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# Bringing Together Educational Standards and Social and Emotional Learning: Making the Case for Educators

JEFFREY S. KRESS  
*Jewish Theological Seminary*

JACQUELINE A. NORRIS  
*The College of New Jersey*

DENA A. SCHOENHOLZ  
*Rutgers University*

MAURICE J. ELIAS  
*Rutgers University*

PAMELA SEIGLE  
*Wellesley College*

Social and emotional learning (SEL) has as its goals to strengthen a person's ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of life. The authors, all of whom have worked in training teachers in the promotion of students' social and emotional skills, have found that educators often view efforts at building such skills as standing in opposition to the academic focus of their state curriculum standards. This view hinders many well-intentioned teachers from implementing SEL in their classrooms. Thus, it is a valuable consultative tool to be able to demonstrate the overlap of SEL, academics, and curriculum standards. The authors set out a rationale for this overlap and provide examples of how they incorporate this overlap into their training and consultation.

Think about why you entered the field of education. What legacy would you like to leave behind? At your retirement dinner, what would you like to hear said about you? What would you like your retirement plaque to say? If you are like thousands of educators to whom these questions have been posed, you will want to be remembered for helping students become life-long learners, good problem solvers, and thoughtful citizens (Lantieri 2001). In short, you

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will want to be remembered for helping students become knowledgeable, responsible, and caring people who resolve their conflicts with words and not weapons.

Despite the pressure for improving academic standards, we have yet to hear an educator tell us that he or she wants top test scores to be his or her legacy. Why? The vast majority of educators care deeply about their students and know that the real purpose of education is to prepare students for their future. They want to equip students with what they need to become world-class people, not just world-class students in academic subject areas (Elias et al. 2002). And these educators know intuitively what studies are showing empirically—that life success is predicted at least as well by emotional intelligence as by IQ—if not better (Goleman 1995). A moment's reflection in our own professional and personal lives tends to confirm that being academically smart is not a guarantee of future life success.

While educators realize that children need to achieve more than competence in math and social studies to negotiate successfully through life's challenges, they often feel conflicted and challenged in their efforts to address nontraditional educational concerns. Many believe that the time and effort needed to teach these nontraditional skills takes time away from teaching the skills geared toward student's academic development (Ragozzino et al. 2003). Furthermore, in this age of growing accountability, educators are reporting feeling increasingly pressured to meet their state curricular standards.

In this article, we address the perceived incompatibility, or mutual exclusivity, between social and emotional learning and state curriculum standards.

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JEFFREY S. KRESS is assistant professor of Jewish education at the Jewish Theological Seminary and senior research associate of the William Davidson Graduate School of Jewish Education, where he coordinates the Davidson School's concentration in informal and communal education. JACQUELINE A. NORRIS is professor of education at The College of New Jersey, member of the CASEL Educator Preparation Work Group, and member of the council of advisors for the Association for Children of New Jersey. DENA A. SCHOENHOLZ is starting her graduate work in clinical psychology at Rutgers University, where she is concentrating on social and emotional learning. MAURICE J. ELIAS is professor of psychology at Rutgers University; leadership team vice chair for the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (<http://www.CASEL.org>); and vice president for the program of the Association for Children of New Jersey. PAMELA SEIGLE is founder and executive director of the Reach Out to Schools: Social Competency Program; facilitator of Courage to Teach, a teacher renewal program; trustee of the Boston Public Library; chair of the trustees' education committee; and director of the Boston Public Library Foundation and Urban Literacies Council.

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Meeting state curriculum standards does not have to compete with helping children develop the skills they need to grow up with sound character. Rather, addressing the social and emotional developmental needs of children not only fosters the skills needed for life-long success but also helps children become better learners. Further, a close reading of state standards often reveals social and emotional skills embedded within academically targeted standards.

Demonstration of the overlap of social and emotional learning and state curricular standards is important in bolstering efforts to build such skills. Implementation efforts will be bolstered to the extent to which implementers not only agree with the goals of programmatic efforts but also see their efforts as consistent with institutional objectives and values (Novick et al. 2002). If educators believe that the academic standards focus seen by administration, state officials, and so forth, implies a deemphasis of the importance of social and emotional outcomes, they will be less motivated to invest energy in efforts to promote social and emotional learning. It has been our experience that educators recognize the synergistic relationship between social and emotional development and academic standards—they embrace efforts in this area rather than shun them. In this article, we will demonstrate the compatibility and synergy between social and emotional learning (SEL) and the achievement of state curriculum standards. Then we will outline two examples the authors have used to demonstrate this overlap with educators in their own states.

