

Making Your School Safe

STRATEGIES TO
PROTECT CHILDREN
AND PROMOTE LEARNING

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Promoting Social Emotional Competencies and Healthy Relationships

Johnny and Robby's Spanish teacher threw them out of class because while Robby was reading a passage out loud from the text, he came upon a suggestive word and he and Johnny started laughing uncontrollably. The teacher yelled at them and they stopped, but she was so irritated that she called the security guard and had them removed. "For no reason, for no reason," Johnny and Robby insisted when they were being led down the corridor by the security guard. The guard took the pair down to the conflict resolution class, where the teacher said, "OK, what happened, guys?" "She's a bitch and I'm gonna hurt her. I'm going to get her after school and slash her. She deserves it," Johnny replied. "Oh, great, Johnny. You're going to let some teacher mess up the rest of your life?" "I don't care. It'll make me feel better."

In this chapter, we focus on the second core dimension of social and emotional safety that enhances the likelihood that children and adults will feel safe in school: direct teaching and learning that enhances social emotional competencies and ethical dispositions. Longitudinal and psychoeducational research has identified a set of core social emotional competencies that can predict children's ability to learn and solve conflicts in nonviolent ways (Cohen, 2001; Fuchs et al., 2002; Weissberg & Greenberg, 1998). In Johnny's case, for example, the adults may begin to relate to him in a one-on-one setting where he will be able to think through and work through his violent fantasies and begin to appreciate how

self-destructive they are. These same competencies enhance the likelihood that children will be more inclined to recognize others in distress and to actively take steps to respond to problems rather than being passive bystanders who inadvertently contribute to a climate of fear in the school (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2003; Slaby, Wilson-Brewer, & Dash, 1994; Twemlow, Fonagy, Sacco, Gies, & Hess, 2001). Learning to become more socially and emotionally literate complements and extends the systemic dimension of social emotional safety described in Chapter 3.

Just as educators and parents can intentionally promote children's ability to decode phonemes and then use this information to become lifelong language learners, we can promote children's ability to decode their social selves and their relationships to others (their reflective and empathic abilities), and then learn to use this information to become lifelong social emotional learners.

The degree to which we are able to promote such learning can predict life satisfaction and productivity, whereas grades and SAT scores, by themselves, cannot (Bar-On, 2005; Goleman, 1995; Heath, 1991; Valliant, 1977). In fact, social and emotional competencies are predictive of adolescents and adults' ability to form and maintain healthy relationships, to work effectively (Goleman, 1998), and even to age well (Valliant, 2002). Learning to become more socially and emotionally literate complements and extends the systemic dimension of social emotional safety described in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, we detail these core social and emotional competencies: reflective, empathic, problem-solving, and decision-making skills as well as cooperative, communicative, self-motivational, friendship-related and altruistic skills, knowledge, and beliefs. We also detail the range of ways that school personnel can promote these essential life skills. When we promote students' social and emotional competencies, we are enhancing healthy development as well as taking meaningful steps to prevent risky behavior. For example, Johnny's inability to recognize his frustration could inadvertently result in his getting into even more serious

trouble. Clearly, Johnny had not had a chance to learn and practice paying attention to his underlying emotions (e.g., frustration) and needs (e.g., that the teacher recognize that he was not trying to disrupt the class). We now turn to these core social and emotional competencies and the range of ways that we can integrate social emotional education into school life.

CORE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

In this section, we focus on the core social and emotional competencies that parents and educators can promote in the classrooms and hallways of schools as well as in homes. Although different longitudinal researchers have used somewhat different terms, our listing of competencies represents an organization of social emotional skills that leading psychosocial researchers and practitioners have endorsed (Fuchs-Nadeau et al., 2002). (Note that these competencies were the foundation for New York State's interpersonal violence prevention guidelines.) For each competency, we begin with a brief definition and overview; offer guidelines that help children to learn these sets of skills, knowledge, and beliefs; and conclude with a series of examples and tips about teaching and learning.

