FLY FIVE[1]
and Improved Academic Outcomes

Social and emotional learning transforms education. In order for students to be academically, socially, and behaviorally successful in school and beyond, they need to develop skills in the five core social and emotional competencies of cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (C.A.R.E.S.). When students are able to learn in classrooms that support not only their academic learning but also their social and emotional learning, they thrive. They learn more, and that learning lasts. Their motivation and achievement grow, they are more connected to their communities, and they stand up for themselves and for each other.

However, when schools and educators feel pressure to increase students' academic performance, they frequently respond by trying to focus all of their time and energy on academic learning, making sure that every possible moment is spent on academic pursuits. While it might seem logical that more time on learning would lead to higher test scores and improved achievement, that's actually not what has the greatest effect on student performance. Student progress is often measured by IQ and achievement test scores, which are less predictive of future success than metrics that include SEL skills, such as educational attainment (Levin 2012). It's when academic, social, and emotional learning (A+SEL) connect that students experience greater success in school and beyond (Duckworth and Schoon 2010).

How do you measure student success?

One of the most effective predictors of success later in life is not standardized test scores but rather social and emotional competence. Research has borne this out time and time again. In 2011, a meta-analysis of 213 studies involving more than 270,000 students showed that the academic

performance of students receiving SEL interventions that focused on the five core SEL competencies increased by 11 percentile points compared to students who did not participate in such programs (Durlak et al., 2011). A 2015 study revealed statistically significant correlations between kindergartners' SEL competencies and their well-being and success as young adults many years later, showing that just a single year of SEL intervention can have a lasting effect (Jones et al., 2015).

In 2017, another comprehensive study analyzed the results of more than 80 different interventions impacting more than 97,000 K-12 students. Not only did the academic performance of the students who received SEL instruction show dramatic improvement--an average of 13 percentile points higher than the control group of peers who had not received SEL instruction--but that level of improvement remained more than three years after the last intervention (Taylor et al., 2017).

If the impact of SEL interventions stopped with improved academic performance in the short term, that would be impressive enough. What school wouldn't say yes to a solution that reliably raises student academic performance by a double-digit percentage? But SEL instruction benefits students and schools in even more ways. In addition to higher student achievement, SEL interventions are shown to improve behavior in the classroom, increase students' ability to handle stress and depression, and enhance their perceptions of themselves, their peers, and their school (Durlak et al., 2011). Outside of school, students who received SEL interventions showed positive results up to 18 years after their final SEL intervention, with lower instances of drug use, emotional distress, and conduct issues compared to the control groups (Taylor et al., 2017).

The list of positive correlations from explicit SEL instruction seems almost limitless: higher motivation, stronger identity development, deeper learning, higher test scores, better graduation rates, success in college and career, more engaged citizenship, and better overall well-being (NCSEAD, 2018). Importantly, these positive effects are not limited to certain students in particular schools. Similar effects have been seen at all school levels and across all types of schools, with results demonstrated consistently regardless of students' race, socioeconomic status, and school location (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017). When SEL interventions are implemented in schools, all students benefit for years to come.

How are SEL and academic performance connected?

Why does spending time explicitly teaching and practicing skills related to the five core SEL

competencies of cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control have such a remarkable effect on academic performance? Because those competencies don't only build social and emotional skills--they are also connected to crucial cognitive skills and abilities that are directly related to high academic performance in school and success later in life.

For example, when students build assertiveness skills like seeking help and persisting through challenges, they are able to grow their self-awareness and self-confidence so they know how to handle challenging situations (Aronson, 2002). Developing responsibility skills like holding themselves accountable and making prudent decisions means that students are more likely to commit to studying, completing homework, and fulfilling their academic obligations (Zins & Elias, 2006). Self-control skills like managing overwhelming feelings, controlling impulses, and showing perseverance support students in handling stress, focusing on important tasks, and attaining goals, all skills that support strong academic performance (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Elliot & Dweck, 2005). In addition, research tells us building these skills through SEL programs activates the prefrontal cortex and positively affects executive function skills--the cognitive processes that allow us to plan, focus, remember, and balance multiple tasks

(Greenberg, 2006).

Of course, there is more that goes into achieving high academic performance than simply building strong skills. Many studies have shown that certain conditions must be in place to support learning, including safe and predictable school communities, positive student behavior, active and engaging teaching approaches in classrooms, strong student-teacher relationships, and high expectations for all students (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Hawkins et al., 2004; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The effects of implementing an SEL curriculum are seen not only at the individual level of student skill development, but also at the teacher, classroom, and school levels as relationships, expectations, and communities are strengthened. It is the combination of explicit skill-building in the context of strong learning environments that creates the conditions for both short-term and long-term positive effects for students (Catalano et al., 2002; Schaps et al., 2004).