### Social and Emotional Learning, Academics, and State Curriculum Standards

In his forward to the proposal of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB Act; at <http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/presidentplan/proposal.pdf>), President Bush pledged to “build the mind and character of every child, from every background, in every part of America.” Secured by the passage of this act, his promise has become the driving force behind today’s education reform movement. This movement is based on accountability, choice, and flexibility, while placing a special emphasis on literacy, character education, and school safety. This legislation recognizes that true education encompasses more than IQ and that children need a safe environment in which to learn and achieve. However, the NCLB Act strategies that receive the most attention from educators and administrators include efforts to increase accountability for student proficiency in core content areas, particularly the implementation of state curriculum standards and assessments.

Standardization of education in America is not new. Many state curriculum standards originated as an outgrowth of a national response to the landmark 1983 report on the condition of education in America’s public schools, *A*

*Nation at Risk* (National Commission of Excellence in Education 1983). This report called for the development of rigorous academic standards (i.e., benchmarks, indicators, and expectations of student performance at various grade levels) to ensure a high quality education to all students, a demand that continues to be echoed by today's NCLB Act. The current standards movement has changed in that standards have been set quite high, they apply to a much more diverse student population than ever before, and they are driving the curriculum, instruction, and assessment of students (Norris and Kress 2000). Successful attainment of these standards is, to a large degree, the yardstick for measuring student, teacher, and administrator performance.

The goal of social and emotional learning is to strengthen a person's ability to understand, manage, and express the social and emotional aspects of life in ways that enable the successful accomplishment of life tasks, such as learning, forming relationships, solving everyday problems, and adapting to the complex demands of growth and development (Elias et al. 1997). Largely derived from the summative work of the Consortium on the School-Based Promotion of Social Competence (1994), SEL efforts include formal and informal instruction in social and emotional skills, the formation of safe and supportive school environments, and the presence of engaged educators, parents, and community members. Effective SEL programming requires a structured, curriculum-based approach that is developmentally appropriate and implemented and reinforced over a span of years (Elias et al. 1997). Similar to the standards-based movement in education, appropriate SEL instruction is guided by benchmarks, indicators, and expectations of student performance at each level of schooling (Elias et al. 1997).

In our work in the area of promoting social and emotional skills in children, and in preparing staff to address these skills, we have met many school personnel who readily embrace social and emotional skills as a key component in the goals and purview of an educational experience. However, it is not uncommon for even the best-intentioned educator to run up against some very real challenges (Ragozzino et al. 2003). How does SEL articulate with the various "standards" we are accountable for? How will we integrate SEL into the existing curriculum? Among the significant concerns that have been voiced is the assertion that, in this world of packed curricula and busy school schedules, there is no place from which to "borrow" instructional time so that social and emotional programming can take place (Ragozzino et al. 2003). We have often observed that the need for infused comprehensive classroom focus on building SEL skills, combined with the ongoing demands of the general curriculum, have the potential to create a situation in which teachers view SEL and curriculum content as competing for space in a zero-sum game. However, as SEL program developers and trainers, we have come to see great overlap and synergy between curriculum content areas

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and the skills of SEL. Social and emotional learning and the curriculum content standards are both/and rather than an either/or aspects of education. In our work, we realize that these concerns of time and curriculum overload must be taken seriously. Social and emotional learning must be framed in the idiom of the classroom and the often-found focus on standards.

There is great theoretical as well as pragmatic compatibility between high academic standards and high standards in social and emotional learning. Socially and emotionally competent classrooms and schools are at the core of effective learning and can be conceived as a prerequisite for the achievement of state standards. When translated into the classroom, social and emotional learning broadens the framework of learning and addresses the complex interplay of emotions and cognition in learning, remembering, and understanding. Learning is not a purely cognitive phenomenon (Brandt 2003). Rather, it is a process closely linked to students' social and emotional needs, as well as the context of their learning environment. Research has demonstrated that emotions drive attention, learning, and memory (LeDoux 2000). Students distracted, or even overcome, by emotions that interfere with learning may find it difficult to accomplish simple academic tasks, such as following directions (Zins et al. 1998). Thus, understanding the context in which students learn entails recognizing that students of all ages bring their social and emotional struggles with them to class. By equipping children with the social and emotional competencies they need to successfully negotiate their way through these challenging times, SEL helps pave the way for effective academic instruction and the attainment of core curriculum standards.

