

# Best Practices for Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning into the Curriculum



# Introductions

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Also about me: I have 2 children (Cali, 8 and Charlie, 4) and I enjoy  
reading, writing, sewing, crocheting, baking, and music (guitar and  
piano).



# The Oracle of Social and Emotional Learning

- Mr. Rogers started his program in 1962 with the goal of teaching children how to recognize and regulate their emotions – his mission continues with the animated series Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood today.
- “By acknowledging [a child’s] feelings, by giving them a voice, by helping them begin to take another person’s perspective and see things from a different point of view from their own, which is very developmentally appropriate for young children — that process of learning is so important,”
- “Anything that we can do to help foster the intellect and spirit and emotional growth of our fellow human beings, that is our job. Those of us who have this particular vision must continue against all odds. Life is for service.”



# What is SEL?

● Social and emotional learning (**SEL**) is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (What is SEL, 2020).



# 5 Concepts of SEL

The Five Concepts of SEL (CASEL, 2020) include:

- Self-Awareness (recognizing ones emotions)
- Self-Management (regulating ones emotions)
- Relationship Building (positive interactions with others)
- Social Awareness (social norms, social cues, and empathy/perspective)
- Responsible Decision Making (making positive choices, setting personal goals, time management, and accountability)



# Professionalism and Behavior

At The Excel Center – there are behavioral expectations for students to qualify as quality graduates. Students must show aspects of professionalism:

- Dress Code (meeting a minimal dress code)
- On Time (Time Management)
- Present (not frequently absent)
- Respectful (of themselves and others)
- Language (professional demeanor, appropriate)
- Accountability (taking responsibility for actions)
- Responsible Decision Making (making positive choices, setting goals, self-accountability)

In order to prepare students for this aspect of graduation and to prepare them for their future in career or academia we must build these skills in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom.



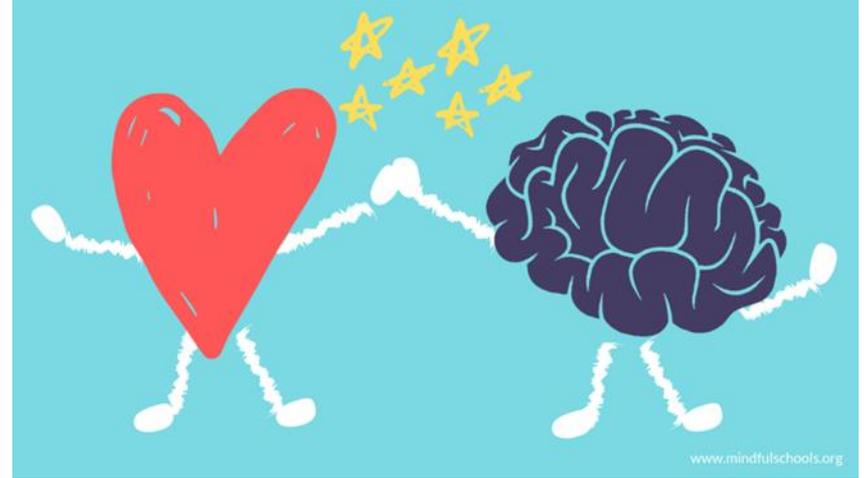
# Why SEL?



- SEL is a set of criteria that will build student skillsets that will align with the professional behaviors we expect.
- The student population at the Excel Center is non-traditional and has been prone to failure and barriers in the past. Many students who come to our schools have suffered trauma.
- In English 1 and 2 – the majority of students are immigrants and new to English and American Culture – without proper education on Recognizing Emotions, Labeling Emotions, and discussion of Mental Health concepts – these students will have no positive outlet for emotions.

# SEL and Mental Health

- Studies have shown vastly improved mental health in students that are exposed to an SEL focused curriculum, largely due to increased communication skills and less internalization of feelings (Castro-Olivio & Cramer, 2016).
- Another aspect of SEL's impact on mental health is the introduction of mental health concepts to students who may have never been exposed to these concepts which can increase their understanding of and respect for mental health.



# How and When to Implement SEL

- WHEN to implement SEL is EARLY – the earlier the better in the program and continue throughout the program as much as possible.
  
- HOW will vary based on course being implemented into – for instance, in an English course the readings may have strong emotional themes that prompt SEL based discussions and writing assignments while a math course may just have students work in groups more frequently and integrate a relaxation or breathing activity into the lessons.

# Humanities and Language Arts

- Studies have shown that SEL concepts are easily applied to secondary English courses as the content itself does not need to be sacrificed but rather can be enhanced by using SEL concepts (Dresser, 2013).
- Language Arts programs across the country are in need of reform as well and with more and more studies showing the need for SEL in older students (secondary and adult) we can see the immediate benefit to the English/Humanities program with SEL (Dresser, 2013).

