This Time, *With Feeling*

Integrating Social and Emotional Development and College- and Career-Readiness Standards

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March 2017

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Executive Summary

The goal of this primer is to help education leaders understand the mutually reinforcing relationship between social and emotional development and ambitious academic goals. Instruction that promotes students' social and emotional development (SED) facilitates better student outcomes on college- and career-ready (CCR) standards. The converse is also true: Learning environments structured to genuinely meet rigorous standards support the development of students' social and emotional skills. To promote deeper learning, educators need to make the most of this interconnected relationship, and to approach SED not as an add-on or discrete intervention, but as an integral part of the academic program.

This primer presents an approach to defining SED, which connects the overlapping terms that educators, developmental psychologists, neuroscientists, and economists use to describe these skills, and provides a summary of the research demonstrating the positive impact of SED. Now that CCR standards have raised expectations for both students' independence and collaboration, the link between academics and SED is even more crucial. To illustrate this, we highlight the required SED skills for a selection of English, mathematics, and science standards, drawn from several different states and organizations to illustrate how CCR expectations from across the country are dependent on SED. We then present the other side of the coin: Ambitious academic expectations can create a positive context for developing SED skills. Teaching to CCR standards should be recognized as an opportunity for students to learn SED skills, with learning experiences planned accordingly.

Moving from awareness to actions that reinforce the relationship between CCR standards and SED requires a long-term vision and commitment. While the ultimate goal is to fully integrate SED into a high-quality academic program and the services that support it, the first step will depend on current conditions and context. To provide additional guidance, the primer closes with a set of a reflective questions and considerations to support system leaders, principals, and teachers who pursue this work.

Imagine you are visiting an 11th grade classroom where students are engaged in a performance assessment as the capstone of an interdisciplinary unit across science, mathematics, and language arts. Diverse teams of students are engaged in problem solving, collaborating to tackle issues with real implications for their school experience and the larger community.

For their project, the students are advising school leaders on the selection of an additional vendor for the school's food services. After being assigned to groups, students must work together to research the relevant issues; develop a strategy; distribute the workload; manage their time and hold each other accountable; and integrate the various work streams into a single, coherent proposal that will appeal to their audience—resolving conflicts and adjusting processes along the way. Over the past few weeks, the students reviewed nutritional research and recommendations, identified and reviewed food safety and health codes, and familiarized themselves with relevant federal guidelines for the school lunch program. They examined the resources and limitations of the current kitchen facilities. They conducted surveys and focus groups of other students and interviewed cafeteria staff, representatives from other schools, and potential vendors.

When you enter the classroom, you find that the teams are in the midst of refining their proposals and preparing what they hope are compelling presentations. Around the room, students work in small groups to create 3-D models, budget spreadsheets, multi-media presentations, and evidence-based reports. One group debates the likely reactions of the multi-stakeholder, decision-making panel. Another group discusses the relevance and credibility of the nutrition resources they found online. Some students are giving feedback to their peers based on the project criteria, including feasibility, cost, health, student interest, and ecological impact; other groups are giving each other pointers on presentation style and effective argument and communication techniques.

This is how students prepare for college and careers. Watching these students in action, it is clear that meeting these ambitious expectations requires not only subject knowledge and technical skills, but also social and emotional competencies. Students need to manage their own learning, navigate interpersonal dynamics on diverse teams, engage each other in civil and productive debates, get comfortable giving and receiving critiques on their reasoning and presentation style, and accept disappointment when group decisions do not go their way. What will it take to ensure that all of our classrooms are positively developing students' social and emotional competencies? When we wrestle with what will truly prepare our students for promising futures, it becomes clear that schools must integrate students' social and emotional development into their mission and their instructional program.

Introduction

The goal of this primer is to help education leaders understand the mutually reinforcing relationship between social and emotional development (SED) and ambitious academic goals. We argue that instruction that promotes students' SED facilitates better student outcomes on college- and career-ready (CCR) standards. The converse is also true: Learning opportunities structured to genuinely meet rigorous standards support the development of students' social and emotional skills. To promote deeper learning, educators need to make the most of this interconnected relationship, and to approach SED not as an add-on or discrete intervention, but as an integral part of the academic program.

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This primer provides an overview of the issues and a summary of key points, guided by the following questions:

- What is SED and what does research say about why it matters for student success?
- How are SED and CCR standards inextricably linked?
- What are the implications for educational leaders as they prepare to integrate CCR standards and SED in practice?

What Is Social and Emotional Development (SED)?

The Aspen Institute's National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development uses the term "social, emotional, and academic development" (SEAD) to refer to the full integration of these domains of student learning. This primer argues that CCR standards demand this integration of social, emotional, *and* academic development into a holistic approach for improving student learning.