Reflective and Empathic Abilities: Connecting With Ourselves and Others

Definition and overview. Learning to connect or listen to ourselves (reflective capacities) and others (empathic capacities) is the foundation for social emotional competency (Cohen, 2001). This capacity involves learning to listen actively to verbal and nonverbal messages and to think about what they mean. It also means recognizing when we do not understand what another person is saying or what we ourselves are saying or feeling, thereby honoring (rather than masking) our confusion. Listening to others and ourselves provides the social emotional information we need to

make decisions, solve conflicts nonviolently, cooperate, communicate, and form friendships.

Feeling connected to ourselves and others and experiencing self-awareness is an essential facet of creating safe schools for several reasons:

- People who are violent—be it physically, socially, or emotionally—are typically disconnected from themselves. Anger and rage typically grow out of frustration and loss. When children as well as adults are disconnected due to feelings of frustration and loss, they are more likely to act in violent ways.
- When a student is feeling aggressive and vulnerable to acting violently, sensing that others are listening and wanting to understand how he or she is feeling, in supportive ways, reduces the likelihood that he or she will act violently.
- Students who feel connected to other students are more likely to express support and caring. This is the kind of social environment that promotes safety and discourages violence as a solution to problems. It is also the type of social environment that allows and encourages students to confide in adults regarding a fellow student they may be concerned about.

Guidelines. There are a number of organizing guidelines that can enhance educators' and parents' ability to connect with children.

- Be curious about children's experiences.
- Ask questions to learn more about children's experiences.
- Listen, listen, and listen.
- Recognize and honor children's experiences. We do not need to always agree with or be pleased with what children say, but it is useful to recognize and honor their experiences.
- Do not tell children that they should not feel a certain way when they are beginning to express feelings—be

it verbally, artistically, or otherwise. On the other hand, there are many other moments when it is essential that we let children know what they should and should not do.

- Display an appreciative attitude. With few exceptions, children do the best they can. Even when a child misbehaves, this typically occurs because the child does not think he or she has any other options. An appreciative attitude can powerfully foster our ability to connect with others. Recognizing that children try to do their best enhances their ability to be open to adults' suggestions and comments.
- Accept confusion and not knowing. Children have a common belief that it is unacceptable to be confused or not know the answer. Although this misunderstanding tends to become more prevalent as children move into middle and high school, it often begins in the first years of school life. As we detail in Chapter 5, parents and educators have a series of ongoing opportunities to let children know it is normal to be confused and not know the answers. In fact, these are wonderful opportunities to learn something new if we allow ourselves to ask for help.
- Pay attention to feeling unable to connect. When we have difficulty connecting with a child, it may be an important signal that something is amiss. If you are concerned about not being able to connect with a child, confer with your school administrator, school counselor, or other community members who have expertise in these areas.
- Allow children to express even their most angry feelings or most destructive fantasies. Help them think about these images and ideas by projecting the possible future negative consequences for these actions.

Examples and tips. What follows is a series of examples and tips that can support our capacity to connect with children and foster social emotional learning to prevent youth violence:

- Ask questions. "How would you feel if you were in that person's shoes? How are you feeling right now?"
- Acknowledge. "We have a problem. What do you think our goal should be? What are the range of ways we can solve this problem?"
- Learn and listen. "What matters to you? How can we learn more about that?"
- Tell stories about how you learned these skills, understandings, and beliefs. It is very important to include stories about moments when we had trouble learning one or more of these capacities. This gives children permission to talk about what is difficult or confusing. As adults, we often shield our children from difficult social emotional moments in our lives. We do not want to burden our children. Yet this can sometimes inadvertently contribute to children thinking that life is easy for us and that we never have problems.
- Make social emotional learning a part of what you do at home and in the classroom. In the classroom, at the dinner table, or in the car, there are many moments when we can think about how we are feeling and how the other person is feeling; what the problem is and what our goal is in facing a given decision or problem; what our options are and what would be the best ways to tackle a situation; what we really want to say to a person; how we might cooperate with others; how we might reach out to that person whom we would like to get to know more.
- Pay attention to the match between the child and the environment (home or classroom). We all come into the world with a "biological package" or temperament. Shyness, activity levels, and soothability are just a few of the many temperamental dimensions that researchers have learned about in recent years. One of the important factors that can inadvertently complicate a child's level of connectedness is a poor match between the environment (home or classroom) and the child's disposition. For example, some teachers insist that young children learn to sit still in their classrooms be-

fore they are ready. A poor match often contributes to children pulling back and disconnecting.