What do you need to teach SEL?

Explicit instruction in social and emotional skills may be the most impactful thing teachers can do in their classrooms. It's clear that cultivating SEL skills is vital for success in and out of the classroom (Jones & Doolittle, 2017), and to effectively leverage the

opportunities of social and emotional learning for all students, teachers need two vital resources.

First, they need access to a developmentally appropriate, research-based curriculum that is both aligned to explicit standards and robust enough to act as a fifth core curriculum. While SEL curriculums in one form or another have existed for some time, until recently they tended to fall far short of the time explicit SEL instruction deserves in the classroom. In fact, in a recent nationwide survey, four out of five teachers indicated that more classroom support for SEL instruction was necessary for effective instruction (NCSEAD 2019).

Second, teachers need support in cultivating and maintaining their own social and emotional competence and well-being. In a recent Gallup poll on occupational stress, teachers and nurses tied for the highest reported levels of daily stress (Schonert-Reichl, 2017)—and that was before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 took its toll (Levinson et al., 2020). Teacher stress and emotional regulation are important for a range of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that teachers' SEL competencies are linked to students' SEL outcomes.

According to Jones and Bouffard (2012), teachers who have strong social-emotional competence themselves are better able to build strong relationships with students,

manage their classrooms successfully, and teach SEL skills effectively. Educators who intentionally develop their own social and emotional competence can better assess their own strengths and areas for growth and then go on to effectively influence student learning (Patti et al., 2015).

The opportunity for professional development specifically in SEL increases teachers' awareness of their own social and emotional competence and their confidence as instructional leaders of SEL. Learning more about SEL also empowers them to plan, set, and hold expectations for instruction that develops SEL skills. Adults who have developed their own SEL competence can set the expectation for adult behavior and modeling of social-emotional competence.

How does Fly Five work?

Center for Responsive Schools, one of the most veteran SEL organizations in the country, responded to this documented need for a robust social-emotional learning curriculum that supports teacher professional growth in addition to student success by developing Fly Five: The Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum (K-8). The Fly Five lessons are intentionally designed to be easy to follow and implement so that teachers can place their attention on the important work of noticing a student's academic, social, and emotional growth and

progress and creating conditions for that progress to continue.

Fly Five's daily lessons are aligned to the five C.A.R.E.S. competencies, with each grade level curriculum comprising five units with four themes based on SEL standards that are in turn aligned with the C.A.R.E.S. competencies R. All lessons identify objectives for the teacher and the students and provide all the information teachers need to lead the instruction. In addition, each lesson is designed to facilitate discussion, support teachers in monitoring student interaction, and provide interactive learning structures for active and interactive learning, all with guidance provided for the teacher on how to implement each of these strategies. Each lesson culminates with a reflection that is used as a formative assessment.

In addition, each unit has a School-to-Home Connection newsletter that includes information and flexible SEL activities for families and caregivers to incorporate outside the classroom. Each grade level curriculum also includes The Mindful Student lessons, which are a set of mindfulness lessons aligned to the lesson objectives that can be used at any point throughout the day. In fact, all of the lessons can be adapted to meet the needs of a school's context and schedule, with teachers using formative assessments and their observations of the students to guide instruction.

The Fly Five curriculum includes ten hours of professional development every year for educators to learn more about social-emotional learning and build their own competence. There's even a tool for teachers to use to gauge their own tendencies with cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control. The Social and Emotional Type Inventory, or SETI, is a typology inventory intended to help adults identify areas of strength and growth in their social and emotional competence. SETI responses identify the user as a member of one of four SEL family types (Creators, Harmonizers, Administrators, Movers), each of which has eight members, for a total of 32 social and emotional types. Unlike a personality typology, one's SETI type is not fixed, so teachers take the SETI once a year. It is expected that the profile will change over time as one's SEL competence grows and develops. The most effective teachers of SEL are ones who practice it themselves!

Where do we go from here?

We know that students need social and emotional competence to be successful in school and out of school, and learning SEL skills in the classroom is the most effective way to cultivate them (Goleman, 1996; Durlak et al., 2011; Rimm-Kaufman & Chiu, 2007). Just like academic skills—decoding a

word, writing a paragraph, dividing fractions—children need the time and space to observe, learn, and practice SEL skills. Their growth in SEL competence over time will strengthen their academic achievement and contribute significantly to their future success in all areas of life. And it can all start with learning more about research-based, standards-aligned, developmentally responsive SEL curriculums like Fly Five.

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