policymakers, and researchers, despite their good intentions, have proposed fragmented initiatives to address problems without an adequate understanding of the mission, priorities, and culture of schools (Sarason, 1996).

For a number of reasons, these uncoordinated efforts often fail to live up to their potential. Typically, they are introduced as a series of short-term, fragmented program initiatives. They are not sufficiently linked to the central mission of schools or to the issues for which teachers and other school personnel are held accountable, which is primarily academic performance. Rarely is there adequate staff development and support for program implementation. Programs that are insufficiently coordinated, monitored, evaluated, and improved over time have reduced impact on student behavior.

Even before the crisis precipitated by the NCLB legislation, concern for the disappointing performance of many prevention and health promotion efforts spurred a 1994 meeting hosted by the Fetzer Institute. Attendees included school-based prevention researchers, educators, and child advocates who were involved in diverse educational efforts to enhance children's positive development, including social competence promotion, emotional intelligence, drug education, violence prevention, sex education, health promotion, character education, service learning, civic education, school reform, and school-family-community partnerships. The Fetzer group first introduced the term family-community partnerships. The Fetzer group first introduced the term social and emotional learning (SEL) as a conceptual framework to address both the needs of young people and the fragmentation that typically characterizes the response of schools to those needs (Elias et al., 1997). They believed that, unlike the many "categorical" prevention programs that targeted specific problems, SEL programming could address underlying causes of problem behavior while supporting academic achievement. A new organization, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), also emerged from this meeting with the goal of establishing high-quality, evidence-based SEL as an essential part of preschool through high school education (see www.CASEL.org).

Social and emotional learning skills have had several competing conceptualizations, including those of Bar-On (Bar-On & Parker, 2000), Mayer and Salovey (1993), Goleman (1995), and CASEL (Elias, 2003). Of these, CASEL's has been most focused on children and has served as the guide for virtually all school-based SEL interventions. Hence, we will concern ourselves with CASEL's view of SEL skills. (See Ciarrochi, Forgas, & Mayer, 2001, for an overview of theoretical perspectives.)

The skills of social-emotional learning are presented in Table 15.1. CASEL (2003) posits five interrelated skill areas: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management and organization, responsible problem solving, and relationship management. Within each area, there are specific competencies supported by research and practice as essential for effective social-emotional functioning. The list does not purport to be comprehensive; rather, it is drawn from research and practice and is intended to guide intervention. Further, the conceptualization of the skills is that they are important at all developmental levels; what changes is the level of cognitive-emotional complexity with which they are applied, as well as the situations in which they will be used. Hence, Table 15.1 provides a framework for looking at the skills from the perspective of childhood and beyond. (See Elias et al., 1997, for versions appropriate to other stages of child development.)

The fact that SEL has been part of the popular literature is significant. People reading about it from all walks of life, from various professions, as psychologists, educators, members of the business community, and parents, can share this term (Goleman, 1995). Similarly, SEL and emotional intelligence found their way into psychology, education, business, and other professional journals and in over 30 languages. This has created a base of interest and involvement that far eclipsed prior work in social competence promotion, even though the long history of research and conceptualization in that area clearly provided the foundation from which SEL and emotional intelligence could spring (Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence, 1994).

However, SEL also had "value added" as a concept. First, it placed a strong emphasis on such dimensions as emotion and spirituality (Kessler, 2000). Second, it was based in advances in brain research (Brandt, 2003). Third, SEL became tied to factors that were being studied in education and related fields as mediators of academic performance, that is, the emotional state of children, their cognitive capacity to learn, and their style of learning. Just as the education field seemed to be focusing on "back to basics" in terms of both skills and learning approaches, the SEL field was uncovering...
TABLE 15.1  Social-Emotional Learning Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-Awareness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recognizing and naming one's emotions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding the reasons and circumstances for feeling as one does</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognizing strengths in, and mobilizing positive feelings about, self, school, family, and support networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowing one's needs and values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceiving oneself accurately</td>
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<td>Believing in personal efficacy</td>
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<td>Having a sense of spirituality</td>
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<tr>
<th>Social Awareness</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appreciating diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showing respect to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening carefully and accurately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing empathy and sensitivity to others' feelings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding others' perspectives, points of view, and feelings</td>
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<tr>
<th>Self-management and Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Verbalizing and coping with anxiety, anger, and depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling impulses, aggression, and self-destructive, antisocial behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing personal and interpersonal stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focusing on tasks at hand</td>
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<tr>
<td>Setting short- and long-term goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning thoughtfully and thoroughly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Modifying performance in light of feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilizing positive motivation</td>
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<td>Activating hope and optimism</td>
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<td>Working toward optimal performance states</td>
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<th>Responsible Decision Making</th>
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<tr>
<td>Analyzing situations perceptively and identifying problems clearly</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercising social decision-making and problem-solving skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Responding constructively and in a problem-solving manner to interpersonal obstacles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Engaging in self-evaluation and reflection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conducting oneself with personal, moral, and ethical responsibility</td>
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<tr>
<th>Relationship Management</th>
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<td>Managing emotions in relationships, harmonizing diverse feelings and viewpoints</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showing sensitivity to social-emotional cues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressing emotions effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging others in social situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working cooperatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising assertiveness, leadership, and persuasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing conflict, negotiation, refusal</td>
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<td>Providing, seeking help</td>
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reasons why genuine learning required attention to other factors (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

Yet another trend was operating in the late 1990s and early 2000s that is relevant to understanding SEL, its emergence, and why action research in that field has generated such unique insights. Both in the therapeutic field and in education, there was a push for evidence-based interventions. Those who were funding services (managed care companies and federal and state government for the former; federal, state, and local government for the latter) were concerned about accountability. Were children receiving services that were cost-effective? Could they be delivered in prescriptive ways, to ensure fidelity and maximize efficiency? Thus came the push for manualized therapeutic interventions and scripted school reform plans and related interventions. And with these circumscribed interventions came the need for accountability and the gold standard of research: randomized clinical trials.

Randomized clinical trials work best for discrete, time-limited, low-complexity interventions (Elias, 1997). This led to an ascendance of the short-term, focused “program” as the unit of intervention and study, along with the illusion/deception that programs were simple to implement in a controlled, replicable, and consistent manner. Outcomes research focused on the efficacy of such programs as implemented in “model” sites. For example, the American Psychological Association’s 14 Ounces of Prevention (Price, Cowen, Lorion, & Ramos-McKay, 1988) and the 1997 publication Primary Prevention Works (Albee & Gullotta, 1997) contain program descriptions and outcome data for SEL programs that address a range of populations across the life span. In the chapter in the latter volume on the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving program, which is the focus of this chapter, data were reviewed showing the efficacy of the program in terms of (a) improving teachers’ abilities in facilitating students’ social decision making and problem solving and (b) improving the social decision-making and problem-solving skills of students. Positive outcomes such as these further boosted interest in the field.

As the field matured, it became evident that there were significant issues to consider in terms not only of the structure of a program, but also of the process by which a program is implemented in a setting. Gager and Elias (1997) showed clearly that so-called model programs were variable in their success, and that their outcomes were related most strongly to implementation
The Complex, Longitudinal Nature of School-Based Social-Emotional Learning Interventions

It is beneficial to provide a developmentally appropriate combination of formal, curriculum-based instruction with ongoing informal and infused opportunities to develop social and emotional skills from preschool through high school. (Elias et al., 1997, p. 33)

It has become widely accepted among researchers and those deeply involved with the SEL field that learning social and emotional skills is similar to learning other academic skills. That is, the effect of initial learning is enhanced over time to address the increasingly complex situations children face regarding academics, social relationships, citizenship, and health. This outcome is best accomplished through effective classroom instruction; student engagement in positive activities in and out of the classroom; and broad student, parent, and community involvement in program planning, implementation, and evaluation (CASEL, 2003; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). Ideally, planned, ongoing, systematic, and coordinated SEL instruction should begin in preschool and continue through high school.

Social and emotional learning programs also take many forms, but several generalities can be drawn about them. To begin with, a definition of SEL is provided by CASEL (2003, p. 8):

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process of developing fundamental social and emotional competencies in children. SEL programming is based on the understanding that (1) the best learning emerges from supportive and challenging relationships, and (2) many different kinds of factors are caused by the same risk factors.

The specifics of how these relationships are formed and how the risk factors are addressed will vary from program to program. Recent years have seen the proliferation of SEL-enhancing programs and efforts. In an effort to help educators navigate among and decide between various programs and to effectively incorporate these into their practice, reviews of effectiveness research (e.g., CASEL, 2003) have been conducted and guidelines established for what constitutes effective programming (e.g., Elias et al., 1997). For example, Elias et al. delineate the scope of SEL programmatic efforts in the first of their 39 “Guidelines for Educators”:

Educators at all levels need explicit plans to help students become knowledgeable, responsible, and caring. Efforts are needed to build and reinforce skills in four major domains of SEL:

1. Life skills and social competencies.
2. Health promotion and problem prevention skills.
3. Coping skills and social support for transitions and crises.
4. Positive, contributory service. (pp. 21-22)

Successful programmatic approaches include a combination of direct instruction in social and emotional skills as well as opportunities to practice these skills in a variety of situations. Direct instruction involves introducing students to the basic components of complex social and emotional skills. Students practice the use of these skills, and receive guided feedback from the teacher. Teachers may establish prompts for use as cues by students to put the behaviors to use. A basic example can be drawn from the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving Program (SDM/SPS; Elias & Bruene-Butler, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) that is discussed in depth later in this chapter. This curriculum includes instruction in communication skills. In this unit, students learn the prompt “Listening Position,” which includes the following behavioral components: (a) Sit or stand straight, (b) face the speaker, (c) look at the speaker. These three components are modeled by the teacher and practiced by the students as the teacher provides feedback on their efforts. The teacher may use a practice activity, such as asking the students to use Listening Position during a game that involves paying auditory attention (e.g., “Clap your hands when you hear me say a certain word”). Again, the teacher provides feedback.
In addition to this type of direct instruction, SEL skills are best taught when infused throughout the school day and in all aspects of a student's experience. To continue with the earlier example, teachers can find opportunities for students to role-play listening skills as part of a discussion about literature or history. A science teacher may reinforce listening skills as part of a lesson on the five senses. A principal, in calling an assembly to order, may use the same “Listening Position” prompt that students learned in their classrooms. Finally, efforts can be made to engage parents in the process by orienting them to the skills and prompts and helping them understand how best to coach their children.

