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New research shows that teaching young people social and emotional skills pays off, improving not only students' behavior and well-being, but their academic performance.

That is the conclusion of a new "meta-analysis" by two of the top researchers in the field, Joseph Durlak, professor of clinical psychology at Loyola University, and Roger P. Weissberg, Professor of Psychology and Education at the University of Illinois and the president of the

Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL).

Weissberg presented the study's findings at a national forum on social and emotional learning in New York City on December 10. The event was sponsored by CASEL, and featured CASEL's founder Daniel Goleman (author of *Emotional Intelligence*); CASEL executive director Mary Utne O'Brien; and CASEL board member Linda Lantieri, a long-time ally of Morningside Center and co-founder of our Resolving

Conflict Creatively Program. They were joined by other leading researchers, policy-makers and educators from around the country—including Morningside Center executive director Tom Roderick. Also on hand was top brain researcher Richard Davidson, who presented evidence from his research that learning social and emotional skills actually changes our brain circuitry.

For their meta-analysis, the researchers reviewed more

Photo above: At P.S. 24, all children learn social & emotional skills.

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SEL, CONFLICT RESOLUTION &

Interview with Executive Director Tom Roderick



Why is Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility putting “social and emotional learning” at the center of its work? What is the connection between “social and emotional learning” and “social responsibility?”

Social and emotional learning lays the foundation for social responsibility. Our programs help kids learn to understand and handle their feelings, have empathy and compassion for others, treat others with respect, handle conflicts without resorting to violence, and make decisions that take their needs and other people’s needs into account. We help people know themselves better and connect with other people—and solve problems that come up.

All this fosters caring—including caring about people who are different from you. And without caring, there is no social responsibility.

Without social and emotional learning, we can’t take the next step—toward caring not only for our family and friends, but for our school, our community, the world. We begin on a personal and interpersonal level—helping youngsters to respect themselves and those around them. And then we encourage them to widen that circle of caring to include the larger community.

Social and emotional learning encourages social responsibility not just by building kids’ skills, but by

fostering an outlook that is hopeful and optimistic. When young people go through our programs, they often develop a more positive view of themselves and others—and of the future. We aim to help them see that if they work together, they can make change.

Morningside Center is well known for its conflict resolution programs, especially the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program and The 4Rs (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution). What is the relationship between conflict resolution and social and emotional learning?

“Social and emotional learning” is a different name for the work we’ve been doing all along. The main purpose of both the RCCP and The 4Rs is to foster social and emotional learning. Our programs have always been about much more than conflict. They’re about learning to handle your feelings, making friends, standing up for yourself and others, and contributing to your community. The whole framework of The 4Rs Program is building a caring classroom community. So the term “social and emotional” learning is actually a more accurate way to describe this work.

Conflict resolution is an important part of what we teach children. But the term “conflict resolution” is too easy to pigeonhole as an antidote for a social problem—not a set of skills every kid should develop.

So when CASEL and others began developing the field of social and emotional learning, we were drawn to it. CASEL identified hundreds of programs like ours around the country that do everything from “character education” to “conflict resolution.” And from the research, it was clear that what the effective programs had in common was their ability to develop students’ social and emotional competencies. And so they began to develop this new field of SEL.

Now CASEL is working to build a movement of people around the country to integrate social and emotional learning into every school—to educate the heart as well as the mind. And we are very glad to be part of that effort.

Do you think this movement for social and emotional learning will really gain traction?

Daniel Goleman [author of *Emotional Intelligence* and founder of CASEL] has been very influential in helping people understand that emotional intelligence is as important as academic achievement in determining success in life. Over and over this has been borne out in the research—including in the two major scientific studies we’ve done of Morningside Center’s programs.

In New York City and elsewhere, school systems are learning to recognize

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this—and see the need to be more systematic about improving the school climate. For the first time last year, the city’s Department of Education conducted a “Learning Environment Survey” in the public schools. In these surveys, students reported really disturbing levels of bullying and fighting. A majority of them said that students did not treat each other with respect. Well, learning is very difficult in an environment like that—and increasingly I think school officials know it.

Of course, we want to foster social and emotional learning for all kids because it’s the right thing to do. But it’s also important in improving academic performance, and the research confirms this. So this is a big reason why social and emotional learning is finally gaining traction.

