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# Advancements in the Landscape of Social and Emotional Learning and Emerging Topics on the Horizon

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Around the globe, dialogs about educational reform and the integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) into policy and curriculum are proliferating. SEL is now a worldwide phenomenon and not just a passing fad, with SEL approaches and programs being implemented in countries throughout the world. Articles included in this special issue are authored by several of the SEL pioneers whose papers represent the current and emerging innovations in the field central to advancing SEL research. I offer 3 observations raised collectively in these articles: (a) social and emotional competencies predict children's success in school and in life, (b) social and emotional competencies are malleable—they can be taught and assessed, and (c) explicit attention to context is foundational to the promotion of SEL. I also provide some additional suggestions for advancing SEL work, including (a) understanding and promoting teacher well-being, and (b) integrating SEL into teacher preparation.

This special issue represents an important and timely marker in our burgeoning knowledge base of social and emotional learning (SEL) and its role in advancing students' success in school and in life. The articles herein interrogate the science and practice of SEL work, illustrating the rapid expansion of the literature in the field. Articles included in this special issue are authored by several of the SEL pioneers whose papers represent the current and emerging innovations in the field central to advancing SEL research, including SEL programs and assessment, implementation science, the importance of equity and transformative SEL, brain science and SEL, and SEL and a science of human development. Taken as a whole, this issue contains an important set of articles reporting thoughtful, rigorous analyses of a range of innovations in SEL theory and research, with a delineation of next steps for the future.

In the last decade, we have witnessed amplified attention to the social and emotional dimensions of learning

coupled with increased integration of SEL into the very fabric of schools in efforts to transform education in the 21st century. There is now a resounding consensus that school-based SEL efforts are an effective and cost-effective way to promote children's positive development and mental health (Domitrovich, Durlak, Staley, & Weissberg, 2017; Hawkins et al., 2015). Moreover, as espoused by Brackett, Bailey, Hoffmann, and Simmons (2019/*this issue*) in their description of the RULER approach, we also know that we need to move beyond just implementing SEL programs at the classroom level and instead need to integrate SEL into the entire *system* of the school, including school leadership, teaching and learning, and with families. Finally, many of the recent discussions on education and educational reform have emphasized that young people's social, emotional, and academic development are inextricably linked (Cantor, Osher, Berg, Steyer, & Rose, 2018; Jones & Kahn, 2017). Recent innovations in neuroscience that emphasize the vital role of social experiences on brain development and learning have given rise to these discussions (see Immordino-Yang, Darling-Hammond, & Krone, 2019/*this issue*).

Around the globe, dialogs about educational reform and the integration of SEL into policy and curriculum are

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proliferating. Clearly, SEL is now a worldwide phenomenon and not just a passing fad, with SEL approaches and programs being implemented in countries throughout the world (Frydenberg, Martin, & Collie, 2017; Humphrey, 2013; Torrente, Alimchandani, & Aber, 2015). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL; [www.casel.org](http://www.casel.org)) has identified a set of five core intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive competencies that underlie effective and successful performance for social roles and life tasks and are interrelated and reflect the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of SEL (CASEL, 2013; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2015; Weissberg et al., 2015). Analogously, large-scale organizations such as the World Bank, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, UNESCO, and the Organization for Economic and Cooperative Development (OECD) are joining in the call for a more explicit and intentional consideration of social and emotional (SE) competencies and social and emotional well-being into both education and health (e.g., OECD, 2015, 2018; Varela, Kelcey, Reyes, Gould, & Sklar, 2013; World Health Organization, 2017).

I read this special issue from the perspective of my own background as a former elementary and high school teacher, as a researcher who evaluates SEL programs and conducts population-level assessments of SEL and child well-being, and as a university professor who teaches in preservice teacher education and works closely with educators and policymakers in integrating SEL into policy and practice. Collectively, these articles touch upon each of these topics, to varying degrees. This timely special issue broadens both the empirical conversation on what we have learned in the past decade concerning the effectiveness of SEL programs and their link to academic achievement and connections between SEL and a broader literature on human development, neuroscience, assessment, implementation science, and equity.

