

Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Shqipe Husaj PhD Cand.

Lecturer at the University "Haxhi Zeka"-Peje- Kosovo

shqipehusaj5@gmail. com, shqipe.husaj@unhz.eu

00377-44137921

Abstract

Being in an environment for the first time, meeting strange people is not easy and simple for everyone. Some people need help in controlling its own emotions or the others emotions and feelings. This help can come from the parents at home, teachers and classmates at school or colleagues at working place. The aim of this paper is to discuss the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL), its competences, skills involved in it etc. As SEL helps develop understanding and empathy, in this paper we will discuss the importance of empathy and some tips how to develop it.

Keywords; Social emotional Learning, feelings, empathy, skills etc.

Introduction

Being in an environment for the first time, meeting strange people is not easy and simple for everyone. Some people need help in controlling its own emotions or the others emotions and feelings. This help can come from the parents at home, teachers and classmates at school or colleagues at working place. Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is a process of learning life skills, such as how to deal with ourselves and the relationship with the others, as well as how to work effectively. In dealing with ourselves, SEL helps in recognition of our emotions and learning how to manage these feelings. In dealing with others, SEL helps develop understanding and empathy for others, and maintaining positive relationships. SEL also focuses on dealing with a variety of situations in a constructive and ethical way. (www. casel. org, retrieved March 2015). The programming of this process is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationship that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful. SEL is an approach that teaches students to recognize, regulate, and express the social and emotional aspects of their lives so they can operate successfully in the world and manage life tasks. (Elias et al. , 1997, and CASEL, Safe and Sound, 2005))

SEL programs are aimed at developing five core social and emotional competencies:

Self-awareness: identifying and recognizing emotions; recognizing personal interests and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence

Self-management: regulating emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and motivating oneself to persevere in overcoming obstacles, setting and monitoring progress toward the achievement of personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately

Social awareness: being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences

Relationship skills: establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation and resistance to inappropriate social pressure, preventing, managing, and constructively resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed (CASEL, Safe and Sound, 2005)

Emotional well-being is "dramatically and positively predictive not only of academic achievement, but also of satisfactory and productive experiences in the world of work and marriage, even of better physical health." Self-understanding and greater emotional management coupled with the ability to deal wisely and effectively with others, positively impacts people's capacity to negotiate their everyday lives. Researchers and psychologists maintain that social and emotional competencies "allow us to modulate emotions, solve social problems creatively, to be effective leaders and collaborators, (and) to be assertive and responsible." (www. casel. org) The good news is that social and emotional skills can be learned and enhanced at any age. Infants, children and adults alike can develop their social and emotional understanding; however, the earlier a person begins the SEL process, the greater the advantages. Comer, J. (Nov. 1999, retrieved March 2015).

Empathy

Many of the problems in schools are the result of social and emotional malfunction and debilitation from which too many children have suffered and continue to bear the consequences. Comer (1999, retrieved 2015). Therefore it is crucial to provide children with an environment that allows them to develop their social and emotional skills. An atmosphere that provides support for one's social and emotional learning and competence versus one that does not can make a huge difference in that child's life. The difference, Comer claims, is equal to the difference in the outcome of throwing seeds on cement versus planting seeds in enriched soil. (Comer 1999- a conference on Social and Emotional Learning and Digital Technology).

Empathy Starts with Teachers: Teacher is the one who should show empathy and be the model for students. But, do teachers expect empathy from the students? What do teachers say about this. One teacher in an Edu. con conference summarized it this way: "How can I have empathy for my students when no one will have empathy for me?" The solution to this would be a better communication between teachers and students creating a more supportive environment where others would care about how everyone feels. To teach empathy, schools should help students learn to initiate relationships by becoming friends with students who are different, have a disability, or are new in that school. Friendship and better relationships are the best motivation. This applies not only for the students but for the new teachers too. Starting a new job and having to do with children is not always easy. Everyone needs support and understanding. "Walking in someone else's shoes" - is a way to reduce bullying and raises better emotional understanding. When a person learns to understand and share the feelings of another, the pro-social behavior that results shows up in better relationships, closer friendships and stronger communities -- it's that important! (edutopia 2013, retrieved March 2015). Empathy is reinforced at home when parents model it. When parents positively demonstrate sharing their feelings in authentic, engaged and non-judgmental ways, kids (influenced by mirror neurons tend to imitate or mirror the intention and emotional state of what they see

Five steps to cultivate empathy:

Watch & Listen: What is the other person saying, and what is his or her body language ?

Remember: When did you feel the same way?

Imagine: How does the other person feel? And how would you feel in that situation?

Ask: Ask what the person is feeling.

Show Your Care: Let the other person that you care through your words and actions. Successful schools ensure that all students master reading, writing, math, and science.

