

Social and Emotional Learning: A Resource Guide and New Approach to Measurement in ExpandedED Schools

AN EVOLVING APPROACH TO MEASURING HABITS OF MIND

Grit, resilience, creativity, the ability to lead or operate within a team – these habits of mind, which take root in childhood, have emerged as potentially more important signifiers of future success than test scores or IQ.

They're all outgrowths of students' social and emotional development. But educators who want to support social and emotional learning within a comprehensive education system are currently in a bind. They want to be able to measure if they are effectively teaching these skills. But despite numerous development efforts underway, educators currently lack measurement tools that are nationally normed, validated and widely used.

TASC is committed to providing ExpandedED Schools with tools and assistance to meet their goals for students. While we haven't arrived at a perfect solution for helping schools measure their students' developing habits of mind, we believe there is value in sharing the mix of tools we currently offer schools and their partners, and how we arrived at their usage.

Developing SEL Student and School Measures

In 2010, TASC developed GradTracker, a tool to help schools identify how many and which students exhibited factors that put them on track to graduate from high school on time. We recognized the

importance of social and emotional development and behavior as an ingredient in long-term success. However, we found that the only universally available behavior data we could collect from schools was suspension records. Partly because schools are inconsistent in how they administer and report suspensions, and partly because this data does not capture the development of positive behaviors, we knew this information had limited use.

The TASC Research team undertook an exhaustive literature review to identify normed measures of social and emotional well-being. We sought measurement tools that would be easy for schools to deliver and that would not impose bureaucratic burdens. We looked for tools that are used widely enough by other educational organizations that we could learn from their teaching and measurement strategies. We sought a tool that applied to individual students so that educators could compare a student's academic progress with his social and behavioral progress, and detect correlations and areas of need.

As a result, the TASC Research team created a 1-page survey to measure the habits of mind for each student in ExpandedED Schools. Either a teacher or a community educator who worked with a student could complete the survey. Our goal was to have schools administer the surveys in the spring of the 2012-13 school year so we could establish a baseline for both schools and individual students. We then asked schools to administer the student surveys again in the fall and spring of 2013-14 in order to track changes, and to help each school drive instructional strategies.

The survey combines the DESSA Mini, which includes a series of behavior rating scales, and selected measures from the KIPP Character Growth Card, which measures such student qualities as zest and social intelligence.

Giving Schools the Help They Need

After schools administered the baseline surveys, the TASC Research team provided each school team with an analysis of how students performed on these measures. We quickly concluded that unless we offered deep interpretation and resources to drive better instruction, it was minimally helpful to deliver this load of new data to principals and partners who already had mountains of student data to sift through.

So in the fall, when the TASC Research team delivered the second round of survey analysis to schools, we also created an interpretive report on each school's data that identifies the most promising areas for growth. Now, in response to requests from principals, teachers and community partners for resources to help schools foster healthy habits of mind, we have developed a guide to available resources that boost social and emotional learning. TASC program officers also now conduct in-person meetings with ExpandedED Schools teams to deliver the survey data, to walk principals and community partners through the analysis and interpretation, and to brainstorm how schools can strengthen their social and emotional instruction.

We believe this three-step process is critical in using the measurement information to drive instructional change. We anticipate learning more as this process evolves.

RESOURCE GUIDE

The following is a list of tools that can be used in continued implementation of strong programming powered by SEL competencies. This curated resource pulls from across the landscape of policy, research and practice, with a description of each tool gathered directly from its website.

THE SEL TOOLBOX

As you consider the SEL landscape, we want to highlight three organizations that could be particularly helpful in shaping new ideas for planning and implementation.

- **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**
casel.org

CASEL, a leader in advancing the science and practice of social and emotional learning, could be a useful resource for policy information and trends. CASEL also releases an annual guide naming high-quality SEL programs; many of the initiatives listed below were included in the 2013 Guide and are so indicated. A 2003 guide developed by CASEL also listed seven guidelines for effective SEL practice.

- **Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence**

ei.yale.edu

The Center conducts research and teaches people of all ages how to develop their emotional intelligence. It can be a great resource in building a knowledge base of the evidence behind SEL programming.

- **Character Education Partnership (CEP)**

www.character.org

A national advocacy organization located in Washington, D.C., CEP offers resources and information on best practices and professional development as well as hosts a national forum on character education. CEP developed, with educators, researchers and other experts, the 11 Principles of Effective Character Education, available for free download on their website.