On these topics, I offer three observations raised collectively in these articles: (a) SE competencies predict children's success in school and in life, (b) SE competencies are malleable—they can be taught and assessed, and (c) explicit attention to context is foundational to the promotion of SEL. Although the authors of each of the articles have thoughtfully and thoroughly identified a number of critical steps forward for advancing the SEL landscape, I also provide some additional suggestions for advancing SEL work, including (a) understanding and promoting teacher well-being and (b) integrating SEL into teacher preparation. As Jones, McGarrah, and Kahn (2019/*this issue*) posit, the next generation of SEL requires that researchers and practitioners work together to move the field further, and I would argue that to make this successful, we need to include an explicit focus on teachers and teacher preparation.

## SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES PREDICT CHILDREN'S SUCCESS IN SCHOOL AND IN LIFE

Although there is tremendous variability in the frameworks that compose SEL (see Berg et al., 2017), there is remarkable congruence with the way in which SEL is defined. SEL is the process of acquiring the competencies to recognize and manage emotions, develop caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively (Weissberg et al., 2015). Brackett et al. (2019/*this issue*) provide a definition that I found particularly pithy, noting that

SEL refers to the process of integrating cognition, emotion, and behavior into teaching and learning such that adults and children build self- and social awareness skills, learn to manage their own and other's emotions and behavior, make responsible decisions, and build positive relationships. (p. 144)

That is, SEL teaches the personal and interpersonal skills we all need to handle ourselves, our relationships, and our work effectively and ethically.

A substantial body of literature supports the premise that children's SE competence predicts not only success in school (e.g., Oberle, Schonert-Reichl, Hertzman, & Zumbo, 2014) but also a range of important outcomes in late adolescence and adulthood, including physical health, substance dependence, and overall well-being (e.g., Jones et al., 2019/*this issue*; Moffitt et al., 2011). Recognizing the interrelationships between SE competencies and academic success, researchers have argued that fostering positive social and emotional development may be key to enhancing academic growth (see Greenberg et al., 2003; Zins et al., 2004). Empirical evidence supports this notion. For example, in one early study that, in my opinion, was pioneering in its design and approach to demonstrating the critical role of SE competencies in predicting students' academic success, Wentzel (1993) found that students' prosocial classroom behaviors were better predictors of academic achievement than were their standardized test scores, even after taking into account academic behavior, teachers' preferences for students, IQ, family structure, sex, ethnicity, and days absent from school. Similarly, in a longitudinal study of third graders, Caprara, Barbaranelli, Pastorelli, Bandura, and Zimbardo (2000) found that prosocialness, (cooperating, helping, sharing, consoling) significantly predicted academic achievement 5 years later, even after controlling for third-grade academic achievement. In contrast, early academic achievement did not contribute significantly to later achievement after controlling for effects of early prosocialness. Collectively, these correlational studies, along with several others described in the articles in this special issue (e.g., Jones

et al., 2019/*this issue*), demonstrate the importance of SE competencies in predicting both short-term and long-term success—including high school graduation, college completion, and employment (e.g., Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015).

Emerging research points to the salience of social and emotional skills in predicting a wide range of life outcomes, including academic achievements. Moreover, a fundamental mission of schools is to educate students to master essential content areas such as reading, writing, math, and science. In addition to these basic academic skills, however, most educators, parents, students, and the public at large support a more comprehensive agenda for education—one that includes promoting students' SE competence, empathy, and social responsibility (e.g., Bridgeland, Bruce, & Hariharan, 2013; Rose & Gallup, 2000). Indeed, current theory and research posit that a high-quality education should not only cultivate the intellectual skills of students; schools today also need to nurture the development of social and emotional skills, such as social awareness, self-regulation, self-awareness, and ethical decision-making—characteristics that will lead to meaningful employment and engaged citizenship (Greenberg, 2010).