To make this argument, we have chosen to use "social and emotional development" (SED) as a broad term for the many ways that educators and researchers define the work to support students to develop as individuals and in relationship to others. We use "development" rather than "learning" to encompass the broader context and sets of experiences through which students grow, and to not limit the definition to direct instruction on social and emotional skills. Educators, developmental psychologists, neuroscientists, and economists describe their work with different terms and at various levels of detail and scope, but the underlying concepts are often similar or overlapping.[1]

SED scholar Stephanie Jones and her team at Harvard University are developing a method to analyze and connect these underlying concepts.[2] Through this work, they have found that the skills described tend to fall into five domains: emotional, social, cognitive, character,[3] and mindset.[4] The table below shows the attributes within each of the domains:

Emotional	• Self-awareness: emotional knowledge and expression • Self-management: emotional and behavioral regulation
Social	• Navigating social situations • Social awareness: understanding social cues • Empathy
Cognitive	• Attention control • Cognitive flexibility • Planning, organizing, and setting goals
Character	• Grit • Curiosity • Optimism • Ethics
Mindset	• Growth mindset • Purpose • Belonging

Clear Evidence that SED Matters

The field is experiencing a unique moment: Recent research in brain science and education link academic learning inextricably to students' emotions and mindsets, findings that are penetrating popular media and energizing policymakers, educators, and social entrepreneurs as never before.[5] Advances in neuroscience demonstrate that, contrary to previously held beliefs, emotion and learning are interdependent. As University of Southern California neuroscientist Mary Helen Immordino-Yang notes, "It is neurobiologically impossible to build memories, engage complex thoughts, or make meaningful decisions without emotion."[6]

This unique moment also is shaped by widespread adoption and early implementation of CCR standards. Whether states designed their own standards or used cross-state efforts such as the Next Generation Science Standards or the Common Core State Standards initiative, these efforts share an important goal: to establish a vision for student learning that prioritizes problem-solving and critical thinking in addition to ensuring basic skills. Given the level of student effort and engagement these standards require, they can only be met by students who have developed healthy social and emotional skills. Promoting these skills further requires teachers and school leaders to create culturally responsive and affirming schools and classrooms. Likewise, it has become more commonly understood that success in college

and in the workplace requires not just academic knowledge and ability but also SED skills such as persistence, interpersonal skills, and self-control.[7] CCR standards and SED are not alternatives; both are integral to student success in school and beyond.

Compelling research demonstrates that developing students' social and emotional skills improves a wide range of outcomes—starting with their performance in the classroom.

Compelling research demonstrates that developing students' social and emotional skills improves a wide range of outcomes—starting with their performance in the classroom. A 2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based, universal SED programs involving 270,034 students in kindergarten through high school found an 11 percentile-point gain in academic achievement (as well as positive effects on mental health and behavioral outcomes) for students in treatment groups compared to those in control groups.[8] A 2012 analysis by the National Research Council found that developing SED skills is associated with increased engagement in learning and reduced behaviors that interfere with learning.[9] Research on college dropouts reviewed by Rutgers Professor Maurice Elias finds that students' failure to graduate is "less the result of intellectual shortcomings and more due to deficiencies in the social-emotional and character competencies necessary for dealing productively with the challenging life situations of college."[10]

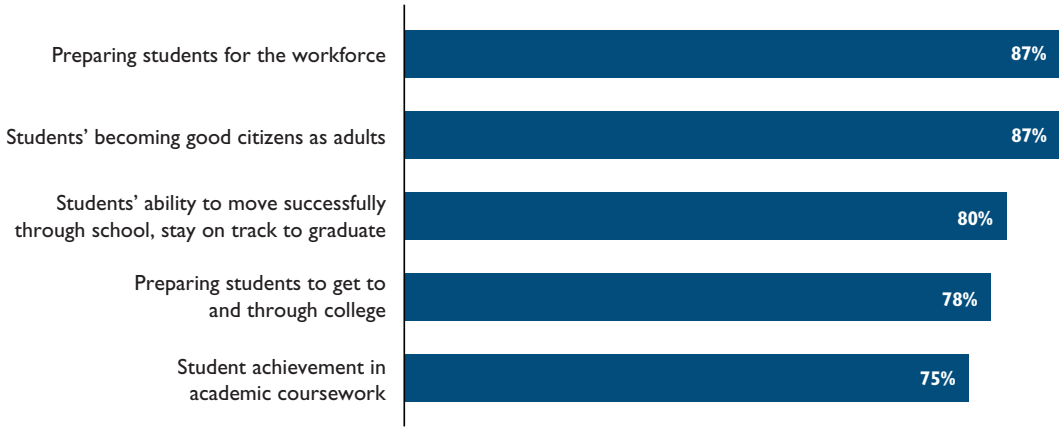
The benefits of SED continue long after school ends. University of Chicago economist James Heckman established a decade ago that social and emotional skills increase productivity, wages, and avoidance of risky behavior.[11] Since the Heckman study, the evidence has continued to build. A 2015 cost-benefit study found that every dollar invested across six SED interventions yields an $11 return in earnings, health, reduced crime, and other long-term benefits.[12] Moreover, trends over the past two decades reveal that jobs requiring high social skills have been growing significantly as a share of the labor market, and wage growth in those jobs has been "particularly strong," while those with low SED requirements are stagnating or disappearing, according to Harvard education and economics professor David J. Deming.[13]

