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ABSTRACT
This group of portraits paints a picture of how educational policies across different regions of the United States afford varying experiences using arts disciplines pedagogically for SEL instruction. Each policy-supported portrait interfaces with SEL to teach competencies and report enhancement in personal emotional growth, social awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, information management, global innovation, and artistic competency. Through reading these portraits, rationales emerge for the need to enhance interpersonal collaboration, verbal, non-verbal and esthetic communication, collaborative creativity, and cultural awareness in teacher education, in curricular design, and school-policy.

Connecting SEL and the arts
Martha Eddy, and Scott N. Edgar

The arts can provide integrative learning across cognitive, emotional, esthetic, and physical domains and do so in embodied and embedded ways. It is precisely this interactive, creative, and experiential learning that is suited for Social Emotional Learning (SEL). This group of portraits paints a picture of how educational policies across different regions of the United States afford varying experiences using arts disciplines pedagogically for SEL instruction. Specifically, arts education allows students to move: from paintbrush to paper, across the room to sound with gesture, or vocalizing in interactions with others while empathizing with a range of feelings. During these creative, embodied processes students are invited to experience novel perspectives, speak thoughts using new vocabulary, take in beauty to elicit a sense of wonder, as well as tap into a myriad of emotional responses during art-making and art appreciation. In reviewing these portraits of SEL implementation, one can learn about how arts education provides opportunities for creative problem-solving, the development of agency, affirmation of diverse cultures, and creatively build diverse SEL competencies. Students are seen touching into their own self-expression, becoming aware of how their behavior affects others, constructing closer relationships, as well as engaging in individual and collaborative decision-making.

Veteran SEL educators know that effective SEL education can be a result of: (a) a teacher’s natural inclination toward compassion and student attunement; (b) explicit teacher education in SEL; (c) educational leadership at school and district levels; and (d) responses to expectations from local, state, and federal educational policies or standards. These portraits provide insight for how SEL can be implemented into the arts with an eye to how policies drive local action.

Engaging the body (kinesthetic intelligence) is a unique feature of arts education that further supports self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making through group interaction, whether in person or online, because they all require reading non-verbal movement cues. The body is the main locus of control for self-awareness and self-management through the internal perceptions of self. Being aware of another person’s movement may impact the success of effective communication. The reading of facial expression and gesture (and other non-verbal communications-NVC) is critical in many artistic manifestations. Furthermore, NVC is 60–90% of effective
communication (Pease & Pease, 2006), an important aspect of good social emotional intelligence. Art education settings afford a rich educational climate for embodied action and decision-making replete with feelingful expression and interactive communication, whether in times of stress (Eddy, 2016), easeful learning, or celebration.

Why the arts and SEL at the local level?

Carolina Blatt-Gross

The pedagogy of Social Emotional Learning emerged parallel to research exploring art as cognition (Arnheim, 1969; Donald, 2006; Dutton, 2009; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Mithen, 1996; Zaidel, 2005; Zeki, 1999); and an understanding of learning as a profoundly social and emotional endeavor. Recently, educational research (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007; Immordino-Yang & Gotlieb, 2017; Storbeck & Clore, 2007); has been demonstrating the import of the social and emotional as essential foundations for applying cognition. Ironically, while the arts have long been considered antithetical to cognition due to their affective connotations, the new emphasis on social-affective neuroscience posits the arts in an advantageous light (Blatt-Gross, 2010), particularly as SEL initiatives are launched. This is positive for arts education, but like much educational research, the trickle of this data-driven affirmation into practice and policy is painfully slow. Furthermore, while many schools have adapted SEL into their curricula, teacher preparation programs—often struggling to stay abreast of the changing tides of policy and research—need to equip future art teachers to navigate and implement SEL. Of particular benefit to our future arts teachers is the capacity to marry SEL with their arts objectives and curricula so that they are mutually beneficial.

