Social Emotional Skills Spotlight

Deeper Dive into the Selected Social Emotional Skills

Introduction

The Expanded Learning 360/365 Research Work Group selected six skills that are considered foundational to youths' success in school, work, and life, using a participatory consensus-based approach. The selected skills include:

- Growth mindset
- Self-efficacy
- Self-awareness

- Social awareness
- Interpersonal skills
- Self-management

To further the conversation about these skills The Partnership for Children and Youth (PCY) commissioned Public Profit to provide descriptors of each skill including "I statements" that embody what a young person who possesses the skill might say. We also summarize research-based practical approaches to shaping the learning context and facilitating learning opportunities that support the development of the six skills. It is important to keep in mind that the context features listed cannot be effective in isolation as they are interdependent on the broader quality of the learning setting.

The *Social Emotional Skills Spotlight* is accompanied by a graphic that details how the six focal skills relate to other social emotional skills and desired educational, personal, and career outcomes for youth (See Appendix A). The purpose of the graphic is to test the Research Work Group's assumption that these skills are foundational.

A Note about Context and Practices

The research on social emotional skills points to the importance of a high-quality learning context for the development of these skills. That is, social emotional skills are the product of young people's experiences and understanding of the world. Social emotional skills cannot be taught effectively as a discrete, stand-alone topic.

This brief summarizes each social emotional skill along with practices and contextual features that contribute to the development of the skill. In some cases, there are similar contextual features across different skills, which represent the consensus about the high-value features of the learning environment. The practices supporting each skill comes from the University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research's (CCSR) 2012 literature review *Teaching Adolescents To Become Learners*.[i] [1] This literature review makes explicit connections between specific social emotional skills and staff member practices; few other reports do so.

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[1] We used the CCSR report as it explicitly and implicitly covered all the foundational skills discussed in this document. Other reports address the connection between specific skills and features of the learning environment, but do so less clearly. These other reports can be summarized at a later date if needed.

The CCSR report describes also general instructional practices that support social emotional skill development. The following practices, which can be used in formal and informal education settings, are not tied to one skill, rather they support multiple social and emotional skills.

- Tell youth how skills can be used in and outside of the educational context
- Normalize difficulty and de-personalize challenges
- Tell youth the skills that they will learn
- Provide projects that are age-appropriate but challenge youth to use new skills and knowledge
- Provide projects that are active, hands-on and require cognitive engagement
- Have youth monitor their own progress and solicit their feedback on their experiences
- Break complex, multi-step tasks and projects into more manageable steps

Growth Mindset - A self-assured belief that one's intelligence and abilities can grow and be cultivated through effort.

Descriptions of Growth Mindset	Youth Perspective of Growth Mindset
Demonstrates a belief that actions are related to goal attainment.[ii]	"What I do helps me achieve my goals."
A belief that intelligence, skills, and abilities can be cultivated and improved through continued learning, practice, and effort.[iii]	"The harder I try the better I will get."

Practices that Support Growth Mindset

Generally, short-term interventions have been used more often to improve youths' growth mindsets, as there are specific instructional practices that support growth mindset. These include teaching youth about how the brain changes over time and formal curricula such as Brainology. The University of Chicago Research Team note the potential benefit that interventions can have is contingent upon the quality of the classroom and/or learning context.

Some recommended context features include:

- Provide challenging activities and tasks
- Communicate high expectations while providing learning supports
- Structure tasks to be active and participatory
- Engage youth in tasks and activities that require critical thinking
- Present material in multiple ways to accommodate different learning styles
- Set and debrief clear learning goals for youth
- Give youth regular feedback about their work, keeping in mind to praise effort and strategies used rather than innate ability
- Structure time for youth to use feedback to improve their work
- Provide youth opportunities to display and share their learning

Social Awareness - An individual's evolving capacity for empathy, and ability to consider and appreciate the diversity of feelings, perspectives, and personal contexts of others.

Description of Social Awareness	Youth Perspective of Social Awareness
Respect - Respecting others and being considerate.[iv]	"I should listen to other's opinions and views."
Fairness - Treating people fairly by taking turns, playing by the rules, not placing blame, and being open-minded.[iv]	"I know how to treat people fairly."
Cultural Competence - A specific focus on cultural competency in appreciating and understanding diverse backgrounds and beliefs.[v, vi]	"I appreciate other's cultural and personal identities."