SEL facilitates the achievement of state standards by strengthening students' preparedness for learning and promoting the development of prosocial attitudes and behavior that mediate school performance (Caprara et al. 2000; Elias 2003; Salovey and Sluyter 1997; Zins et al. 2004). In a metaanalysis of educational research over the last 50 years, Wang and colleagues (1993) revealed that social and emotional variables have the greatest influence on learning, including student's metacognitive processes (e.g., planning), prosocial behaviors, effort and perseverance, and classroom management and climate. These factors are essential components of a positive, lasting educational experience and are not only compatible with but also necessary for the achievement of state curriculum standards (Osterman 2000).

Emerging research underscores the importance of SEL in academic settings and its ability to impact motivational, behavioral, and performance outcomes (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2003; Zins et al. 2004). Research evaluating the effectiveness of SEL initiatives suggests that while many of these programs do not primarily target academic variables, a number of program outcomes are related both directly and indirectly to school success (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2003;

Elias et al. 1991; Felner et al. 2001; Hawkins et al. 1999; Hawkins et al. 2001; Zins et al. 2004). Social and emotional learning program outcomes include improvements related to the development of positive relationships between students and teachers, attachment to school, student attitudes and motivation, and decreased nonattendance/dropouts (Elias et al. 1991; Felner et al. 2001; Hawkins et al. 1999; Hawkins et al. 2001). These factors are important determinants of school success and the achievement of state standards. Further, recent research has drawn a more direct linkage between social and emotional education and positive educational outcomes. Ben-Avie and colleagues (2003) found a relationship between indexes of social and emotional skill and attainment in science and math. As these authors explain, “in both math and social interactions, success depends on awareness of the challenge and of an ideal outcome, skills to map out a strategy to solve the problem, and willingness and skill in persisting at and refining the strategy until a positive outcome is achieved” (Ben-Avie et al. 2003, p. 12).

Moreover, social and emotional competencies are emerging as vital components of today’s education standards. This is not surprising, given the growing body of evidence that SEL skills are integral prerequisites to life success (Cohen 1999; Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2003; Elias et al. 1997; Goleman 1995; Salovey and Sluyter 1997). In a content analysis of literature reviews, government reports, and summaries of educational trends, Day and Koorland (1997) found that the competencies most frequently projected to be important to today’s students as they progress into adulthood are those associated with SEL. In order of frequency, the five most frequently mentioned competencies were higher-level thinking/problem solving, interpersonal communication, decision making, communicating effectively, and self-management. Similarly, the current standards movement requires that students be able to read with understanding, think critically about information, be effective communicators, work collaboratively to problem solve, and make sound decisions. Furthermore, standards-based assessments now ask students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of content material through application. Short answer and longer essay writing across content areas make up a good portion of standardized tests today. Even the area of mathematics has evolved from calculations alone to having sections where students must explain the process one might use to solve a problem.

Furthermore, SEL competencies can be found in a number of states’ core curriculum standards. While the integration of SEL curricula into academic standards may be inadvertent, schools and state departments of education are recognizing that student mastery of social and emotional skills is important for success (Fredericks 2003). In New Jersey, the Core Curriculum Content Standards have struck an interesting balance among the levels of thinking: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation

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(Norris and Kress 2000). Furthermore, many sections of the revised New Jersey standards include social and emotional competencies. The Comprehensive Health and Physical Education revisions, for example, explicitly require skills for “social and emotional health,” “character development,” “leadership, advocacy, and service,” and “critical thinking, decision making and communication” (N.J. Department of Education 2004). The world languages, social studies, and career education sections also contain revisions to incorporate SEL skills.

Iowa, Wisconsin, New York, and South Carolina are also among the states where there is evidence of social and emotional competencies emerging in the curriculum standards. Iowa’s Reading Content Standards outline that students should be able to “infer traits, feelings, and motives of characters” as early as grade 3. Wisconsin’s Political Science and Citizenship Standards ask that students can “identify and explain the individual’s responsibilities to family, peers, and the community, including the need for civility and respect for diversity” (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction 1998). New York’s Learning Standards for English Language Arts require that students “understand that within any group there are many different points of view depending on the particular interests and values of the individual, and recognize those differences in perspective in texts and presentations” (New York State Education Department 1996). These examples are not intended as a comprehensive review of how states are incorporating a focus on social and emotional matters in their standards-based curricula. Rather, they serve to highlight the overlap and compatibility between the content of academic standards and social and emotional learning.