- **Recognize changes.** As our children grow physically, socially, and emotionally, it is important to recognize and explicitly acknowledge these changes. Recognizing and validating these changes provides a foundation for connectedness. A wonderful way to talk about these kinds of changes is to tell children stories about ourselves when we were children. Sometimes telling stories about our own changes without explicitly asking or suggesting that they should talk about their own changes allows them to be more comfortable and open up. For example, the passage into adolescence, which often begins well before the ninth grade, involves a series of extraordinary physical, mental, social, and emotional changes. In conjunction with the very visible physical changes that accompany puberty and the new mental capacities that many adolescents show, we often see children becoming more independent and moving away from parents and teachers. However, the need to be connected to others and ourselves is as important as ever.

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making Abilities

Definition and overview. Life involves a series of decisions and problems. How we solve problems and make choices shapes our lives and our ability to handle conflicts in nonviolent ways. Flexible and healthy decision making and problem solving involves engaging in a process of weighing options and consequences and coming to a conclusion that will result in positive and productive behavior. This competency includes the ability to develop and implement a plan, evaluate successes and barriers, and revise the plan to accomplish the objectives effectively.

Guidelines. There are helpful and unhelpful ways to solve problems and make decisions. It is useful to teach children the

steps that characterize flexible and creative problem solving and decision making.

A primary approach in learning to solve problems and to enhance decision-making abilities in children is to use a specific model. It is important to remember that for children to use this model, adults should be modeling this behavior and technique in their everyday life. Here is one example of an effective tool for problem solving and decision making and planning:

1. Make a clear statement of what the problem is. Define the problem.
2. Consider possible solutions to the problem. What can we do to fix it?
3. Test and evaluate these conclusions and arrive at a solution.
4. Take action and implement the best solution.
5. Evaluate the results of the action. Did the plan work?

Examples and tips. Here are some examples and tips that may support your teaching children these essential violence prevention skills, understandings, and beliefs:

- Talk about “good” and “not-so-good” problems: Normalize the notion that life is a series of problems and decisions and that the key issue is how we can become flexible and creative problem solvers.
- Talk about times when we did not solve problems so well. This can allow children to reflectively consider their own helpful and not-so-helpful problem-solving strategies.
- Underscore the importance of learning to recognize our emotional state and to keep calm. This is one of the foundations for helpful problem-solving abilities.
- Be a learner with children. Whatever happens when they (or we) are faced with a problem or decision can become a teachable moment, an opportunity to reflect and think about how we might have managed this if we could do it over again.

- Appreciate and practice goal-setting, the first critical stage in the problem-solving process. How we set goals (automatically or thoughtfully) is important. Goals drive behavior.

One of the very important decisions that children make pertains to acceptable and unacceptable ways to settle conflicts and disputes. Researchers have found that it is especially important to help middle school children (ages 6 to 11) learn about this skill (Huesmann, Guerra, Miller, & Zelli, 1992; Selman, Beardslee, Schultz, Krupa, & Podoresky, 1986). Helping children understand that it is not necessary to use physical force to settle disputes and to develop related skills and knowledge about how to manage interpersonal disputes is an important step in the creation of socially and emotionally as well as physically safe schools.

Communicative Capacities

Definition and overview. Communicative capacities refer to our ability to express ourselves and be clearly understood and our ability to understand what is being verbally and nonverbally transmitted back. Research has shown that fostering clear communication between children and adults is an important component of interpersonal violence prevention and the creation of safe schools (Pianta, 1999). It contributes to children feeling more connected and less isolated from others. How we communicate parents or educators becomes the model for how children communicate. Learning to put our feelings into words reduces the likelihood that we will feel frustrated and act aggressively or violently. Learning to communicate clearly and directly includes the ability to use refusal skills, assertiveness, and verbal as well as nonverbal methods to engage in positive behavior. Helping children to acquire observational, listening, and other communication skills reduces conflict and helps children handle problems more easily. If adults use inappropriate expressions and verbal put-downs, children will see these as acceptable forms of communication.

