# What should an academic leader do?

## Blue Sky Paper on Social and Emotional Learning

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Academic leaders are much more than facilitators of pacing guides for textbook curriculum. Such experts not only have the skill and instructional know-how to build curriculum, they also have the capacity to develop teacher-leaders as co-designers of customized and localized contexts for learning. While it is possible for school leaders to address curriculum in a random fashion, that is, respond the 'next' initiative from above, educators can be systematic and proactive about teaching and learning in school settings.

### Why Academic Leaders Address SEL

There are many disciplines an academic leader cannot ignore. While there is limited shelf space in many school schedules for social and emotional learning (SEL), it should not be an option. It can be argued that each distinct form of intelligence contributes to the overall 'whole' of one's intelligence. Given that Gardner (1985) identified both personal (intrapersonal) and social (interpersonal) intelligences, it is unfortunate that many schools do not teach explicit courses in social and emotional learning. Such a gap in programming could diminish each student's overall intellectual return.

While schools need to be responsive to students, we also need to be proactive about supporting positive conditions for mental health. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services identified loneliness as part of a list of risk factors that lead to premature mortality. As Holt-Lunstad, Smith, Baker, Harris & Stephenson (2015) noted: "A substantial body of research has also elucidated the psychological, behavioral, and biological pathways by which social isolation and loneliness lead to poorer health and decreased longevity" (p. 235). What are the concrete actions happening in schools that address loneliness? How is reducing loneliness a deliberate part of school curriculum? It's not enough to feel empathetic for a short burst of attention in an assembly or a discussion of a literary character in ELA. A sense of belonging is an important cultural feature of a caring school.

At the high school level, the need to build in themes of resilience, adaptation, and employability skills, as well as exposure to disciplines, such as psychology and sociology, can increase the depth and breadth of a social and emotional learning course offer. Tragically, the passionate and exceptionally articulate group of students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas school have recently put society on notice. The strength of their commitment to support a ban on rapid fire weapons after the horrific shooting at their school, represented a serious force for change. They stood up and made us aware that students could have a say. While the 'enough' of violence campaign rallied behind the goal of abolishing assault rifles, few spoke of the size of the school (over 2000) as a possible contributor to the problem. It seems more likely that young disenfranchised and angry students are part of larger schools. Could the frequency of shootings diminish with more inclusive cultures so all students could feel a sense of belonging? The academic leader

needs to think beyond the puzzle of curriculum scope and sequence and challenge the 'bigness' of the school context that can get in the way of learning and belonging.

There are clear connections between mental health and social and emotional learning. "We need to make more room in the curriculum for mental health, if only to address the compelling data of increased depression and suicide rates." Often supported by well-intentioned community advocates, there is a rush to create separate curriculum to deal with issues of bullying, eating disorders, drug education… Rather than address the underlying mental health issues in a proactive way, the short term burst of attention in a reactive approach, leaves the learning disconnected from a comprehensive school health and SEL program. Cyberbullying, for instance should be addressed in every school, but without fitting into the larger program promoting mental health, the potency of moving knowledge to attitudes and positive behaviors can be limited. Figure 1 reveals some compelling cyberbullying research, to date.

Figure 1: Cyberbullying Research

| Findings | Researchers |
|---|---|
| Those cyberbullied have less ability to make bullying stop…effect of permanence can make it challenging to erase information on the Internet | Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005 |
| Cyberbullies are more likely to have anxiety, depression, less life satisfaction, less self-esteem, and face drug and alcohol abuse | Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014 |
| Cyberbullies and their targets report less school satisfaction and achievement | Bernan & Li, 2007 |
| Cyberbullies can have a lack of confidence or desire to feel better about themselves, a desire for control, find it entertaining, and enjoy retaliation | Hamm, Newton, & Chisholm, 2015 |
| Targets of cyberbullying have greater chance of becoming bullies…being cyberbullied can lead to revenge bullying as way to cope…vicious cycle | Arslan, Savaser, Hallett, & Balci, 2012 |
| Because cyberbullying can occur anonymously, cyberbullies can act more aggressively as they feel there will be no consequences…often resulting in further aggression | Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014 |

(adapted from http://www.pacer.org/bullying/resources/cyberbullying/). In Smith (2018).