In the face of current societal economic, environmental, and social challenges, the promotion of these “nonacademic” skills in education are seen as more critical than ever before, with business and political leaders urging schools to pay more attention to equipping students with what are often referred to as “twenty-first century skills” (Heckman, 2007; National Research Council, 2012) such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-regulation. For children to achieve their full potential as productive adult citizens in a pluralistic and democratic society, there must be explicit and intentional attention given to promoting social, emotional, and ethical education in schools. Equally, the notion of engaged citizenship and democracy are central to the arguments put forth by Jagers, Rivas-Drake, and Williams (2019/*this issue*) calling for critical examination of the root causes of racial and economic inequities in order to catalyze individual and collective actions in young people and adults.

## SE Competencies Are Malleable—They Can Be Taught and Assessed

### *Malleability of SE Competencies*

The articles in this special issue collectively illuminate the empirical research demonstrating that SEL impacts students' success. One approach to promoting the well-being and success of our young people is to identify the cognitive and social emotional knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that are considered to be “malleable”—that is, those

that can be changed and promoted through education and other experiences. Groundbreaking new research has emerged during the last half of the 20th century that challenges these preexisting beliefs about the brain's malleability by demonstrating that the brain is changeable (or “plastic”) to experience across the life span (Baltes, Reuter-Lorenz, & Rösler, 2006; Diamond, 2012). Notably, recent innovations in neuroscience demonstrate that brain development fundamentally also requires social and emotional experiences—experiences that are active and safe and that are embedded in rich and meaningful relational environments (see Immordino-Yang et al., 2019/*this issue*). However, although the malleability of the brain can be changed by experience through the life span, there remain periods across human development for which the brain experiences is more actively changing, including the prenatal period through childhood, early adolescence, transition to parenthood, and old age. This information is particularly important when making decisions about SEL programing.

### *SE Competencies Can Be Taught*

As summarized by Jones et al. (2019/*this issue*), there are several meta-analyses demonstrating the impact of SEL programs on student competencies. Perhaps some of the most compelling evidence for the malleability of SE competencies comes from the meta-analysis conducted by Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) of 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 students from kindergarten through high school. Students in SEL programs, relative to students who did not receive an SEL program, were found to demonstrate significantly improved SE competencies, attitudes, and behavioral adjustment (increased prosocial behavior and decreased conduct problems and internalizing problems). SEL students also outperformed non-SEL students on indices of academic achievement by 11 percentile points. Durlak et al. also found that classroom teachers and other school personnel effectively implemented SEL programs. Thus, SEL programs can be easily incorporated into routine school practices and do not require staff from outside the school for successful delivery. Taken together, these results provide strong empirical evidence for the “value-added” of SEL programs in fostering students' social and emotional skills, attitudes, and behaviors, and also counter the claim that taking time to promote students' SEL would be detrimental to academic achievement. Moreover, recent evidence also demonstrates that SEL programing is durable and has long-term effectiveness (Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).

Jones et al. (2019/*this issue*), in their summary of program effects, highlight the great deal of variation across

intervention research with some findings showing consistent positive effects across studies and others not replicating effects. They point to an important topic for which there needs to be increased attention in evaluations of SEL programs: the degree to which certain subgroups of children are more or less likely to benefit from universal SEL prevention programs. Using the example of the evaluation of the 4Rs prevention program, Jones et al. argue for “a next generation of questions about the intersection of universal, population wide effects and those observed for key subgroups” (p. 131). Such an approach underlines the importance of research–practice partnerships to assist in the identification of key strategies and approaches for classrooms and schools. Moreover, some effects may be variable because of the theories that underlie the interventions and ways in which the program is durable. Following along this line, Brackett et al. (2019/this issue) put forth compelling evidence about the importance of system-wide SEL integration that is informed from theory that is comprehensive and multi-level. Their system-wide approach moves beyond the theory of change underlying many other SEL programs.