Most teachers are convinced of the connection between SED and positive outcomes. According to a 2013 survey commissioned by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 87 percent of teachers believe a larger focus on SED would improve workforce readiness, and 78 percent believe it would improve college preparation.[14] Yet only 44 percent of teachers surveyed reported that SED is taught schoolwide. The gap between what teachers believe will benefit students and what they see taught presents a great opportunity to leverage teachers' confidence in SED, but closing this gap must be done purposefully. Integration of SED into CCR standards-aligned instruction as one holistic package—rather than treating it as an add-on, siloed initiative with separate offices and stand-alone interventions—can streamline and strengthen the work of teachers, principals, and district leaders.

The link between SED and achieving CCR standards is also a matter of equity. To genuinely engage and persevere in intellectual risk-taking, students need strong SED competencies. K. Brooke Stafford-Brizard, an adviser for Turnaround for Children, an organization that applies findings from neuroscience to develop tools for academic improvement in high-poverty schools, argues that "many children, particularly those who grow up in adversity, need

Teachers Believe Greater Emphasis on Social and Emotional Learning Would Have Major Career, School, and Life Benefits

Larger focus on social and emotional learning would have a major benefit on this:



Source: John Bridgeland, Mary Bruce, and Arya Hariharan, *The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools,* Civic Enterprises with Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 29, https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/the-missing-piece.pdf.

additional supports for nonacademic development." Stafford-Brizard writes that "these young people are often labeled with learning disabilities or behavioral disorders when, in fact, they may be missing foundational skills for learning" that can be acquired through deliberate instructional strategies.[15] Educator and author Zaretta Hammond notes that inattention to students' social and emotional development compounds challenges when students struggle academically, such that "over time, many students of color are pushed out of school because they cannot keep up academically because of poor reading skills and a lack of social-emotional support to deal with their increasing frustration."[16] Integrating a focus on SED into instruction helps ensure all students can access and wrestle with rigorous academic content.

The link between SED and achieving CCR standards is a matter of equity. To genuinely engage and persevere in intellectual risk-taking, students need strong SED competencies.

How the Standards and SED Connect

Now that academic standards have been raised substantially and the expectations for both independence and collaboration increased, the link between SED and academic standards is even more crucial. Many CCR standards refer explicitly to SED, while for other standards the relationship is unstated but essential due to the level of effort and capacity that the standards require.[17]

Below, we highlight the required SED skills for a selection of English, mathematics, and science standards. We have drawn these examples from several different states and organizations to illustrate how CCR expectations from across the country are dependent on SED. Note that the sample standards referenced may draw on multiple SED skills in one or more of the five domains: Emotional, Social, Cognitive, Character, and Mindset. For brevity and clarity, we have chosen to highlight some but not all of the relevant skills.

English Language Arts

Although the specifics of states' English language arts standards vary, most address a range of language skills across reading, writing, speaking, and listening—explicitly requiring instruction on a broad range of communication competencies rather than a narrow focus solely on reading. According to the introduction to the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy,* students who meet the standards—what is called "the literate individual"—share some important characteristics. They "demonstrate independence"; "respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline"; and "come to understand other perspectives and cultures." While the need for social and emotional skill is implied by such a description, K–12 anchor standards and grade-specific standards clarify the demands further. Below are examples from several states' standards for speaking/listening, reading, and writing and a description of SEL skills required to meet them.

Interact with others to explore ideas and concepts, communicate meaning, and develop logical interpretations through collaborative conversations; build upon the ideas of others to clearly express one's own views while respecting diverse perspectives. This communication anchor statement guides the development of students' ability to navigate *social* situations. What starts as storytelling and taking turns in the primary grades becomes the ability to ask and answer probing questions and to build on each other's ideas as students' skills mature. A collaborative conversation demands a deeper, more meaningful ability to integrate the perspective of another individual into one's own critical thinking. By high school, students are expected to apply this skill to more complex situations and subject matter. (*South Carolina College- and Career-Ready Standards for English Language Arts* — C.MC.1)

Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate. To meet this speaking and listening anchor standard, students must develop a range of oral communication skills and the ability to use them flexibly. The kindergarten grade level standard, "Speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly," requires students to draw on their *emotional* skills. In developing their emotional knowledge and expression, they will learn the vocabulary to name and describe their own emotions. Over time, this emotional self-awareness is expected to be extended to other relevant contexts. (*Arizona's College and Career Ready Standards* — SL.6)

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. The *emotional* capacity to understand and label feelings more extensively shows up in standards in later grades, such as in this third-grade reading standard: "Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute

to the sequence of events." In addition to a sufficient emotional vocabulary, students will need *social* skills to take the perspective of a character and to determine their motivations and feelings. (*Tennessee's State English Language Arts Standards* — R.1)

Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. This reading anchor standard is another good example of how connecting with others via text also requires *social* understanding. Students' capacity to infer another's intent is an important SED-related skill that develops over time. To meet the third-grade standard "Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters," students must demonstrate sufficient social awareness and empathy to be able to interpret others' behavior. By grades 11 and 12, students must be substantially more sophisticated in discerning authors' intent: "Analyze a case in which grasping point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement)." (*Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* — R.6)

Develop and refine writing skills by writing for different purposes and to specific audiences or people. This writing anchor statement highlights the need to consider and adapt one's writing to its intended audience, and thus the need to develop the *social* skills necessary to do so. By grades 11 and 12, the standards expect students to be able to craft arguments "in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases." Meeting this standard, and the expectations of perspective-taking in prior grades, will require the development of cognitive empathy, or the capacity to recognize and understand another's mental and emotional state. (*Indiana Academic Standards for English/Language Arts* — W.3)

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a different approach. In order for graduates to demonstrate the skills necessary to meet this writing anchor statement, they must develop a suite of *cognitive* executive function skills, including planning, goal-setting, and time management. A capacity for self-organization is necessary to sustain and complete the writing projects described in the standards. Moreover, the need for *cognitive* flexibility, or the ability to shift gears when needed, is inherent in these writing process expectations. A college- and career-ready writer not only can craft a piece of writing but also can adjust his or her strategy in response to critical feedback from others, or after recognizing independently that the current approach is ineffective. (*K–12 Louisiana Student Standards for English Language Arts* — W.5)

Mathematics

In mathematics, the link to SED is often more visible in what many states call "practice" or "process" standards. These standards of mathematical practice articulate key processes and proficiencies that span the K–12 spectrum and accompany mathematical content standards, which present skills and concepts to master for each grade. Below we present several examples of practice standards that are, according to the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin, "inextricably linked" to SED competencies.[18]

Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. Meeting this math practice standard requires students to develop their *cognitive* skills and think flexibly. The description includes the expectation that students "monitor and evaluate their progress and change course if necessary." The ability to shift gears, trying a new strategy when the current one is not working, is important in all grades. Moreover, students must be able to regulate their *emotions* because students who are easily frustrated can be derailed by a challenging problem. With self-awareness, successful students can notice and name potentially disruptive emotions; those able to regulate their emotions and behavior can stick with complex tasks. A standard explicitly requiring perseverance also relates directly to *mindsets,* which "shape how students interpret and respond to challenges."[19] Research by Stanford professor Carol Dweck documents the positive impact of growth mindset on mathematics achievement.[20] Moreover, the benefits of growth mindset, likely to include a sense of self-efficacy and the perseverance it inspires, are not limited to mathematics. The complexity of work demanded by the CCR standards in all subject areas will require students to believe that working at learning will develop their intelligence and capacity—and then to act on that belief. (*Georgia Standards of Excellence* — MP.1)

Construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others. This practice standard requires students to develop their *social* skills. To construct a viable argument, you have to consider the audience's perspective to determine what arguments will convince them. It is also important to consider others' perspectives when giving feedback, which is a hallmark of CCR-aligned instruction and something that was not prioritized under prior standards. Giving and receiving feedback is a sensitive social interaction to navigate, even for adults. Accomplishing this successfully depends on social awareness and the ability to understand social cues, such as body language and tone of voice. (*Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Mathematics*)

Attend to precision. Students who meet this practice standard are careful, clear, accurate, and efficient in their mathematics practice. To do so, students must continue to develop the *cognitive* skill of attention control, improving their ability to concentrate and maintain focus while tackling increasingly challenging mathematics. Self-regulation, an *emotional* skill, is especially critical for success in mathematics. The very nature of problem solving in mathematics requires a careful, deliberative process, involving planning, exploring, analyzing, and reflecting—placing high demands on students to focus and inhibit reactions to irrelevant or conflicting information or external motivations.[21] (*Nevada Academic Content Standards in Mathematics* — MP.6)

Science

Reports published by partner organizations that developed the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) describe science as a "fundamentally social enterprise" that relies on discourse, collaboration, and the evaluation of evidence.[22] Similar to the practice standards for mathematics, the NGSS name a series of Science and Engineering Practices (SEP) that

cut across topics and grade levels to guide students in developing an understanding of how scientific knowledge develops.[23] The practice standards in science, as in math, place demands on students beyond their content knowledge.