As suggested by these examples, a comprehensively implemented approach to SEL transcends work by individual teachers in individual classes. In addition to the type of curriculum-based work described earlier, J. Cohen (1999, p. 13) points out that SEL can be addressed in less formal, “noncurriculum-based” ways in which educators “discover ways of being further attuned to SEL and how best to incorporate it into all they do at school,” thereby “integrating a set of principles and practices with work that is taking place in the classroom.” Further, Cohen points out that there are SEL initiatives targeting students at risk. Further, Cohen discusses a dimension of SEL specifically focusing on the educators themselves and the SEL competencies and experiences of those working in the school. Building on Cohen’s rubric, we suggest two further related areas in which SEL can be manifested in a school. First, we can think about systemic SEL, or SEL initiatives that transcend the classroom and have to do with school policies (such as discipline) and governance (e.g., how students can have meaningful input into the functioning of the school community). Second, we see the importance of administrative SEL, or the ability of the administrator to draw on the principles of SEL in his or her interactions with staff and students and in bringing new programs or initiatives to the school.

Numerous successful, multiyear, multicomponent, school-based interventions promote positive academic, social, emotional, and health behavior. Examples include the following:

- Creating coordinated, caring communities of learners and enhancement of school and classroom climate through a combination of class meetings, peer leadership, family involvement, and whole-school community building activities (Battistich, Schaps, Watson, & Solomon, 1996; Solomon, Battistich, Watson, Schaps, & Lewis, 2000). This takes place by having an entire school staff come together to discuss the potential program and agree that they support the values and procedures that are encompassed by the program and are prepared to implement it over time.

- Strengthening teacher instructional practices and increasing family involvement (Hawkins, Catalano, Kosterman, Abbott, & Hill, 1999). Teachers are taught how to create opportunities for children to bond with one another and participate in and support the creation of school norms; parents are similarly engaged in supporting school norms and in learning skills of nonviolent conflict resolution and anger management with their children.

- Establishing smaller units within schools and building trust among school staff, families, and students, thereby increasing student access, guidance, and support from school staff and other students (Felner et al., 1997). Specifically, students entering middle and high school do so in their own wings of buildings and share classes mostly with students in their own grade to increase camaraderie and mutual support; advisories also provide all students with regular problem-solving opportunities.

- Developing effective classroom-based SEL instructional programs that extend into all facets of the school environments, as well as family and/or community, to enhance students’ social-emotional competence and health (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999; Elias, Gara, Schuyler, Branden-Muller, & Sayette, 1991; Errecart et al., 1991; Greenberg & Kuscé, 1998; Perry, 1999; Shure & Spivack, 1988). The skills imparted in such programs are reinforced by being explicitly used in physical education classes, in hallways, on the school bus, as part of service learning experiences, and for family problem solving. Invoking the skills outside the curriculum and instructional context serves to reinforce and generalize the use of those skills.

Despite the availability of evidence-based programs of varying degrees of complexity, many schools still do not use them (Ennett et al., 2003; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001; Hallfors & Godette, 2002). For example, Ennett et al. surveyed educators from a national sample of public and private schools and found that only 14% use interactive teaching strategies and effective content in delivering substance use prevention programming. Hallfors and Godette’s survey results from 81 Safe and Drug-Free School district coordina-
tors across 11 states indicated that 59% had selected a research-based curriculum for implementation, but only 19% reported that their schools were implementing these programs with fidelity. This issue is of equal if not greater importance than generating new and more accurate curricula; the level of practice would be enhanced greatly if even current knowledge was implemented to a greater degree.

The history and trajectory of development of the field of SEL provides insights into what we believe is one of the deep, structural issues maintaining the gap between knowledge and practice. Since the emergence of the SEL field, there has been a reconceptualization of what is needed to be an effective action researcher and practitioner. The field first moved from an emphasis on short-term, discrete programs, to a realization that multicomponent, multilevel, multiyear interventions, linked to the goals and fabric of the organizations for which they are intended, are essential for successful, enduring outcomes (Weissberg & Elias, 1993). Accompanying this view is an evolving understanding of the skills needed to implement such efforts effectively (Elias, 1997). Social and emotional learning, character education, service learning, prevention, and related school-based programs and activities are highly operator-dependent. That is, their success is not linked to some automated technology, but rather to actions carried out by human beings interacting with multiple others across situations over time. Even when such interactions are scripted, there is great potential variation, and the moment-to-moment decisions made by the human operators of an intervention, in ecological relationship to all those around them, greatly influence the ultimate outcomes.

For schools to successfully bring in comprehensive approaches to SEL in enduring and effective ways, they will need consultants who can negotiate a complex, interactive, ecological-developmental process. The remainder of the chapter focuses on a pragmatic-theoretical guide for consultants and researchers working to implement SEL in a variety of contexts.

DEVELOPMENTAL ARENAS IN SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

As our contribution to the greater likelihood that interactive, ecological-developmental processes will be well-handled, we want to elucidate the developmental nexus within which effective SEL takes place. The centerpiece of our ecological considerations is the consultant and the path that he or she takes to being able to master, or at least address, the evolving complexity of interventions. An additional level of analysis is a set of developmental processes in the host settings that must ultimately be in alignment if SEL is to take root in a school and be a positive influence on children.

Developmental Arena 1: Program Implementation

Finding trends in the changing trajectories of individuals is a difficult endeavor due to the large number of variables that may influence the pathways. Examining the change trajectory of an organization, itself made up of multiple individuals undergoing their own processes of change within the ecology of the setting, yields a literature "that is diverse and often unwieldy" (Commins & Elias, 1991, p. 207). Efforts to summarize the process of program implementation within an organization are necessarily summative generalizations of the efforts of multiple individuals within the organization. A temporal cross section of the setting at a given point in time may reveal individuals whose level of implementation does not correspond to the overall level of implementation within the organization. New teachers come on board and need to be brought up to speed. Veteran teachers differ in terms of their own motivation to implement the program. Individual differences in creativity or drive for innovation will impact the degree to which one adheres to or makes changes to the program being implemented.

However, even with the multitude of factors impacting the process (many of which are discussed later in this chapter), there are trends that emerge as implementation of a new program unfolds in a setting. Novick, Kress, and Elias (2002), basing their work on Hord et al. (1987), summarize these trends by looking at the general levels of use of interventions by individuals within a setting (Table 15.2).

The earliest stage, though technically one of nonuse, is important in forming the foundation of future implementation efforts. All implementation efforts have a "prehistory" (Sarason, 1972) of past experiences with innovation in a setting, of beliefs, values, and experiences held by individuals within a setting, and of the culture of the school...
TABLE 15.2 Levels of Use and Concern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Use</th>
<th>Level of Concern</th>
<th>Staff Members at This Level</th>
<th>Adult Learners at This Level Need</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nonuse</td>
<td>Awareness</td>
<td>May be concerned about the consequences of SEL deficits, but not about SEL programming or implementation.</td>
<td>To gain an understanding of the program rationale, the contextual supports/incentive supports for implementation, and skills needed for implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Informational</td>
<td>Would like to know more about SEL and how to promote it.</td>
<td>Introductory information about specific program goals, requirements, and time lines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>Are considering using (or not using) SEL and are grappling with the impact that this decision will have on their work and on themselves.</td>
<td>Concrete information on what the innovation will look like, what materials they will use, and how to prepare themselves to take the first steps in getting started.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical use</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Are concerned about their ability to handle the logistics of the program implementation.</td>
<td>Support and troubleshooting for implementation (e.g., observing other teachers, additional consultation/supervision, e-mail contact with experts, peer-group meetings to share and learn).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Routine</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Wonder about the impact that their efforts are having on their students.</td>
<td>Praise and recognition for what they are doing; assistance in making implementation easier or better and assessing outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refinement</td>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Consider how to maximize program effectiveness and improve delivery.</td>
<td>Support and reinforcement for innovation while maintaining the core aspects of the plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Recognize that impact can be maximized by coordinating efforts with others and continuity over time.</td>
<td>Support for naturally occurring interactions and collaborations; planned contexts in which cooperation can occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewal</td>
<td>Refocusing</td>
<td>Begin to supplement and enhance the intervention based on their own experience.</td>
<td>Opportunities for staff to share and discuss desirable, coordinated changes in the school’s SEL efforts.</td>
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in terms of such areas as staff collaboration and morale. Does the school have a history of revolving-door innovations that might impact how seriously staff regard yet another new program? Do staff tend to work together proactively to address concerns in the school, or does individual griping predominate? The answers to such questions will impact the trajectory of any programmatic efforts in a setting.

1The prehistory also involves the process by which the innovation was brought to the setting. Who initiated the effort: was it top-down from the principal, grassroots from the teachers, or some combination of the two? What program options were explored? These factors are important, but because they precede the onset of programming, they will not be a focus of this chapter.
gram. For SEL programming, introduction and initiation is a time when implementers consider the importance of SEL skills, the difficulties with deficits in such skills, and basic tenets of best practices for promoting SEL skills. Further, they are learning the nuts and bolts of implementing the specific program being brought to the school (e.g., Are there lessons to learn? Materials to use?) and planning how to incorporate new activities into existing class structures (e.g., When will the lessons be delivered?).

Once a degree of implementation mastery is achieved through repeated mechanical use, initiation gives way to regularity of programming efforts within a school. Such a routine level of use involves fairly consistent patterns of programming with few changes being made. As implementers gain increased fluency with the program and begin to notice subtleties such as differential impact on various students (e.g., based on gender, developmental level, special needs classification) and their own implementation style (e.g., comfort or lack thereof with various programmatic aspects), they may attempt to refine their efforts in light of their experiences and observations.

As staff members become regular users, the program moves toward institutionalization within a setting. The program becomes part of the standard operating procedure of a setting. A visitor would be unable to distinguish the institutionalized program from any other long-standing initiative. Many of the functions once performed by an outside consultant are now owned by the institution (Kress, Cimring, & Elias, 1997). New roles might be created to maintain the program, and the values and goals of the program may be reflected in the rituals and ceremonies of the school.

The institutionalization phase, like the routine use phase before it, is not static. Just as routine use is marked by refinement, institutionalization is marked by integration and renewal. The former term refers to the growing realization by implementers that their individual efforts will be enhanced to the extent to which they support one another and their efforts are carried through over time. The focus of programmatic efforts shifts from isolated classrooms to coordination among faculty members at and across grade levels and/or disciplines.

