

CONTEXT & PURPOSE

- Social emotional development is considered critical for school readiness, as evidenced by its representation in all 50 states Pre-K standards, its inclusion as an essential element of national early learning programs, and its presence in many state kindergarten entry assessments (CASEL, 2017, 2018).
- It also been gaining traction in the K-12 realm, with 15 states having adopted K-12 standards including social emotional development and an additional 6 states including it in PreK-K or K-3.
- The evidence of the effects of social-emotional learning programs on positive outcomes (e.g., positive attitudes, academic performance, reduction in conduct problems and emotional distress) is extensive and compelling (e.g., Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017).
- Yet, Efforts to understand teacher preparedness to teach and assess such skills are few and in early stages (i.e., SEL T-ED project).
- We *do* know that beliefs about social emotional skills for learning do not translate to changed practices (Bassok, Latham & Rorem, 2016),
- We also *don't know* how teachers' beliefs about social emotional skills relate to their perceived role in developing such skills in the classroom.

PURPOSE

- As part of development of a comprehensive, formative Kindergarten Entry Assessment (KEA), We obtained interview and survey feedback on the manageability and usability of information from the assessment across the 5 domains of school readiness (i.e., approaches to learning, cognitive development, language development and communication, physical/motor development, and social emotional development).
- The focus of this report is social emotional development and its three constructs: emotion regulation, emotion expression, and emotional literacy.
- It was expected that teachers would have general buy-in for the social emotional content, but would experience difficulty understanding, assessing, and incorporating the information learned from the assessment into their daily instructional routines.

METHOD

- 141 teachers grades K-3 were trained to assess their students using the observation-based, formative assessment in their classrooms.
- Teachers were trained over a two-day, in-person training.
- Researchers provided follow-up support for implementation via webinars, online modules, guidance documents, email, and phone consultation.
- Teachers were asked to observe children across two, 60-day windows (fall and spring) and place them on a progression of skills that best described their ability at the end of each window.
- Teachers provided evidence (i.e., notes, audio, and video clips) to substantiate their placement.
- Teachers completed surveys in the fall and spring and participated in interviews after the final data collection window.
- Teachers' evidence was reviewed and coded for specificity, relevance, and agreement by the research team. A 10 percent sample for each construct was coded by two reviewers from the research team before the full sample. Cohen kappa estimates ranged from .85 to 1.00, indicating almost perfect to perfect agreement among reviewers.

RESULTS

The findings support the hypothesis that teachers would have general buy-in for the constructs, but were not equipped to engage in formative assessment and instruction in this domain:

- Survey data indicate teachers found the content difficult to understand and assess. Yet, survey data also indicate teachers believed the construct progressions captured the children's skills well, they were confident in their placements, and more than half of the teachers found the information to be useful for instruction.
- Interview data concurred; teachers reported difficulty in observing the constructs, distinguishing between constructs, some did not understand the relevance of the constructs to classroom instruction.
- Yet, teachers simultaneously expressed excitement and interest in learning about social-emotional development.
- Review of the evidence teachers collected found less than 40 percent agreement with researchers' ratings on all three constructs, compared to some constructs with more than 70 percent.

RESULTS

Percentage of Teachers Reporting Across Items

Survey Item	ER	EE	EL	Range (all constructs)
Progression captured information "very well" or "somewhat well" (N=125)	84%	84%	85%	84-97%
Construct was "very easy" or "easy" to assess (N=29-40)	22%	24%	31%	22-98%
Difficulty of construct to assess (N=99-133):				
Construct hard to understand	33%	28%	37%	16-100%
Construct progression was too long	14%	16%	24%	8-100%
Not applicable to students	7%	8%	7%	5-100%
Not enough time to assess skills	28%	30%	26%	26-67%
Teacher was "very" or "somewhat" confident in placement (N=126)	71%	74%	75%	71-99%
Unable to assess as part of everyday instruction (N=129)	24%	22%	23%	1-54%
Information was "very" or "somewhat" helpful to instruction (N=126)	65%	64%	64%	51-81%

Note: ER = Emotion Regulation, EE = Emotion Expression, EL = Emotional Literacy

CONCLUSION

- Teachers are not yet ready to meet the expectations at national, state, and local standards and assessments.
- A review of teachers' evidence in this study suggests that observing social emotional skills is not something that can easily be taught over a two-day training and follow up support.
- In order for teachers to be ready to instruct and assess in social emotional skills, it is critical that pre-service training at all levels (e.g., k-12, elementary, early childhood).
- Teacher preparation should include, at a minimum, how to observe and interpret children's observable behavior at different developmental stages, *and* in an authentic setting.
- We must question whether observing social emotional skills in an authentic setting is an ideal sole-source method of assessing young children's social emotional skills.