School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
July 25, 2018

About using self-report for measuring social emotional learning

Discussion of the new report:

School Effects on Social-Emotional Learning: Findings from the First Large-Scale Panel Survey of Students

Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Some Resources on the Topic:

This practitioner provides links to the following related resources:

>Measuring Students' Social-Emotional Learning
>Trends in Student Social Emotional Learning
>Measuring Social Emotional Learning Through Student Surveys
>Enacting Social-Emotional Learning

Note: Go to http://smhp.psych.ucla **for links to other resources including**
>Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
>Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
>Training and job opportunities
>Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

****

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to **Ltaylor@ucla.edu**

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm

Topic for Exchange:

Social emotional learning is a major focus for all who are concerned with whole child development and whole school improvement. It is embedded in both the instructional and learning supports components. Some districts are including self-surveys measures of social emotional functioning as an accountability indicator. A recent report providing data from a CORE group of California districts (400,000 kids) that joined forces to bolster social-emotional development highlights a problem. Here is an excerpt from a news report:

From: ***Tracking social emotional development as a district effectiveness measure***

> http://laschoolreport.com/californias-core-districts-joined-forces-to-bolster-social-emotional-development-but-a-study-of-400000-kids-reveals-gaps-in-learning-a-confidence-crisis-among-middle-school-girls/

As they progress through school, students are getting better at believing they can master challenging subjects, but they are getting worse at managing their behavior and empathizing with others.

Those are highlights of a recent study of nearly 400,000 California students in some of the state's largest school districts, which have collaborated over the past several years to teach and measure a common set of social-emotional learning skills.

But the study, which looked at how social-emotional learning developed from fourth to 12th grade, found that not all students are learning these skills at the same pace. Girls' self-confidence plummets as they enter middle school, while white students consistently report higher social-emotional learning than their non-white peers....

The districts identified four skills they wanted to teach students: growth-mindset, self-management, self-efficacy, and social awareness.

While growth-mindset increased between 2014 and 2016, researchers found that social awareness, self-efficacy, and to a smaller extent self-management, decreased as students progressed through school....

It's important for schools to see if there's anything systemic that could be causing certain subgroups to lag behind their peers in these social-emotional skills, said Robert Jagers, an expert in social-emotional learning research who was not involved in the study. For example, he said some students might internalize biases from their teachers that could cause them to feel like they don't belong or aren't understood. Or those students could be in need of more support in certain social-emotional areas...."

For more on this see
> *School Effects on Social-Emotional Learning: Findings from the First Large-Scale Panel Survey of Students* http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-school-effects

Discussion of the measure used is online at
> http://coredistricts.org/our-data-research/improvement-measures/

For your easy reference, we have appended the survey questions to this Practitioner.

##
Invitation to Listserv Participants to Share Perspectives

Let us know what you think about these findings.
Are they valid?
If so, what do you think causes student self report of social skills to go down as they move through the grades?
What would you recommend to counter such effects?
Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu
##

2

Some Early Responses

To start an exchange, we asked a few colleagues to comment on the report. Here is a sample:

(1) "It is a very interesting finding. I think there are two possible explanations. One, because there was no control group and there are no normative data on these constructs longitudinally, we don't actually know if the SEL programming is helping or not. It is possible that these results are minimizing long-term detriments in performance. But I suspect that what they are showing is that these 'skills' cannot be taught effectively out of context. I have been skeptical of their claims for its efficacy as the research that I have seen has not controlled for school and community variables. It seems more likely that these programs help some kids and not others and the research is lagging on identifying those factors. Also, I do not believe that kids learn these skills without adult modeling. Teaching SEL on Thursdays at 11:00 and then not incorporating this into their daily lives makes no sense. I think people are picking up on this but again the research that I have seen largely ignores these issues.

    The second issue is that often these programs compete with academic programming, especially in resource-poor schools. My experience in schools is that these programs often drain resources that can be better allocated to academics or teaching staff. And don't get me started on trauma-informed schools! So many movements and so little progress!"