Costs related to mental illness have skyrocketed over the past few decades; it, therefore, makes sense that while families will teach values at home, we should also rely on schools to be proactive about social and emotional learning. People, who view personal and social learning as a collection of soft skills, are naïve to the reality that healthy lifestyles predispose students to positive learning conditions.

***All Can Achieve***

Regardless of the school or class size, all students need to feel they can learn what is being taught. Classrooms that focus on right answers miss rich opportunities for learning. Mistakes

should be a welcomed learning tool and confidence builder, not a confidence shatter-er. Tests can be opportunities for learning when students can be re-tested on sections that required re-learning and re-teaching. Sadly, the pressure to succeed on the SAT test, which subtracts wrong from right answers, can be devastating for so many young people. Ranking with a bell curve means that at least half of the participants will be crushed by their results. Multiple-choice test with built-in trick answers to sway students away from the 'most correct' answer are also looks that erode confidence. Such standardized test approaches are rooted within fixed mindsets, decision-makers who believe the quick data grab, will ease admission decisions. On the one hand, educators are required to differentiate their teaching, and demonstrate a growth mindset, yet students are measured with a fixed yardstick. We preach "not yet", recognizing that young people are not on the same page at the same time, but glorifying winners "fastest to the right answer" is what seems to be more in fashion these days. We can change the way we address learning for ALL.

There are ways to "wait for it" and ensure mastery verses being in the rush hour of a fact-finding, narrow and exclusive learning culture. Classrooms can be organized as multi-age experiences where students can work at their own pace, and '*leave no learning behind'*. Teachers can differentiate their teaching so that ALL students learn, not at the same time, but when they are ready. Boys, who often lag behind girls in achievement in elementary grades, can have more time to master concepts before moving on. I've opened two multi-age schools, where teachers work with students at multiple levels at the same time. In both situations, we created an innovative report card, where students scored A, B's or "Not Yets", borrowed from Carol Dweck's work on growth mindsets. By not giving students an opportunity to score C's and D's, this did not mean that learning was easy. Students (and teachers) were both responsible for figuring out a way for students to master at least 80% of something before moving on. The task of really knowing something remained on their bucket list until they could demonstrate mastery. The idea of learning for ALL, not ALL learning at the exact same time. is much more educationally sound.

In classrooms dedicated to ALL learners, students regularly self-assess their work. They learn to be aware of their strengths and limitations and have a clear sense of what they should be doing when the teacher is not present. Some schools choose to support student-directed activity while other schools promote student compliance in teacher-directed classrooms. Often, social and emotional learning is addressed as a way of controlling students. Some classrooms post 'codes of conducts' emphasizing what not to do, while others list positive ways to learn and interact with others. There are truckloads of books on how to 'signal' students to stay on task, but fewer resources that focus on meaningful and challenging activities. As Alfie Kohn noted: "Maybe when a student is off task, the right question to ask isn't "How do I get him back on?" but "What's the task?" Social and emotional learning should not be the curriculum of classroom management. A sense of belonging fuels a strong culture for learning. Some schools build an accepting culture, while others are satisfied when community members simply tolerate one another. Schools that value social and emotional learning teach acceptance, not tolerance.

## *Critical and Creative Thinking*

Many way not be aware that social and emotional learning can be a viable context for learning

and applying critical and creative thinking. Different forms of inquiry whether problem-based or project-based learning can use authentic SEL contexts. An inquiry experience is much more than asking questions. Students can become independent action researchers with the proper inquiry support. In one high school class, we had students research different colleges and create and defend their own ranking schemes.

Parents and students can also engage in extended project work together. Vygotsky speaks of helping learners be in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by designing instruction for novice users of language to adopt more expert use of language. In the classroom setting, it can be difficult for teachers to find time to work with students in a 1:1 scenario. Given that classes can have excess of 20-30 students, it can be difficult to provide individual attention on a regular basis. In Middleburg, we initiated *Family Leo Projects* to give parents a chance to be co-learners with their children. As they read about and discussed their projects, students had extended opportunities to speak about what they were learning on a regular basis. Homework shifted to primarily a home study, not something for parents to supervise, but rather, celebrate and model being a learner with their children. We often think that curiosity is a personal thing, but it can also be a social experience. Imagine what can happen when parents and young people explore the world together. Co-investigation at home can be much more meaningful than completing boring worksheets. Some examples of projects include: creating a planet; designing a family flag; developing a 51$^{st}$ American state or a new Canadian province; publishing a book of billions; a book of 'parts'; and creating your own insect. In the past, students would have to hide parent help on projects, even though much that went home – was touched by varying degrees by many parents. In the Family Project scenario, the weighting of student involvement did vary, but that's okay because the 'exhibitions' served as sources of inspiration for the next round of projects. There is no assessment – or competition associated with this activity – merely a focus on – and permission for parents to be fully involved in a project. Such an experience does not replace students reading aloud or being read to on a regular basis at home – but it gives a focused direction for reading of non-fiction, which sometimes requires a bit of help to get past technical language. In this way, having a parent on board, helps students with vocabulary development.