Finally, social and emotional learning is compatible with teacher preparation and performance standards (Fleming and Bay 2001). According to Fleming and Bay (2001), 10 out of the 11 Illinois Core Professional Teaching Standards contain multiple competencies consistent with SEL instruction. The Illinois teaching standards, which are aligned with national standards for teachers and typical of state teaching standards, demonstrate that educators are expected to be well versed in SEL-related competencies. This overlap with state teaching standards provides additional support for the integral role of social and emotional learning in the attainment of state standards.

The overlap between SEL and standards is encouraging. It serves to recognize that interpersonal and intrapersonal matters are at the heart of a great deal of what children must learn and how they must learn it, whether in history, science, the performing arts, or various forms of literacy. However, teachers and school administrators must be on board to realize this synergy. In our view, this synergy is not optional but, rather, essential for true education reform and improvements in learning among our students.

The remainder of this article will present the perspectives of the authors who have worked in the field of social and emotional learning in various

capacities on the overlap of their activities with standards of their home states. Below we outline two activities we have used to demonstrate the overlap of SEL and standards. Both involve curricular “mapping” of SEL skills and curricular content areas. The authors have used these activities in their work with educators who are beginning work with implementation of SEL programming and have found these important for creating “readiness” (Novick et al. 2002) for initiating programming. Though there are similarities between the two examples, they are not meant as parallels to one another, and differences exist as well (the first example is drawn from a teacher-driven activity; the second is consultant generated). However, together these stand as two ways to “make the case” to educators regarding the overlap of SEL and standards.

#### Example 1: SEL Standards Grids: An Activity for Educators

The first example is drawn from the work of Jeffrey Kress and Jacqueline Norris with the Social Decision Making/Social Problem Solving (SDM/SPS) program and is drawn from Norris and Kress (2000). The SDM/SPS program (Elias and Clabby 1989) is a comprehensive, research-validated prevention program that provides teachers and school personnel with training and curricula to equip students with social and decision-making skills. It has been designated as a Model Program by the National Education Goals Panel; as a Promising Program by the Department of Education Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined, and Drug Free Schools; and as a Select Program by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Focal skills are in the domains of students’ self-control, social awareness, and group participation, and in strategies for making decisions and solving problems, especially when under stress. An application phase emphasizes the transfer of skills to everyday life choices and academic situations. This research-validated program is used as a framework to help school districts develop comprehensive prevention programming in order to reduce such behaviors as aggression and substance abuse.

The SDM/SPS curriculum is designed to satisfy a school’s existing curriculum mandates, most often in the health or guidance areas. Implementation occurs through direct classroom instruction of SDM/SPS skills, as well as ongoing efforts on the part of school personnel to reinforce and facilitate students’ use of these skills throughout the school day. The resulting SEL school environment fosters carryover of SEL skills beyond the classroom. The SEL skills covered by SDM/SPS are similar to those of other SEL-enhancing programs that have been noted as exemplary because they link to key SEL areas, have at least one well-designed evaluation study demonstrating their effectiveness in terms of their impact on the acquisition and use of SEL skills, and offer high-quality professional development.<sup>1</sup> The SDM/SPS skills can

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be divided into three categories (see Elias and Tobias 1996 for more detail about these skills):

1. Self-control skills (e.g., listening skills, self-calming, and following directions).
2. Social awareness and group participation skills (e.g., choosing friends and giving and receiving help, praise, and criticism).
3. Decision-making and problem-solving skills (e.g., problem identification, solution generation, anticipating outcomes).

The activity described below has been used in training settings to show the overlap of SDM/SPS and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. The activity can be changed to fit various SEL programs and different sets of standards.

1. Participants are given a blank grid. Across the top (in the column headings), are numbers that correspond to specific areas in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. Listed on the left side of the grid (the row heading) are the skills from the SDM/SPS program.
2. Participants are then given a set of standards with their descriptive paragraphs and the grade-level indicators (see table 1).
3. The participants are divided into groups, with each group examining the standards of different content areas (e.g., one group might work on math and social studies standards).
4. Participants are asked to read through the standards assigned to them, looking for mention of skills related to the SDM/SPS. When a particular SDM skill appears in the description of a particular standard, they are asked to indicate this with a mark on the corresponding point of intersection of their grid. A sample outcome is shown in table 2.