As the overall quality and consistency of implementation continues to progress, implementers will be interested in renewing their efforts in light of contextually based changes. Student populations change, staff turnover occurs, new mandates are mandated, and new materials materialize. Programmatic response to such changes can be seen in a Piagetian light: Changes may be “assimilated” into existing program structures, or the program “accommodates” to new realities.

A curriculum-based and problem-solving oriented program such as Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving (ICPS) (Shure & Spivack, 1988), Open Circle (Seigle, 2001), and SDM/SPS (Elias & Bruene-Butler, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) is typically introduced in a half-day awareness workshop that shows staff the framework of the program, the key skills, and the problem-solving steps that are embodied in their lessons. Preparation involves another level of training, for at least an entire day, in which specific curriculum materials are presented to staff. What follows next is mechanical use, whereby teachers typically follow the curriculum lessons pretty much as presented in the curriculum but are not overly concerned if they miss an occasional lesson. There is not much flexibility and little spontaneous use of the curriculum in noninstructional time. Use is considered routine once there is an understanding of the importance of regular use if the program is to have an impact on students. Refinement is the next logical level; this is where problem-solving procedures might be modified to make them more clearly remembered or applied by particular students, or whole-class activities are recast into small groups (or vice versa) in an attempt to have a greater impact on students who do not seem to be grasping the skills based on standard presentation. Integration occurs when problem-solving skills are applied not only to social situations, but to academics, such as literature and social studies, and to the discipline system in the form of problem-solving worksheets to help students think through rule infractions and plan better ways to handle troubling situations when they occur in the future. Finally, after perhaps 2 to 3 years, these programs can be at the renewal level of use as the need to modify procedures and supplement materials is evaluated in light of the impact of the curriculum. For example, procedures from the Responsive Classroom program (www.responsiveclassroom.org) that focus on morning meetings, establishing rules, and building a positive sense of community often provide a valuable adjunct to Open Circle and SDM/SPS; self-control techniques from Second Step (www.cfc.org) have been used to bolster readiness skills for problem solving in ICPS. These modifications then go through their own levels of use process, albeit usually at a much quicker pace than shown by the original curriculum.

These trends can be considered developmental in that earlier stages of implementation are seen as enabling
later stages to occur. As in individual developmental theories, not all stages are achieved at the same speed (nor by all the implementers in any given setting at the same time), nor will any given setting (or its individual implementers) make their way fully to the “last” stage. Finally, there is a cyclical nature to the process, as modifications that are made during later phases might need to be initiated in a process similar to introducing a new program.

Developmental Arena 2: The Program Implementers

The stage-wise progress of implementing programmatic change on a systemic level has parallels in terms of learning, behavioral change, and innovation adaptation on the part of the implementers of any SEL program. This progression can be framed in terms of Prochaska and DiClemente’s (1984) transtheoretical model of behavior change (cf. Edwards, Jumper-Thuman, Ploest, Oetting, & Swanson, 2000). In their model, individual readiness is described as an underlying factor in moving through stages of change, beginning with limited awareness of the problem and lack of motivation to change, and progressing through increases in both. With regard to SEL programming, various adult learning needs may emerge as implementers move from initial exposure to the intervention to preliminary inroads in its use to eventual regular usage.

Novick et al. (2002) have discussed a progression of levels of concern, or adult learner-implementer needs, based on Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, and Hall (1987), that emerge as implementers move through the process of implementing an SEL program. As summarized in Table 15.2, these concerns and needs correspond to the levels of use discussed previously. In summary, these levels begin at a limited awareness of the issue of SEL and low motivation to implement SEL programming. As staff become more aware of the importance of SEL, and their own role in addressing SEL skills, basic “how to” issues come to the fore. Once implementers have achieved a degree of mastery of the basics of implementation, needs begin to focus on improving, supporting, and innovating practice.

These levels of concern point out the interplay between the progress of program implementation and implementers’ needs to have certain concerns addressed. A consultant must be aware of the particular concerns at any given time and be ready to help see that they are addressed. At some levels, for example, at the information level, learners’ needs may be filled by a direct intervention on the part of the consultant (in this case, providing more information). Other levels, for example, collaboration, may require a more systemic approach to create the kind of learning communities that would meet some implementers’ concerns.

Factors Impacting Initiation into the Implementation Process

Embedded in this discussion is an understanding that the developmental needs of the adult learner-implementers are sensitive to social and emotional factors. At the early levels of concern, for example, beliefs and attitudes will be important in the progression toward initial steps of implementation. Specifically, the beliefs and attitudes held by the implementers regarding the origins of social and emotional skills and the best way to build such skills will impact the degree of motivation to implement any SEL program. Incompatibility between the consultant’s and implementers’ framing of a target problem can result in the latter group rejecting the program being promoted by the former (Everhart & Wandersman, 2000). Teachers who believe that social and emotional skills are part of a student’s immutable genetic makeup will be unlikely to show support for a program based on a social learning model of social and emotional skill development.

Perceptions regarding the importance of deficits in SEL skills and one’s responsibility for addressing them may have an impact on implementation, as well. For example, in a study of an antibullying program, degree of implementation was predicted by perceptions held by teachers regarding the extent of bullying behaviors in their school and teachers’ assessment of the importance of their role in stemming the problem (Kallestad & Olweus, 2003). Thorsen-Spano (1996) found that elementary school teachers with a favorable attitude toward conflict resolution report a higher level of implementation of a conflict resolution program in their class than do those who report a less favorable attitude. Teachers who do not see SEL skills as a problem (and therefore, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”), or who see them as a concern but not their concern (“SEL is for the parents/school psychologist/and so on to deal with, not me”) will be unlikely to embrace an SEL program. A consultant must work to gauge the attitudes and feelings of the implementers both around the social-emotional climate of the school and about the implementation as it unfolds (Novick et al., 2002).
Factors Impacting Movement toward Regular Use

Implementers must possess a sense of their own ability to successfully carry out an SEL program. That is, a teacher might believe in the premise of the SEL program but have concerns about how he or she will handle factors such as classroom management during program sessions or finding time to implement an additional initiative (e.g., Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997). Such concerns can derail the efforts of the implementer to progress toward regular program use. Although teachers will enter the implementation process with a level of implementation self-efficacy, this factor will also be sensitive to iatrogenic effects. The relative success or failure of initial implementation efforts will have an impact on willingness to regularize programming. As such, Elias et al. (1997) have stressed the importance of “small wins” early on in creating positive momentum.

Growth in skill development will be enhanced by the extent to which individual efforts are given an opportunity to intersect with the efforts of others who are also involved in the process, thereby creating a community of learner-implementers. Such efforts “can enhance relationships, facilitate contextually relevant modifications, and foster understanding of the role of school culture in program implementation” (Nastasi, 2002, p. 222).

Factors Important during Institutionalization

Finally, in considering the development of the implementers qua implementers, it is important to keep in mind parallel developmental processes. Program implementation may be related to an educator’s experience level. For example, following a staff development program on cooperative learning, experience was negatively correlated with reported attitudes toward implementation (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1997). Also, as discussed by Everhart and Wandersman (2000), adults in an Eriksonian “generativity” stage may find it more exciting to modify the existing program or to try something new than to maintain implementation as is. Staff turnover ensures that any ongoing implementation cohort includes both those experienced with as well as new to any intervention. As such, a consultant must be careful not to generalize regarding the implementation-developmental level of any group of consultees. Newly hired teachers likely being at a less advanced level of concern (after all, they may enter the school with little or no familiarity with the SEL program being used). Further, teachers new to a setting have these concerns play out in a social and emotional context different from that of the cohort with whom the innovation was introduced (Elias, Zins, Greenberg, Gracyzk, & Weissberg, 2003). When first introduced to a program, implementers often have a cohort of colearners who are facing the same excitement, anxieties, and so on related to the program, and can support one another through the process. A new teacher, already needing to gain entry to a new workplace, may be the only one, or one of an isolated few, going through these initial awkward baby steps.

Developmental Arena 3: The Social-Emotional Learning Intervention

Another factor that operates in interplay with others in developmental progression is the nature of the intervention. At its inception, an intervention should be limited, tangible, and scripted. This allows it to incorporate complexity but not require full understanding on the part of implementers to carry it out. As long as its principles and procedures are clearly laid out in training and follow-up materials in ways that allow emulation, the implementer will be able to get a feel for what it is like to carry it out. As in the sensorimotor period of infancy, learning occurs without being accompanied by full understanding. Also, the intervention is not experienced as a flow or systematic sequence, but as a set of discrete events. Yet, operational knowledge sufficient to manage in the world in a rudimentary way is present.

From Discrete Intervention to Establishing a Flow

Feedback during this initial period of use is followed by the intervention being carried out for a full year or cycle (e.g., some interventions are designed for a set period of weeks or months, others go for a full academic year). It is at this point that the flow of an intervention is established and those implementing it can make realistic and comprehensive preparations for carrying it out. Among these plans are how to connect the intervention to other programs and services in the school and other experiences that the child has either in preparation or follow-up to the intervention. For example, in SDM/SPS, a first year of teaching students problem-solving skills led to a decision to provide them with readiness skills in 1 to 2 prior years, and then application opportunities to allow integration of problem-solving skills into academic subject areas in subsequent years.
Integration in the Culture and Climate of Classrooms and Schools

These expansions also go through the process of development, as noted earlier. In addition, within the classroom, an SEL intervention becomes integrated with classroom management—it becomes the umbrella under which related efforts are organized. At this point, the integration might not be clearly visible as such; it has become part of the culture and climate of the class. In Heinz Werner's (1957) terminology, the process of differentiation and integration takes a decisive turn toward the latter.

Yet, the process is not over. Interventions that operate only at the classroom level are still limited in their impact on the student body. The next part of the development of an intervention involves its principles being extracted and applied into building-wide SEL/SPS efforts. This includes such important areas as the overall school climate and the discipline and positive recognition systems used. Among the components one is likely to see that denote this process are administrator training and the training of bus drivers and lunch aides in intervention-linked techniques. Other indicators are an SDM/SPS Lab, Keep Calm Force (a schoolwide, peer-led self-control and problem-solving program), bulletin boards denoting application of intervention principles to everyday interactions and situations and academic content areas, positive recognition systems, and emphases on positive citizenship in and out of the school. In other words, the intervention tends to expand and become more comprehensive.