One line of inquiry relatively absent in much of the extant research evaluating the effectiveness of SEL programming and not addressed by the articles in this special issue is the degree to which SEL programs can “get under the skin” and influence biomarkers and health outcomes (see Greenberg et al., 2015, for a review). Although Immordino-Yang et al. (2019/this issue) point to the advances in neurobiology, including epigenetics, there is a paucity of research on these approaches in the SEL field. One study conducted Schreier, Schonert-Reichl, and Chen (2013) provides an illustration of an SEL program that includes volunteering can improve the cardiovascular health of adolescents. To determine whether adolescents who help others incur health benefits for themselves, Schreier et al. examined whether regular volunteering can reduce cardiovascular risk factors among adolescents. Analysis indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the volunteering group and the wait-list controls at baseline. Analysis for differences between groups at posttest showed that adolescents in the intervention “volunteering” group, compared to those adolescents in the wait-list control group, significantly reduced in their risk for cardiovascular disease. Specifically, adolescents who volunteered with elementary school children for 1 to 1½ hr a week for 10 weeks showed the greatest decreases in cardiovascular risk over time. In addition, among those adolescents in the volunteer group, higher postintervention empathic concern and altruistic behaviors were associated with lower levels of cardiovascular risk markers (adjusting for baseline values). These findings are particularly significant because they show that adolescents who engage in volunteering with elementary school

children not only help others but also benefit themselves in relation to their cardiovascular health.

An evaluation of the MindUP program—an SEL program that incorporates mindfulness—provides illustration of how an SEL program can influence stress physiology. In a randomized controlled trial of the MindUP program (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2015), four classes of early adolescents (in combined fourth and fifth graders,  $N=99$ ) were randomly assigned to receive the MindUP program versus the regular social responsibility school program. An active control group of children who received a business as usual (BAU) social responsibility program were used as a comparison. Group differences between MindUP and BAU conditions were assessed on multiple outcomes at pretest and posttest, including cognitive control tasks: executive functions, hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenocortical regulation (stress physiology), SE competence, and end-of-year math grades. Findings revealed that at posttest, children who received the MindUP program had demonstrated significantly better outcomes on the cognitive control tasks; on stress physiology; on reports of optimism, emotional control, empathy, perspective taking, prosocial goals, and mindful attention; and on levels of peer acceptance and prosocial behavior. Regarding academic-related outcomes, in comparison to the BAU group, MindUP participants had a significant increase in self-reported school self-concept and demonstrated a 15% gain in teacher-reported math achievement. It can be surmised that SEL programs not only can lead to improvements in behavior and school success but also have the potential to impact stress that could lead to lifelong positive health outcomes.

### *SE Competencies Can Be Assessed*

“What is not assessed, is not addressed” is a statement often made in the context of education and is one that McKown (2019/this issue) takes on in his extensive review of how students’ SE competencies can be assessed through an array of valid and reliable SEL assessments. As McKown notes, although the empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of SEL programs has flourished, one relatively neglected topic regards the assessment of SEL. Nonetheless, this is now changing. Indeed, CASEL has now established an SEL Assessment workgroup, which offers a series of briefs and an extensive compendium of SEL assessments (see <https://measuring-sel.casel.org/>)

McKown is at the forefront of this change, and he provides a cogent description of the five challenges and opportunities regarding the assessment of SEL:

- (a) balancing the priorities of assessment developers and educators;
- (b) ensuring that the inferences and decisions made from SEL assessment scores are supported by



evidence of the assessment's psychometric merit; (c) establishing conditions for SEL assessment and data use that maximize benefit while mitigating risks; (d) coordinating standards, programs, assessment, and professional learning; and (e) balancing highly focused assessments that, by design, do not vary in content or format, and the varied cultural contexts in which they may be used. (p. 205)

Although much work has been done, McKown offers some words of caution, one being whether SEL assessments will highlight inequalities and create stigma, which might lead to “new kinds of racial or gender gaps and associated deficits that unproductively echo a cultural narrative about inequalities” (p. 219). In this vein, it will be critical that those who develop a next generation of SEL assessment act responsibly, with a lens of social justice to prevent the reproduction of inequalities.