While we expected strong overlap between the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards—with their focus on life skills needed for employment—the results of this activity impressed upon us the degree of convergence between SEL and a broad range of curriculum areas. For example, the first of the New Jersey Language Arts and Literacy Standards (standard 3.1) states, “All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences” (cf. <http://www.nj.gov/njded/cccs/>). In reviewing this standard and the 22 progress indicators that accompany it, participants in this exercise consistently point out the need for students to express themselves clearly, listen appropriately, make choices and strategize around how to best communicate to a particular audience, and plan what they will say. Clearly, these are SEL skills and are integral to successful achievement of this standard. The standards cannot be achieved without a focus on social and emotional competencies.

This exercise can help to create a rationale among educators for bringing SEL into schools systematically and comprehensively. This integration of SDM/SPS and the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards has

TABLE 1

*Selected New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards*

Content Area	Standard Number
Cross-content workplace readiness	<p>1. All students will develop career planning and workplace readiness skills.</p> <p>3. All students will use critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.</p> <p>4. All students will demonstrate self-management skills.</p>
Language arts literacy	<p>3.1. All students will speak for a variety of real purposes and audiences.</p> <p>3.2. All students will listen actively in a variety of situations to information from a variety of sources.</p>
Mathematics	<p>4.1. All students will develop the ability to pose and solve mathematical problems in mathematics, other disciplines, and everyday experiences.</p> <p>4.2. All students will develop reasoning ability and will become self-reliant, independent mathematical thinkers.</p>
Science	<p>5.1. All students will learn to identify systems of interacting components and understand how their interactions combine to produce the overall behavior of the system.</p> <p>5.2. All students will develop problem-solving, decision-making, and inquiry skills, reflected by formulating usable questions and hypotheses, planning, experiments, conducting systematic observations, interpreting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and communicating results.</p>
Social studies	<p>6.1. All students will learn democratic citizenship and how to participate in the constitutional system of government of the United States.</p> <p>6.2. All students will learn democratic citizenship through the humanities by studying literature, art, history and philosophy, and related fields.</p> <p>6.5. All students will acquire historical understanding of varying cultures throughout the history of New Jersey, the United States, and the world.</p>

SOURCE.—<http://www.state.nj.us/njded/cccs/archive/1996/>.

NOTE.—The authors used the 1996, prerevision standards, and it is to these that this table and the next table refer.

TABLE 2

*Intersection of Social Decision-Making Skills to the New Jersey Content Standards*

Social Decision-Making Skill	Standard												
	1	2	4	3.1	3.2	4.1	4.4	5.1	5.2	6.1	6.2	6.5	
Listening skills	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Following directions	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Self-calming	X	X											
Communication skills	X	X	X	X					X	X			X
Giving and receiving praise	X	X	X										
Perspective taking	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
Choosing friends	X												
Participating in groups	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
Giving and receiving criticism	X	X	X										
Respecting differences/diversity	X	X	X					X		X	X	X	X
Identifying problems	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Setting goals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Generating alternative solutions	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Anticipating consequences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evaluating options	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X
Planning	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X				X
Evaluating outcomes	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X

SOURCE.—Based on Norris and Kress 2000.

benefits for children and educators alike. Children would possess some of the sophisticated intellectual and social-emotional tools needed to navigate the challenges of our world in the twenty-first century. Educators find that they have a framework for an instructional and school climate conducive to enthusiastic, well-structured teaching in which students can develop the skills necessary for deeper, more cooperative, and focused learning.

### Example 2: SEL-Standards Mapping, Supported by Training

The second example is drawn from the work of Pamela Seigle, the founder and executive director of the Open Circle Social Competency Program based at the Stone Center at the Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, in Massachusetts. Open Circle is a comprehensive, multiyear social and emotional learning program for elementary school (grades kindergarten–5) children, their teachers, principals, and parents. The program recognizes the important role that relationships play in the academic and social success of children and works to support caring, respectful school communities with high expectations for all students. The *Open Circle Curriculum* (Seigle 1999) builds on well-researched methods of instruction in social competency skill development, including the work of Schelkun (1987), Shure and Spivack (1982), Weissberg and colleagues (1980), and Elias and Clabby (1989). In addition, the work of Jean Baker Miller (1986) and her colleagues at the Stone Center has provided a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of positive interpersonal relationships to the psychological and intellectual growth of both children and adults.