A Spiraling Process of 3 to 5 Years

At the same time, it becomes a bit harder to bring new people on board into this process because of turnover, changes in the target populations, and changes in the development of the adult learners. Sarason (1996) and others (e.g., Elias, 1997) suggest that it takes 3 to 5 years to proceed from the inception of a pilot intervention to its spreading systematically within an entire school building. To understand this process most accurately, it is best to think of it as a developmental trajectory that is less linear and perhaps more like a spiral in nature.

Developmental Arena 4: The Consultant

There are two aspects of the development of consultants that are of particular relevance. First, consultants gain experience over time, and thus develop expertise and sophistication. However, there is a second aspect of development. Over time, consultants are called on to handle more and more advanced stages of the intervention process. Schools call on consultants at different stages in the process of bringing in programs. The stages are:

1. Awareness
2. Training to begin
3. Ongoing consultation/support
4. Leadership team/administrator training
5. Program evaluation (including implementation monitoring, consumer feedback)
6. Intervention development and expansion
7. Contextual integration

Each stage brings its own nuances and requires consultants to have certain knowledge, skills, and perspectives. What happens almost inevitably, especially to effective consultants, is that they are called on to shepherd an SEL program through its various stages in a particular school or district over time. Ready or not, the consultant will have to develop the understandings and skills needed to deal with what is in essence a transformational process. Complexities abound, however, in that consultants might be working at different stages of programs at the same time in different settings, and sometimes they are called in to work at different stages, rather than following the developmental progression of stages during a single consultation.

1. Awareness

At this stage, consultants have the task of introducing an SEL program to potential adopters. This is best understood as marketing the intervention. Typically, the consultant has a limited time period, from 45 minutes to 3 hours, to introduce the intervention to a group that can be homogeneous (from one grade level), heterogeneous (from all elementary grades, or even K–12), to a mix (from the same school, but all different grade levels). The recipients may well be informed about the intervention, but it is more likely that they will not be, other than knowing the title or topic of the presentation and perhaps a synopsis. Rare indeed is the situation in which staff members will read an article in advance of an awareness training. Thus, the mind-set of the consultant must be one of reducing complexity, eschewing comprehensiveness, and maximizing entertainment/engagement as part of the workshop/presentation experience.
2. Training to Begin

If an awareness session goes well, the consultant may be called on to conduct a training with staff to get them started with the intervention. Several pragmatic factors influence the specific nature of the training, such as when during the school year it takes place (e.g., fall, early in the calendar year, May/June, summer, just prior to the start of school), the length of time (2 hours, a full day), the number and nature of staff people attending, and the extent to which the training is voluntary or mandatory (no, it is not incongruous to refer to degrees of mandatory, or even voluntary, attendance). Because the agenda of the consultant is to encourage trainees to begin and persist, whereas the main focus of the trainees is simply to begin in a sound, comfortable, effective way, another concern is the plan and resource allocation to follow up the training. One need not be a veteran consultant to recognize the inherent difficulties of conducting trainings in May/June or early or midsummer. Again, the consultant must balance how much to present the full year-long context of the program versus focusing on a segment but going into it in sufficient depth to allow trainees to begin to implement with confidence. Even in a full-day training, unless the groups are highly homogeneous and well prepared, it is difficult for consultants to give trainees a good feel for how the intervention looks and feels over the course of a school year and also have time to impart the skills and practice needed so that initial implementation goes well. A further consideration is the definition of “begin.” How far along in the program should the consultant focus the initial training? In preparing staff from a single grade level from 10 elementary schools in an urban district for a 2-hour workshop, one consultant decided to focus on the generic structure of the lessons and then the first two lessons (out of 22 planned for the school year). Given how long it took staff from 10 buildings to arrive at a single location, functional instructional time was closer to 75 minutes. (Note that the decision about whether to start on time but then have perhaps 50% of the trainees come in while the training is in progress, versus waiting, is a vexing one that beginning consultants often do not anticipate.) Even in a generally positive and receptive climate, completing the two-session focus was a challenge under these circumstances.

It is useful to point out some developmental considerations here. The consultant is being asked to coordinate cognition, emotion, and behavior between the groups of trainees and the tasks for which they are being prepared. The ability of the consultant to do this effectively increases with experience, reflection, and supervision. Some issues, such as how to address late arrivals, can be thought through in advance with the proper guidance; so can the issue of how to deal with absentees.

Werner’s (1957) principle of differentiation and integration is relevant here as well. To do an awareness training, the amount of differentiation the consultant deals with is minimal. Deciding on what to emphasize, the consultant then must think of how to integrate these disparate elements so that he or she can have an integrated approach and the trainees can perceive their experience in an integrative, rather than scattered or disconnected, way. During a training to begin (as would occur at initial stages of implementation), the consultant has more to differentiate, but still not the full context of a year-long program. Integration usually needs to take place around the concept of “What do I do on Monday, and then the next Monday?” assuming that the cognitions, emotions, and behavior of trainees must be coordinated around these primary concerns.

3. Ongoing Consultation/Support

If there is an agreement to continue working with the consultant after the initial training, the consultant’s attention must turn to how to support staff in implementing the program. Various studies converge to suggest that this is a pivotal point in the process for both psychological and pragmatic reasons (Diebolt, Miller, Genheimer, Mondshein, & Ohmart, 2000; Gager & Elias, 1997; Greenberg & Kusche, 1988). The latter is self-evident. People want to be successful and comfortable taking on new tasks and would like to have questions answered before and after the initial session and receive feedback or support in preparation for the next one. The former has to do with the question of the school administration’s commitment to the program teachers are being asked to carry out. Teachers want to know that they are not being asked to invest their time in a fad, or in a 1-year, short-lived, tangential intervention. No amount of verbal assurance is a substitute for tangible support. The consultant, then, needs skills in providing supportive consultation and feedback (a skill set that is more interactive and differentiated than doing a frontal group training) and needs to have the ability and perspective to negotiate a system or framework for that consultation to take place. Often, external consultants are constrained in being able to have the time and flexibility to observe and meet with teachers over the course
of a school year. Therefore, some procedure for developing local expertise must be developed. (Note that experienced consultants will often want to create initial agreements that include not only the awareness and initial trainings, but also the work that the consultant will do to help develop and sustain a system of ongoing consultation, support, and training.) This brings the consultant into the arena of administrative consultation and requires an understanding of district goals and policies, procedures and practices for staff development, staff schedules, and supervisory practices and methods of compensation.

4. Leadership Team/Administrator Training

It is one thing to have the administration agree to allow some staff members to serve in supervisory/coaching roles, and another for the administration to take ownership of the direction and operation of the program. Setting up an SEL or program-based leadership team is another pivotal task for consultants. To do this effectively requires consultants to understand well the roles of school administrators, social workers, guidance counselors, school psychologists, health educators, and character education and substance abuse and violence/bullying prevention coordinators. Should there be student-family support staff or any position with responsibility as a liaison to parents and the community, that person’s input is also important because one of the purviews of the leadership team is funding. Consultants must know these roles because roles that might be assigned must be congruent with existing duties and patterns of availability. Designing and implementing a training for this group requires that the consultant find a way to concisely convey the key elements of the program, its pedagogy, and the expected implementation time line and structure. In addition, attendees should be exposed to basic principles of supportive, constructive supervisory feedback to teachers. And there is yet another level of concern: The leadership team will assume responsibility for program planning and evaluation, and so training in this process and the tasks involved must be provided. As before, the consultant must deal with logistical constraints (such as number and length of sessions and expectations about attendance and absence) and the attitude of staff toward the program and its implementation (Gager & Elias, 1997).

What begins to happen at this stage is that consultants are being asked to switch cognitive, emotional, and behavior gears in an increasingly disparate context. It is one thing to work with multiple schools or districts within the same or adjacent stages; that provides great variation and challenge for the consultant to keep straight. But it is another to shift back and forth between the awareness level, which eschews detail, and the ongoing consultation and support levels, which require it. Many consultants flounder as they experience difficulty inadvertently increasing the complexity of their awareness or initial trainings or, less often, oversimplifying their ongoing consultation and related work in the name of getting easy acceptance. Commins and Elias (1991) showed that such simplification is associated with reduced program longevity in schools, whereas presenting programs at an appropriate and realistic (but not excessive) level of complexity is associated with longer program endurance.

5. and 6. Program Evaluation (Including Implementation Monitoring, Consumer Feedback) and Intervention Development and Expansion

Whereas some level of accountability is a constant concern at every stage of consultancy (including the process by which the consultant monitors and evaluates his or her own efforts), systematic program evaluation efforts usually emerge once a leadership team, social development committee, or similar structure is established (Elias et al., 1997). Program evaluation is deceptively complicated, and consultants who are not trained in this area will find themselves needing to build their expertise or bring on consultative assistance. The first challenge is to find ways of monitoring what is actually happening with the program: who is carrying out lessons, with what frequency, and with what degree of fidelity. Without knowing how the program is implemented, it is impossible to make any inferences about the relationship of the program to any observed outcomes. Consumer feedback is also important, because a program that teachers and other school professionals do not like to implement and that students do not enjoy receiving is unlikely to be carried out in an effective and enduring way. This is not to say that consumer satisfaction is a primary criterion, but it is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition for long-term program success.

Intervention development is the process of refining a program based on feedback. Where something is not working for a subgroup of students, modifications must be made. This is not a simple process. Staff members need to be involved for maximum buy-in, and those modifying the program must know its key elements and make changes that do not change the character of the program (especially if it is an evidence-based program). However, programs tend not to be static, and the most
recent view about program effectiveness is that programs must be multiyear in nature. True skill gain in children is cumulative in nature, and so programs must be carried out over multiple years (Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). If a given program has been created to operate over multiple grade levels, then at least the materials and structure are available for the consultant to work with. Sometimes, however, a program exists only through grade 3, or grade 5, and a school wants to expand it to the next grade level. This will require a new skill set for consultants and will take them into collaborative relationships with teachers and perhaps program developers. Thus, the consultant must develop new skills related to curriculum/program content and be prepared to serve not purely as a consultant but as a collaborator in program development and expansion efforts.

7. Contextual Integration

Another recent insight about SEL programs is that they need to be integrated into the structure, climate, and organization of the classroom if they are to succeed (CASEL, 2003). And if programs are to have an impact on the school, they also must be integrated into the overall structure and climate of the school. Social and emotional learning must become salient outside the classroom and influence what happens in the hallways, lunchrooms, bus rides, discipline procedures, and how everyone in the school interacts with one another. Further, students benefit most when SEL is continuous across schools.