The NGSS assert that "all students no matter what their future education and career path must have a solid K-12 science education in order to be prepared for college, careers, and citizenship."[24] Extending the expectations for a rigorous science education to all students requires many teachers to "make a significant shift in the content and manner in which they have been teaching," according to the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA).[25] In the case of elements that require teachers to "facilitate appropriate and effective discourse and argumentation with and among students," the NSTA wrote, teachers will also have to incorporate SED skills into their lessons in the form of self-awareness, navigating social interactions, perspective taking, and inhibiting inappropriate responses.[26]

Planning and carrying out investigations. The third science practice standard incorporates elements of character education, including curiosity, grit, and ethics. Students utilize their curiosity to drive an iterative process, one that by nature requires a certain measure of perseverance. By the time they are in high school, the performance expectations indicate that students should be able to conduct this research "in a safe and ethical manner including considerations of environmental, social, and personal impacts." (NGSS SEP.3)

Engaging in argument from evidence. Engaging in argument successfully requires *social* skills like the ability to navigate interpersonal interactions and, in the case of spirited discussion, *emotional* regulation to inhibit inappropriate responses. Some students have been taught that arguments are to be avoided. But in reality, wrangling with peers about ideas is an important skill and should be the focus of instructional practice. "Because they examine each other's ideas and look for flaws," wrote the committee developing the conceptual framework for the science standards, "controversy and debate among scientists are normal occurrences, neither exceptional nor extraordinary."[27] (NGSS SEP.7)

Developing SED through Academic Instruction

We have described ways that developing SED skills helps students meet the specific academic demands of CCR standards. Now we present the other side of the coin: ambitious academic instruction can create a positive context for developing SED skills. Pursuing CCR standards should be recognized as an opportunity for students to learn SED skills, with learning experiences planned accordingly.

SED skills do not necessarily grow on their own. They need to be developed over time, with the same attention and rigor as academic skills. In academic subjects, many of us are familiar with the gradual release of responsibility in

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which students work at increasing levels of challenge, with supportive scaffolding in the form of instruction and feedback.[28] Similarly, students need practice to develop their SED skills, in the form of experiences that stretch them and provide encouraging support for their growth. Well-designed classrooms focused on CCR standards, built with appropriate scaffolding and thoughtful feedback, are the perfect place for students to grow socially and emotionally as well as academically.

Neuroscientist Immordino-Yang writes that "emotions are skills—organized patterns of thoughts and behaviors that we actively construct in the moment and across our life spans to adaptively accommodate to various kinds of circumstances, including academic demands."[29] Many students will struggle when initially engaging in tasks that challenge them socially and emotionally. Without an intentional focus on SED, students might display anger or recoil from uncomfortable situations, or feel badly about their inability to display more mature skills. Even worse, teachers who do not recognize and address the SED dimensions of ambitious learning goals might revert to lower standards or more teacher-directed instruction, providing little chance for students to meet the CCR standards; moreover, they will deprive students of opportunities to develop their SED skills.

Educators need to consider the SED competencies required for academic success and weave them into instruction.

A commitment to preparing students to be college- and career-ready has significant implications for what is taught and how it is taught, and requires pedagogies that effectively incorporate SED skills. Many common techniques, including those that are teacher-centered, in which students focus on bite-sized chunks of curriculum and interact primarily with the teacher rather than each other, do not demand much social and emotional capacity. They often do not prepare students to meet the CCR standards, either. When teachers modify instructional strategies to ensure students are prepared to meet CCR standards, for instance by engaging students in small-group work and project-based learning, they often increase the SED demands along with the academic demands.[30]

Adjusting instructional strategies to those that require more sophisticated SED skills requires a thoughtful approach to supporting students in developing those muscles. Just as with academic skills and knowledge, students need to be directly taught SED skills and ably guided in applying them in their ongoing work. It is important not to confuse being taught *about* something with being taught *how* to do something, and deliberate SED instruction is only a portion of what students need. Direct SED instruction without deliberate and meaningful opportunities to utilize their developing skills is insufficient.

Educators need to consider the SED competencies required for academic success and weave them into instruction. Teachers commonly identify academic prerequisites for particular standards and consider them in lesson planning: the math skills that build on one another, the text complexity levels that become more challenging over time. They may be less familiar with the SED precursors, previously developed SED skills that are required to be successful in tackling a particular CCR standard. "If academic standards are what students must learn, certain social-emotional skills support *how* they learn," according to Stafford-Brizard.[31] As academic demands increase, attempts to work around the lack of SED competencies is less

effective, and failure to acknowledge and address them will hinder success. "SED is not a detour from a pursuit of academics," Jeff Wagenheim wrote in *Harvard Ed. Magazine,* "[i]t's an on-ramp."[32]

Recommendations to Start Taking Action

As illustrated above, building students' social and emotional competencies is part and parcel of meeting the aspirations of CCR standards. Teaching and learning that aligns with the ambitions of the standards necessitates development of SED competencies. What follows are some reflective questions and considerations to support system leaders, principals, and teachers who pursue this work.