While Blooms Taxonomy stresses creativity as the highest form of learning, Glaser & Strauss (1967) pointed out that teaching others requires one to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create, but also have an impact on others. Peer teaching is much more than presenting to fellow students. Ideally, it takes place in a multi-age setting, usually when older students work with younger students. An effective peer teaching experience means that others gain a deeper understanding from the peer teaching experience. To teach, students understand and use not only the language of the subject matter as an expert, but also use the language and practices of teaching to further consolidate their own understanding. It is impossible to peer teach well without the capacity to form relationships with others, so including peer teaching within social and emotional learning classes makes good sense.

Examining media messages for truth requires the capacity to critically analyze perspective and understand the credibility of sources. There are so many personal, social, health and political facts that require back-checking before purchasing products or voting in civic elections. Without the capacity to critically examine for truth and the will to be truthful, it can be difficult to establish integrity. On the one hand, young people expect their peers and adults to do as they say,

but sometimes, there can be a double standard when it comes to cheating. It's alarming to read about the widespread occurrence of cheating happening in some schools.
According to Lynch (2017):

> In today's K-12 classrooms, students who cheat are rarely caught. There are no formulas written on in the insides of hands or students looking across the aisle, or whispering answers to their classmates. Today's students use smartphones, tablets or even in-class computers to aid their cheating endeavors and leave no trace of their crimes. Since cheating through technology is not listed specifically as being against the rules in many school policies, students do not view the actions an unethical.

Building a reputation of integrity based on ethical actions can happen at home and at school. Learning about community service heroes can help young people think about making good choices that build their integrity. In one elementary school, I integrated the context of a charity with a ELA writing task. Figure 4 describes the 'find and advocate for a cause' activity:

Figure 4: Description of Service Learning Letter Writing Inquiry

> We began by listening to video accounts of a dozen nominees for CNN's annual tribute to heroes. Students were given the option to send in their votes prior to the selection. Reading these biographies were incredibly inspirational. We then spent time searching the web for causes that the students felt strongly about. Their goal was to gather at least twenty talking points they could place on a promotional poster to not only illustrate their ideas, but also act as an outline for letters they would draft and write to the President of the United States. In one letter, I recall a student asking the government to provide more funds for improved juvenile brain cancer drugs. Through a careful analysis of the *Smashing Walnuts* website, this student prepared a compelling argument for supporting research into the making of new experimental drugs. Each student learned about paragraph writing, and more specifically business letter writing, within the context of a cause that they chose to support. Many students received responses from President Obama that year, adding to the authenticity of the task (Smith, 2018).

Recently, Jones (2016) and her team from the Harvard Graduate School of Education identified three key buckets of inter-related skills that contribute to student learning. Figure 3 outlines these findings.

Figure 3: Three Key Buckets of Learning Skills

| Cognitive regulation skills (executive function skills) | • this bucket includes working memory<br>• cognitive flexibility<br>• inhibitory control<br>• attention control |
|---|---|
| Emotion skills | • emotion knowledge and expression<br>• emotion behavior and regulation<br>• empathy and perspective taking |
| Interpersonal skills (social domain) | • prosocial behaviors and skills<br>• ability to understand social cues |

| | •     conflict resolution |
|---|---|

(adapted from https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/07/what-makes-sel-work

There are many SEL contexts that directly address cognitive regulation, emotion skills and interpersonal skills. To teach about resilience, communication and creative problem-solving, I often share with students the lesson from Apollo 13. When an oxygen tank exploded more than 200,000 miles from Earth, the astronauts had to problem solve alternative solutions, as their mission shifted from one of exploration to survival. Creativity, cooperation and communication skills were key as lives depended on how each member of the team in the spacecraft and at command central related to one another. Figuring out how to fit a square box into a round hole with whatever was at their disposal was no easy task. Without resilience and persistence and a willingness to accept ideas from others, it is doubtful this story would have had such a positive ending. Teaching students to think differently and come up with creative solutions could ultimately save lives one day.