None of this should be surprising because the points are the same for academic skill acquisition. If reading were to be limited to classroom lessons, not continued at all grade levels, not carried out from school to school, and, particularly important, not done with any consistent approach across settings, children would be quite impaired in their literacy development. If children do not receive SEL across grade levels in a coherent and high-quality manner, they may be at risk with regard to developing the skills they need to maximally carry out their responsibilities as adults. Consultants develop from being focused on the delivery of a particular program in one classroom to providing the array of supports necessary to ensure that children develop substantial SEL skills. An extended example of such development is provided in the accompanying vignette.

Developmental Arena 5: The Child

The development of social and emotional competencies has been extensively researched. The scope of the topic and the various subcomponents of many of these competencies contribute to the amount of research done. For example, emotional skills can be broken down into sub-units, including identification of emotions in oneself and others, the regulation of emotion, and the communication—both verbal and nonverbal—of emotions. It is not our intention to review this literature in its entirety. Rather, we trace the trends in the social and emotional expectations that can be held for students as they develop and that can become curricular foci for school-based intervention of the type described in this chapter.

A helpful rubric for organizing this complex literature is provided by Elias et al. (1997), who trace trends in social and emotional development through different age groups (early elementary, elementary/intermediate, middle school, high school) within various developmental contexts (personal, peer/social, family, and school- and community-related). This clustering of age groups not only simplifies understanding of the developmental trends, but also underscores the nondeterministic nature of a child’s specific age. Although trends exist, great variability can be expected within any group of same-age children. As readers encounter this review, they might find themselves thinking, “This doesn’t describe the 8-, or 10-, or 12-year-olds I know!” This response is anticipated by the authors and is a by-product of the variability within ages mentioned earlier. The approach we take here is one of reviewing what students at this age generally can do, especially with proper support from adults, rather than what might be seen in any given interaction or social situation. We take such an approach because the focus of this chapter is on how developmental issues can inform school-based programming. Such programming strives to help students achieve the types of competencies we describe here as reasonable expectations.

Early Elementary

In terms of the personal arena, early elementary students are generally developing the ability to express and manage basic emotions (such as fear, anger, excitement), can differentiate between negative and positive emotions, and can use increasingly complex language to express emotion. They are increasingly able to tolerate frustration and delay gratification and to manage turn taking, although these skills will be demonstrated inconsistently. “Although the preschooler begins to use language to facilitate self-control and begins to engage in cognitive planning in the service of frustration tolerance, the ability to effectively and automatically use these processes transpires primarily during the
One Consultant’s Developmental Journey

One of the authors (MJE) worked with an urban school district over a 7-year period, allowing for a journey through all seven of the stages of consultant activity. This example is instructive because it also involves SDM/SPS. However, in the focal school district, an urban, high-risk setting in central New Jersey with poor test score performance, SDM/SPS had to be modified to be sensitive to the predominantly African American population and also the strong literacy needs of the students. Thus, at the 2-hour awareness workshop, attended by teachers from grades 2 and 3 across 10 elementary schools, an attempt was made to introduce SEL, introduce a specific curriculum program, Talking with TJ (Dilworth, Mokrue, & Elias, 2002), show its appropriateness with regard to culture and literacy, and provide teachers with a practice opportunity that would allow them to carry out an initial lesson. There was no additional opportunity to provide training to begin. Teachers were expected to begin, and I, along with an African American graduate student assistant, provided follow-up to teachers in all 10 schools. We did this by meeting with them during available slots between 2:35 and 3:05.

In the course of providing ongoing consultation and support, we became aware of how few teachers had a good feel for the program and recognized that this would have to be accomplished without formal training. We recruited Rutgers undergraduates, trained them in the curriculum, and sent them into many classrooms so that they could provide direct feedback and assistance to teachers and help to convey their feel of the program. This helped make our ongoing consultation efforts more useful. However, we also recognized the limitations of this approach over the long term. Thus, I turned my attention to working with the superintendent of schools and a special assistant assigned to provide administrative support to the SEL effort to develop a leadership team and support structure. My consultation involved a level different from working with and supporting teachers, which was continued by graduate and undergraduate students who had familiarity with the program but not with working with administrators. The key need was to provide channels of communication from the teachers to the Rutgers Social-Emotional Learning Lab team that was supporting the program, and also local building-based leadership in bringing SEL across grade levels and into the school climate beyond its presence in curriculum lessons. Opportunities to address the administrative cabinet were used to help principals understand the theory and pedagogy behind the program and to appreciate the specific actions they needed to take to support teachers in their work (e.g., ask them to submit lesson plans showing when they would implement the program, assist them in finding the time and context if they were having difficulty, and provide feedback based on the lesson plans and direct observation when possible). Administrators also selected “TJ captains” in each building; these were teachers who had the role of speaking with other teachers carrying out the program and raising concerns proactively with members of the Rutgers team. So the consultation task shifted from working with all teachers to working primarily with the TJ captains and occasionally working with teachers who needed special help.

Another consultation task was working with the building-based SEL coordinators. This involved helping them to see ways to extend SEL to schoolwide efforts, such as positive recognition of students and creating school citizenship and service activities, bulletin boards, plays focused on SEL themes, and literacy activities such as the Principal’s Book of the Month. They also needed help communicating about SEL within their buildings, across buildings, and to parents.

There were other nuances of consultation not mentioned; for example, another diverse area was evaluation. Here, the primary consultee was the school superintendent. He wanted ways to monitor the implementation of the program and its outcome. Consultation required knowledge of formative and summative evaluation procedures, as well as how to convey them in a practical manner and deal with the logistics of carrying out this assessment in an environment already saturated by standardized tests. Consumer satisfaction surveys were put into place and completed by teachers and students. Teachers also completed an assessment related to levels of use. Teachers rated students’ behavior on a standardized teacher rating scale, which was shortened and modified for use with urban, low-income minority populations (at the request of teachers), and students completed measures of SEL skills, self-concept, social support, and school violence and victimization. Clearly, this requires a very different kind of activity by a consultant than any previous stage.

As data from the program indicated positive receptivity and successful outcomes (Dilworth et al., 2002), there was a desire on the part of the school district to develop and expand the intervention. The development included adding a character education component, the Laws of Life essay, to the skills-based Talking with TJ curriculum. The expansion was creating a curriculum for grades 4–5 and then K–1. These changes required work by the consultant to integrate Laws of Life and Talking with TJ into the literacy curriculum. At the same time, the building-based SEL coordinators increased their efforts to better connect the program with other elements of the school day to increase the impact on school climate. For this to take place, the consultant needed to coordinate more with school principals and to grasp the big picture of how SEL could unfold within the culture of each of the schools. Managing this diversity across 10 schools is challenging, as is the need to continue the consultative cycle as each new component to the curriculum was added on.

Other skills that were required over the course of the 7 years included writing school board policy around SEL, dealing with high staff turnover, and following up the program into the two middle schools and high school. In each case, new areas of expertise were required, and sources of support and information had to be tapped for the consultant to effectively meet these needs.
Students at this age are learning basic skills that will remain vital to peer functioning. They are developing competencies in areas such as listening, sharing, cooperating, negotiating, and compromising. These students understand similarities and differences between self and others. They are able to demonstrate empathy toward their peers and become distressed at the suffering of others, and often respond by helping a child in need.

They are also learning about themselves, can express themselves through artistic and dramatic representations, can express their likes and dislikes, and are learning about their own strengths. The ICPS, Second Step, and Responsive Classroom Programs are especially strong at this age level.

**Middle Elementary**

Students at a middle elementary level are moving ahead in many of those competencies initially begun earlier. Their repertoire of labels for emotions is expanding, and they can generally be expected to exercise more control over their anger. They can calm themselves down when upset and verbalize how they are feeling and describe what happened. They can learn strategies to cope with strong emotional situations. They are developing more positive ways to express their feelings. When they do lose their temper or become upset, they can generally calm themselves down, increasingly tending to use cognitive as opposed to behavioral strategies to deal with stressors, and they are forgiving regarding the situation.

From this age into the next cohort, students are developing repertoires of coping skills and learning to match different strategies to different types of situations (Brenner & Salovey, 1997).

Students at this grade level are making advances in sociocognitive skills as well. They are increasingly able to set goals and to continue to work toward these even in the face of obstacles. Abilities to anticipate outcomes and consequences of actions are improving. Students at this level are becoming increasingly self-aware, particularly regarding their own strengths and weaknesses and those of others. They are learning not to be derailed by failures. Skills in perspective taking continue to grow.

Social interactions at this level are more complex, with cooperative planning and joint problem solving taking place. They are grappling with a set of social skills such as making new friends and entering new and expanded peer groups. They are accepting of diversity and difference. They call on improved skills in being able to manage a reciprocal conversation and judge and anticipate the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others. They can modify their interactions—verbal and nonverbal—to suit different audiences (e.g., peers, teachers). With the increased peer interactions come an increased awareness of peer norms and sensitivity to pressures for conformity. Also, students at this age are developing skills in assertiveness, boundary setting, and dealing with rejection.

In school, students at this age are increasingly able to work on teams and to see projects through to completion and experience pride in a job well done. The skills emphasis of Providing Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS; Greenberg & Kusché, 1998), SDM/SPS, and Open Circle are especially well matched to this age level.

**Middle School and Beyond**

As we turn our attention to middle school, we find students who are entering adolescence, with its attendant social and behavioral changes. In terms of social and emotional development, there are several trends that can be traced. Students at this stage are increasingly self-aware and, often, self-critical. Their sociocognitive skills are making great strides. They are able to understand multiple sides of arguments and disagreements. They are sensitive to perceived social norms and often judge their own abilities and self-worth by others' reactions to them. They can identify their own self-talk and acknowledge its importance. Although they are increasingly able to articulate goals, both long and short term, it is often difficult for them to modify actions to come into line with achieving these goals. As with those that precede it, there is often a great disparity at this age level between what one can do under structured conditions and what one will do in actual situations.

Peer interactions are undertaken with a great sensitivity to popular trends, but at the same time with increasing introspective thoughtfulness and ability to distinguish between good and bad friends. Belonging becomes an important issue to students at this age, and friends strive to develop ways to deal with conflict and
solve problems while maintaining friendships. Throughout adolescence, students are gaining skills in peer leadership.

As students progress into high school, perhaps the most important theme is that of increasing integration among the various developing social and emotional skills under the broad umbrella of developing a stable sense of identity and set of long-range goals.