(2) "At first glance I was not surprised they found *something* statistically significant. With such a large n, even small differences can be significant. Then I began to wonder about the standard error of their measuring device. Self-report ratings are likely to fluctuate a fair amount anyway, which limits the reliability. If the measurement had a relatively high standard error then a dip that looks dramatic on a graph might easily have been best accounted for by "chance variation." At second glance, I wondered what was really new. In my own work, female teens who are attending school regularly, getting good grades, working at a part-time job, volunteering at a hospital, participating on a sports team, actively engaged in their faith community, etc. regularly rate themselves as 'no good at anything.' Tons of evidence to the contrary, but no confidence and a fair degree of shame. The males, on the other hand, who had little to report in the way of engagement, accomplishments, or actual participation would not hesitate to claim that they are the best ever in everything! All they really had was bravado, but they worked it big time! So I'm thinking the gender gap is not new. Here's a published study that used data from 2009, for example: https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2016/01/self-esteem-gender.aspx

    I noted the researchers indicate that this is just the beginning of collecting data so we know how big is the problem. And that is the sort of thing you need to say in academia and governmental bureaucracy. Lots of people have known about this for a long time. We've tried ideas. Even when the ideas work, the participating schools tend to stop using the intervention once the researchers leave town. Sustaining effort, I think, is the bigger problem.

    There is a lot of inertia and inflexibility in most of the schools I have worked in. I chalk it up to schools developing policies and procedures that make them unassailable in a court of law. There is also a fair amount of 'too much work/not enough worker bees', so people feel overwhelmed by just the current daily demands. I suspect people will be slow to take on much more in the way of social/emotional support until something else gets taken off their already too full plates.

    We can also look to unlimited screen time as a factor. I've read that app designers are intentionally making their products super-engaging to the point of being addictive. I see students with difficulty in maintaining a 1-1 conversation without looking at their smart phones. Some of the difficulties noted in the study could perhaps be connected to a lack of practice in real life because so much time and effort is going to building a persona in cyberspace."

(3) "SEL is not a one size fits all curriculum that is often boring and disengaging; and is delivered from scripted curriculums. At the secondary level classroom community building that combines the SEL core skills would be so much better at addressing what this article identifies over using a scripted curriculum such as second step. But those are stepping stones to embedding SEL in the curriculum. Also engaging students in developing lessons and discussion is more effective. It's a long road to train teachers in this model, but well worth the time and effort."

(4) "Overall, I'm encouraged by the CORE districts willing to partner with PACE to study their efforts. A HUGE undertaking - well worth the time and effort so districts can know what's working and where to target future efforts. As I read, I could only think about how complex the issues are and how little we really know about SEL and human development, as the article suggests. The other thought I had goes back to 30+ years of substance abuse prevention research and the impacts of micro- and macro-level influences on human development.

Micro-level influences are, of course, those factors that are closest or most influential to an individual including family (1st), school (2nd), and peers (3rd). The macro-level then becomes the 'community' and larger environments that influence an individual including issues like poverty, crime, etc. Naturally, individual genetics, temperament and physiology play a role as well on an individual's beliefs, attitudes and behaviors.

Of course not everyone will learn and develop at the same rate. Think about a physician who examines the a baby or very young child. They weigh, measure, observe and ask behavioral questions of the parent. There's not a 'standard' for growth and development, but there are milestones that children typically reach by a certain age. If they don't reach those milestones within an acceptable amount of time, the doctor looks into the possible reasons why they are not developing as expected. This is exactly the same thing. If middle and high school personal/social growth is trending downward, the schools need to understand why and adjust practice accordingly. CORE now has the data and should investigate along with experts to not only figure out what could work better for older students, but why there is such disparity among subgroups.

CORE has a common set of S/E standards, which is a great start. It doesn't, however, dictate how districts teach SEL but serves as a resource for schools. If CORE districts want to affect these trends, they first need to keep in mind that the school is only one environmental influence on students. This means that all schools need to partner with families and the community to review their data and make informed decisions about what needs to happen. Developing a comprehensive system of learning supports could be a great goal to help districts organize efforts, measure progress and affect positive change for students."

