The Status and Promise of Social-Emotional and Character Development for Students via the Arts

Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.

Dept. of Psychology, Rutgers University
Dir., Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab
(www.secdlab.org) @SECDLab

Co-Director, The Academy for Social-Emotional Learning in Schools (SELinSchools.org) @SELinSchools

maurice.elias@rutgers.edu
www.edutopia.org/profile/maurice-j-elias

Presentation at ArtsEd NJ, FEA
November 11, Monroe NJ
Current and Future Artists at Rest
All Youth Need Social-Emotional Literacy

- We must systematically prepare all educators--teachers, administrators, and support staff--to implement many literacies.
- SEL is a set of skills and dispositions/essential life habits,
- SEL is best built developmentally with intentionality, focus, and continuity,
- SEL instruction can occur in schools, the place to reach children systematically, and
- SEL skills underlie accomplishment in academics, civics, workplace, and artistic arenas.
The Sun is Rising for SEL 2.0 (SECD)
A movement dedicated to children’s social, emotional, and academic well-being is reshaping learning and changing lives across America. On the strength of its remarkable consensus, a nation at risk is finally a NATION AT HOPE.
The NJ State Board of Education Has Adopted the CASEL SEL Competencies

- Recognize one’s emotions, values, strengths, and limitations
- Manage emotions and behaviors to achieve one’s goals
- Make ethical, constructive choices about personal and social behavior
- Form positive relationships, work in teams, deal effectively with conflict
- Show understanding and empathy for others
- Form positive relationships, work in teams, deal effectively with conflict
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Life Success
- Responsible decision making

CASEL Video: 5 Keys to SEL
True academic and life success integrates the intellectual, emotional, social, and artistic facets of learning. These are inextricably interconnected.

Habits of mind, eye, & ear, and patterns of thinking that include imagination, curiosity, explaining reasoning & products, feedback processes, asking questions, defining & solving problems, and striving to communicate clearly, creatively, and proudly.

“Simply passing the accountability assessment is not enough for them to navigate this complex world.”

(Metz Elementary Principal)
We Know the Benefits of Systematic SECD

Good Science Links SECD to the Following Student Gains:

- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
- 10-11 percentile-point gains on standardized achievement tests

And Reduced Risks for Failure:

- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

"This is our time," asserts Tim Shriver, an educator, advocate and Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning board chairman. "When you look at what's going to make the country stronger, restore or rebuild the fabric of citizenship and service, reduce anxiety and fear, and promote competition and creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit — it's not politics or business or entertainment. It's education."

Social and emotional learning and character development have been on the education priority list for decades but are getting a new attention thanks to:

1. Increasing business demand for interpersonal skills. Employers want people who can communicate and interact well with others, but many US workers lack these skills, according to research from LinkedIn. "Communications is the No. 1 skills gap across those major cities in the United States," says LinkedIn CEO Jeff Weiner in an interview with CNBC's "SquawkBox."

2. Mounting scientific evidence that suggests success in school and life is dependent on healthy social and emotional development, including the ability to understand and manage emotions, according a report by The Aspen Institute.

3. Growing realization that this is not a minority or low socioeconomic status issue. "Today, the most elite independent private schools are looking for social and emotional learning programs in the same way most challenged urban high schools are," Shriver says. SEL is not relegated to class or status; it impacts students from all walks of life.
SEL 2.0: We Need an Integration of Social-Emotional Competence and Character

MOSAIC

Mastering Our Skills And Inspiring Character

If Skills are the propellers, and Virtues are the rudder, Inspiration is the catalyst. The Journey of Life requires them all.
We Must Turn Jumbled Schoolhouses into Places that Synergistically Promote Social-Emotional and Character Development (SECD) and Nurture Civility and Service.
What Does SECD Look Like in Schools:
A Confluence of Skills and Classroom and School Environments