Open Circle has been designated as a Promising Program by the U.S. Department of Education Expert Panel on Safe, Disciplined, and Drug Free Schools, and as a Select Program by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. Quantitative evaluations have provided evidence of Open Circle's effectiveness in promoting SEL skills. One study (Hennessey forthcoming) involved 150 fourth grade students and their teachers in eight classrooms at four elementary schools. Four of the classrooms used the Open Circle Program. The other four did not use the program and served as the control group in the study. In the fall, no systematic differences emerged when the ratings of participating children were compared to those in the control group. By the spring, students in the participating classrooms were rated by teachers as having significantly greater social skills and demonstrating significantly fewer problem behaviors than the students in the control group. Furthermore, these differences were consistent when urban and suburban classrooms were compared separately.

A second study (Taylor et al. 2002) focused on the effects the program had on children as they enter middle school. Researchers found positive effects on middle school adjustment for both girls and boys. For example, the study found that girls who had participated in the program for at least 2 years in elementary school showed, among other benefits, a significant increase in self-assertiveness as compared to girls who had not participated. Boys with at least 2 years of program participation in elementary school reported higher levels of social skills and self-control, and fewer problems with physical fighting when compared to nonparticipants. These findings lend support to the hypothesis

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that having two or more years of the program in elementary school has an impact on social adjustment even after children are no longer exposed to the program in middle school.

The vehicle for the program's direct work with students is a multiyear social competency curriculum for elementary school classrooms implemented by classroom teachers and supported by a yearlong teacher training and consulting program. The *Open Circle Curriculum* focuses on three content areas—communication, self-control, and social problem solving—and presents a consistent set of concepts across all grades. These essential concepts are explored in greater depth and reinforced as students proceed from year to year, building a vocabulary that is shared by the entire school community. The curriculum is taught in the context of a class meeting known as Open Circle, a name that describes how students and teacher arrange their chairs to include an extra seat for anyone who wants to join and to symbolize openness to different perspectives. Teachers facilitate Open Circle meetings with their students twice a week for 15–30 minutes. Open Circle becomes not only the setting for developing SEL skills but also a place to bring issues of importance for individuals or the entire class, to identify and resolve conflicts, and to celebrate the classroom community. Recognizing that a socially competent classroom cannot exist in isolation from the larger school community, Open Circle provides training sessions that introduce its concepts to principals and administrators new to the program, other professional and nonprofessional school staff, and parents. This serves to complement the comprehensive training the program provides for classroom teachers implementing the curriculum. A yearlong program for principals, accompanied by a principals' handbook, supports leadership of the adult community. Another training program, which focuses on helping schools sustain their use of Open Circle over time, brings teams of teachers and principals together to develop plans for in-depth, school-wide implementation.

As is the case for other evidence-based SEL curricula, Open Circle approaches the challenge of making links between the *Open Circle Curriculum* and local curriculum frameworks and academic standards in several ways. The program enables teachers and students to form learning communities in their classrooms. As teachers develop their relational capacities, they are better able to understand their students individually, culturally, developmentally, and as learners. As teachers become better listeners and are more fully present in the classroom, they are able to create an environment in which students can take the risks that are necessary for learning to occur.

In addition, through its training activities, the program builds teachers' skills as facilitators, problem solvers, and communicators. These skills are crucial for teachers to effectively implement new pedagogical strategies grounded in constructivist theory and problem-based learning. As part of the training,

teachers explore how Open Circle concepts, skills, and vocabulary can be integrated into academic areas and other parts of the school day. In particular, the Open Circle Curriculum supports literacy goals by including, after each lesson, an annotated list of children's literature and suggested activities to explore the SEL concepts in more depth.

Finally, the program has developed a document, made available to schools and teachers by request, which outlines specific links between Open Circle lessons and individual strands of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (see table 3). This document has been informed by input from teachers and the program's work in the field. By making available material such as the document described above, and by drawing parallels between sound pedagogical technique and SEL skills, training and consultation activities consistently forge a close tie between SEL and state standards.