Guidelines. Communicating clearly and directly is hard work and it is an ongoing process. Pay attention to how your children communicate and recognize their efforts. Think about what kind of communicator you are: Our actions become a model for our children.

Examples and tips. What follows is a number of examples and tips that can aid our efforts to foster this fundamentally important skill and understanding:

- Learn to listen. Pay attention to what the child is saying; find time to be alone with the child; do not interrupt; do not prepare your response while your child is speaking; reserve making judgments or decisions or arriving at conclusions and solutions until the child has finished speaking.
- Look at and observe the child. Be aware of the child's facial expressions and body language. Is the child nervous and uncomfortable, or relaxed and happy? Reading these signs will help adults know how the child is feeling and respond more appropriately. During the conversation, acknowledge what the child is saying and move close to the child, make eye contact, and nod.
- Encourage respect for individual differences. If you are tolerant of people who are different from you, then the child will be more likely to model your behavior.
- Teach children, beginning at an early age, the importance of learning to say no or take a time-out when they feel uncomfortable.
- Respond and recognize. Use "I-statements" to let the child know how you feel about what he or she is saying. Speak for yourself and do not try to put words into the child's mouth. Identify when it is important for you to tell the child what you believe about a topic or issue and when it would be better for the child to figure out what he or she believes without your opinion. I-messages are simple, powerful ways to communicate our wants, needs, and feelings. By teaching chil-

dren to use these messages, you are giving them tools to help them in situations where they need to feel empowered and listened to.

Impulse Control and Anger Management (Self-Management, Stress Management, and Self-Regulation)

Definition and overview. Impulse control and anger management refer to our ability to recognize when we are feeling impulsive or angry and manage these urges in appropriate, nonviolent ways. Research has shown that learning how to control one's impulses will reduce violent behavior (Guerra, 2003). Anger is one of the most difficult emotions for children to manage. When children are angry, it is difficult for them to think clearly and make appropriate choices. In the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, Johnny was certainly not thinking clearly when he fantasized knifing the teacher who disciplined him. This is why it is an important violence prevention strategy for children—beginning in the prekindergarten years—to learn about and practice impulse control and anger management. Research has shown that learning to control impulses at an early age reduces the likelihood of aggressive and violent behavior in adolescence (Zigler, Styfco, & Gilman, 1993).

Guidelines. Learning to control our impulses rests on our ability to recognize our emotional state, contain these impulses, and find safe and appropriate ways to express them. It is important for children to understand that it is okay to feel angry or impulsive. However, children need to learn that there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to express these impulses. It is also useful for children to gradually learn that anger typically stems from frustration or loss.

Examples and tips. What follows is a series of ideas, examples, and tips that can further your ability to help children learn to recognize and manage their impulses:

- Label emotions, your own and others. This helps children to develop a vocabulary of feelings. If we can talk about our feelings, it is easier to recognize and manage them.
- Practice recognizing the physical signs or cues that accompany anger and other strong feelings. For example, the following questions can spur important discussion and discovery about this: How does your body feel when you are angry? What do your hands do? What does your face do? How does your voice sound? Do you walk, sit, or stand differently?
- Talk about “okay” and “not so okay” ways to express strong impulses.
- Help children understand that anger typically grows out of frustration or hurt.
- In class and at home, engage in conversations about what children should do when they are feeling angry or hurt.
- Talk about the various ways that we manage feeling frustrated and hurt, both helpful and unhelpful.
- Acknowledge a child’s feelings. For example, say, “I can see you are angry.” “It looks like you are pretty mad about . . .” This is important because many children calm down quickly when they realize someone recognizes how they are feeling.
- To help children understand what triggers anger, you can ask them to make statements like, “I get angry when . . .”
- Teach children how to keep calm. Generate a list of ways that a child can stay calm. Refer to the list when the child gets angry.