There are many activities that contribute to helping students succeed? As Estrada points out: "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn".  It is becoming more popular to include meditation, yoga and martial arts experiences as powerful calming practices within some social and emotional learning and/or physical education curriculum. According to *Educational Psychology Review*, students who meditated reported "fewer feelings of anxiety and stronger friendships, to teachers seeing more settled classrooms" (Smith, 2018) and at the neuroscience-based Blue School in New York, third through sixth grade students work with a 'settling jar' shaking it when stressed and waiting blue glitter and sand to settle to the bottom, "acting as a visual metaphor for the sensation of calming and stillness" (Anderson, 2015).

Internships, paid or not, provide valuable learning experiences, and can be augmented by a social and emotional learning program that can specifically address preparation for and reflection of such experiences. Young people in Missouri have learned to appreciate math and science after participating in the GO CAPS (Greater Ozarks Centers for Advanced Professional Studies) engineering internship program. As Jungman (2018) noted "I can think back to a story of when I sat down with a student, and he talked about how the CAPS program he participated in made his classes feel relevant for the first time" (p. 12). He added:

> Businesses tell us…<internships> are a value add to their culture... If they're going to give us their time…to engage at the site— interrupting their workflow—there better be a value proposition…giving back, smiles, contributions, and…engagement is what…brings the most value (p. 14).

College admissions and future employers pay attention to self-less experiences, so whether internships are volunteer or paid nominally, they can play a significant role in a student's future. "Career education does not have to be organized as an alternative program within or outside the school for disengaged students. Hands on learning and understanding all possibilities in the world of work has value for all students" (Smith, 2018).

*Meaningful and Challenging Curriculum*

Academic leaders will have different ideas about what is meaningful and challenging. To find common ground, however, it might be easier to begin with a dialogue about what is NOT meaningful and challenging. Think about things you did in school that were boring. Identifying what can be more meaningful and challenging can be problematic, if all that people know is their own experience. For instance, many educators are aware of the trend that students become less engaged in school between fifth and twelfth grade. While such research is mainstream, we have a library of options for shifting this pattern. Rarely, is such data gathered at the school level, even though dashboards of achievement are the focus of ongoing analysis. Gathering qualitative and quantitative data from teachers, students and parents about what leads not only to achievement, but engagement, seems to be a missing piece of the puzzle. Without surveying and/or interviewing students and parents, ideally in a systematic way, how can we know what initiatives are supported by stakeholders. Often, surveys are tied to strategic planning or school improvement initiatives that appear every three to five years, but such a time span for gathering input is frankly too long, and not immediate enough to make improvements happen in a timely manner. It is not only important that students are challenged and excited, and parents are aware they are, but teachers must also be surveyed for their input.

And it's not enough to simply conduct a survey; we need to think carefully about the questions and the opportunity for respondents to increase awareness of options prior to their participation. Surveys of the 'what did you like or not like' kind do not necessarily lead to new directions. For the most part, they tend to provide tweaking ideas about the current experience already happening in the school. If students, parents or teachers are not made aware of alternative practices, then it would be rare to make significant changes based on such surveys. At Middleburg Community Charter School, I worked with a community member (local hotel owner) to create *Vision Quest*, an opportunity for teachers, parents and students to view examples of exceptional school websites in advance of designing our annual school survey. The event began on a Saturday morning with parents and teachers listening to a humorous *TedTalk* 'keynote' from Dave Eggers about the creation of his pirate storefront school in San Francisco. Then everyone received a passport with red, yellow and green stickers. The passport listed 32 unique school programs that were featured on 32 laptops spread out around the gymnasium. We suggested they work in pairs or on their own and browse the sites for ideas. If they wanted the school to implement an idea right away, they would place a green dot on the computer, a red dot to indicate "no way" and a yellow dot to suggest we study the idea and learn more about it during our parent education evenings and/or professional development days. On the Monday morning, we asked students (grade 3 and older) to take part in the same process. We then used this information to construct the survey for all the parents, teachers and students to complete. While we could find out if they felt the current program was meaningful and challenging, we could also find out about how to make things more meaningful and challenging.

