What Every Early Childhood Professional Should Know About Social Emotional Development and Executive Function in Young Children

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By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Identify the roles schools play in the development of social and emotional skills & executive function in young children
- Articulate strategies and interventions to support SE and EF development
- Communicate data related to the impact of SE and EF on childhood and school readiness outcomes
Some sobering statistics...
An estimated 9 to 13% of American children and adolescents between ages 9 to 17 have serious diagnosable emotional or behavioral health disorders resulting in substantial to extreme impairment. 
(Friedman, 2002)
Students with SED miss more days of school than do students in all other disability categories (U.S. Department of Education, 1994).

More than half of students with SED drop out of grades 9-12, the highest rate for all disability categories (U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Of those students with SED who drop out of school, 73% are arrested within five years of leaving school (Jay & Padilla, 1987).

(U.S. Department of Education, 2002)
Children who are identified as hard to manage at ages 3 and 4 have a high probability (50:50) of continuing difficulties into adolescence.

(Campbell & Ewing, 1990; Egeland et al., 1990; Fischer, Rolf, Hasazi, & Cummings, 1984)
It begins early...
Research highlights the importance of the first three years of life for school readiness, but also the important role that emotional health plays in preparing children to engage in cognitive tasks. Research has shown that the emergence of early onset emotional / behavioral problems in young children is related to a variety of health and behavior problems in adolescence, not to mention juvenile delinquency, school drop out, etc.

(Campbell, SB, 1991; Loeber, R., 1991; Ramsey, CT, 1998)
Early appearing aggressive behaviors are the best predictor of juvenile gang membership and violence. (Reid, 1993)
When aggressive and antisocial behavior has persisted through to age 9, further intervention has a poor chance of success. 

(Dodge, 1993)
Preschool children are **three times more likely** to be “expelled” than children in grades K-12.

(Gilliam, 2005)
Of the young children who show early signs of challenging behavior, it has been estimated that fewer than 10% receive services for these difficulties. (Kazdin & Kendall, 1998)
...the problem is not what to do, but rests in where and how we can support children and help families access services.
How should we transition to the next section?

So what does this mean? We looked at some national statistics. What is happening here in Maryland? How are we capturing the data of where our kids fall?
Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

“The KRA measures children’s readiness to learn when entering kindergarten.”
KRA Domain: **Social Foundations**

- **45%** demonstrate readiness
- **66,200** kindergarteners

**Maryland Kindergarten Readiness**
- **Language & Literacy**: 43%
- **Mathematics**: 40%
- **Social Foundations**: 55%
- **Physical Well-being & Motor Development**: 58%

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KRA Domain: Social Foundations

- Social and emotional development
- Approaches toward learning
- Executive functioning
Components of Executive Function

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility
Let’s put our Executive Function skills to the test...
What did skills do you use?

Inhibitory Control

Working Memory

Mental Flexibility

Red Green Black Blue
Yellow Red Blue Black
Orange Yellow Green
Black Orange Red Blue
Making Connections

Social Emotional Executive Functions

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility
Examining Our Attitudes about Challenging Behaviors

• What behaviors push your buttons?

• How do these behaviors make you feel?

• How does this impact your relationship with a child and his/her family?
Teaching Pyramid Overview

- Effective Workforce
- Nurturing and Responsive Relationships
- High Quality Supportive Environments
- Targeted Social Emotional Supports
- Intensive Intervention
Effective Workforce: YOU!

- **Committed** to professional development
- **Dedicated** to quality early childhood experiences for every child
- **Concerned** about at-risk children
Intensive Intervention

Targeted Social Emotional Supports

High Quality Supportive Environments

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

Effective Workforce
Level One Topics

• Relationships
• Behavior Expectations & Classroom Rules
• Classroom Design
• Schedules & Transitions
• Directions & Feedback
Building Relationships with Children

Why is it important?

1. The relationships that we build with children, families, and colleagues are at the foundation of everything we do. It is important to build these relationships early on rather than waiting until there is a problem.

2. Children learn and develop in the context of relationships that are responsive, consistent, and nurturing.

3. Children with the most challenging behaviors especially need these relationships, and yet their behaviors often prevent them from benefiting from those relationships.

4. Adults’ time and attention are very important to children, and we need to be sure that we are giving them that time and attention at times other than when they are engaging in challenging behavior.