Cooperative Capacities

Definition and overview. Cooperating refers to our capacity to work together in pairs and groups. Being able to listen, take turns, and develop collaborative goals and strategies to accomplish these goals is an essential set of skills and knowledge that provides the

foundation for this ability. Research has shown that cooperation is a core competency that allows us to develop healthy friendships and positive relationships throughout life (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

When children cooperate, they learn to appreciate the strengths and differences of each classmate or family member. They also learn to wait and take turns. This creates an atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance, and respect. When children play and work together, the environment is less competitive because the goal of cooperation is success of the group or family rather than the individual.

Organizing guidelines. Being able to cooperate is pleasurable and meaningful. It is also hard work. The capacity to cooperate rests on a number of social and emotional skills and understandings that include active listening; impulse control and the ability to take turns; identifying and setting goals; appreciating what others are thinking and doing; contributing new ideas; being able to ask for help, accept help, and help others; taking responsibility for one's actions; and working toward a shared goal.

Examples and tips. What follows is a series of examples and tips that can further our ability to teach and learn about this core competency:

- When we have a cooperative opportunity, acknowledge it. Be explicit about cooperation as an important and sometimes difficult process.
- Encourage children to ask for help when they are having a problem in an interaction. Asking for help is not an admission of failure, but it identifies that there is a problem that needs to be solved.
- Ask questions. What is the problem? What have you tried to do to solve the problem already? How do you want me to help?
- Encourage children to look at a situation as a problem to be solved rather than as a question of who is to

blame. If the child sees that you do not put value on blame, then it will not be an issue in the future.

- Suggest possible solutions when a child is stuck, and try to give the child choices so that he or she feels empowered.
- After a cooperative exercise or experience, talk about what it was like. What was easy? What was difficult? How can we learn from it?

Ability to Form Friendships

Definition and overview. The ability to form friendships rests on many other social and emotional competencies: being able to listen to ourselves and the other person; being able to control our impulses; and being able to communicate and cooperate. Research has shown that forming friendships is essential for children's healthy development and happiness (Parker, Rubin, Price, & DeRosier, 1995; Selman, 2003). Friendships provide a needed sense of belonging for children and adults alike. Friends offer security and support and are important in times of difficulty. Without friends, individuals can develop negative, antisocial behaviors. Researchers have reaffirmed the importance of a stable peer group in early adolescence (ages 12 to 14; Allen, Weissberg, & Hawkins, 1989), and to what extent this group is primarily prosocial or antisocial affects the probability of aggressive and violent behavior. Positive, supportive friendships permit children to deal effectively with risky and negative life situations.

A key factor in helping children build friendships is understanding why one child likes or dislikes interacting and playing with another child. What do the children like to do together? Who is the leader, and who is the follower? Do they prefer one-on-one interactions or enjoy group play more often?

Guidelines. Learning to be a friend is one of the most important capacities we can develop. We need to help children value good friendships and develop the skills and understandings that

provide the platform for healthy, supportive, and caring relationships. Being a friend is fun; however, as children move into the elementary school years, being a friend also takes time and energy.

Examples and tips. What follows is a series of examples and tips that can further parents' ability to teach and learn about this core competency:

- Learn who a child's friends are.
- Get to know the parents or caregivers of the children.
- Talk about the importance of friendship and the pleasure of getting to know all different kinds of people in the world.
- Provide the child with an opportunity to get to know his or her friend in the child's home.
- Help the child assess the negative and positive qualities of his or her friendships.
- Encourage open communication about friendships.
- Encourage the child to be an individual and not to try to be like his or her friends.
- Help the child to learn to say no in a friendship while still maintaining the friendship.
- Help the child to learn when the friendship is unhealthy and harmful to his or her self-esteem.

Ability to Recognize and Appreciate Diversity and Differences

Definition and overview. Younger children are trying to build an understanding of the world around them. Their interest in exploring who they are makes them aware of the differences and similarities in others around them. They may notice gender, age, color, or physical differences in people.