Sharing research is also an important feature of continuous improvement. For instance, to address the need to make schools more meaningful and challenging Taylor & Parson (2011) found that students want:

- Learning that is relevant, real, and intentionally interdisciplinary – at times moving learning from the classroom into the community.
- Technology-rich learning environments – not just computers, but all types of technology, including scientific equipment, multi-media resources, industrial technology, and diverse forms of portable communication technology.
- Positive, challenging, and open – sometimes called "transparent" learning climates – that encourage risk-taking and guide learners towards co-articulated high expectations. Students are involved in assessment for learning and of learning.
- Collaboration among respectful "peer-to-peer" type relationships between students and teachers (horizontal organization model); Professional Learning Communities working together to plan, research, develop, share, and implement new research, strategies, and materials.
- A culture of learning – teachers are learning *with* students. Language, activities and resources focus on learning and engagement first, and achievement second.

Having a culture of learning, where updated research is regularly examined and discussed, makes for a school, ripe for making meaningful and challenging curriculum decisions. A school may have an incredible *Model United Nations* program, chess club or robotics club for some students in an extra-curricular offering, but when they are not embedded within school disciplines, they are not experienced by all. Imagine a school where all Social Studies students take part in a United Nations simulation to have a deeper grasp of global understandings. Imagine if all math students had chess one day per week inside the math program, and how progressive would it be for all students to take part in robotics constructions? Similarly, leadership opportunities in schools tend to be experienced by a small selection of the population. In primary classes, teachers rotate 'helping hand' type jobs, but somehow as the students move into older grades, there tends to be fewer responsible roles. This doesn't have to be the case. In progressive schools, students are peer teaching younger students on a weekly basis and taking part in ongoing cooperative learning activities. Working with others during classwork or projects should mean that students rotate both leading and supporting roles. At one school, we asked every student at the end of grade 7 to write a speech to run for school president, and within the speech indicate at least three school committees they would be interested in leading. They presented their speeches to their Grade 7 classmates. The class voted on their top three selections who went on to present to the whole school for a final election. While the remaining classmates may not have been named school president, they did form working committees to lead the school in various initiatives throughout their graduating year. While there were no vice presidents, secretaries or treasurers, there were committees who organized special days, family events, performances, intramurals, fitness walks, games rooms and a host new ideas spawned each year. Many organizations support student leadership development including:

- Model United Nations (https://www.nmun.org)
- WE (https://www.we.org)
- Outward Bound (http://www.outwardbound.ca),
- Duke of Edinburgh Awards (https://www.dukeofed.org)
- Habitat for Humanity (https://www.habitat.org)

- Round Square (https://www.roundsquare.org)

Student leadership can take many forms. Copp & Smith (2010) claimed that student leadership roles in schools "must be plentiful enough for all students to take part" and added,

> These roles need to be meaningful enough to require student planning and open enough to promote student initiative. SL should be progressive, challenging and steeped in evidence that those who are led by the student leader, thrive as a result of his or her work (p. 67).

Finding leadership roles for all students is much easier to do in a small school (less than 300) with small classroom sizes (20:1 ratio).  At the classroom level, smaller class sizes enable teachers to form stronger relationships. Some schools choose to be small for ALL vs. larger settings '*where only a few know your name*'.

The image of a lion looking back at a younger lioness with the message: "I thought about quitting but then I noticed who was watching", is compelling. When middle school-aged students for instance, are separated out of the mix, away from younger primary students, they miss the opportunity to apply character education skills in mentoring roles. It is not as effective to peer teach same aged students, so when schools decide to break away from a K-8 structure, they are minimizing the potential for character development between multi-age students. And given the fact that many junior high and middle schools in inner city locations enroll more than 1000 students, this only compound the problems of building cultures of character. The larger the school size, the more opportunities for kids to fall through the cracks, socially, emotionally and intellectually.

Some schools have discovered community resources that can serve as a context for SEL. At Lucy Anne's Place in Surprise, Arizona, Wirtzie pre-school students visited seniors at a nearby community center on a regular basis. In this intergenerational program, the young students learned to develop pro-social skills. According to lead teacher, Diane York: "The grandparents and kids laugh, they talk — and they learn...". She added students "need to see that it's OK to age, it's OK to be sick" (Ritchie, 2017).