While the ultimate goal is to fully integrate SED into a high-quality academic program and the services that support it, the first step is to determine where and with whom to start. We recommend that you review the following recommendations, and then identify the starting point that makes the most sense given your organization's state of development. As you read, you might consider the right division of responsibility in your particular context: which tasks are primarily the work of the central office, which are school-based decisions, and which make most sense to be led by classroom teachers.

Build Awareness and Ownership

- Send the message that SED is foundational to active engagement and meaningful learning, and that a focus on students' SED is essential for meeting CCR standards; as such, it is a core responsibility of schools and educators in partnership with families and communities. As needed, use the arguments and evidence presented in this article. Teachers and school leaders are critical audiences and many already support this approach; be sure to reach out to other important decision makers, including board members, to ensure they understand the purpose behind prioritizing SED alongside academics.
- Enlist the support of your cabinet/leadership team to make this vision a reality. Sponsor a text-based discussion with three goals in mind:
  - Awareness: understanding how SED and academic learning are mutually reinforcing;
  - Ownership: knowing that SED is everyone's responsibility, just as academic achievement is everyone's responsibility; and
  - Action Planning: gathering multiple perspectives and ideas for addressing these issues and then establishing specific plans for making progress.

- Consider using a protocol for discussion that will support full, candid, and divergent participation, as well as set the stage for future problem-solving. Depending on the familiarity of your team with the issues, possibilities include K-W-L, SWOT analysis, or one of the tools from the National School Reform Faculty.[33]

- Given that many teachers already know that SED contributes to academic success, enlist teachers as ambassadors to make the case to their colleagues. Make explicit the link between SED and equity by highlighting the need to ensure all students have the opportunity to develop what Harvard University lecturer Mandy Savitz-Romer calls the "building blocks for more academic skills."[34] Rather than lowering academic expectations or avoiding rigor, SED can create the foundation that enables students to engage with challenges more confidently and successfully. In her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain,* Zaretta Hammond presents the "Ready for Rigor" frame and describes the role of mindset, relationships, and community in "creat[ing] the social, emotional and cognitive conditions that allow students to more actively engage and take ownership of their learning processes."[35] A clear message on this point may preempt the argument that struggling students and/or whole schools do not have time for SED.

Rather than lowering academic expectations or avoiding rigor, SED can create the foundation that enables students to engage with challenges more confidently and successfully.

- Learn from how other districts and schools are approaching the integration of academics and SED:

  - Oakland Unified School District "aims to seamlessly integrate Social Emotional Learning into the academic experience of all [its] students and across [the] organization for every adult," and the structure of the central office reflects that commitment.[36]
  - Boston Public Schools created a series of "playlists" comprised of key district documents as well as research and resources that reflect a commitment to integrating SED and academics.[37]
  - Cleveland Metropolitan School District's commitment to "address conditions for learning so that all students are academically and socially equipped to succeed" is reflected in its strategic plan and labor agreement with teachers.[38]
  - San Francisco Unified School District's Mathematics Department created a webpage filled with mindset resources, including links to free online courses for students and teachers.[39]
  - The New York City Department of Education named "Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health" as one of the optimal conditions of learning in the rubric for their school and district review process.[40]
  - The CORE Districts, a consortia of California's eight largest school districts, decided to prioritize the integration of SED with academics and created frameworks and other resources to support this work.[41]

- The Urban Assembly School for Media Studies put forth a hypothesis of the link between SEL and instructional outcomes, provided teachers with a low-risk space to experiment with different instructional strategies, and allowed teachers to examine the impact over time.[42]
- Citizens of the World Charter Schools created a graduate profile that incorporates both SED and academics, and embedded SED into their academic program by weaving in practices that scaffold the development and application of students' emerging SED skills.[43]
- Valor Collegiate Academy attributes their much of their success as the top scorer among Nashville's schools to *Compass,* the social-emotional learning program they developed for students and teachers and which guides their approach to learning and growth in community.[44]
- KIPP charter schools include a strong focus on character and have created a toolkit to share resources.[45]