Morningside Center says it wants to “make to making social and emotional learning a part of every child’s education.” What can Morningside Center do to make this happen?

We’re in a very strong position to move SEL forward. As you know, we’ve been implementing high-quality social and emotional learning programs in the public schools for well over 20 years. Every year, we’re in over 100 schools. We’re now completing the second rigorous scientific study of our programs, and the research shows that they work. We’re not only improving childrens’ behavior and their well-being, we’re helping to boost their academic performance. So part of our contribution is to keep developing and perfecting these programs, and to keep putting a lot of energy into scientific research so that we can all

better understand what works and what doesn’t work.

With our years of on-the-ground experience, we’re a resource for other schools and school systems that are looking for effective ways to foster social and emotional learning. CASEL and others are featuring our work as a model for SEL.

Our experience at P.S. 24 is of special interest because that school has completely infused SEL into everything it does—and the results have been stunning, both in terms of school climate and academic progress. We’ve already begun to spread the approach to other schools.

We’re very excited to be working with CASEL to pilot and refine the process they’ve developed for school-wide SEL planning. This is a process that CASEL will be sharing with school systems all over the country. What this model does is take social and emotional learning far beyond the classroom. It’s not just a “program” or a curriculum. It’s an ongoing school-wide approach.

I think we’re at a turning point in this work. The research is all coming together to show the importance of SEL, and the pendulum may be ready to swing back from the narrow focus on test scores. People are beginning to see that you have to look at the school, the classroom, and the child in a more holistic way.

We still have a long way to go. But I think we’re picking up momentum.

Below left, mediators training at New Millennium Middle School in the Bronx.

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TRANSFORMING CONTINUED...

than 700 studies of programs that aim to foster positive youth development, social and emotional learning, and character education. They examined evidence from the 207 studies that met their criteria. Among the criteria: The studies had to involve typical students ages 5 to 18, and they had to use a control group. The meta-analysis is the largest, most scientifically rigorous review ever conducted of controlled outcome research on programs to promote children's social and emotional learning.

The study found that an average student enrolled in a social and emotional learning program had significantly better attendance; their classroom behavior was more constructive; they liked school more; they had better grades; and they were less likely to be suspended. These programs

yielded:

- a 23% improvement in children's social and emotional skills
- a 9% improvement in children's attitudes about self, others, and school
- a 9% improvement in students' school and classroom behavior
- a 9% decrease in conduct problems such as classroom misbehavior and aggression
- a 10% decrease in emotional distress such as anxiety and depression
- an 11% gain in achievement test scores.

When it comes to improving students' academic performance, CASEL noted, "the impact of SEL programs is almost twice as large as that achieved through class-size reductions. Overall, school-based SEL programs lead to several meaningful, practical changes in youth's lives."

"This research confirms what a lot of us have been saying for years," said James Comer, a Yale University psychologist and leading school reformer who also attended the CASEL forum. "It's almost counterintuitive for some people to believe that it's about how you treat the kids."

Certainly it's not counterintuitive for us at Morningside Center: We've been teaching young people social and emotional skills since 1985 through programs such as the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, The 4Rs, and peer mediation. (Please see

the interview on page 2 with Tom Roderick on how conflict resolution, social responsibility, and SEL are connected.) We are thrilled to be part of the growing national movement to foster social and emotional learning, which is being spearheaded by the Chicago-based CASEL.

Morningside Center's work at Brooklyn's P.S. 15 and P.S. 24 was highlighted in a 13-minute video featured at the CASEL forum. This video, an overview of social and emotional learning, was produced by the George Lucas Foundation and can be viewed on their website, www.edutopia.org. The foundation has completed a new 7-minute video about our peace helpers and peace corners at Brooklyn's P.S. 24. This video can also be seen on edutopia.org—as well as on our own organizational website, www.morningsidecenter.org.

A MODEL SCHOOL

Each year, Morningside Center works in about 100 NYC public schools. In most of these schools, we focus on training and coaching teachers in providing regular instruction in our curricula.

We chose one school, P.S. 24, to develop a powerful new approach to fostering SEL. This approach puts youth leadership front and center, and has the passionate support of P.S. 24's principal Christina Fuentes and AP Mariana Gaston. It includes classroom instruction, but its

SEE THE NEW 7-minute VIDEO OF OUR WORK by the George Lucas Foundation! Visit their website, edutopia.org, or link to it from our site, morningsidecenter.org.