# SEL and ELL's

- English Language Learners (ELL's) are a large portion of the low-level (English 1 and 2) student population.
- Studies have shown significant long term improvements academically and personally/professionally in ELL students who have been taught an infused SEL curriculum (Castro-Olivo, 2014).
- Studies have also found improvements in ELL (English) language acquisition through oral practice (reading aloud, speaking to others as well as listening and responding) when incorporated with SEL concepts (Dresser, 2012).

# SEL in Adolescents and Adults

- Social and Emotional Learning traditionally is aimed at children – new to emotional concepts.
- However, Social and Emotional Learning is important to adults as well, especially adults who may lack some emotional regulation skills or critical decision making skills or who struggle with mental health issues.
- In Adolescents and Adults it is important to approach the SEL concepts with the theory of Andragogy (adult learning) explaining WHY these concepts are important, HOW they can be used, and giving the students vote/say in how they complete the work as well as respect and boundaries within the classroom.

# The Social Justice Approach

## Educators for Social Justice



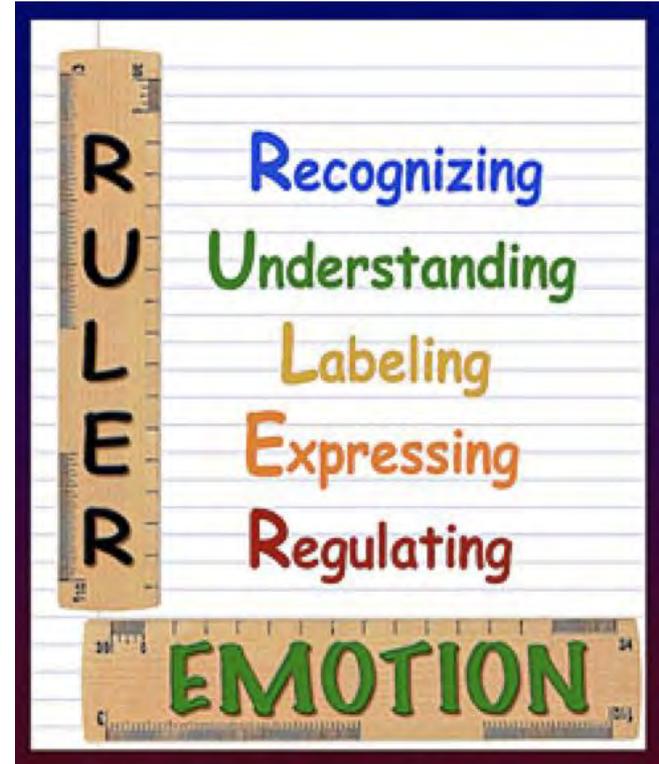
- In adult students one way to implement the concepts of SEL in a constructive and applicable way is to utilize Social Justice.
- Given the current climate – never has this been more important.
- A Social Justice curriculum would apply the 5 concepts of SEL in a new way with 5 Social Justice Competencies (Interdependence, Social Responsibility, Perspective Taking, Multicultural Literacy, and Community Engagement) (Hamendani & Darling-Hammond, 2015).

# Social Justice Competencies

- Interdependence – seeing oneself as part of a community, understanding how collective experiences shape individual lives
- Social Responsibility – understanding how ones' actions impact others – ethical and respectful behavior towards others
- Perspective Taking – shifting point of view to understand and empathize with others.
- Multicultural Literacy – Appreciating and valuing similarities and differences across various cultures/backgrounds in literature and life, having an awareness to systems of power, privilege, and oppression.
- Community Engagement – Actively participating in the educational community

# RULER

- The RULER method breaks down the first 2 concepts of CASEL's 5 SEL concepts (Self-Assessment and Self-Regulation) with more detail:
- R = Recognizing (emotion in ones self)
- U = Understanding (ones own emotions)
- L= Labeling (naming the emotions one feels)
- E = Expressing (letting others know of the emotions one feels)
- R = Regulating (managing ones emotions internally, productively)



# How to Implement in English 1 and 2



- English 1 – First 2 concepts of SEL (self-assessment and self-management) and beginning relationship building using the RULER method.
- English 2 – Last 2 concepts of SEL (Responsible Decision Making and Social Awareness) with continued Relationship Building using the Social Justice platform and competencies.

# English 1

- Some practices to enhance self-assessment skills in English 1:
- Emotion word vocabulary (using thesaurus' students will define emotion words and offer multiple synonyms to learn words to label their emotions with)
- Self-Portrait (students will fill out various self-assessments to define potential areas of growth and create goals for improvement)
- Affirmation Writing (one sentence affirmations to be written at the start of every class)



# English 1



## Self-Management Skills

- Some practices to enhance self-management skills in English 1:
- Self-Portrait (if students notice a struggle they have with emotion expression or management this can be an area to improve in their goals)
- Case-Study (after reading stories with emotional themes\* students will be asked how the character could have reacted differently/better)
- Partner Practice (students will be in groups or partners and role play various emotional situations)

# English 2

- Some practices to enhance social awareness in English 2:
- Literature Choice (literature for the course will have emotional and social justice themes)
- Discussion (open discussions in class on the social aspects of the literature)
- Writing (students will be asked to write on the themes, conflicts, and from other character perspectives)