### *Explicit Attention to Context Is Foundational to the Promotion of SEL*

Effective SEL interventions and skill development should occur in an environment that is safe, caring, supportive, participatory, and well managed—an environment that supports students' development and provides opportunities for practicing the skills. As highlighted in the articles by Brackett et al. (2019/this issue) and Jones et al. (2019/this issue), communication styles, high-performance expectations, classroom structures and rules, school organizational climate, commitment to the academic success of all students, district policies, and parental and community involvement are all important components of an SEL approach in the learning context. Hence, in addition to focusing on specific instruction in social and emotional skills, SEL is a process of creating a school and classroom community that is caring, supportive, and responsive to students' needs.

Decades of research have shown that caring and supportive classroom and school contexts are foundational to the promotion of students' academic success, as well as their SE competence and well-being (Hamre & Pianta, 2010). Indeed, students can learn and thrive when they are in school and classroom contexts in which they feel safe, secure, connected, and cared for—contexts in which their SE competence and academic growth is nurtured and cultivated (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Moreover, effective SEL programs should include an ecobehavioral systems orientation (Weissberg, Caplan, & Sivo, 1989) in which teachers generalize the curriculum-based skills throughout the school day and support children's use and internalization of skills to support a positive classroom environment. This point is particularly emphasized by Brackett et al. (2019/this issue) in their description of the RULER Program.

Fundamentally, children and youth develop in the context of relationships. This notion of relationships and context is emphasized by all of the authors of the articles in this special issue. For instance, as noted by Immordino-Yang et al. (2019/this issue), the ways in which students experience these relationships across multiple contexts, including home, school, and community, influences their biological development, which in turn influences how “they live and think” (p. 188).

Nonetheless, as noted by Jagers et al. (2019/this issue), there are inequalities in the ways in which students experience the context of schooling. Missing in much of the extant literature on SEL as noted by Jagers et al. (2019/this issue) is an explicit focus on what they call *transformational SEL*—“aimed at educational equity—fostering more equitable learning environments and producing equitable outcomes for children and young people furthest from opportunity” (p. 163). The articles by Jagers et al. (2019/this issue) and Immordino-Yang et al. (2019/this issue) collectively underline the importance of creating equitable learning environments for promoting students' SE competence and well-being. For example, in their discussion of the various ways that environments that support the physiological preconditions for brain development, Immordino-Yang et al. highlight the importance of cultural well-being and delineate the research demonstrating that

the experience of discrimination—which can pose physical harm; unfair treatment; economic deprivation; stereotype threat; and lack of access to housing, green space, quality food, health care, and other basic needs—is a major source of stress undermining cognition and social-emotional well-being, with implications for health, brain development, and learning. (p. 191)

Schools by their very nature can be a source of stress and a mirror of the social inequalities that are present in society. One person at the forefront of this argument is Philip W. Jackson, a renowned expert in the field of education. Jackson (1968), in his landmark book *Life in Classrooms*, coined the phrase the “hidden curriculum,” described as “the pervasive moral atmosphere that characterizes schools. This atmosphere includes school and classroom rules, attitudes toward academics and extracurricular activities, the moral orientation of teachers and school administrators, and text materials” (Santrock, 1993, p. 452). The “hidden curriculum” then can be perceived as educating students according to their social class, race/ethnicity, and status, thereby reinforcing larger societal social inequalities. Hence, any attempt to implement “transformational SEL” and create equitable learning environments that integrate SEL must be cognizant of this pervasive “hidden curriculum” for real transformation to take place.

### *On the Horizon: Teacher Well-Being and Teacher Preparation*

Effective SEL interventions and skill development occurs when teachers possess the requisite social and emotional skills to create an environment that is safe, caring, supportive, and well managed and have the competencies and knowledge to effectively implement SEL programs. Teachers are the engine that drives SEL programs and practices in classrooms and school, and teachers' own SEL competence and well-being plays a critical role in influencing the learning context and the infusion of SEL into classrooms and schools (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013). Indeed, classrooms with warm teacher-child relationships facilitate deep learning among students (Merritt, Wanless, Rimm-Kaufman, Cameron, & Peugh, 2012), and when children feel comfortable with their teachers and peers, they are more willing to grapple with challenging material and persist at difficult learning tasks. Conversely, when teachers poorly manage the social and emotional demands of teaching, students demonstrate lower levels of performance and on-task behavior (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Hence, it is essential that efforts are made to support the development of teachers' SEL competencies to optimize their classroom performance and their ability to promote SEL in their students (Jennings & Frank, 2015).