Practices that support Social Awareness

There are no specific instructional practices cited in the CCSR study that support social awareness. Rather, there are system level supports around activity and classroom design and structure that can contribute to positive social behaviors. The University of Chicago Research Team note, however, that research suggests poorly designed classroom-level structures could also exacerbate existing poor social behavior.

Some recommended context features include:

- Cooperative learning exercises that promote good classroom citizenship
- Caring teacher-student relationships that foster commitment and bonding to school
- Peer and adult norms that convey high expectations and support
- Safe and orderly environments that encourage and reinforce positive classroom behavior
- Staff teach and model appropriate social behavior and give students opportunities to practice and apply them

Interpersonal Skills - The ability to establish and maintain positive and productive relationships through effective communication and collaboration skills.

Description of Interpersonal Skills	Youth Perspective of Interpersonal Skills
Conflict resolution – negotiating, preventing and managing conflict.	"I can talk to someone if I have a problem with them."
Communication – Being able to present and share clear ideas and adapting communication styles to different audiences.[iii]	"I can communicate my ideas clearly."
Collaboration – Being able to work with others and finish assigned tasks, encouraging others, compromising, sharing responsibility.[ii, v, vii, viii]	"I work well with others."
Leadership – Ability to lead and influence others by being assertive.[vii, ix]	"I know what it means to be a leader."
Caring – being kind and expressing gratitude.[iv]	"I care about how others feel."
Citizenship – doing your share to make your community better by being cooperative, respecting authority, and staying informed.[iv]	"I'm involved in my community."

Practices that support Interpersonal Skills

There are no specific instructional practices to support interpersonal skills cited in the CCSR report. Rather, the University of Chicago Research Team describes system-level supports around activity and classroom design and structure that can contribute to positive social behaviors. They note, however, that research suggests poorly designed classroom-level structures could also exacerbate existing poor social behavior.

Some recommended context features include:

- Cooperative learning exercises that promote good classroom citizenship
- Caring teacher-student relationships that foster commitment and bonding to school
- Safe and orderly environments that encourage and reinforce positive classroom behavior
- Staff teach and model appropriate social behavior and give students opportunities to practice and apply them

Self-Awareness - An individual's evolving capacity for introspection, and ability to recognize and understand one's own personal identity, feelings, and capabilities.

Description of Self-Awareness	Youth Perspective of Self-Awareness
Social Capital – Recognizing and using family, school and community resources, to support goals. Asking for help.[vi]	"I know people I can depend on for help."
Emotional Regulation – managing emotionally charged situations productively (e.g. express anger respectfully) and using functional aspects of emotions (e.g. use excitement for motivation).[viii]	"I know how to manage my feelings."
Emotional Awareness – The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations.[x]	"I know how I am feeling."
Personal Identity – Understanding one's beliefs and culture. [vi]	"I know who I am."
Sense of Belonging – Perception of acceptance and support. [vi]	"I feel like people accept me here."

Practices that support Self-Awareness

The University of Chicago Researchers do not directly incorporate self-awareness in their model of non-cognitive factors. Aspects of self-awareness are incorporated indirectly through factors such as social skills and learning strategies. Within learning strategies, they find that students can learn by being more aware of their own thinking through academic engagement, self-observation and self-evaluation. (Note: since these examples are drawn from the learning strategies component of the model, they are more academically focused than other context features.)

Some recommended context features include:

- Provide timely, on-going feedback through formal and informal assessments
- Prompt students to complete self-assessments of their performance
- Encourage youth to talk about their thinking processes when planning out an academic task
- Paired problem-solving to think about one's own thinking processes
- Visualize homework completion to think about what might be challenging

Self-Efficacy - A self-assured belief in one's capabilities and ability to learn, achieve goals, and succeed.