5. Parents and other colleagues (such as mental health providers and therapists) are critical partners in building children’s social emotional competence. We should all work together to ensure children’s success and prevent challenging behavior.
Table Activity:
Connections with Children & Adults

CONNECTED

DISCONNECTED
Building Positive Relationships with Children

- Play
- Happy Grams
- Empathy
- Time & Attention
- Lunch Bunch
- Notes home
- Share

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Creating Supportive Environments

Executive Function

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility
Creating Supportive Environments

1. Turn on water.
2. Wet hands.
4. Rinse hands.

Executive Function

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility

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Level Two Topics

• Emotional Literacy
• Anger Management
• Problem Solving
• Friendship Skills
For Kids, Self-Control Factors Into Future Success

by Nancy Shute
NPR
Characteristics of Classrooms That Foster Emotional Literacy

- Books about feelings are read and are available in the book center.
- Photos of people with various emotional expressions are displayed.
- Teachers label their own feelings and notice and label children’s feelings.
- Activities are planned to teach and reinforce emotional literacy.
- Children are reinforced for using feeling words.
http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources стратегий.html#booknook
Problem Solving Steps

1. What is my problem?

2. Think, think, think of some solutions.

3. What would happen?

4. Give it a try!

Would it be safe?
Would it be fair?
How would everyone feel?

Anger Management

Problem Solving

Executive Function

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility

Relaxation Thermometer

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Development of friendship skills
What is Social Emotional Development?

• What is *social development*?  
  – A sense of *confidence* and competence  
  – Ability to *develop good relationships* and *get along* with others  
  – Ability to *persist at tasks*  
  – Ability to *follow directions*  

• Related to *emotional literacy*  
  – Ability to *identify, understand* & *express* emotions in healthy ways
Why is Social Emotional Development Important?

- Why focus on social emotional development?
  - What happens when children do not have good social emotional skills?
  - What do you notice about these children?
The **single best childhood predictor** of adult adaptation is not school grades, and not classroom behavior, but rather, the adequacy with which the child **gets along with other children**.

-Willard Hartup, President of International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development
ALL children can use your help to learn social emotional skills.
Level Three Topics

• Identifying Form & Function of Behavior
• Matching Strategies to Child Behavior
What are Intensive Interventions?

• An approach for changing behavior
• Is based on humanistic values and research
• Relies on understanding why the behavior occurs and teaching new skills to replace behavior.
• A holistic approach that considers all factors that impact a child
Executive Function Deficits

Intensive Intervention

Targeted Social Emotional Supports

High Quality Supportive Environments

Nurturing and Responsive Relationships

Effective Workforce

Executive Function

- Inhibitory Control
- Working Memory
- Mental Flexibility
Why do we wait *so long* to focus on the challenges?
It’s a **Teaching** Pyramid
When children do not have these skills, they often exhibit challenging behaviors.

We must focus on teaching the skills!
If a child doesn’t know how to read, *we teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to swim, *we teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to multiply, *we teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to drive, *we teach*.

If a child doesn’t know how to behave, *we ............

*........teach? ........punish?*

**Why can’t we finish the last sentence as automatically as we do the others?**

Tom Herner (NASDE President), Counterpoint 1998, p.2
What SEFEL is and isn’t…

• **SEFEL is….**
  
  – an approach to teaching young children pro-social behaviors
  
  – a relationship based intervention to be used both in the classroom and the home to prevent and manage challenging behaviors
  
  – philosophy

• **SEFEL is not….**
  
  – a scripted intervention
  
  – a curriculum
  
  – a behavioral plan only to be used with children who have challenging behaviors

**SEFEL is a culture both in the school and the home. Relationships are at the core of intervention.**
SEFEL Guiding Principles/Values

• Support young children’s social and emotional development to *prevent* challenging behaviors;
• **Individualize interventions** to meet children’s and families’ unique interests, strengths, and needs;
• Promote **skill building with enough intensity** to affect change;
• **Implement strategies in the context** of naturally occurring routines and environments;
• Ensure fidelity of use through a **systematic change process**;
• **Modify strategies** to meet the cultural and linguistic diversity of families and children.
Data Reflection

Maryland Kindergarten Readiness
Percent Demonstrating Readiness by Domain

- Language & Literacy: 43%
- Mathematics: 40%
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Questions & Feedback

2 Stars and a Wish

Think of all the information you learned. What two things are you excited about?

What questions /concerns do you have or need answered?

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Our time with students, is an investment in a future that we may never see.

And the investment can be a very positive one.