At the Jalen Rose Leadership Academy in Detroit, Michigan, high schools students also visited seniors. Each week they were bussed to a government supported nursing center which housed over a thousand elderly citizens, many former veterans. They formed relationships with the seniors, who also helped students with goal setting. Students also interviewed their buddy and used the information in their English class to write and publish their biographies in an anthology collection.

Building a culture of service learning is a significant part of character education. According to Brooks (2017), "Through service-learning, students can gain significant experiences of reflecting and acting upon the world alongside fellow students, faculty, and community partners" (p. 7). Co-founder of *Free the Children*, Craig Kielberger claimed his world-renowned organization had humble beginnings. At first, it was "little more than a small group of classmates eager to raise awareness about child labor. None of us had much experience with social justice work – just a

desire to take action." Today, the 'WE' movement (https://www.we.org) is a constant source of inspiration for young people eager to dispel the myths that they can't make a difference.

### *Integrating SEL into the Big Curriculum Picture*

Academic leaders who consider a STREAM approach to curriculum design are focused on getting out of the weeds, making decisions about priorities, and not simply accepting the '*red schoolhouse'* as the way to color learning. We often look at what should happen in schools from a special interest perspective. Some years the pendulum swings in the direction of the liberal arts. Echoes of college professors cry: "Why is it students can't write?". More recently, the plight of STEM education has the ear of business and governments. "How can we be innovative or come up for a cure for cancer, if we do not emphasize science, technology, engineering and mathematics?" A strong academic leader must do more than simply respond to the loudest demands. Schools need to find a way to not only meet current demands, but prepare students for anything. By placing the A inside STEM, the arts supporters have secured their presence, but what about language arts, world languages, physical education and social and emotional learning? These are not accounted for inside the notion of STEAM, as it stands today.

The idea of STREAM adds a twist to STEAM, not simply by adding the R for Relationships, but by providing a fresh look at what STREAM can be.

S – Science
T – Technology
R – Relationships
E – Engineering & Entrepreneurship
A – Arts (liberal) & Athletics
M – Math

In this STREAM model the A encompasses all liberal arts, not only fine arts, but ELA, Social Studies and World Languages; as well, Physical Education is recognized as a reputable discipline with the reference to 'Athletics'. Such a comprehensive view of curriculum emphasizes not only Science, Technology, Engineering and Math, but also the applied experience of 'Entrepreneurship'.

The R in STREAM is set aside for the study of Relationships. This emphasis on social and emotional learning can be integrated within existing disciplines and/or be a standalone subject – shoulder to shoulder with other disciplines (new and conventional). How we relate to ourselves and others is at the core of social and emotional learning. A progressive experience in psychology and sociology should begin when students enter school, not appear as an optional search for courses in a college setting. There is plenty of room for SEL in a STREAM curriculum, because people and ideas are headed somewhere – with an authentic purpose. The overloaded curriculum, on the other hand, has little space for change; expectations are often muddied and content-driven and as such, it's easy for students to become lost and unclear about their future possibilities.

A quality Social and Emotional Learning program develops character and builds employability

skills. A quality SEL program will develop specific qualities including: persistence & diligence, responsibility, caring, adaptability and resilience, teamwork and collaboration, open-mindedness, honesty and, empathy.

We can focus on SEL in three ways:

(a) A concentrated focus of study
(b) An integrated aspect of each discipline
(c) A school-wide approach in a co-curricular sense

Inserting the "R" into STREAM can involve the coordination of many SEL experiences including:

- Lifeskills; Coops/Internships; community and global service; college preparation; health education; religious education…
- Cooperative and independent skills and habits demonstrated in all subject areas.
- Student-led school or community campaigns (assemblies; letters to restaurants about using paper straws; eliminating plastic bags at grocery stores…)

The R in a STREAM-focused education can refer to what happens within classrooms, at the school level, and at local and global levels, as well. Social and emotional learning does not need to be random, responsive or reactive; it is possible to synthesize healthy habits in comprehensive and coordinated ways. A welcomed collateral effect of an effective character education program can be a reduction in disciplinary issues. Relating well to oneself and others matters at school, at work and throughout life. It should no longer be on the back burner of education.