Description of Self-Efficacy	Youth Perspective of Self-Efficacy
The belief in one's ability to achieve a desired outcome, reach a goal, learn and succeed. [xi, vi, ix, xii]	"I can achieve my goals."
Academic Self Concept: the perception of one's academic ability formed through experiences and the context. Two types 1) global- general ability in academic contexts 2) domains specific- ability in specific subject. [xii]	"I believe that I can do well in school" "I write well."

Practices that support Self-Efficacy

Much like growth mindset, there are specific instructional practices that support self-efficacy. These include providing specific feedback to youth about their progress and engaging youth in cooperative activities with peers. The University of Chicago Research Team note the potential benefit that interventions can have is contingent upon the quality of classroom and/or learning context. The contextual features that are important for growth mindset are also applicable for self-efficacy.

Some recommended context features include:

- Provide challenging activities and tasks
- Communicate high expectations while providing learning supports
- Structure tasks to be active and participatory
- Engage youth in tasks and activities that require critical thinking
- Present material in multiple ways to accommodate different learning styles
- Set clear learning goals for youth
- Give youth regular feedback about their work, keeping in mind to praise effort and strategies used not ability
- Structure time for youth to use feedback to improve their work
- Provide youth opportunities to display and share their learning

Self-Management - The ability to regulate and monitor one's behaviors, feelings and impulses in order to make responsible decisions, maintain focus, and achieve goals.

Description of Self-Management	Youth Perspective of Self-Management
Self-Regulation – ability to work past impulses and manage one's emotions and behaviors.[iii, ix]	"I know how to manage my feelings."[2]
Work Ethic – Taking initiative and having professionalism. Needing minimal direction and staying focused.[ii, vii]	"I work hard."
Flexibility and Adaptability – being able to adapt to different roles.[v]	"I am open to different ways of doing things."
Responsibility – someone who can be counted on, plans ahead, and is accountable.[iv, v, viii]	"I do things I say I am going to do."
Trustworthy – someone who is reliable and doesn't cheat.[iv]	"You can count on me."

Practices that support Self-Management

The University of Chicago Researchers consider self-management an aspect of academic perseverance. Their review concludes that there is currently insufficient research to recommend strategies for teaching perseverance directly. Perseverance is developed through a recursive relationship between young people's academic mindsets and learning strategies.

Classroom context has an indirect influence on perseverance and self-management, so efforts to improve the learning context can support academic perseverance. Another way to improve self-management/ academic perseverance is to improve academic mindsets.

Some recommended context features to affect mindset and learning strategies include:
- Communicate high expectations while providing learning supports
- Significant levels of teacher monitoring and support
- Multiple opportunities for students to achieve success
- Youth are not afraid to fail
- Clear expectations and system for supporting students in meeting those expectations.
- Safe and orderly environments that encourage and reinforce positive classroom behavior.
- Choice of activities that ensure projects are relevant and engaging for students.

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[2] This statement is also used for "emotional regulation" that is an aspect of self-awareness because of the similarity between the two definitions.

[i] **University of Chicago**
Farrington, C., Roderick, M., Allensworth, E., Nagaoka, J., Keyes, T., Johnson, D., & Beechum, N., (2012). *Teaching adolescents how to become learners. The role of noncognitive factors in shaping school performance: A critical literature review.* Chicago: University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research.

[ii] **MHA Labs**
MHA Labs (2014). *MHA Labs Practice Guide.* Retrieved from the MHA Labs website: http://mhalabs.org/tools/.

[iii] **Every Hour Counts**
Every Hour Counts with Moroney, D., Newman, J., Smith, C., McGovern, G., & Yohalem, N. (2014). *Understanding key elements, processes and outcomes of expanded learning systems: A review of the literature.* Retrieved from the Every Hour Counts website: http://www.afterschoolsystems.org/content/document/detail/4061/.

[iv] **Josephson Institute**
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[v] **Partnership for 21st Century Skills**
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[vi] **Youth Development Executives of King County**
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[vii] **National Research Council**
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[viii] **Youth Development Research Project**
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[ix] **Institute of Education and Social Research**

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[x] **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**

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[xi] **California Office to Reform Education**

California Office to Reform Education (2014). *CORE SEL Pilot Update*. Sacramento, CA: Author.

[xii] **RTI International**

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