During adolescence emotions noticeably become the basis of identity and ideals. What adolescents care about is usually what they feel strongly about—not only feel intensely but also feel variably. ... Adolescents become aware of feeling everything, and this transforms their values and their understanding. (Haviland-Jones, Gebelt, and Stapely, 1997, p. 244–245)

Adolescents become more interested in questions of personal meaning, transcendence, and goals for personal accomplishment. One’s own decisions and behaviors, including those regarding friendships and peer relations, school functioning, balancing independence and interdependence within one’s family, all become crucial pieces in an ongoing process of self-definition.

Effective programs at the secondary level include Lions-Quest, and especially their Skills for Action service learning program (www.lions-quest.org), the Giraffe Heroes Program (www.giraffe.org; Graham, 1999), Facing History and Ourselves (www.facing.org), and the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (www.esrnational.org; DeJong, 1994).

**Special Populations**

This section began with a caveat that variability is the norm in the development of social and emotional skills. However, consultants must be aware that students with clinical diagnoses or special educational classifications will often show particular patterns of deficit in the development of such skills. In fact, social and emotional skills deficits are in many cases pathognomonic of clinical diagnosis and a part of the defining feature of educational classifications. For example, interpersonal interactions marked by hostility, bullying, and cruelty are among the diagnostic criteria of Conduct Disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Anxiety and depressive disorders clearly have affective symptomatology as primary features.

Further, as we have discussed elsewhere, “Children with mild disabilities tend not to be accepted by their peers, and they display shortcomings in the way they interact with parents and peers” (Elias, Blum, Gager, Hunter, & Kress, 1998, p. 220). Children classified as learning disabled face an array of social and emotional challenges. For example, as reviewed by LaGrecia (1981), these students have more negative peer relations than their nondisabled peers, receive more negative responses from their peers, and are less adept at initiating helping behaviors. The specific nature of a child’s learning disability may impact the social and emotional manifestations: “For example, students with more severe cognitive impairments may lack age-appropriate social understanding of complex interactions. Language impaired students may have appropriate understanding of social situations but may have difficulty communicating effectively to others” (Elias & Tobias, 1996, p. 124). As reviewed by Elias et al. (1997, p. 65), children with a variety of classifications, including learning disabled, language disordered, with mild mental delays, neurologically disordered, and with hearing loss, “often have related difficulties in the areas of social and communicative competence. They are more likely to show difficulties in effectively reading social cues from others and managing frustration and other high intensity emotions.”

Students classified as emotionally disturbed could be differentiated from their nonclassified peers on the basis of deficits in interpersonal problem solving (Elias, Gara, Rothbaum, Reese, & Ubriaco, 1987). For emotionally disturbed (ED) populations, the distinction between skill deficits (i.e., mastery of social skills) and performance deficits (i.e., lack of motivators to use skills that are possessed) becomes particularly salient. In addition, many ED students have incorporated previous negative outcomes in social situations into a set of expectations for continued difficulty and a negative self-image based on such expectations (Elias & Tobias, 1996). Students with a variety of classifications (including LD and ED) show deficits in nonverbal aspects of emotional interactions (see Kress & Elias, 1993, for a review).

Trends in the use of social and emotional skills have been studied in various clinical child populations. For example, depressed children and early adolescents were found to be less likely than nondepressed peers to use cognitive strategies for coping with negative mood states and more likely to use negative behaviors to cope in such situations (Brenner & Salovey, 1997). Research suggests that children with conduct and aggression problems may misread ambiguous nonverbal cues and make hostile attributions for the behaviors of others (Dodge,
Surprisingly, few programs have been developed for special populations. Project OZ and the SDM/SPS program (Elias & Bruene-Butler, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c) are among those that have shown effectiveness in these contexts. Work done by the authors with the SDM/SPS program with a special needs population is highlighted in the discussion later in this chapter.

In conclusion, a consultant’s attention to the area of children’s development of social and emotional competence must be informed by both possibility and reality. As discussed in this section, there are trends in what can be expected from most students as they move through the school years. However, there is considerable variability in any group and some more systematic deficits found when dealing with clinical or classified subpopulations. As programs are targeted to student needs, efforts must build on strengths of, and address needs in, individual students to move them ahead in their social and emotional functioning. If this process is seen as a social and emotional skill analogue to the Vygotskian (1978) idea of the zone of proximal development, then the consultant is left with the question of how an individual’s environment (in this case, primarily but not limited to the school environment) can facilitate skill development and use.

INTEGRATION: THE GRADIENT OF DEVELOPMENTAL RELEVANCE

The previous sections outlined several arenas that exhibit developmental change over the course of implementation. Although these arenas are reviewed individually and separately, it is our strong belief, grounded in our experience as consultants, that these arenas can be better understood as intersecting and existing in dynamic relationship. At any given point in the life of a programmatic effort, a cross-sectional freeze-frame can be taken of each of these arenas, but once the scene is allowed to progress, changes in one arena will bring changes in others. The dynamic nature of these interactions often makes it difficult to state where an evolution of these arenas begins, which is the cause and which is the effect.

As a matter of practice, the beginning of a consultation/intervention program defines the starting point along all of the dimensions, though the starting point is not necessarily at the beginning of the dimension. As an example, in the 2nd year of an intervention, the original group of students typically will be in the next grade level. The faculty who implemented in the 1st year will now have a year of experience under their belts and will face a new group of students. However, new faculty will not be at that same point. Thus, the experience of the faculty, their need for consultation, and the experience of the students (as well as the impact of the program) will be different. If we look ahead to the following year, teachers in the next grade will find students coming in with greater variability than they experienced after the 1st year of the intervention. This is something for which they need to be prepared and for which consultation will have to take place. The situation is further complicated if the intervention is followed up in the next grade level. To what extent will the consultant be prepared to deal with these issues? They will require considerable flexibility, as well as deep knowledge of the intervention to allow for changes to be made that optimize what particular teachers can do. These new needs and the new perception of needs may necessitate a change in the original programmatic focus. To support this, a consultant may need to plan for increased training and support for a program that had been running with less oversight.

The picture is beyond one of intersecting lines, and more of interdependent forces. That is, although it is the case that any temporal cross section will reveal various points in each of the developmental trajectories, paths of any one arena will influence all the others. The scenario depends on where one starts the story, but in reality the arenas exist in dynamic interrelationship. As the program moves along, staff concerns will change, the needs of the students will change (based on natural factors and on the impact of the program), and the staff’s perceptions of the students and their actions and needs might change. To make appropriate consultative decisions, a consultant must be able to judge options against where each arena is in its development. We use the term “gradient of developmental relevance” to refer to the conditions created by the interacting developmental needs of the various arenas. New information, decisions, procedures, and so on can be evaluated against the gradient of developmental relevance to assess where they fit within this ever-evolving system.

An apt analogy might be to the leader of an improvisational jazz band. Each developmental arena can be seen as a band member, playing a particular improvised

2 We are honored to continue Jim Kelly’s line of jazz analogies applied to community psychology concepts!
line of music. Just as a bandleader might go in with a certain set of parameters in mind—a particular tempo or key—the consultant may be guided by research on effective practice (e.g., Elias et al., 1997). The consultant (who, in most cases, embodies all of the band members and has to serve as the conductor) has to work in a dynamic way, without a script, often by feel, to keep the instrumentation moving forward in a harmonious way. There is a framework for guiding the leader’s decisions, but there is not note-for-note scripting. It remains up to the consultant to make it all come together. A consultant with an understanding of trends in each of the developmental spheres has the same advantage as a leader of a well-rehearsed (rather than a newly formed) jazz group. Although each member works on his or her own, the leader has come to know about the style and tendencies of each and can anticipate possible next moves (though there is always room for surprise). Likewise, knowing developmental trends allows the consultant to apply additional structure to decision making, while still remaining flexible enough to handle what is essentially a constantly shifting set of contextual realities.

DEVELOPMENTAL SNAPSHOTs

Our developmental snapshots are pulled from work at The Children’s Institute (TCI), a private, nonprofit, out-of-district school for students ranging in age from 3 to 16. The school was founded in 1963 and is divided into preschool, elementary, and middle school levels. The school receives out-of-district placements from a broad area throughout northern and central New Jersey, with over 40 different districts represented. As such, the school population is quite diverse in terms of both socioeconomic status and ethnicity, although male students constitute a majority (90%) of the enrollment. Students are referred to TCI with one of three classifications: preschool handicapped, emotionally disturbed, and autistic.

Students at TCI receive instruction in all academic areas and, in addition, receive therapeutic services. These services are provided by two specialty areas. Crisis workers provide a frontline intervention for students exhibiting an acute behavior that can no longer be accommodated in the classroom. The model, at least early on in the chronology of the program, was for crisis workers to be called in an emergency and to remove the indicated student from the classroom until the crisis de-escalated. The second line of therapeutic intervention was provided by social workers. In contrast to crisis workers, social workers saw children on an ongoing, scheduled basis. The social workers are the object of our first snapshot, and more will be said about them in the next section.

Although a school focusing on students with emotional disorders can be seen as addressing social and emotional needs on an ongoing basis, formal implementation of SEL programming began in 1989, with the implementation of the SDM/SPS program. SDM/SPS was created in 1979 through collaborative efforts among psychologists, and educators from Rutgers University, the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, and school districts in New Jersey. Over the years, curriculum guides have been developed for the elementary and middle school grades (Elias & Bruene-Butler, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Elias & Tobias, 1996). Books written specifically for parents helps carry-over of school-based programming (Elias, Tobias, & Friedlander, 2000, 2002). The program is implemented in the classroom by teachers (or other staff) who are trained to deliver the program. The program has undergone extensive research (Bruene-Butler, Hampson, Elias, Clabby, & Schuyler, 1997) and has received commendation from the National Education Goals Panel, the U.S. Department of Education’s Expert Panel on Safe and Drug Free Schools, the Character Education Partnership, and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2003).