The arts expand our abilities to communicate to include more forms of representation, thereby enabling us to communicate a broader range of ideas and content (Eisner, 2002). But there is plentiful overlap. While it can be difficult to quantify art education’s structural outcomes, Eisner’s (1985) Ten Lessons the Arts Teach derived from Arts and the Creation of Mind as well as Hetland, Winner, Veenema & Sheridan’s Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Visual Arts Education (2013), offer both scholarly arguments and empirical evidence of the types of skills and thinking that commonly result from the study of the visual arts. Commonalities between these “habits of mind” (Hetland et al., 2013) and SEL competencies are easy to identify, and Figure 1 illustrates the potential for arts skills and thinking to feed into multiple SEL outcomes. With this in mind, art educators have the theoretical and empirical grounding to pursue and deploy these connections.

![Figure 1. Mapping connections between Eisner’s Ten Lessons the Arts Teach (2002) on the left, the core competencies of Socio-Emotional Learning (CASEL) in the middle, and the habits of mind articulated by Hetland, Winner, Veenema, & Sheridan’s Studio thinking: The real benefits of visual arts education, 2nd edition, (2013) on the right.](image-url)
Historically, most—if not all—of the arts began in communal, collaborative forms that established and fortified social bonds (Carroll, 2004; Dewey, 1934; Dissanayake, 1995, 2000, 2007). Research on this union between art education and SEL is relatively sparse, but a handful of appeals seek to combine SEL with the natural social and emotional character of art-making through collaborative service-learning and community arts projects (Hutzel et al., 2010; Russell & Hutzel, 2007). It is worth noting that the arts are ultimately something generated with bodies, often initiated by perception, followed by an interaction with material or spatial environment. Whether constructed or natural, the context in which learning occurs consists not just of tangible or material surroundings, but social and emotional layers that are inherently physical and give that physical context meaning. Hence, the arts are naturally, profoundly contextualized in ways that suggest an alignment with both the best pedagogical practices derived from cognitive research and the intentions of SEL.

While many schools (typically driven by education policy) have spent decades perfecting isolated, individualized instruction and assessment, current educational neuroscience undermines the likelihood that the decontextualized model for learning will yield meaningful application, retention or transfer of content (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). Evidence that students take their work goals more seriously and invest in it more authentically if it has a social and/or emotional context is abundant. This is particularly salient when opportunities for real-world application are built into the curriculum.

Given that the core competencies of SEL align with the natural outcomes of the arts, the task of teaching SEL through the arts is surmountable (even facile) in arts education, where the educational fortes of both content and form dovetail with social and emotional needs and management. To deepen and expand on the common goals of SEL, arts educators need merely embrace art’s communal tendencies, and origins, (Blatt-Gross, 2016, 2017) to help our future art teachers fortify art-making’s SEL potential.

Depending on how the arts education classroom is organized and taught, lessons can be conducive to modeling how to establish a safe social emotional environment resulting in responsible decision-making through the creation of art products. Generally, this means lessons are delivered in ways that enhance social emotional skills (e.g., non-punitive, not Zero Tolerance, with focus on affirming learning processes) and provide opportunities for enhancing self-awareness, social awareness, and responsible decision-making.

Local arts education: Policies in action
Martha Eddy

It has taken decades for policy-makers to identify and place SEL skills and objectives into standards. Some states are ahead of the curve—Ohio, Alaska, New Jersey, Illinois, and Georgia—provide strong positive examples (with New Jersey having the most robust arts/SEL standards at the time of this publication [www.selarts.org]). The authors of the portraits in this article describe how SEL-rich arts education can be shaped effectively and about the forces that compelled them—knowledge of policies within and across states, local administrative and community support, interaction amongst cross-disciplinary arts educators, and the personal motivation amongst educators. In art-making, within real-world contexts, we see how SEL competencies transfer to other facets of life.

Implementation of “SEL-aware” arts education as described throughout this article, reveals how the basic components of Social Emotional Learning can be taught effectively, and possibly be used in any classroom or school area. These pedagogical strategies allow us to delve deeper into “the hidden curriculum” (also referred to as Non-Cognitive Factors in education) (Eisner, 2002). As a result, educators in a range of disciplines can benefit from understanding the experiential pedagogical strategies common amongst arts educators.