Take Stock and Define Success

- Commit to a broader, more holistic definition of student success, one in which SED and academic performance are fully integrated. While most school systems and schools articulate an ambition that goes beyond test scores, success in these broader domains often is not measured. The inclusion of "school quality" and "student success" factors in accountability systems under the federal *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) is bringing these goals to the fore, but the collection of student SED data should not be limited to high-stakes accountability goals.
  - If you are not already articulating a definition of student success that goes beyond academic outcomes, start there.
  - Consider what data you already have access to that could serve as indicators of SED. If you interpreted these data points as a source of information about SED, how would it change how you use them?
  - Identify goals and leading indicators that reflect this expanded definition of student success.
- Define what SED means for your school or district. To ensure a common framework and vocabulary at the system level, define your terms and use consistent language. As noted above, there are numerous terms used in the field.
- Organize a team for analyzing academic content standards to identify explicit and implicit expectations regarding SED competencies.
- Conduct an asset analysis to determine who and what your resources are to tackle the integration of SED and academic instruction. Ask what you are already accomplishing, investing in, or have access to. Remember that your highly skilled teachers are also resources.

- Define the skills and competencies that need to be developed at different ages and developmental stages.[46] Draw on key resources to assist you in defining these, such as the Chicago Consortium, Turnaround for Children, and CASEL.[47] Once priorities have been identified, determine how these fit into existing frameworks or rubrics for classroom evaluation, school walk-throughs, etc. and communicate these connections to all relevant educators and other staff.

Facilitate Collaboration and a Supportive Culture

- SED is for educators, too! We need to tend to the social and emotional needs of teachers and principals in creating the environment we want for kids.[48] Schools that effectively support students are led by educators who possess and can model healthy SED skills. This work will take time, attention to adult culture, and a "commitment to develop the social-emotional skills of staff members," as well as a recognition that "sometimes the transformation begins with the adults," according to CASEL leaders.[49] Healthy adult culture is not a preexisting condition, but one that must be cultivated deliberately.
  - Name the SED competencies that you expect educators to demonstrate, and determine how to develop them with current staff.
  - Incorporate consideration of candidates' SED skills in recruitment, selection, and onboarding processes and communicate this practice and its rationale to educator preparation programs.
  - Implement practices that support educators' capacity to care for their own social and emotional health. In particular, we know from the research on secondary trauma and resilience that working in challenging conditions with our neediest students can take a toll on educators. The work of Patricia Jennings at the University of Virginia shows how engaging in stress-reduction strategies helps educators to be more effective with students.[50]

Schools that effectively support students are led by educators who possess and can model healthy SED skills.

- Recognize that current school culture and climate may or may not be facilitating the development of SED competencies.
  - Relational, or social, trust among the adults (teachers, parents, and school leaders) plays an essential role. A longitudinal study of 400 Chicago elementary schools provides a research basis for what many of us know intuitively: When our working environments are characterized by strong relationships and we trust the people we work with, it is easier to do good work. *In Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for School Reform,* Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider present learnings from this study and conditions that foster relational trust.[51] EL Education offers a collection of professional development materials on relational trust, in addition to other SEL and instructional topics.[52]

- In effect, classroom management is a reflection of the collective SED of the school.[53] To establish effective classroom practices that build the foundation of an integrated instructional space, be intentional and explicit about structuring school routines and expectations for student behavior in and out of class in ways that give students opportunities to practice SED. You might, for example, deliberately work towards an approach to classroom management that prepares students to be more independent by explicitly developing their capacity for self-management and attention control, and to make choices based on both self and social awareness.

- Build bridges among staff usually responsible for the emotional and social lives of students (counselors, psychologists, social workers); those primarily responsible for academics (teachers, professional developers/coaches, curriculum developers); and relevant leaders from the central office.

  - Organize working groups that cut across academics and SED, in which these stakeholders are engaged together in figuring out how to maximize the mutually reinforcing relationship between SED and CCR standards. Some educators in your district, such as those who work with students with special needs, may already be doing a lot of SED work that could benefit all students. Bring them to the center of these efforts and learn from them.
  - Break down silos by setting expectations that stakeholders communicate about their current work and allocating time to do so, with an expectation that future projects will require more formal collaboration. Then work collaboratively to develop joint projects and set goals that require cross-functional teams to work together to accomplish them.
  - Ensure coordination and alignment with out-of-school time providers, who traditionally focus on SED. When these providers know more about CCR standards, they can be more effective in connecting SED to success in school.

Make Change in the Classroom

- Work towards full implementation of instructional techniques that develop both CCR-level academics and SED, and don't let concerns about student behavior stand in your way of getting started. Student-centered instructional practices, like project-based learning and workshop methods, are ideally suited to developing SED skills, given how students are expected to work independently and collaboratively and must draw on skills like self-management, social awareness, and cognitive flexibility. Often teachers hesitate to try these methods out of concern that students can't behave appropriately, but you have to start somewhere if you ultimately want students to be able to draw on their SED skills in more demanding learning environments.