The general structure of the program is shown in Table 15.3. SDM/SPS can be broken down into three phases: readiness, instruction, and application. The readiness skills cover the fundamental components of self-control and social awareness/group participation. This part of the curriculum got its name from the idea that these skills are essential building blocks, or needed tools, for proper decision making. Lacking self-control and social awareness, we are unlikely to engage in productive problem solving and are subject to “emotional hijacking” (Goleman, 1995), which derails rational thought during high-threat situations. Table 15.3 shows the skills covered in the readiness phase. A major focus of the readiness phase has to do with setting the stage for effective conflict management and fostering self-discipline and socially responsible behavior even in the face of situations that might tax such positive outcomes. To begin to address these issues, teachers introduce an interconnected set of skills in conflict resolution and
anger management. In introducing this set of skills, a teacher may lead a discussion of the importance of being able to stay calm in stressful situations (e.g., by asking the students to share experiences where they had difficulty calming down and the consequences of that). The teacher may have students discuss situations when it is particularly difficult for them to stay calm (“trigger situations”), and internal “feelings fingerprints” that signal stress. “Keeping calm” is broken down into component skills, which are demonstrated and practiced, with feedback given to the students as they practice. The teacher often has students role-play use of skills as they are introduced. Particularly important, the phrase “Keep Calm” is established as a prompt and cue for the desired behavior. This behavioral shorthand can be used by the teacher and other staff members throughout the school to call for the skill when needed. Students may be prompted to “Keep Calm” during difficult times such as transitions or before exams. Teachers can model use of Keep Calm during situations where they might be feeling particularly stressed. As students become adept at using Keep Calm, the teacher can ask students to share situations in which they used Keep Calm in class or at recess. Aides and other staff can prompt students to use the skill as needed.

In the instructional phase of the curriculum, students are introduced to eight skills of decision making, as summarized in Table 15.3. The acronym FIG TESP can be used as a mnemonic to assist students in remembering the process. Notably, the first step focuses on feelings. Emotions are seen as important guides through the problem-solving process. The eight decision-making skills are taught directly and through the use of a guided facilitative questioning technique to help students move through the process.

Comprehensive programming involves infusion of SEL skills into all aspects of the educational experience. Application activities provide opportunities to practice new skills in academic and social situations. Once introduced, SDM/SPS skills can be applied to content areas. A teacher may use the terminology of problem solving to analyze a situation in a story (What was the character feeling? What was the problem?) or to make a decision about how a student will present material from a research project. Students can be prompted to use SDM/SPS skills in real-life situations such as recess and lunch, and then this experience can be processed with them.

Implementation of SDM/SPS at TCI began with a pilot group of six teachers and assistants and all of the social workers, crisis workers, speech teachers, and specialists (e.g., physical education). Consultation for the program was provided by graduate students (including JSK) familiar with the program and working under the supervision of one of the program’s creators (MJE). From the beginning, the vision of the school leadership called for SEL programming that is “integrated within all aspects of the special educational setting throughout the entire school day” (M. Cohen, Ettinger, & O’Donnell, 2003, p. 127). As such, as the programming progressed efforts were made to train all school personnel and to orient any new staff to the SDM/SPS program. Throughout, consultation was provided by graduate students and their faculty supervisor at Rutgers University.

These descriptive snapshots are drawn from several sources. Aside from the reflections of the authors, who were each involved in a variety of consultative roles at TCI, data are drawn from several written documents. The primary source of documentation is a dissertation written by the school director (Ettinger, 1995) that documents the systemwide changes and initiatives that occurred during the period from approximately 1993 to 1995. Because SEL has such a central role in the school, the documentation of this period provides rich descriptions of the work done in this area. Also, the consultation team was able to publish two journal articles based

### Table 15.3 Basic Structure of the Social Decision Making Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness Skills</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>A. Self-control skills:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Listening carefully and accurately.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Following directions.</td>
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<td>3. Calming oneself when upset or under stress.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Approaching and talking to others in a socially appropriate manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B. Social awareness and group participation skills:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Recognizing and eliciting trust, help, and praise from others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Understanding others’ perspectives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Choosing friends wisely.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Participating appropriately in groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Giving and receiving help and criticism.</td>
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</tbody>
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Skills for Decision Making and Problem Solving

1. Listening carefully and accurately.
2. Following directions.
3. Calming oneself when upset or under stress.
4. Approaching and talking to others in a socially appropriate manner.
5. Recognizing and eliciting trust, help, and praise from others.
6. Understanding others’ perspectives.
7. Choosing friends wisely.
8. Participating appropriately in groups.
9. Giving and receiving help and criticism.

Comprehensive programming involves infusion of SEL skills into all aspects of the educational experience. Application activities provide opportunities to practice new skills in academic and social situations. Once introduced, SDM/SPS skills can be applied to content areas. A teacher may use the terminology of problem solving to analyze a situation in a story (What was the character feeling? What was the problem?) or to make a decision about how a student will present material from a research project. Students can be prompted to use SDM/SPS skills in real-life situations such as recess and lunch, and then this experience can be processed with them.

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on their experiences (Kress et al., 1997; Robinson & Elias, 1993), and these provide an additional perspective on efforts at TCI. Finally, school leaders published a chapter describing their efforts (M. Cohen et al., 2003).

Developmental Snapshot 1: Resistant Clinical Constituents

Our first snapshot concerns a difficulty encountered in achieving the outcome of schoolwide implementation. As indicated in a previous section (cf. Novick et al., 2002), successful implementation of any SDM/SPS program depends on mutual acceptance of program goals, methods, and responsibilities on the part of those called on to implement the program. Looking at the developmental trajectory of the TCI implementers, it was clear that not all constituents achieved this, at least not within the same time frame. Within approximately 3 years of initial implementation, use among classroom teachers could be described as moving toward stabilization of programming. Supports were set up for new teacher-implementers, meetings were initiated in which implementers were able to share accomplishments and discuss obstacles, and a committee was formed to address SPS/SDM programming (Robinson & Elias, 1993). However, at the same time, it was noted that the school social workers were not actively participating in implementation efforts.

The participation of social workers emerged as a concern as early as 1993, when results from interviews conducted by the school principal led him to set social worker-teacher collaboration as a goal for enhancing SEL efforts. Further, the nonparticipation of the social workers was a source of dissatisfaction by the classroom teachers, who felt that their own efforts were not extending beyond the classroom.

The roots of the differential readiness of social workers (as opposed to classroom teachers) to implement the program can be speculated on. One cause might have to do with the educational background and subsequent theoretical perspective of the social workers. According to the school principal, “Clinical staff members had extensive training and education in psychodynamic interventions and understanding children’s psychopathologies. However, they had minimal course work in education of the emotionally disturbed child” (Ettinger, 1995, p. 15), and in particular, very little with regard to the type of cognitive-behavioral approach that underlies the SDM/SPS program.

The reaction of the social workers to SDM/SPS implementation is best summarized from a segment from the administrator’s dissertation tracing program implementation during the period at approximately the 4th year of implementation:

The social workers’ graduate studies had prepared them to work in a traditional mental health setting using a psychodynamic approach emphasizing insight therapy with pullout mental health services. They were committed to treating children in a private confidential manner in settings separate and apart from the students’ daily routines in school, the classroom, and in the community. They perceived their role with staff members as that of the professional consultant, providing recommendations and advisement. Due to the clinical paradigm the social workers were clinging to, they were resistant and threatened by the psychoeducational model this staff development project promoted. Social workers had expressed concerns that implementing the behavior management program, participating in leading SPS sessions, and conducting social skills training would result in their losing their identities as therapists. (Ettinger, 1995, pp. 36–37)

It is possible to look at this snapshot through the lens of the developmental arenas described previously. The increased emphasis on the role of the social workers, and the concern at their resistance to assuming this role, can be seen as emerging from the developmental needs of the students in the setting. The students at TCI, by virtue of the presenting classification for their referral to the school, exhibit pronounced deficits in social competence, particularly in the areas of self-control. Efforts to remediate these deficits are complicated by the fact that many of these students exhibit learning problems that confound skill development. TCI students are involved with multiple educational and psychotherapeutic personnel throughout every school day.

Combined, these factors point out the need for intensive, coordinated efforts to address SEL outcomes in these students. For one constituency to fail to support this effort raises the concern that efforts will not be enough to overcome the challenges faced by the students. To address this, the intervention model itself began to develop as well. Individual teacher implementation efforts were augmented by ever-widening spheres of schoolwide implementation. In addition to featuring specific expectations placed on the social workers, the period of this snapshot was also characterized by increases in the number and variety of specialists...
other school personnel trained. Along with this came increased efforts at developing communication structures so that all implementers would target a similar set of skills with particular students.

This snapshot illustrates the potential for different cohorts of school-based personnel to be at varying developmental stages of both their usage and their concern with regard to an intervention. The concerns expressed by classroom teachers regarding the lack of carry-over by the social workers can generally be thought of as representative of those who have had experience working with an intervention and are looking for ways to maximize impact, particularly by finding others to support their efforts. From a development of implementation standpoint, the teachers were implementing and refining (Table 15.2). However, their efforts to move ahead to the next level of implementation, that of integrating their efforts with those of others, had been complicated by the social workers’ resistance. In terms of the teachers’ development as adult learners, a similar situation existed. Teachers were interested in the consequences of their work and in improving their efforts. However, movement to collaboration, a common next stage, was hindered.

The nature of the SEL intervention was itself in developmental flux, with increased attention being given to applying specific behavioral techniques to a focused effort on the readiness skills of self-control and social awareness. At this point in the implementation, the Rutgers-based SDM/SPS consultant was also working at several developmental levels. Part of the consultant’s focus was on helping to provide training and consultative support, both basic and advanced; the development of institutional ownership (Kress et al., 1997) was a major goal as well. Major SDM/SPS implementation and leadership functions rested in the hands of a multidisciplinary team comprising school leadership and representatives from various school constituencies (teachers, assistants, clinical staff, specialists). The consultant was a member of this team, but did not assume a leadership role.

To summarize, this snapshot of resistance on the part of one constituency occurs within a gradient of developmental relevance understood as the convergence of developmental trajectories of the implementation process, the intervention itself, the needs and concerns of the implementers, the role of the consultant, and the needs of the program recipients. As student needs became clearer regarding collaborative efforts focused on social competence promotion, teachers became frustrated by perceived impediments to the effectiveness of their efforts. The consultant was playing a supportive, rather than a leadership, role. Understanding this gradient not only helps in terms of problem definition—understanding the greater context in which the social workers’ resistance took place—but also helps in conceptualizing the way that solutions were implemented.