These portraits depict: (a) an understanding of youth development and the role of embodied cognition in education; (b) the role of the performing arts presenter/artist-in-residence in recognizing community and youth’s social emotional needs; (c) the SEL knowledge base of arts educators and administrators; and, (d) how SEL through arts education can impact both K-12 classrooms and the local community through collaboration and expand into higher education. When federal, state, and local policies and mandates are less defined the role of Social Emotional Learning in arts education can be guided by the insights shared by the educators themselves, creating a basis for future research and policy development. In these portraits we gain a glimpse into the lifetime of work accomplished by six writers and the many other educators they represent. We learn how policy, teacher education, and art pedagogy come together in innovative methods for practicing SEL competencies. Each policy-supported portrait interfaces with SEL to teach competencies and report enhancement in personal emotional growth, social
awareness, critical thinking, problem-solving, information management, global innovation, and artistic competency.

**Portrait #1: Body language arts and SEL**

Martha Eddy

From 2019 through April 2020, in two different New York City schools (The Thurgood Marshall Academy in Harlem and Central Park East 2 in East Harlem), Kei Phillip developed and implemented *Body Language Arts: A Dance Approach to SEL*. The programs were offered for 3rd and 4th graders during their weekly dance classes for 4 or 5 class periods. Class size averaged 18 participants across schools. One school employed the RULER framework and the other did not have an SEL framework. Some sessions were conducted by Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic. The content of the unit was developed by Kei Phillip and reviewed by the presiding instructor of each class before implementation, with support from each principal. Programming was further supervised by curriculum developers Martha Eddy and Linda Lantieri (founding collaborator of CASEL) both of whom have piloted over decades Conflict Resolution and other SEL related curriculum in NYC. Phillip describes the program as:

> An experiential laboratory for awareness, movement expression, and communication. The workshop sessions are accumulative and combine five foundational dance concepts with the four hallmarks of Social Emotional Learning. Through the scaffolded structure of inquiry, brainstorming, games, and debriefs, students explore how verbal language and conscious movement choices are connected to their senses (auditory, visual, proprioception), emotional expression, interpersonal relationships, and environment. By actively participating in each session, students engage in a collaborative and self-empowered learning space that provides opportunities for play, stress-relief, self-advocacy, and community-building.

...In my project, participants play body-mind games to practice their situational awareness and develop their capacity for creative problem-resolution. CASEL’s SAFE approach1 and the learning experience format of CASEL and SEE (Social, Emotional, Ethical Learning), respectively, inform the structure of each session.

Reflections on the programing revealed that what students experienced physically provided insights about how they experience their environment (internally and externally), how they communicate with one another, and how they recognize, approach and address conflict (intrapersonally and interpersonally). Outcomes demonstrated that learning about body language contextualized perceptions and gave greater meaning to verbal expression of emotions, as well as providing alternative approaches to challenges and/or conflicts.

Further, Philip reports, “CASEL2 and SEE learning3 has provided me with a pedagogical framework to reflect on the benefits of interactive dance and how creative movement exploration can be a mechanism to expand our body-mind awareness and cultivate socio-emotional skills. Much of SEL theories and approaches, which often integrate mindfulness, tend to introduce body awareness later on, not at all, or in limit embodied exploration such as meditative practices and yoga.” Integrating SEL within dance classes affords children and teachers opportunities to both learn the SEL competencies and practice them.

**Portrait #2: The UW community arts collaboratory: Building policy through collective work**

Erica Halverson

In the beginning

Diana Hess, Dean of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison often refers to our School as, “the school of the good life,” because of its unusual composition, which includes not only traditional education departments such as Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Psychology but also includes the departments of Art, Dance, and Theater and Drama, as well as health departments Kinesiology and Counseling Psychology. This composition supports interdisciplinary work at the intersection of traditional academic work and community practices and places the School at the forefront of being able to create collaborative change through the arts.

Our efforts are grounded in University of Wisconsin policies for collaboration that are instantiated in funding mechanisms for collaborative work. Currently, we are engaged in an effort funded by our School of Education’s Grand Challenges project4 to develop shared definitions and measures of SEL to test and use across our programs and eventually to bring inspiration and promising practices to others’ work. The Grand Challenges seeks to, “support research and practice in education, health, and creative expression [leveraging] disciplinary teams to engage in projects to make a profound difference in the world”. The Arts Collab, described below, is engaged in an emic process of mapping constructs used across its four arts outreach programs to measure participants’ SEL (Lashley &
Halverson, this issue). We are also using these constructs to develop tools for observing (and evaluating) arts programs in action.