##

Some Resources on the Topic:

>**Measuring Students' Social-Emotional Learning**
http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-measurement

>**Trends in Student Social Emotional Learning**
http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-trends

>**Measuring Social Emotional Learning Through Student Surveys**
http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-validity

>**Enacting Social-Emotional Learning**
http://www.edpolicyinca.org/publications/sel-practices

####################

Appendix: Self-report survey used in the study

Social-Emotional: Self Management

First, we'd like to learn more about your behavior, experiences, and attitudes related to school.
Please answer how often you did the following during the past 30 days.

During the past 30 days……

I came to class prepared.

I remembered and followed directions.

I got my work done right away instead of waiting until the last minute.

I paid attention, even when there were distractions.

I worked independently with focus.

I stayed calm even when others bothered or criticized me.

I allowed others to speak without interruption.

I was polite to adults and peers.

I kept my temper in check.

(Almost Never, Once in a While, Sometimes, Often, Almost All the Time)

Social-Emotional: Growth Mindset

In this section, please think about your learning in general.

Please indicate how true each of the following statements is for you:

My intelligence is something that I can't change very much.

Challenging myself won't make me any smarter.

There are some things I am not capable of learning.

If I am not naturally smart in a subject, I will never do well in it.

(Not At All True, A Little True, Somewhat True, Mostly True, Completely True)

Social-Emotional: Self-Efficacy (Global)

How confident are you about the following at school?

I can earn an A in my classes.

I can do well on all my tests, even when they're difficult.

I can master the hardest topics in my classes.

I can meet all the learning goals my teachers set.

(Not At All Confident, A Little Confident, Somewhat Confident, Mostly Confident, Completely Confident)

Social-Emotional: Social Awareness

In this section, please help us better understand your thoughts and actions when you are with other people.

Please answer how often you did the following during the past 30 days.

During the past 30 days……

How carefully did you listen to other people's points of view?

(Not Carefully At All, Slightly Carefully, Somewhat Carefully, Quite Carefully, Extremely Carefully)

How much did you care about other people's feelings?

(Did Not Care At All, Cared A Little Bit, Cared Somewhat, Cared Quite A Bit, Cared A Tremendous Amount)

How often did you compliment others' accomplishments?

(Almost Never, Once in a while, Sometimes, Often, Almost all the time)

How well did you get along with students who are different from you?
(Did Not Get Along At All, Got Along A Little Bit, Got Along Somewhat, Got Along Pretty Well, Got Along Extremely Well)

How clearly were you able to describe your feelings?

(Not At All Clearly, Slightly Clearly, Somewhat Clearly, Quite Clearly, Extremely Clearly)

When others disagreed with you, how respectful were you of their views?

(Not At All Respectful, Slightly Respectful, Somewhat Respectful, Quite Respectful, Extremely Respectful)
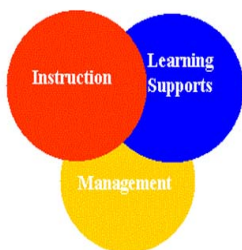
To what extent were you able to stand up for yourself without putting others down?

(Not At All, A Little Bit, Somewhat, Quite A Bit, A Tremendous Amount)

To what extent were you able to disagree with others without starting an argument?

(Not At All, A Little Bit, Somewhat, Quite A Bit, A Tremendous Amount)

###

Take a couple of minutes to view the new free book:

Improving School Improvement
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

If you missed the following, you can access them and more from the Center's homepage –
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu

>**The *quarterly ejournal* for Summer 2018.**
Excepts from a new, free book.
Online at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/news.htm
Contents:
Part I: Good Schools and Classrooms
Part II: Moving toward Personalized Instruction and Special Assistance
Part III: New Directions for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching
Part IV. Moving Forward

>**The July *ENEWS'* discussion of:** *Staff Development & Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching and Re-engaging Disconnected Students*

Also the 2017 free book on:
Addressing Barriers to Learning: In the Classroom & Schoolwide
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html

****

For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
go to http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Recent publication related to the initiative:
>*Transforming Student and Learning Supports:*
Developing a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System –
https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student -and learning -supports -9781516512782.html

****

THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!
For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu
Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.
We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange*
on our website at http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)