They also foster a good understanding of history, literature, arts, foreign languages, and diverse cultures. However, most educators, parents, students, and the public support a broader educational agenda that also involves enhancing students' social-emotional competence, character, health, and civic engagement (Metlife, 2002; Public Agenda, 1994, 1997, 2002; Rose & Gallup, 2000). In addition to producing students who are culturally literate, intellectually reflective, and committed to lifelong learning, high-quality education should teach young people to interact in socially skilled and respectful ways; to practice positive, safe, and healthy behavior ; to contribute ethically and responsibly to their peer group, family, school, and community; and to possess basic competencies, work habits, and values as a foundation for meaningful employment and engaged citizenship (Elias et al. , 1997; Jackson & Davis, 2000; Learning First Alliance, 2001; Osher, Dwyer, & Jackson,

2002). In his book *Born to Be Good*, UC Berkeley professor (and GGSC director) Dacher Keltner, based on research in psychology, sociology, and neuroscience said that we are also wired for good. More specifically, he looks at the science of emotions and how positive emotions such as compassion and awe are contagious--and help to bring out the good not only in ourselves, but in others as well. "The origins of human goodness," writes Keltner, "are rooted in our emotion, and these social instincts may be stronger than those of any other instinct or motive." "Some of the most compelling proof that we are wired for altruism, kindness, and compassion comes from numerous studies that demonstrate children as young as 14 months have innate altruistic tendencies, well before socialization can have a major influence on their development. Children may be motivated to help friends, not because someone tells them to, but because they feel good. If we for example give a chocolate to a 14 months old baby and the other child is there playing with him, the baby will immediately offer that chocolate to the other baby. Just because that baby feels good in sharing possessions with the others. This clearly shows that human beings are wired for good and that our altruistic, compassionate tendencies may be motivated, in part, by positive emotions elicited through our interactions with others.

According to leading emotions expert Richard Davidson, in his book *The emotional life of our Brain* (www. Casel. org 2007) writes that our emotions work with our cognition in a seamless and integrated way to help us navigate the classroom, workplace, our relationships, and the decisions we make in life. In his book *Richard Davidson addresses the questions about how we become who we are with a scientific rigor and impassioned curiosity that enable us to understand others and ourselves, as well as to directly influence how we approach life with a sense of resilience and vitality.* Davidson, R. (*Edutopia* 2007)

The skills taught through SEL, all of which benefit ourselves and others, ultimately help us to cultivate more positive emotions. The goal, however, is not to feel positive emotions all the time, but rather to understand how emotions, both negative and positive, impact us. Instead of acting out of fear, hate, and anger, we can take a deep breath and try to empathize with what the other person is feeling or experiencing and then make the choice to respond with care. Teacher should understand that social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to student success in school, work, and life. To be effective, schools must concentrate on their fundamental mission of teaching and learning. And they must do it for all children. That must be the overarching goal of schools in the twenty-first century. (Ravitch, 2000, p. 467) As SEL helps develop understanding and empathy teachers, counselors and parents play an important role in facilitating SEL by implementing programs in schools that can help to increase competence and learning in students which may be applied to more complex situations in the future. Teachers can accomplish this in the classroom through effective and direct classroom instructions, student engagement in positive activities, and involving parents, students and the community in planning, evaluating and implementing the program into the classroom.

Conclusion

Base on what is written above all schools are recommended to implement a curriculum for Social Emotional Learning program which will foster tools important for social and emotional competence, and increase positive peer interactions and reduction in negative internal emotions.

It is important to also recognize that this kind of program and should start from home itself and then continue at school. Teachers and parents should have a continues cooperation in order to facilitate children adapt in an unfamiliar environment. The skills taught through SEL, all of which benefit ourselves and others, ultimately help us to cultivate more positive emotions. The goal, however, is not to feel positive emotions all the time, but rather to understand how emotions, both negative and positive, impact us. Instead of acting out of fear, hate, and anger, we can take a deep breath and try to empathize with what the other person is feeling or experiencing and then make the choice to respond with care. Teacher should understand that social and emotional learning (SEL) is critical to student success in school, work, and life. To be effective, schools must concentrate on their fundamental mission of teaching and learning. And they must do it for all children. That must be the overarching goal of schools in the twenty-first century. (Ravitch, 2000)

Literature;

1. Five Keys to Successful Social and Emotional Learning". Edutopia/ The George Lucas Educational Foundation.
2. Jump up ^ <http://www.edutopia.org/sel-research-learning-outcomes>

3. **Jump up** ^ <http://www.edutopia.org/sel-research-learning-outcomes>
4. The Hawn Foundation. The Mind-Up Curriculum: Grade Pre-K-2. New York: Scholastic Inc. , 2011.
5. Emotionally Intelligent Parenting M. Elias, S. E. Tobias, B. S. Friedlander
Random House 1999
6. Emotional intelligence D. Goleman Bantam Books 1995
7. Mayer J. , Caruso, D. , and Salovey, P. (2000). Emotional intelligence meets traditional standards for an intelligence. *Intelligence* 27 (4) 267-98
8. Emotionally Intelligent Parenting: eqparenting.com
9. Communities of Hope: www.communitiesofhope.org