#### *SEL and Teacher Well-Being*

*Classroom teaching ... is perhaps the most complex, most challenging, and most demanding, subtle, nuanced, and frightening activity that our species has ever invented. In fact, when I compared the complexity of teaching with that much more highly rewarded profession, "doing medicine," I concluded that the only time medicine even approaches the complexity of an average day of classroom teaching is in an emergency room during a natural disaster. — Lee Shulman (2004, p. 504)*

Why is it important to consider teacher well-being in discussions of the promotion of students' SEL? One reason comes from recent research showing that stress is contagious in the classroom. That is, when teachers are stressed, students are the collateral damage. Evidence of this comes from a recent large study-scale examining the relationship between classroom environments and students' mental health in more than 10,000 first-grade students and their teachers. More specifically, Milkie and Warner (2011) found that, in classrooms in which teachers reported higher levels of stress in the form of not having access to material resources and not feeling respected by their colleagues, higher numbers of students experienced higher levels of externalizing problems (e.g., arguing, fighting, impulsivity), interpersonal issues

(e.g., expressing emotions, resolving conflicts), and internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, sadness, low self-esteem). In addition, when teachers did not receive the support of colleagues, students also suffered.

More recent research lends support for stress contagion in the classroom and the potential detrimental role of teacher stress in predicting student well-being. Drawing from the stress-contagion framework, Oberle and Schonert-Reichl (2016) found that, after adjusting for differences in cortisol levels because of age, gender, and time of awaking, higher morning cortisol levels in students could be significantly predicted from higher levels of self-reported burnout of classroom teachers. Although these findings were correlational, this research was the first to show that teachers' occupational stress is linked to students' physiological stress regulation. What is not yet known is the direction of the stress contagion. That is, does teachers' burnout lead to higher levels of stress in students? Or do students who enter the classroom with higher levels of stress lead to increased teacher burnout? Only future research determining this causal relationship will lend further clarity to this relationship.

Research on teacher attrition provides some interesting insights into the value of understanding the ways in which social and emotional teaching and learning dimensions affect teachers. The evidence is now clear that teacher burnout and attrition is a major problem that poses a threat to efforts to improve teacher quality. According to a report from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (2007), teacher turnover costs the United States up to \$7 billion a year, with the negative impact of teacher turnover being greatest at low-performing, high-poverty, high-minority schools. Stress and poor emotion management rank as the primary reasons why teachers become dissatisfied with the profession and leave their positions (Darling-Hammond, 2001). Another contributing factor is student behavior (Ferguson, Frost, & Hall, 2012). One study, for instance, indicated that of the 50% of teachers who leave the field permanently, almost 35% report reasons related to problems with student discipline (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Problems with student discipline, classroom management, and student mental health emerge at the beginning of teachers' careers, and 1st-year teachers feel unprepared to manage their classroom effectively and are unable to recognize common mental health problems such as anxiety (Koller & Bertel, 2006; Siebert, 2005).

On a more positive note, data also suggest that when teachers receive training in the behavioral and emotional factors that impact teaching and learning in the classroom, they feel better equipped to propose and implement positive, active classroom management strategies that deter students' aggressive behaviors and promote a positive classroom learning climate (Alvarez, 2007). To understand the conditions under which the effective promotion



of students' SEL and development can occur, institutional factors that may impact SEL promotion need to be addressed. Therefore, an important issue is to what extent preservice teacher education provides the necessary information, coursework, and/or experiences that prepare teachers to address dimensions relevant to SEL, including information on theories and research on the social and emotional development and the knowledge and skills necessary for creating classroom learning contexts that are well managed and promote student mental health.