- Directly teach SED. Once the overall conditions for learning reinforce the underlying values, direct instruction will help students make sense of opportunities to utilize SED skills in their daily work. In the 2011 meta-analysis of SED programs, those that were *s*equenced, *a*ctive, *f*ocused, and *e*xplicit—what's called the "SAFE criteria"—produced better outcomes than programs that were not.
    - Rather than just training teachers on discrete SED programs, help them understand the "why." Teachers with a deep understanding of the research on learning and social and emotional competencies are better equipped to productively integrate SED skills in other learning environments and throughout the school day.

Integrate Tools, Structures, and Systems

- Although stand-alone SED programs have produced positive effects, college- and career-readiness requires a more comprehensive approach. Commit to a more holistic, integrated approach that includes all staff; all learning environments; and all student, family, and community interactions with schools.
- Draw attention to explicit connections between SED and rigorous academic standards. While you don't want to create additional bureaucratic hoops to jump through, tools should reflect SED and its connection to teaching and learning. What are meaningful levers in your organization? To craft culture and direct focus to targeted areas, use what you've got. Possibilities include:
    - Revising planning templates (yearlong, unit, lesson) to reflect the expectation that teachers consider and address the SED skills students will have to draw on, or have the opportunity to develop.
    - Ensuring that those who look at lesson plans and observe classes—such as coaches, evaluators, and peer planning groups—get explicit guidance, training, and support to recognize SED and provide feedback on how to support its integration with academics.
    - Prioritizing curricula that link to both SED and CCR standards.[54] Where academic and SED expectations are separate, there needs to be a process to fuse them so teachers see the connections and enact them together. Thoughtfully integrating academics with SED requires time and space for collaboration among teachers.
    - Tracking implementation. Incorporate SED into walkthrough protocols and other monitoring tools.
    - Including SED in your evaluation practices for teachers and leaders; draw attention to SED practices that appear in teaching frameworks and practice standards for school leaders.[55]
    - Looking for other places where you can weave in SED to existing structures and practices. Possibilities range from agenda norms to data analysis tools.

Conclusion

Preparing each student for success in college, careers, and life is an aspiration that unites and motivates educators across this country. The recent development of CCR standards clarifies the academic expectations that undergird this vision of student success. Brain science and educational research document that students' social and emotional development are vital to meeting these ambitious academic goals. Educators have the challenge of fully integrating these bodies of work into instructional strategies that are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

We know this is a lot of work, but it is worth it. In many systems, it will require educators to embrace new ways of conceptualizing the work of educating our students and then will necessitate a substantial shift in how educators approach their work. If we truly want to prepare our students to fulfill their potential, this change in practice is imperative; students cannot be ready for college and careers without social and emotional skills.

Moving from **awareness to actions** that reinforce the relationship between CCR standards and SED requires a long-term vision and commitment. Truly embedding SED throughout programmatic offerings and organizational structures will likely take several years. But even the longest journey starts with a single step. You've begun with your own awareness. Share that with your team, and ensure that they co-own the challenge and co-construct the solutions.

Acknowledgments

The authors extend their gratitude to the practitioners, researchers, and thought partners who provided valuable insights and feedback on this primer. The authors alone are responsible for the recommendations in this primer and for any inaccuracies or errors.

- David Adams, Director of Social Emotional Learning, Urban Assembly
- Wendy Baron, Chief Officer of Social and Emotional Learning; Ellen Moir, Founder and Chief Executive Officer; and Nina Wooldridge, Senior Vice President, Product Strategy & Development, New Teacher Center
- Noah Bookman, Chief Strategy Officer, CORE Districts
- Sara Burd, Director of Social Emotional Learning, Reading Public Schools (Massachusetts)
- Monique Burns-Thompson, President, Teach Plus
- Pamela Cantor, President and CEO, Turnaround for Children
- Tommy Chang, Superintendent, Boston Public Schools
- Mike Cohen, President, Achieve
- Deborah Donahue-Keegan, Associate Director, Social-Emotional Learning & Civic Engagement Initiative, Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University
- Kriste Dragon, CEO and Co-Founder, Citizens of the World Charter Schools
- Susan Enfield, Superintendent, Highline Public Schools (Washington)
- Zaretta Hammond, Founder, Ready4Rigor
- Stephanie Jones, Associate Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education
- Dan Katzir, President and CEO, Alliance College-Ready Public Schools
- Sara Bartolino Krachman, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Transforming Education
- Clark McKown, Associate Professor of Behavioral Sciences, Rush University Medical Center and Executive Director, Rush NeuroBehavioral Center
- Heather Peske, Senior Associate Commissioner of Instructional Support, Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Christopher Poulos, 2007 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, Joel Barlow High School
- K. Brooke Stafford-Brizard, Consultant
- Roger Weissberg, Board Vice Chair and Chief Knowledge Officer, Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning

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