Right, staff developer Nelly Espina at work in PS 38.

Next page top, New Millennium middle school mediators. Next page bottom, P.S. 91 students in a session with staff developer Audrey Major.

reach extends far beyond the classroom. Regular readers of *Action News* are familiar with our many innovations at P.S. 24, where our staff developer Emma Gonzalez (in collaboration with P.S. 24 staff and with support from the Tiger Foundation) has helped train hundreds of young peace helpers, established peace corners in classrooms, created student lunch clubs and diversity panels, and expanded the peer mediators' role to include connecting with the community.

The cumulative effect of these initiatives has been to make students become partners with the adults in creating their school community. While we still view regular classroom instruction as essential for developing students' social and emotional skills and transforming school culture, student leadership can take this transformation to a higher level.

This new approach has produced impressive results at P.S. 24 and is helping to



make the school a national model for social and emotional learning. In the past two years, P.S. 24 has seen huge gains in many areas, including academically. This fall, P.S. 24 received an "A" on its Department of Education progress report, thanks in part to rising test scores.

Advocates see SEL not only as the process by which people develop social and emotional skills, but also as a lens through which we can view everything that goes on in a school. Through this lens, members of the school community can take a hard look at all of the school's practices—from the classroom to the playground to the principal's office—and gauge how well they are helping students grow and learn, socially, emotionally, and academically. The hypothesis—now supported by a growing body of scientific research—is that as the school becomes more consistent and effective in fostering students' social and emotional development, academic achievement will rise as well.

This differs sharply from the reactive, piecemeal approach that schools too often use—a series of drug prevention lessons here, a pregnancy prevention class there, a violence prevention program for high-risk youth, an auditorium presentation on the dangers of gangs. The research shows that the most



WHAT IS SEL?

Morningside Center defines social and emotional learning (SEL) as the process by which we develop our capacity to understand and manage feelings, relate well to others, make good decisions, deal well with conflict and other life challenges, and take responsibility for improving our communities—from the classroom to the world.

In schools where SEL is well implemented, students develop their social and emotional competencies; become partners with adults in creating vibrant learning communities; and learn to care about and respect other people, including those who are different or who live far away. A growing body of research shows that students who develop these skills also do better academically.

SEL shouldn't be seen as an add-on "program," but rather as a set of attitudes, practices, and policies that are fully integrated into the life and culture of the school. As such, SEL is a vision of education and a powerful organizing framework for analysis and action. We can look at everything that goes on in a school and ask: to what extent does it contribute (or not contribute) to students' positive social and emotional development?

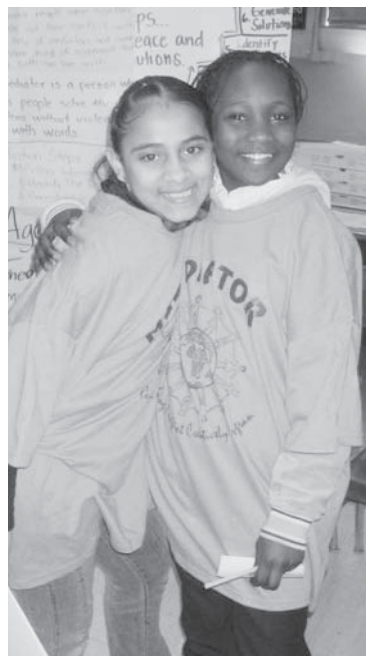
In short, SEL can be a lever for school improvement. As a school integrates SEL into its daily life—from the playground to the classroom to the principal's office—students feel safer and more motivated to learn, and their achievement rises. And adults get more satisfaction from their work.

TRANSFORMING CONTINUED...

effective way to prevent risky behavior is to help young people learn skills such as handling feelings, assertiveness (in resisting peer pressure, for example) and problem-solving. And *all* kids need these skills—not just those deemed “at risk.” SEL offers a unified, systemic approach to helping students not only avoid risky behavior, but live happy, productive lives. As CASEL president Roger Weissberg says, SEL is about promoting positive behavior, not just avoiding the negative.