BUILDING STUDENT STRENGTHS

The DESSA Mini, created by the Devereux Center for Resilient Children, seeks to nurture students’ personal growth across eight key constructs: self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, relationship skills, goal-directed behavior, personal responsibility, decision making, and optimistic thinking.

- **Competent Kids, Caring Communities (CKCC)**

www.competentkids.org

Affiliated with the Ackerman Institute for the Family, CKCC is an evidence-based intervention that works with schools to integrate social and emotional learning throughout their academic day as well as connects with families in ways that impact their child’s success. Lessons in its K-5 curriculum align with CASEL’s Five Competencies—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making—and CKCC was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program.

- **The 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution)**

www.morningsidecenter.org/4rs-program

First developed by Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility for New York City public schools and now at work in other states like Ohio and Georgia, the 4Rs program uses children’s literature in engaging curriculum to foster community building, strengthen listening and problem-solving skills, and boost cooperation. It was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program.

- **Children’s Literature Lists via Open Circle**

bit.ly/1fbBNB6 and bit.ly/19ZB2qk

Open Circle, a project of Wellesley College’s Wellesley Centers for Women, is an evidence-based curriculum and professional development program serving K–5. They offer two lists of children’s literature that support SEL learning, including one that aligns with DESSA’s constructs, and another “Top 25” that corresponds to specific grade levels. Open Circle was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program.

- **Lions Quest**

www.lions-quest.org

Offering three distinct programs—Skills for Growing (K–5), Skills for Adolescence (6–8) and Skills for Action (9–12)—Lions Quest works to encourage key skills, healthy attitudes and strong character. Curriculum kits and supplemental materials can be purchased on their website, with samples available for download. Lions Quest also offers training for educators.

- **WINGS**

<http://www.wingsforkids.org>

WINGS operates after-school programs focused specifically on social and emotional learning at schools in South Carolina and Georgia. It uses a research-based curriculum, with a specific Creed and learning objectives, and tracks student progress daily. WINGS has several facets, including group time to build community, choice time to encourage decision-making skills, academic time to boost key learning, community service time to foster outreach, and recreational time to offer engaging opportunities for critical thinking. WINGS’s [SEL toolkits](#) with lesson guides are available for free download on their website.

NURTURING POSITIVE CHARACTER

Inspired by the research of Angela Duckworth, Martin Seligman and others as well as by the KIPP Character Growth Card, TASC focused on eight character strengths—zest, grit, self-control (in two domains, school work and interpersonal relationships), optimism, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity—on which to measure social and emotional growth.

Zest

- **MindUP**

thehawnfoundation.org/mindup

A program of The Hawn Foundation, MindUP is a research-based training program for educators and children. Based in neuroscience, the program nurtures optimism and happiness in the classroom, helps eliminate bullying and aggression, and increases empathy and compassion. MindUP was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program.

- **Good Time: 4 Ways to Reawaken Student Engagement and Kids Speak Out on Student Engagement via Edutopia**
bit.ly/18u8A0O and bit.ly/18xbCN6

One teacher offers suggestions for creating open and engaging environments, while another goes directly to kids to ask, “What engages you?,” and comes back with 10 great youth-driven ideas.

Grit

- **Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance by US Dept. of Education (2013)**
www.ed.gov/edblogs/technology/files/2013/02/OET-Draft-Grit-Report-2-17-13.pdf

A forthcoming paper of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Educational Technology describes several activities that could foster a positive growth mindset, including reflective writing assignments, guided group discussions, mentoring programs and interactive software like Brainology.

Self-Control

- **TeachableMoment**
www.morningsidecenter.org/teachable-moment

A project of Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility, TeachableMoment is an online portal of K–12 classroom lessons, activities and ideas that supports students’ development of strong interpersonal relationships and encourages youth to think critically.

- **Headstand Yoga**
www.headstand.org

A San Francisco-based non-profit, Headstand uses yoga and SEL strategies to help K-12 students combat stress and be more mindful. Their website offers a glimpse into their curriculum, while [this post](#) on Headstand’s impact in one California KIPP school shared a “Take five” calming technique.

- **"Helping Students Develop the Skills to Focus" and "Refocusing Students: How to Get Their Attention Back" via Edutopia**
bit.ly/18XmELB and bit.ly/18XmGmI

Maurice Elias, a psychology professor at Rutgers University, provides several ideas for classroom activities that teach youth effective listening and observation skills so they remain focused and attentive.

- **PAX Good Behavior Game**
goodbehaviorgame.com

The PAX Good Behavior Game promotes positive classroom management and productivity through “Spleems” and “Granny’s Wacky Prizes.” Youth, organized in groups, rack up Spleems through moments of misbehavior. As they work on keeping on-task and reducing moments of disturbance, students earn their time for fun, developing key skills along the way. Training and materials are provided by PAXIS Institute.