Children are often victimized by peers because of their sexual orientation or their confusion about their sexual or gender identity. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered youth who attend

both public and independent schools are often harassed relentlessly and sometimes physically attacked.

By learning to acknowledge differences without bias, children help create an environment where each child can feel comfortable about his or her differences and feel safe taking risks or being an individual in a group. Some skills associated with appreciating differences are identifying differences and similarities in a non-judgmental way; using appropriate language to acknowledge or ask questions about differences; learning to be assertive or to stand up for themselves or others; building empathy about others' feelings. Differences can lead to conflict. Children need to learn to appreciate human differences as enriching rather than threatening. The more children understand about prejudice and discrimination, the more they will be able to resist prejudice themselves.

Guidelines. Both children and adults make prejudgments (prejudice) about others. It is useful to recognize how and when we do this. It is important to learn that if someone is different, this does not mean that the person is bad. People who are different often evoke anxiety and fear. Teasing and bullying are one way that some children negatively manage this anxiety and fear.

Examples and tips. Some examples and tips for building these skills follow:

- Acknowledge differences. The more children hear that adults are comfortable with differences and the more you discuss this with respect and ease, the more they will be able to accept differences.
- Recognize that one common reaction to the other person being different is anxiety.
- Use culturally diverse teaching materials. Post pictures around the classroom that depict people from diverse backgrounds interacting with each other. It is also helpful to post pictures of people with a variety of body types and physical abilities.
- Create diverse groups. Make a conscious effort to put

children from different backgrounds in small groups together. Research has shown that working in small, cooperative groups is an effective way to help young people overcome fears and stereotypes (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

- Involve families in your curriculum. Celebrate different holidays and traditions in your classroom and have people from each religion or culture explain the holiday or tradition to the class.
- Foster inclusion. Take time to celebrate each child as an important member of the group.

Altruistic Capacities

Definition and overview. Altruistic capacities refers to people's inclination to be concerned about and helpful toward others.

Guidelines. The capacity and inclination to be helpful toward others is one of the organizing processes that fosters safer schools. It is important to remember that empathy can be used in helpful (i.e., altruistic) or unhelpful (i.e., antisocial) ways. For example, when a child empathizes with someone who has inadvertently hurt his or her feelings, it promotes essential social and emotional capacities like maintaining friendships. But when children learn to empathize with the ability to manipulate their peers, this undermines friendships and trust. As is the case with all of the core social emotional competencies described here, the capacity to be altruistic is shaped by a constellation of social emotional skills, knowledge, and values. For example, to be altruistic, children need to be able to actively listen to others, to empathize and reflect, and to be creative social emotional problem solvers. Children need to understand that healthy social relations rest on our helping as well as being helped by others. And the belief or value that helping others is a social responsibility supports the development of this core social emotional competency.

Like all competencies, altruism and the capacity to act in pro-

social ways develop over time. Altruistic behaviors have been observed in children as young as 2 years of age. As maturation results in new capacities, children's abilities in these areas blossom. For example, when verbal skills develop in the early elementary school years, children's ability to understand others, to connect, and to help others increases. In early adolescence, the development of greater abstract capacities (which enhances our ability put ourselves in the other person's shoes) dramatically promotes children's ability to empathize with others and thereby be helpful to others.

Examples and tips. The following are examples and tips to aid our efforts to build altruistic capacities in children:

- Be a role model. How do you show that you are helpful to others? Talk about this. There is pleasure in helping others. Let your children or students discover this themselves.
- Provide opportunities for older children to help younger children (e.g., mentoring programs).
- Talk about the pleasures of giving and receiving help. To the extent that there is a balance in our lives, both are important and pleasurable facets of life.
- Discuss world and local events to identify concrete ways for children to express concern and help others.
- Encourage community service and provide opportunities for children to feel and be responsible for others and the environment, such as community trash clean-up, raking leaves for neighbors, and so on. As we detail even more below, service learning or programs that link community service with academic learning provide powerful ways to promote altruistic capacities and social emotional learning.
- When a classmate or friend is absent due to illness, provide help by having a classmate call, take projects to the child, or make a visit, checking first with the child's family.