OUR OWN SEL RESEARCH

Morningside Center fosters social and emotional learning not only through our work in schools throughout New York City, but through research. For the past four years, we have



All three photos are of peer mediators at New Millennium Middle School in the Bronx.

been collaborating with researchers on a major scientific study of our 4Rs Program (Reading, Writing, Respect & Resolution), which integrates SEL and language arts for grades K-5. The researchers (led by Dr. J. Lawrence Aber of New York University and Drs. Stephanie Jones and Joshua Brown of Fordham) are comparing the development of students in nine schools that implemented The 4Rs with that of students in nine control schools. Our project is part of a multi-site study of social and character development programs funded by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) of the U.S. Department of Education, the Centers for Disease Control, the W.T. Grant Foundation, the Booth Ferris Foundation, and the Tiger Foundation.

Three years of program implementation and data gathering were completed last June, and analyses of program impacts from the first year have been completed. While IES has embargoed the reporting of these findings until August when the first National Evaluation Report from the multi-site study is expected to be released, our research team tells us that preliminary findings are quite positive. We expect this study to have a major impact not only on our own work, but on the field of social and emotional learning.



A previous study by researchers at Columbia University of our Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, one of the largest studies of a school-based conflict resolution program ever conducted, has already contributed to the field.

In a report released in 2003, researchers found “compelling evidence” that the RCCP “reduces aggression and violence in children and youth and enhances their classroom learning. This independent evaluation of the program shows it is relatively low in cost and not purchased at the expense of academic achievement.” In-depth interviews with teachers participating in the study revealed that they viewed the RCCP as having a positive impact on their teaching, their personal lives, their students’ attitudes and behaviors, and on the school environment.



FROM A FIELD TO A MOVEMENT

Since its founding a decade ago, CASEL has taken the lead in developing social and emotional learning into a field. Their work has included establishing a clear definition of social and emotional learning; assembling and analyzing the research on SEL programs; establishing criteria for program effectiveness; and giving schools tools for selecting evidence-based SEL programs and for systematic planning to foster school-wide SEL.

At CASEL's forum in December, Roger Weissberg said that now it is time to turn the "field" of social and emotional learning into a "movement."

Morningside Center is contributing to this movement for SEL through our school-based programs, our research projects, and a major new initiative that we launched last year in collaboration with CASEL and the NYC Department of Education: the SEL Policy Pilot Project. Through this project, we tested in 19 NYC public schools a

process CASEL developed to guide schools in planning for sustained, school-wide social and emotional learning.

The pilot project was highly successful, and we are now making some changes in CASEL's model based on what we learned from the pilot to make it even more effective in addressing the needs of NYC public schools.

Morningside Center is also helping build the SEL movement by working to establish standards for social and emotional learning in schools. Not long ago, CASEL helped lead a successful campaign to get the state of Illinois to adopt such standards. We are now working with CASEL and allies on Long Island and in Albany to get New York State to set SEL standards—and to ensure that schools have the resources they need to meet those standards.

We will keep you posted on our progress with our school-based programs, the 4Rs Research Project, the SEL Policy Pilot Project—and the nascent movement to make social and emotional learning a part of every child's education.

NEW ON TEACHABLEMOMENT.ORG

Our website of classroom activities includes a host of new lessons on the 2008 election—and much more:

Presidential Election 2008: HILLRAISERS, McCain 100s & PUBLIC CAMPAIGN FUNDING (2/20/08)

RESPECTING DIFFERENCES for K-2 (2/20/08)

Presidential Election 2008: WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT NUCLEAR WEAPONS? (2/13/08)

MILITARY SPENDING & THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL-CONGRESSIONAL COMPLEX (2/6/08)

LISTENING WELL for Grades 3-6 (2/6/08)

Presidential Election 2008: MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES (for grades 4-6) (1/30/08)

ECONOMIC ANXIETY: Lost homes, lost jobs, debt & dropping markets (1/23/08)

Presidential Election 2008: MISLEADING FACTS & VAGUE OPINIONS (1/23/08)

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND (1/16/08)



Students from our PAZ After School Program traveled to City Hall on February 13 to learn about the recent school budget cuts and to see for themselves the actions citizens are taking to protest them. Reported Josh Nugent, PAZ’s coordinator: “The kids were a huge hit. They were by far the youngest folks there and everyone gave us a huge ovation as we walked across the barrier to our gathering spot.” The students had a great time—and got back to PAZ in time for dismissal!



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Social Responsibility

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