Optimism

- **Teach Your Child to Operate with Optimism by Dr. Katherine Larson (2008)**
raiseinspiredkids.com/files/rik_publications/operatewithoptimism.pdf

Written for parents but equally accessible for program providers and teachers, this publication provides specific talking points and ideas on keeping youth inspired and optimistic in their endeavors. Dr. Katherine Larson is the Executive Director of *Raise Inspired Kids* and a Researcher Emeritus from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

- **Fostering Optimism in Young Children by Darlene Kordich Hall (2000)**
reachinginreachingout.com/documents/Fosteringoptimism.pdf

In this document, Hall provides talking points and teaching strategies for developing optimistic children, taking inspiration from Martin Seligman’s seminal text *The Optimistic Child*.

Gratitude

- **Gratitude Activities for the Classroom via The Great Good Science Center**
greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/gratitude_activities_for_the_classroom

An initiative of University of California, Berkeley, the Greater Good Science Center studies the psychology, sociology, and neuroscience of well-being, and teaches skills that foster a thriving, resilient, and compassionate society. In this article, they offer 15 ideas for bringing gratitude to kids, including creating paper chains, sharing circles or journals.

- **Thnx4**
www.thnx4.org

Brainchild of UC Berkeley’s Greater Good Science Center, Thnx4 is a digital platform currently in beta that will offer a 14-day gratitude challenge via an online, sharable journal. It is funded by the John Templeton Foundation in an effort to expand on the scientific database of gratitude, promote evidence-based practices of gratitude and engage the public in a larger social conversation about the role of gratitude.

- **Creating More Compassionate Classrooms and Habits of Heart: Helping Students Reflect and Act on Gratitude via Edutopia**
bit.ly/18CEUQ7 and bit.ly/1i89W1C

Two educators offer ideas for fostering gratitude in youth, finding communication and reflection are key to positive interpersonal relationships. For more information, see the links for the full articles.

Social Intelligence

- **RULER**
ei.yale.edu/ruler

Developed by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, RULER trains staff in understanding the building blocks of emotional intelligence and helps them hone the skills of the Feeling Words Curriculum, Common Core-aligned lessons that complement students' social and emotional learning needs. RULER was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program.

- **Second Step**
www.cfchildren.org/second-step.aspx

A program of the Committee for Children and a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program, Second Step serves children from their early years to 8th grade and teaches core social-emotional skills such as empathy, emotion management, and problem solving. Curricula and other materials are available on their website.

- **I Can Problem Solve (ICPS)**
www.researchpress.com/books/935/icps-i-can-problem-solve

Created by Dr. Myrna B. Shure, a developmental psychologist at Drexel University, ICPS is a school-based program designed to enhance the interpersonal cognitive processes and problem-solving skills of children in preschool through grade 6. It was named a 2013 CASEL Guide SElect Program. The three books, organized by grade level, are available on the website above.

Curiosity

- **Flat Stanley**
www.flatstanley.com

An online sensation, The Flat Stanley project endeavors to connect children and/or classrooms to their peers around the world by sending “flat” visitors, via the mail or digitally on The Flat Stanley app. Kids then track and write about their character's adventures. Strengthening both literacy and communication skills, Flat Stanley encourages deep and meaningful connections. For more information, visit the website.

- **Teaching Your Students How to Have a Conversation via Edutopia**
bit.ly/JhYc1M

Encourage your kids to be great speakers and listeners! This article by speaker and educator Dr. Allen Mendler provides 8 tips from modeling good conversation and asking open-ended questions to demonstrating physical cues and maintaining eye contact.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE

- **Maryland Center for Character Education at Stevenson University (MCCE@SU)**
www.mdctrcharacter.org

A joint project with Stevenson University, MCCE@SU offers resources to school districts and community leaders committed to social and emotional learning. The Center also offers monthly spotlights of promising programs and best practices.

ABOUT TASC

The mission of TASC is to expand the school day to give disadvantaged students more opportunities to discover and develop their talents; more support to overcome the challenges of poverty; and more time to achieve at the high levels essential for success in the global workplace. Since our founding in 1998 we have helped more than 621,000 kids, supported more than 564 public schools, partnered with more than 400 community and cultural organizations and colleges and trained 23,000 community members to work in schools.

For more information, contact Katie Brohawn, Director of Research, kbrohawn@expandedschools.org or (646) 943-8845.

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