Just as it was important for disciplines such as Math and English Language Arts to have progressive and comprehensive curriculum frameworks, so too, should critical learning experiences associated with social and emotional learning be a part of a curriculum map and ongoing area of study. The following map (Figure 2) which features character education, service learning and health education was first developed for a K-8 school in Toronto, and later adapted for use in Washington DC and then more recently, at an outdoor education school near Collingwood, Ontario. At one school, it was called Stewardship; at another school, we referred to this advisory type course as PAL for 'promoting arts and leadership', and at an outdoor education, we called it Watermarks.

At the DC school, the grade 1 class was responsible for learning about friendship; they were also responsible for hosting the friendship assembly in February. They coordinated school campaigns as ambassadors and school leaders encouraging everyone at school to be friendly. Rather than touch on different themes for only a month…each individual grade focused for a whole year on one character trait. They took turns showcased their character quality and prepared their own campaigns throughout the whole year.  In this way, students and teachers could address one social and emotional theme with a more immersed approach, rather than repeating the same topics each year.

Figure 2: Sample Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum Map

| Grade | Character Education | School Service | Community Service | Global Service | Health Education |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| PK | Be Caring | Black Tie Event | Humane Society | World Wildlife Federation | Senses; Clean Hands |
| K | Be Kind | Gold Ribbon Day (PK Fashion Show) | Planting Trees | | Healthy Snacks; Road/car safety |
| 1 | Be a Friend | Grandparent's Day | Friends of Children's Hospital | International Pen Pals | Water Safety |
| 2 | Be Courteous | Turkey Dinner Donation | Books for America | Mosquito Nets for Africa (kiva.org) | Healthy eyes ears Healthy Meals |
| 3 | Be a Good Sport | Staff Talent Show | St. Jude's Trikathon | Right to Play | Smoke-free spaces; first aid |
| 4 | Be Brave | Purple Ribbon Day (Founder's Birthday) | Anti-Smoking Campaign | The Zambia Project | Nutrition |
| 5 | Be a Citizen | Can and Coat Drive | Community Clean Up | Earth Day | Internet safety; Hygiene |
| 6 | Be a Team Player | United Nations International Day | PowerPoint Competition | Save the Children | Puberty; eating disorders |
| 7 | Be Responsible | Field Day | St. Jude's Mathathon | Amnesty International | Family Life education; CPR |
| 8 | Be a Leader | Do something.org | Walk for the Homeless | International Disaster Relief | Drug education; Healthy choices/ Avoiding Infection |

Different schools may have different missions, and could benefit from integrating school history and values within such a curriculum, as well. Many schools with religious affiliations might infuse chapters specifically related to specific spiritual lessons. In such a case the course might be organized in four sections: character education, service learning, religious education and health education.

In each school, we also developed learning logs that served as diaries or journals housing character reminders, study tips, links to school history/mission, service learning reflections and health education, which included Tech Time links, all integrated and designed with Language Arts expectations in mind. Samples for piloting are available at zpdschoolandcurriculumdesign@gmail.com.

*Barriers/Limitations*

"Often touted as central to learning, social and emotional learning courses lack the status of mainstream disciplines" (Smith, 2018). What conditions limit the teaching of social and emotional learning in schools?

- Diminished status of social and emotional learning compared to 'test-able' subjects
- 'Time' dedicated to character education is less – (in assemblies; afterschool…)
- Lack of room in the schedule for character education classes
- Assessment is less rigorous for social and emotional learning (in class/on report cards)
- Assumption that experts must teach social and emotional learning
- Splintering and isolated promotion of specific areas of social and emotional learning (leadership, career preparation, character education, anti-bullying campaigns, health education, service learning, study and university preparation, drug education, family life education, internet safety, lifeskills, guidance, nutrition, time management, volunteerism, internships…)
- A random approach to social and emotional learning curriculum -  on an "as needs basis" (in other words, a 'crisis management' approach)
- Repetitive nature of curriculum – Lack of comprehensive and coordinated curriculum that increases concentrated placement of study, rather than the "all about me" every year)
- Lack of connection and link to other subject areas
- Notion that free flow of conversation during advisory or homeroom groups is enough
- Idea that social and emotional learning will be covered within 'social justice' themes in ELA classrooms
- "this is 'good enough' attitude on the part of some curriculum decision-makers
- Lack of pre-service education that supports the teaching of social and emotional learning
- Lack of representation of social and emotional learning leaders at the curriculum decision-making table

Success is not a simple pathway, nor is it usually a straight and predictable one. There is plenty to see and experience inside the stream of education, with plenty of good choices leading towards success.

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