# English 2

- Some practices for enhancing responsible decision making in English 2:
- Role-Play (students will role-play social situations from the stories and will be asked to replay them with more responsible decision making)
- Time Management (students will address time management and procrastination issues in a self-assessment unit)
- Positive and Negative Relationships (examples from the text will be reviewed for positive and negative relationship aspects)



# Suggested Literatures

- English 1 : Frog and Toad (emotional themes across varying stories), Alexander and the Terrible, Awful, No Good, Very Bad Day (emotional management), The Very Grouchy Ladybug (emotional management and assessment), The Giving Tree (and other Shel Silverstien), Where the Wild Things Are (emotional assessment and management)
- English 2: Thank You Ma'am (juvenile justice), A Brief Moment in the Life of Angus Bethune (gay rights, bullying, eating disorders), Eleven (emotional regulation, social awareness, immigration/race) \*Other Excerpts from *House on Mango Street* that go more in depth in the issue of immigration and race\*

# How to Apply to English 111

- English 111 (and English 3 and 4) can build on the concepts from English 1 and 2. Continuing the Social Justice theme can be done by giving students short writes and having them identify Social Justice themes in the stories or identifying political rhetoric used in certain time-specific examples.
- The concepts can easily be carried over into the next course and students empathy, self-regulation and responsible decision making can be assessed throughout their program in the humanities courses.



# Suggested Literatures



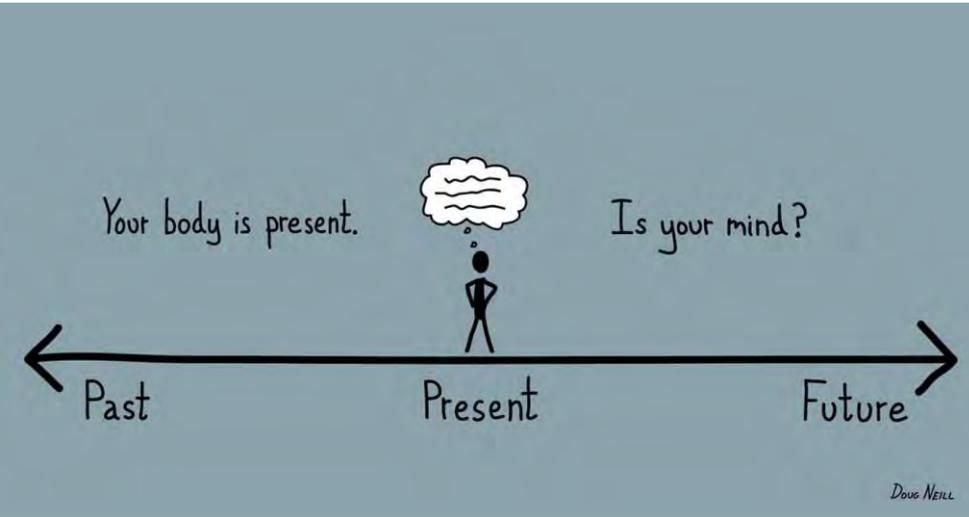
- English 111 – Maya Angelou poems (including Still I Rise), Other poems (by Langston Hughes, Ntozake Shange, Margaret Atwood, etc.) with a social justice theme
- Rhetoric Example: They Call Us Enemy – George Takei (graphic novel memoir of time in Japanese Internment)
- The Lottery by Shirley Jackson, Minority Report by Phillip K Dick, The Fireman by Ray Bradbury, Harrison Bergeron by Kurt Vonnegut
- Novel Excerpts: If Beale Street Could Talk, The Glass Castle, The Pursuit of Happiness, (more)

# Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is an important component to SEL, students often need to learn how to step back and breathe or to be in the moment in order to focus on the task at hand.
- Mindfulness is a natural counterpart to SEL - especially in the emotional management and self-assessment components.
- “If Mindfulness is the canvas then the SEL skills are the paint” (Dunham, 2020).



# Implementing Mindfulness and Reflection



- Mindfulness Minutes or Breathing Breaks are important to integrate into EVERY classroom to ensure students are present in the moment and not overwhelmed by outside responsibilities or other courses.
- Mindfulness journals are a great tool as well – every day (as a Do Now) students can spend 10 minutes writing using various gratefulness and mindful prompts.

# Proposed Implementations for Other Courses

- Mindfulness and breathing can and should be integrated into every class to enhance present thinking and reduce student stress and overload
- SEL concepts should be implemented in all courses when possible to enhance professionalism and behavior in the student body
- English 3, 4, and 111 can build on the concepts from English 1 and 2 and utilize the social justice concepts and competencies with higher level thinking strategies.

# School Wide Opportunities for SEL

- Outside of the classroom, students should be encouraged when overwhelmed (for instance, when speaking with a coach) to practice mindfulness techniques and breathing
- Students should be encouraged to journal throughout their experience to record their emotions

# Questions?



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# CONCLUSION