- Discuss bullying and the importance of children standing together to assist the victim, and to help the bully change behaviors.
- Foster altruistic class projects (e.g., class adopts an orphan in a third world country, raises money for him or her, and corresponds regularly).
- Discuss ways to orient new children and teachers to the school or neighborhood and improve acceptance of diversity and tolerance (i.e., helping those who are different to become comfortable in the school community). This can be a way of introducing broader issues relating to prejudice and diversity.
- Introduce a regular time for reflection on these matters in the classroom and at home (e.g., the dinner table).

STRATEGIES THAT PROMOTE SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Educators can promote students' social and emotional competencies and ethical dispositions in a range of ways. In fact, we always are. As we have pointed out previously, whether we mean to or not, we are always social and emotional as well as academic teachers. Teachers explicitly and implicitly signal their values and beliefs about what matters and how they feel about students as well as about the relative importance of making mistakes, effort, strengths, and weaknesses, all of which color students' feelings about themselves. As described below, there are many ways in which we can promote students' social and emotional competencies (see Cohen, 1999, 2001, for further ideas).

Stand-Alone Courses of Study

Educators can create stand-alone courses of study to promote students' social emotional competencies. We believe that the oldest example of this is the ethics classes taught in the Ethical Culture School, an independent school in New York City founded by Felix

Adler over 100 years ago (Caroline, 1905). A more recent—and empirically studied—example can be found in New Haven, Connecticut. The Social Development Program is a K–12 curriculum-based sequence of courses mandated by every school in the city; it includes detailed lesson plans for every class (Shriver, Schwab-Stone, & DeFalco, 1999). Health education courses represent another ongoing course of study that can and, we suggest, should include ongoing social emotional educational efforts.

Some researchers have suggested that these courses may be most useful for disadvantaged youths who often grow up with dramatically less than average caring and responsive social interaction. Some youths need to learn social and emotional skills in isolation (e.g., learning what it means to assume a listening position) before they can begin to utilize these skills in a more generalized manner.

Integration of Social Emotional Education Into the Academic and Nonacademic Aspects of Class Life

Most educators do not have the time or inclination to develop a new course of study in this area. However, many, if not most, elementary and middle school teachers are quite interested in the range of ways that they can integrate social emotional learning into the life of the class in academic and nonacademic ways. There are a number of language arts, social studies, and history curricula that various organizations have developed to further linguistic (or social studies or historical) literacy as well as social emotional literacy. The Center for Social and Emotional Education works with schools and districts to support classroom teachers to infuse social emotional teaching into existing curricula.

Social emotional learning can also be integrated into the non-academic dimensions of classroom life. First, educators communicate what is most important to them in a variety of ways. To the extent that we include social and emotional goals as primary for learning, it matters. We are telling students about our values and goals. We can also integrate teaching social emotional competencies into morning meetings, into the creation of a democratic class-

room, and into how we manage class and student discipline or in advisory programs.

Service Learning and Community Service

Service learning and community service provide extraordinary ways to promote students' social and emotional competences. As Fredericks (2003) has described, these efforts are overlapping. To the extent to which service learning and community service are meaningful activities for students, this is an engaging and powerful way to focus on and promote social and emotional competencies (Kaye, 2004).

Relationships

Learning is fundamentally relational: We are almost always learners in the context of the teacher-student relationship. Some of the most important emotional learning takes place in informal relations between child and teacher (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Pianta, 1999). We suggest that it is always valuable to periodically review and reflect on what kinds of relationships we want to have and do have in school: teachers and students; educators with other educators and school staff; and educators and parents. What students see relationally is much more powerful than how we tell students to act. Our actions teach.