Reviewing the evidence linking teachers' SE competence and student outcomes, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) pointed to the importance of quality teacher–student relationships, and effective student and classroom management skills (as well as implementation dosage and fidelity) in obtaining the best outcomes for students. Accordingly, they recommend the development and implementation of interventions designed to specifically address teachers' SEL competencies, reduce teacher stress and burnout, and improve teacher well-being. Although limited, the past few years have seen the emergence of interventions specifically targeted at improving teachers' SEL and stress management. For example, two programs designed to promote teachers' SEL competence by incorporating mindfulness-based approaches are CARE (Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education) and SMART-in-Education (Stress Management and Resiliency Training). Mindfulness is typically described as an attentive, nonjudgmental, and receptive awareness of present moment experience in terms of feelings, images, thoughts, and sensations/perceptions (e.g., Kabat-Zinn, 1990). Both programs aim to increase teachers' mindfulness, job satisfaction, compassion and empathy for students, efficacy for regulating emotions, and decrease stress and burnout. Initial research to date has supported the effectiveness of both the CARE (Jennings et al., 2017; Jennings, Frank, Snowberg, Coccia, & Greenberg, 2013) and SMART-in-Education (e.g., Benn, Akiva, Arel, & Roeser, 2012; Roeser et al., 2013) programs in promoting teacher SEL competence and well-being. Nonetheless, further research is needed to examine whether such positive changes in teacher well-being spill over into the classroom and lead to improvements in students' SEL competence.

### *The Case for SEL in Preservice Teacher Education*

Jones et al. (2019/*this issue*) assert that a research agenda for the next generation include a better understanding of the ways in which the preparation of educators leads to high-quality implementation of SEL programming. How preservice teacher education programs can best prepare teachers with the background knowledge necessary to succeed in the teaching profession has become a recent topic among educators, policymakers, and the public at large.

Research on the extent to which preservice teacher education includes information and/or training directly in SEL is in a nascent stage (Schonert-Reichl, 2017; Schonert-Reichl, Hanson-Peterson, & Hymel, 2015). However, findings from a few recent studies provide a glimpse into the extent to which factors that provide the foundation for promoting students' SEL in classrooms and schools are routinely included in teacher preparation. For example, knowledge about classroom management is essential for all teachers because the promotion of students' SE competence is most effective when it occurs within a supportive learning environment that is safe, caring, participatory, and well-managed—an environment that supports a child's development and affords them opportunities for practicing SEL skills (Weissberg et al., 2015). Issues including communication styles, high performance expectations, classroom structures and rules, school organizational climate, commitment to the academic success of all students, teacher SE competence (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009), and openness to parental and community involvement are important components of effective classroom management in general and SEL in particular.

One dimension that is considered central to effective high-quality teaching and learning is teachers' knowledge and understanding of their students' social, emotional, and cognitive development (Daniels & Shumow, 2003; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Sarason, 2001). More than a decade of research tells us that teachers who have knowledge about child and adolescent development are better able to design and carry out learning experiences in ways that support student social, emotional, and academic competence and enhance student outcomes (Hamre & Pianta, 2010; Rimm-Kaufman & Hamre, 2010). Associations between successful social relationships in schools (i.e., student–teacher relationships and peer relationships) and positive social and academic outcomes have also been documented (Wentzel, 2003).

Analyses of educational curricula confirm that preservice education programs are not adequately preparing teachers to deal with student social, emotional, and behavioral problems (SEB). State, Kern, Starosta, and Mukherjee (2011) collected and examined the content of syllabi in required educational courses of U.S. preservice teacher elementary preparation programs. They found that 42 of the 80 syllabi examined did not include *any* content related to students' SEB, and most of the other required courses provided very limited coverage. For example, relatively little class time was devoted to teaching student teachers how to identify student problems and/or how to promote SEL in students. With regard to course topics, among 38 syllabi, only eight focused on classroom management, six included information on the characteristics and identification of emotional and behavioral disorders,

and only two included information on children's social and emotional development.