- Evidence-Based SEL/Character Programming to Support the Whole Child
- Teach Pro-Health, Anti Substance, Anti-Bullying, Pro-Civic and Service Competencies
- Opportunities for Positive Contributions, Recognition, and A Sense of Purpose And Pride in Being Part of the School
- Less Risky Behavior, More Assets, & Positive Development
- Greater Attachment, Engagement, & Commitment to School: Role of the Arts
- Better Academic Performance and Success in School and Life

- Safe, Caring, Cooperative, Well-Managed Learning Environments
We Are All Artists—Or Should Be

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.” Pablo Picasso

Artist

• a person who **produces paintings or drawings** as a profession or hobby.
• a person who **practices any of the various creative arts**, such as a sculptor, novelist, poet, or filmmaker.
• a person **skilled at a particular task or occupation**: a surgeon who is an artist with the scalpel.
• a **performer**, such as a singer, actor, musician, or dancer.
Why are We Concerned about SEL and the Arts?

“When you think about the purposes of education, there are three. We’re preparing kids for jobs. We’re preparing them to be citizens. And we’re teaching them to be human beings who can enjoy the deeper forms of beauty. The third is as important as the other two.”

Tom Horne, Ariz. Supt. of Public Instruction (2009)
Read the Pictures First!
Art is Equity

• “Art reaches a segment of children who have not found their way in another specialty. If we can help those kids find themselves in any way possible, then we’ve helped this generation get that much further along in how they will eventually contribute to society.”

Heather Becker, Chicago Conservation Center CEO, February 2009 (Greater Good, p. 30)
John Pitman Weber, TILT (Together Protect the Community), 1976
The True Common Core

“What is the quality of the core skill set with which we hope to- and must- equip future generations? Will it be a tool kit designed for the performance of simple tasks? Or will it promote instead the sort of flexible, imagination, and critical thinking that is required to grappled with the complex and ever-shifting challenges posed by the contemporary world?”

Jeffrey Schnapp (Greater Good, 2009)
For news of the heart, ask the face. –Guinea
For news of the heart, ask the face. –Guinea
The Larger Picture: SEL Skills Attune Students for Success in Creating, Performing/Presenting, Responding, Connecting

- Purpose and Other Virtues
- Empathy
- Self-Awareness
- Group Relationship Skills
- Emotion Regulation
- Ethical Problem Solving

Literacy in the Arts
The Arts Advance our Emotional Intelligence, for Self and Other

“We need the arts because they remind children that their emotions are equally worthy of respect and expression. *The arts introduce children to connectivity, engagement, and allow a sense of identification with, and responsibility for, others.*”

- Jessica Hoffman Davis, author of *Why Our Schools Need the Arts*, in Greater Good Interview, 2009, p. 19
Examples of Arts-SECD Integration

• **Create Your Own Version of Virtue/Values Linked Art: Four Freedoms; Social Action Songs**

• **Samples:** [www.secdlab.org/supplemental-lessons-1](http://www.secdlab.org/supplemental-lessons-1)

• **Look at expressing the artist’s purpose as a problem-solving process**

• **Using artwork to engage Character concepts: Laws of Life**
The Arts Foster Nuanced Civic Awareness

“Arts experiences boost critical thinking, teaching students to take the time to be more careful and thorough in how they observe the world”

(*Education Week, Dec. 2014, p. 24*)

Observing, analyzing, and understanding art and its production and context build many competencies but also promote a sense of common humanity....
A Fair Wind (Breezing Up), 1876, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
In Memory and Honor of Tom Schuyler
Building the Youth of Our Future
Promoting the Arts in an Age of Academics Requires Relentless Courage of Character

“Don’t let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do.”

John Wooden

“The children are waiting.”

Ted Sizer
Contact Information

• Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D., Rutgers University
• Director, Rutgers Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab  
  (www.secdlab.org)
• Co-Director, Academy for Social-Emotional Learning (SELinSchools.org)
  • Maurice.Elias@rutgers.edu and www.edutopia.org/profile/maurice-j-elias