Teachers and administrators may influence children's ability to express and regulate emotions in two ways: directly by teaching and coaching, and indirectly by observational learning or by controlling children's exposure to different situations. Thus teachers, through their interactions with students, fellow teachers, and administrators, model for children appropriate ways to regulate emotions. Teachers also directly instruct students about how to manage and deal with distress. Earlier, we mentioned the school structure: Clearly, in the very process of designing and redesigning a comfortable learning environment, teachers and other educators construct the opportunities that children have to learn about emotion regulation (Matthews, Zeidner, & Roberts, 2002).

The Importance of Adults Walking the Talk

How invested are we—the adults working, teaching, and learning with students—in being ongoing social emotional learners ourselves? To the extent that educators and parents are active social emotional learners themselves, they provide powerful and positive role models. If teachers act rudely to one another or to school support staff, or if the teachers use a tough street style as a mechanism of control in either the classroom or the corridors, students will quickly perceive that these kinds of behaviors are tolerated in schools, and often they will act accordingly. In the vignette at the beginning of this chapter, the teacher clearly overreacted. She might have handled the whole situation with some humor, thereby giving the students a sense that she understood their reactions.

There are many reasons why most social emotional and character educational efforts fail to foster learning and behavioral change (see Cohen and Sandy, 2003, for a review). Although no systemic research has addressed this question, our work with thousands of educators, hundreds of schools, a number of state departments of education, and foreign educational ministries suggests that three major factors undermine efficacy: (1) short-term and fragmented efforts, (2) ill-conceived efforts, and (3) inadequate opportunities and support for adults to walk the talk. The importance of teachers as learners in the process of social emotional education cannot be overestimated. Discovery in relation to our colleagues, students, and constituency (parents and community) is a powerful tool to further our ability to understand, empathize, and become effective educators and role models.

SUMMARY

Teaching students the skills, knowledge, and beliefs that foster core social and emotional competencies is one of the two major strategies that creates safer and more caring schools. There is a group of core social and emotional competencies that is predictive

of students' ability to learn, to solve problems in nonviolent ways, and to act in caring, related ways. Although researchers have used various labels to describe the core social and emotional competencies, the following list represents one generally agreed-upon framework for the competencies:

- Reflective and empathic abilities
- Problem-solving and decision-making abilities
- Communicative capacities
- Impulse control and anger management abilities
- Cooperative capacities
- Ability to form friendships
- Ability to recognize and appreciate diversity
- Altruistic capacities

There is a range of ways in which educators can actively promote students' social and emotional competencies:

- Through stand-alone courses of study.
- By integrating social emotional education into the existing curriculum.
- By infusing social emotional education into the nonacademic aspects of classroom life.
- Through service learning and community service.
- By example: To the extent that we are active social emotional learners, we become vital role models for our students.

It is essential that we are actively involved with being social emotional learners ourselves and that professional development activities support this goal. Social and emotional competencies should be an explicit and valued goal throughout the school. Teachers should be provided with professional development opportunities to increase their awareness of social and emotional skills. Adults and children can work collaboratively to develop a list of common values regarding rights and responsibilities within the school and make that list visible in every room.

REFLECTING ON YOUR CURRENT PRACTICE

- What are your goals?
- What can you do to clarify whether current as well as planned efforts are actually furthering your goals?
- Are students given work that is appropriate to their academic needs?
- Are there opportunities for children to excel in academic, artistic, and social domains?
- Are grouping practices flexible to help meet individual students' needs?
- Are teachers provided with professional development opportunities to help them recognize and meet the diverse needs of learners?
- Are administrators involved consistently in the teaching and learning process?
- Do teachers ask administrators for instructional assistance?
- Do teachers believe that it is important to be a reflective practitioner and to self-evaluate?
- Do teachers believe that an important part of their job is to teach social and emotional skills, knowledge, and beliefs?
- Are professional development opportunities in social and emotional learning offered to faculty and staff?
- Is social and emotional skill building a clearly articulated piece of the curriculum?
- Are teachers given ongoing administrative support in the area of social and emotional learning?
- Do adults in the school demonstrate an understanding of students' social and emotional needs?
- Do adults in the school model effective social and emotional skills?
- Do adults in the building see a relationship between their own behaviors and those of their students?
- Are students encouraged to take intellectual risks?