#### Discussion: Building for the Integration of SEL and Academics

When it comes to consistently and systematically implementing SEL programming, good intentions on the part of educators often outweigh sustained efforts. Although educators generally agree on the importance of such outcomes, it is not uncommon to encounter programmatic efforts that barely extend beyond the staff-development workshop at which they are introduced. There are multiple factors that serve as inhibitors to programming efforts. We have found that among these is the perception that adding this layer of programmatic effort necessarily comes at the expense of addressing core academic skills. And, more and more, teachers are wary of making time in their already crowded schedules for anything that is seen as potentially impacting negatively on test scores and academic achievement. Community psychologists discuss the importance of a contextual approach, understanding the needs and structure of the settings in which we conduct our work (e.g., Dalton et al. 2001) and the motivation that drives (or inhibits) consultees from instituting change (Adelman and Taylor 1997). Similarly, Seymour Sarason (1972) has discussed the importance of learning about the time "before the beginning" of consultation. Although there is much debate on this topic, the reality for many educators is that curriculum standards exist "before the beginning" of implementation of any SEL program.

As the literature we review in this article demonstrates, there is great conceptual overlap between social and emotional skills and those competencies necessary for academic success. Furthermore, emerging research points to relationships between social and emotional skills and academic success. As such, the issue of SEL-academic conflict is one of perception rather than reality. However, of course, implementer perception regarding the extent to

TABLE 3

*Examples of Links between the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and the Open Circle Curriculum*

Strand/Domain	Grade	Skill	General Standard	Corresponding Open Circle Lesson
English language arts	Pre-K–4	Questioning, listening and responding	Students will use agreed upon rules for informal and formal discussions in small and large groups	Classroom rules Being a good listener Nonverbal signals Speaking up Brainstorming Class meeting Using creative thinking
English language arts	Pre-K–4	Identifying themes in literature	Students will identify and apply knowledge of theme in a literary work and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding	The <i>Open Circle Curriculum</i> makes explicit connections between children’s literature selections and Open Circle themes. At the end of each lesson, there are specific annotated literature selections with discussion questions and activities related to <i>Open Circle Curriculum</i> concepts and themes. Key concepts are taught through personal experience and the experience of others. Students reflect on these experiences and apply the ideas and experiences to literature they are reading

History and social science	Pre-K–4	Civics and government	Students will retell stories that illustrate honesty, courage, friendship, respect, responsibility and the wise or judicious exercise of authority and explain how the characters in the stories show these qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting to know one another</li> <li>Including one another</li> <li>Recognizing differences</li> <li>Speaking up</li> <li>Understanding feeling words</li> <li>Friendship</li> <li>Showing respect for one another</li> <li>Honesty</li> <li>Finally, each lesson contains an annotated bibliography of literature connected to <i>Open Circle Curriculum</i> themes such as friendship, courage, respect and honesty one another</li> </ul>
History and social science	Pre-K–4	Civics and government	Students will define and give examples of some of the rights and responsibilities that students as citizens have in the school (e.g., students have the right to vote in a class election and have the responsibility to follow school rules)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What students have in common</li> <li>When to tell a responsible adult</li> <li>When to deal with situations yourself</li> <li>Dealing with teasing</li> <li>Recognizing differences</li> <li>Speaking up</li> </ul>
Comprehensive health	Pre-K–5	Mental health	Students will acquire knowledge about emotions and physical health, the management of emotions, personality and character development, and social awareness, and will learn skills to promote self-acceptance, make decisions, and cope with stress, including suicide prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding feelings</li> <li>Getting calm when you feel upset</li> <li>Practicing self-talk</li> <li>Stress relievers</li> <li>Additional self-talk activities</li> </ul>

TABLE 3 (Continued)