Enter the UW-Madison community arts collaboration (Arts Collab)

Kate Corby (Professor of Dance) and I (Professor of Curriculum and Instruction) co-founded The Arts Collab in 2017 as a way to build resources for community arts outreach programing and research. Our collaborative also includes colleagues Faisal Abdu’Allah (Professor of Art) and Yorel Lashley (Director of Arts Outreach initiatives). Prior to joining forces, we had each run independent community arts outreach programs, offering our own arts education residency programs in public schools, area community centers, and rural communities across Wisconsin.

The Arts Collab programs provide art-making opportunities for youth to cultivate wellness and advocate for social change. The Arts Collab empowers youth as art makers by engaging them as agents of creativity, intellect, and self-efficacy. The Arts Collab also houses a lab designed to generate cutting-edge research on the role of the arts in improving children’s learning and development. This unique design allows us to provide direct service to young people through our arts programs while working with university leaders and staff to establish promising practices for university-community partnerships. The research lab allows us to use these programs as opportunities to communicate with the broader academic and policy community who are interested in understanding how the arts positively influence young peoples’ lives at scale.

The Arts Collab consists of four programs all of which integrate cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies into the design of arts-based learning:

- **Whoopensocker.** An artist-in-residence program for creative expression through writing, performance, and improvisation. Whoopensocker works with third and fourth graders creating and performing original narratives, true stories, and plays. A company of professional performers then adapts students’ stories in a vaudeville-style sketch comedy show that is performed at the school for students, their families, and the community-at-large.

- **Performing Ourselves.** A dance movement therapy program focused on the role of movement and choreography in kids’ social emotional lives. Performing Ourselves works with children ages 5–12 in classrooms and community centers creating and performing original choreography.

- **Fauhaus.** Visual arts for disaffected high school students to produce and perform identities for public audiences, Fauhaus works primarily with young men who are part of the juvenile justice system to develop positive identities through visual art-making.

- **Drum Power:** A West African and Afro-Cuban drumming and dance project promoting leadership and empowerment. Drum Power started 20 years ago in New York City and has worked with hundreds of students in classrooms and summer camps.

There were many reasons for us to combine our efforts into one super-team of community arts activists. Germance to this special issue is that we are all interested in understanding how our community arts programs positively influence young peoples’ SEL. We are all committed to working with kids who otherwise do not have access to arts programs and who have historically been marginalized in schools. In articulating these shared values, we have crafted several shared research and evaluation projects aimed at: (a) defining constructs of SEL that are core to our programs; (b) developing instruments to measure changes in students’ SEL as a result of our programs; and (c) building observation tools to document SEL in action. In doing so, we have begun to establish a joint program evaluation process and a program of research that centers SEL in our understanding of what it means to learn in and through the arts.

**Opportunities for Change-Making University-Wide**

Though there is cursory attention paid to the importance of community outreach work and the integrated nature of partnerships, faculty are ultimately judged by their traditional academic contributions. The Arts Collab aims to disrupt the siloing of research and outreach making them indivisible. One mechanism for that is placing the Arts Collab between the School of Education’s outreach office and research center; we have been working to leverage the strengths of both offices without marginalizing the contributions of either office or our community partners. Across the university, we hope that developing a project-centric approach to collaboration may help ease tensions and provide opportunities for faculty to work across the research-outreach divide without feeling marginalized.
Portrait #3: Building partnership: Understanding SEL skills in the dance residency
Kathryn Humphreys, and Louanne I. Smolin

Introduction and purpose
Led by Kathryn Humphreys, the Education Programs of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC) combine the creative mission of the performing company with decades of expertise in dance education and school partnership. This portrait will explore initial findings and stories from our project Understanding Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills in the Dance Residency.

Through this project we have been focusing on CASEL’s SEL Competencies, particularly how these skills manifest during a dance residency, and examining the capacity of the artistic process of choreography to develop academic mindsets, social skills, and learning strategies for participating students. For a number of years, our school partners have implemented research that observed growth in their students’ SEL skills as a result of their participation in the Hubbard Street residencies. For example, teachers have consistently commented that students engaging in the choreographic process built trust and cohesion, exhibited enhanced student leadership and empowered student voice, and increased students’ persistence, even when they experienced failure.