With regard to the total amount of class time spent on the various SEB topics, State et al. (2011) estimated that an average of 168 min was spent discussing possibly useful interventions, whereas an average of 57 min was allocated to classroom management topics. For example, State et al. estimated that an average of only 16 min was spent discussing characteristics or identification of students with SEB problems, including psychiatric disorders, and an average of only 7 min of class time was spent on social-emotional development. Slightly less than 1 hr was spent on classroom management. Overall, State et al. (2011) found that across all the required coursework that students received in the typical teacher education program, there was on average of only 6 hr 50 min that was devoted to issues related to understanding, identifying, and managing students' problematic behaviors and promoting their social and emotional development. Obviously, the preparation of new teachers varies considerably on these topics. Some teachers receive no formal preparation at all, whereas others may receive quite a bit.

Although, as documented earlier, there is a plethora of recent research to support action to address the SE competencies of teachers (Jones, Bouffard, & Weissbourd, 2013) and their students (Durlak et al., 2011), research that addresses the degree to which teacher preparation programs equip teacher candidates with the necessary knowledge base and skills for the promotion of SEL is absent. To address this, Schonert-Reichl, Kitil, and Hanson-Peterson (2017) conducted a scan of SEL of courses in colleges of education teacher preparation programs in the United States. This was the first comprehensive scan ever conducted of SEL content in preservice teacher education programs.

After conducting a detailed content analysis of 3,916 required courses in teacher preparation program in 304 colleges of education in the United States (representing 30% of all colleges in the United States), Schonert-Reichl et al. found that few teacher education programs included any content on the five SEL competencies outlined by CASEL. Specifically, 13% had at least one course that included information on relationship skills, 7% for responsible decision-making, 6% for self-management, 2% for social awareness, and approximately 1% for self-awareness. However, although the scan revealed the presence of SEL content in the descriptions of courses on the websites of colleges of education, there is no way of actually knowing the *specific content* covered in the courses reviewed or the *quality* of that content. Hence, future research efforts should seek to design studies using mixed methodologies that include both quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a more complete picture of the precise nature of SEL efforts in teacher preparation.

Although the field has far to go, there are some emerging examples of teacher preparation programs that are now incorporating theory, research, and practical application of SEL into preservice education. For example, faculty at San Jose State University in the Collaborative for Reaching and Teaching the Whole Child (<http://reachandteachthewholechild.org/>) are committed to embedding the social-emotional dimension of teaching and learning into their teacher preparation program. Preservice courses that have been revised to embed the SEL lens include math and science methods and classroom management. Moreover, the faculty at San Jose State are not only focusing on embedding SEL into coursework but also developed an observation protocol with an SEL lens for mentor teachers and university supervisors to use when observing preservice teachers during their student teaching.

In the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia, Canada, SEL has been explicitly integrated into a postbaccalaureate 12-month teacher preparation program. Specifically, one of the nine options available to the approximately 400 elementary preservice teacher education students is the "Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)" cohort (comprising approximately 36 students each year). Within this program, teacher candidates take the regular teacher education program with a special emphasis on SEL. Throughout all of their coursework, teacher candidates not only learn about current research and theory on SEL but also are provided with explicit training and opportunities for implementing SEL evidence-based programs and practices into classrooms during their student teaching practicum. There is even an "SEL Program" library in the Faculty of Education that includes a wide variety of SEL programs, which teacher candidates can review and integrate into their coursework and student teaching. Practicum placements provide opportunities for teacher candidates to integrate SEL programs and practices into the classroom and curriculum. Moreover, in addition to explicit attention to SEL within this unique "SEL cohort," all teacher candidates, both elementary and secondary, are provided with specific coursework and active learning approaches for creating safe, caring, and participatory classroom and school environments (see <http://teach.educ.ubc.ca/bachelor-of-education-program/elementary/>).

## CONCLUSION

As illustrated by the articles in this special issue, although much work has been done in the past decade to advance our understanding of the science and practice of SEL, much work still needs to be done (Jones, Farrington, Jagers, & Brackett, 2019). As you read the articles in this special issue, the hope is that you are both inspired by the magnitude of the work that is being done in the field of

SEL and inspired to join the movement in education and science to seek a clearer scientific understanding of the ways in SEL can foster the development of the skills and dispositions necessary for students and educators in the 21st century. We invite you to travel with us on this road to creating a world in which all individuals can experience flourishing and where all individuals are concerned with the equal rights of all other individuals to that same flourishing.

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