Strand/Domain	Grade	Skill	General Standard	Corresponding Open Circle Lesson
Comprehensive health	Pre-K–5	Violence prevention	Students will identify factors (such as internal character and personality attributes and forces external to individuals, such as media or society) related to both violent and nonviolent attitudes. They will differentiate between one’s personal rights and those of others and use communication and problem solving to set personal boundaries, resolve conflicts, and develop positive relationships	When to tell a responsible adult When to deal with situations yourself Dealing with teasing Problem solving Personal space
Science and technology	Pre-K–2	Guiding Principle II: investigation and problem solving are central to science and technology education	Skill(s) of inquiry students will be able to: Ask questions about objects, organisms and events in the environment Tell about why and what would happen if? Discuss observations with others	Getting to know one another Being a good listener Speaking up Problem solving (including calming down, identifying the problem, deciding on a positive goal, thinking of several solutions, evaluating these solutions, and making a plan and trying it)
Science and technology	3–5	Guiding Principle VIII: an effective program in science and technology/engineering gives students opportunities to collaborate in scientific and technological endeavors and communicate their ideas	Skill of inquiry Students will be able to record data and communicate findings to others using graphs, charts, maps, models, and oral and written reports	Getting to know one another Being a good listener Speaking up Problem solving (including calming down, identifying the problem, deciding on a positive goal, thinking of several solutions, evaluating these solutions, and making a plan and trying it)

NOTE.—Pre-K = prekindergarten.

which their work will be valued and will be seen as central to the mission of the school is an important aspect of the “readiness” of the educators to implement any SEL programs (Novick et al. 2002). Failure to address this important contextual issue creates a risk of invalidating the concerns teachers have in terms of how to use limited classroom time and how to meet expectations for teaching “to the standards.” The two examples discussed above have been used to address these legitimate concerns and to empower educators to make innovations in their practice within the presses and constraints they face in their professional lives.

The examples discussed show the overlap of SEL and standards. The realization of this overlap can be helpful in reframing the implementation process from one of “taking away time from academics” to one of “contributing to academic success.” However, even recognizing the SEL-standards overlap, educators may still have pragmatic concerns regarding use of their limited time. The examples given in this article are just one type of strategy to address a complex issue. While showing conceptual overlap can be an important step, this is not the only way to address implementers’ concerns. Consultants can work with implementers to develop methods for promoting SEL that are integrated in curricular content areas. For example, the SDM/SPS program discussed previously contains worksheets and activities for students to practice problem solving in the context of history lessons, current events, and so forth (Elias and Clabby 1989). In fact, integration of SEL promotion efforts within academic content areas is seen as essential for effective social and emotional skill building (Elias et al. 1997). Consultants must look for multiple ways to address the complexity of implementing SEL programs within school settings.

Further, we recommend further efforts—both in terms of research and curriculum development—to ease the pragmatics of SEL program implementation within curriculum content areas. Work should continue in developing materials that address both SEL and academic content. The social and emotional learning curriculum developers should take to heart the guideline that “academic and SEL goals [be] unified by a comprehensive, theory-based framework that is developmentally appropriate” (Elias et al. 1997, p. 139). Further research should also focus on helping to bridge SEL and academics by exploring outcomes from both spheres and by looking at the mechanisms by which SEL skills might help promote academic success. Importantly, efforts must be made to ensure that relevant research findings appear in venues and formats that are likely to be accessed by frontline implementers.

This article has focused on making the SEL-state standards connection apparent to teachers, an important step in enhancing readiness for school-based implementation. However, the authors acknowledge that there are other relevant constituencies involved in the implementation process as well. For example, the perceptions held by school administrators and parents regarding

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the value of SEL and its overlap with academics and standards may make difficult efforts to promote SEL and academic standards, and the way these are conveyed to frontline teacher implementers will have an impact on implementation. Administrators and parents might also have concerns that focusing on SEL skills, even those they might acknowledge as vital, might somehow detract from the academic focus of the school. Examples such as those provided here can be modified help “make the case” to these other constituencies as well. Administrators and parents can be introduced to literature tying SEL competencies to academic outcomes and can themselves explore state standards to the SEL areas embedded within.

### Conclusion

Education for the new millennium is a transformed profession. Instruction that does not address all of the facets of the child that inform and direct the learning process—with the notable inclusion of social and emotional factors—will not effectively educate. We have described the beginning of a growing number of related efforts to show the articulation of SEL and academic standards. As such efforts progress, we will see that children who are cognitively, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally ready to learn will accomplish more in academic domains. What we also should expect to see, however, is that children are more ready to put their knowledge to work, to share with their classmates, to bring what they know to the community and to those whose learning needs are great. Further, we can expect to see them step into the range of roles and responsibilities of citizenship envisioned not only by those who were formative of our republic but by those who made citizenship and character a part of our national education goals and our mandate to leave no child behind.

### Note

1. More information about exemplary programs, as well as citations and contact information for these, can be found in *Safe and Sound: An Educational Leader's Guide to Evidence-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programs* (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning 2003).

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