School leadership, functioning at a point of increasing ownership of the SDM/SPS program, worked to redefine the job description of the social workers “to place more emphasis on social workers serving as case managers who coordinated in and out-of-school services and to include their role in sps [sic], social skill training, and parent education” (Ettinger, 1995, pp. 135–136). Social workers were expected to co-lead SDM/SPS social skills groups along with the classroom teachers and to provide carry-over for skill building in their individual clinical work. Recognizing that the social workers were at a different developmental point in both implementation and concern about the intervention, specific efforts were made to provide training with regard to their role in the skill-building endeavor. Leadership made efforts to make its expectations clear, even going so as to remove a social worker from a case due to unwillingness to “support the [behaviorally based] plan due to [the social worker’s] psychoanalytic orientation” (p. 169). Other structural components were put in place to provide opportunities to reinforce social worker efforts, as well as to increase accountability. For example, social workers and teachers were asked to present at staff meetings the joint social skill lessons they developed and implemented.

To increase the degree to which such training was consistent with the values and expectations of the social workers, the social workers were provided with literature and data regarding the efficacy of social skills interventions. In addition, further training and ongoing consultation were provided by a practicing clinician, who, although coming from a theoretical orientation different from the social workers’, could more specifically address the clinical issues they confront. This clinician worked with social workers both on clinical case issues and on their work with social skills groups in the classroom, providing both professional modeling and links among their work. The addition of another consultant also had the benefit of allowing the Rutgers-based SDM/SPS consultant to maintain the focus on transferring ownership and leadership to school personnel. Close supervision and observation of a large cohort of the school might have sent an unintended message about
the consultant's interests in the school leadership being empowered to guide implementation.

These efforts appear to have had an impact on the role of the social workers in the school. Several years after the more intensive work with the social workers, M. Cohen et al. (2003, p. 137) updated the role of the school clinical staff: “The clinician combines a cognitive-behavioral approach, classical behavioral principles (TCI’s Token Economy), and psychodynamic techniques to promote social competence through social-emotional skills training and social problem solving.” However, this should not give the impression that the process was simple and linear. Social workers did not always report satisfaction with their new roles, and sometimes it took changes in staff before appropriate implementation occurred.

Snapshot 2: Integrating Interventions

The second snapshot plays out over the same period of time as the previous one. Feedback from various sources suggested that efforts to promote the desired SEL outcomes in the TCI population would be enhanced by “the use of a social skills curriculum that provides direct instruction and opportunities for practice, rehearsal, and application” (Ettinger, 1995, p. 7). The importance of a structured behavioral approach for emotionally and behaviorally disordered children and adolescents was stressed by program consultants and bolstered by the school executive’s reading of research literature related to specific social skills deficits in these populations. The decision was made to integrate another social skills curriculum, Skillstreaming (Goldstein, Sprafkin, Gershaw, & Klein, 1980), into the school’s SEL work.

It is notable that this desire for a structured behavioral curricular approach emerged from a setting that was in the midst of implementing a program that was based on a similar array of cognitive-behavioral principles. The “direct instruction...practice, rehearsal, and application” mentioned earlier are all elements of recommended practice in the SDM/SPS program. As mentioned previously, a major component of the SDM/SPS curriculum involves building readiness skills in the areas of self-control and social awareness. For example, a lesson on listening skills introduces a set of behaviors associated with “Listening Position” (sit or stand up straight, look at the source of the sound, etc.) and practice activities. Teachers are instructed to give feedback to student efforts and to prompt and reinforce proper use of “Listening Position” throughout the school day.

It is worth exploring briefly the specific concerns about the behavioral skill content of the SDM/SPS and the perceived benefits of bringing in the Skillstreaming program. In comparing the approaches of the two programs, the school director emphasized the differences rather than the similarities: “Social skills training is behavior specific in comparison to SPS, emphasis is on teaching prosocial skills rather than cognitive strategies" (Ettinger, 1995, p. 57). Clearly, there is an element of perception involved here. As shown by the example of “Listening Position” in the SDM/SPS curriculum, there is a behavioral skills focus to the SDM/SPS program. Further, the Skillstreaming curriculum does contain a section on “Planning Skills,” similar to the problem-solving skills of SDM/SPS.

However, perceptions notwithstanding, there are some significant differences between the two approaches. The (behavioral skills-based) readiness section of the SDM/SPS curriculum contains 16 skill areas (e.g., “Learning to listen carefully and accurately,” “Giving criticism”). The Skillstreaming program contains 42 distinct behavioral skill areas, plus 8 more in the more cognitively oriented “Planning Skills” section. These 42 skill areas are broken down into a small number (generally 4 to 6) of performance steps. It is likely that this approach was seen as more consistent with the educational approach generally taken with students at TCI. Further, the discrete skill-based approach of Skillstreaming generally lends itself to a more structured approach to teaching the skills.

It is important to note that the approach taken at TCI was not one of replacing one curriculum with another. Rather, the two curricular approaches were integrated into a unique SEL approach. The work of integrating the curricula was guided by the school’s interdisciplinary Social Problem Solving Committee, which, as curricular integration progressed, was renamed the Social Development Committee. This new name reflected the growing role of the committee in guiding SEL efforts, expanding beyond the implementation of a specific program. The committee’s guiding vision was summarized by the school director: “The SPS curriculum would be followed, which provided the structure, developmental guidelines, and strategies for social skills instruction. The social Skillstreaming curriculum provided more detailed, specific skills to be integrated into the SPS curriculum and additional instructional strategies.”
Curricular integration was supported by the consulting psychologist, who understood how to make the approaches work in a complementary way. A constructivist approach was used to bring the teachers along in their understanding of how the new structure might work. A half-day staff training workshop was held on the topic, and teachers developed and presented a lesson illustrating the integration. The implementation model called for classroom teachers and social workers to collaborate in developing and delivering SPS/Skillstreaming lessons. The Social Development Committee would collate the lessons into a unique site-based curriculum guide and spent 3 days during the summer break formalizing and organizing lessons into a “Social Development Curriculum Guide.” The guide, and training in using it, was presented to all staff when they returned for the following school year. Sharing of new social development lessons became a regular part of staff meetings.

This initial combination of SPS and Skillstreaming can be seen as the beginning of a cycle of curricular integration and adaptation that resulted in what has been referred to as the TCI Model (M. Cohen et al., 2003). The model is summarized as follows:

TCI uses a cognitive-behavioral approach with all students. This involves a step-by-step process to teach students what they need to do to develop socially appropriate replacement behaviors. On a regular basis, students also participate in “practice and rehearsal” of skills specific to the needs of the individual child. It is through this technique that students learn to replace inappropriate actions with appropriate ones with a specific situation. This method is based on the extensive works of Dr. Maurice Elias (Elias & Tobias, 1996), Dr. Arnold Goldstein’s Skillstreaming curriculum (McGinnis & Goldstein, 1984), and Dr. Frank Gresham’s Social Skills Intervention Guide (Elliott & Gresham, 1992). These works focus on the social and emotional learning of all children: using the cycle of design, implementation, and feedback for more than a decade, TCI staff members revised—and continue to revise today—the works to reflect the unique needs of our students. We then added lessons promoting self-esteem and other social-emotional skills. This evolved into TCI’s Social Development Curriculum.

The TCI model incorporates the common vocabulary found in Elias and Clabby’s (1989) approach. The use of this shared language created far greater continuity in care for the students than had previously been in evidence. (M. Cohen et al., 2003, pp. 128–129)

The SDM/SPS provides the structure and language into which a number of other curricular pieces are integrated. The result is a unique product that speaks directly to the needs of the site in which it was created. As with any snapshot taken of a setting, the integration of Skillstreaming and SDM/SPS represents a convergence of the developmental arenas described previously. Perhaps the main motivator was concern for the developmental trajectory of the students and an increasing understanding of how best to address these concerns. Specific behavioral skill deficits, frequently found in populations such as TCI’s, seemed to indicate that a more focused skill-building approach was warranted.

As summarized in the previous snapshot, implementation at this point was inconsistent among the various school constituents. Classroom teachers were regularly implementing SDM/SPS lessons, but the clinical staff was generally resistant to refocusing their primarily psychodynamic approach. Teachers were ready to refine their work based on their experiences and the results of initial implementation, which gave rise to a desire for a behavioral skills-based focus. The consultant, as noted previously, was working with a goal of transferring major program SEL ownership to the setting, rather than outside support personnel. Finally, it is evident that this snapshot marks a major developmental change in the intervention itself, moving from the use of a specific program to the creation of an integrative new approach.

The gradient created by this convergence of developmental arenas can help in the understanding of how these events unfolded. In particular, this snapshot is notable for what did not happen. In the face of newly understood programmatic needs, school leadership refused to take the commonly trod path of revolving-door programming. That is, the SDM/SPS program was not replaced by Skillstreaming, and a new cycle of implementation was not begun. The decision of the school’s director and the Social Development Committee to adapt rather than adopt may be attributable to the already existing level of comfort and competence with the SDM/SPS program on the part of the frontline implementers. Further, school personnel had longstanding positive relationships with consultants from the SDM/SPS program. This relationship had evolved to the point where the SDM/SPS consultant, rather than
representing, to move with the committee, rather than setting up an either/or situation between SDM/SPS and Skillstreaming. Finally, school SEL leadership had an appreciation of the unique nature of their student population and recognized the opportunity to do something new in a way that would contribute to the field. For example, from the early stages of SEL curricular integration, the Social Development Committee and school leadership developed a proposal to present their approach at a statewide conference.

CONCLUSIONS

Although we acknowledge the centrality of the five developmentally linked areas of change that can impact implementation efforts. For example, factors involved in the school leadership might be of relevance. Is the principal new to the setting, or a veteran? What is the principal’s history of working with (or failing to work with) various constituents in the school? How much does leadership know about and care about the intervention in question? A second additional area is the life span of the setting itself. How long has the setting been in existence? What other interventions, in SEL and beyond, are currently being implemented, or have been implemented in the past? A school still recovering from a difficult or controversy-filled implementation process of, say, a new block-scheduling approach may present unique challenges to efforts to again initiate something new.

For interventions to succeed, a convergence of a large number of what are essentially developmental influences must take place. Consultants, as well as school leaders, who attempt to implement innovations can hardly keep all of the possible areas clearly in mind and coordinate the affect, cognition, and behavior necessary to do so. Yet, some interventions, like SDM/SPS in TCI, succeed. We hypothesize that for this to happen, a critical mass of those involved in the implementation process must have a generalized, developmental understanding that pervades their work. It may take the form of a generalized expectancy (Rotter, 1954), a superordinate schema, or some other higher-order transactional organizing structure. This is a matter for future research. What is clear, however, is that our understanding of the implementation process (and consultation process) can be enhanced by adding the perspective of a gradient of developmental relevance and applying it to the context of interventions, as a complement to a developmental perspective on the student recipients and their match to developmental content of the intervention itself.

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