These teachers reported that they had gained new insight into how to structure their classroom to reach their students through their participation in the accompanying professional development along with the residency. These powerful stories were rewarding and interesting, prompting us to investigate what was happening in the dance residency. Residencies are divided into three sections that match the curriculum phases of the Prepare, Create, Perform, Respond (PCPR) model (Humphreys & Kimbrell, 2013): Concept and Vocabulary Introduction (Phase 1), Choreographic Exploration (Phase 2), and Performance Preparation (Phase 3). Teacher reflection is not included in this first phase of the Project. Our goal is to create an arts-based model for teacher change aimed at improving middle and upper school student achievement in choreography and learning across academic domains, including SEL skills.

This current initiative, which works with 2100 students and 70 teachers across 9 schools, was designed to determine which elements of PCPR directly contribute to increased abilities in specific SEL skills and knowledge transfer across domains, explicating how SEL elements can become a resource for students’ academic achievement. The project also increased classroom teacher and teaching artist skills in recognizing strategies to improve these elements. The vignettes below provide examples of the instances of SEL skills observed within in the residencies.

CASEL’s SEL competencies and noncognitive factors
A key policy influence was the decision to use University of Chicago Consortium’s framework since it provided a shared language to rebalance and refine the integration of cognitive and non-cognitive instructional approaches within our residencies, “weaving social, emotional, and cognitive development together and into the fabric of formal and informal learning opportunities” (Jones, Camille, Farrington, Jagers, & Brackett 2017 p. 3). Then, we worked to link the framework with CASEL’s SEL competencies. In this portrait, we focus on the factors outlined by Farrington et al. (2012) and their corresponding CASEL Competency:

Academic mindsets
“Psycho-social attitudes or beliefs one has about oneself in relation to academic work. Positive academic mindsets motivate students to persist at schoolwork (i.e., they give rise to academic perseverance), which manifests itself through better academic behaviors, which lead to improved performance (p. 9). This corresponds to CASEL Self-Awareness: the ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well-grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset”.

Learning strategies
Processes and tactics one employs to aid in the cognitive work of thinking, remembering, or learning. Effective learning strategies allow students to leverage academic behaviors to maximize learning... including goal-setting and time management, both of which help students manage the process of learning” (Farrington et al., p. 10). The idea of learning strategy most relates to CASEL Self-Management—the ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

Social skills
Including “such interpersonal qualities as co-operation, assertion, responsibility, and empathy” (Farrington et al., p. 11). Social skills are defined as Relationship Skills within CASEL—the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist
inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

What we have learned

A close examination of residency videos found that our curriculum facilitated a wide range of SEL characteristics within its student participants. Particular to mindset: With respect to Self-Awareness, students’ participation and performance improved. During Phase 1 (Concept and Vocabulary Development), students exhibited a shared or joint attention. Teachers and teaching artists nurtured novice students’ attention through brief and carefully-structured activities, such as “mirroring” one another. As portrayed in Figure 2, students’ joint attention was evident and resulted in an observable group cohesion. Students were able to rehearse, refine and repeat these movement studies. Additionally, students exhibited a growth mindset as they encountered this new material. This was evident as they consistently utilized peer and teacher feedback to improve choreographic skills and employed the processes of rehearsal and repetition to embody movement skills, all contributing to their self-confidence and acknowledgement of their own strengths.

During Phase II (Choreographic Exploration), students’ Social Skills/Relationship Skills were evident in the ways they collaborated in groups. They engaged in functional joint decision-making by communicating with one another. Together, they drew upon resources available to them, such as directions listed on the blackboard, to make decisions about modifying movement studies. Students were inclusive and engaged in teamwork. For example, in one group students asked one another for their ideas, while in another group, peers invited one group member to return to the task at hand. Finally, students took on leadership roles during group work, relying less on teacher intervention and using relationship-building skills to set and accomplish their own goals for choreography. In Figure 3, one student takes the leadership in shaping group members in a tableau that will be set to movement.

During Phase III (Performance Preparation), students employed a variety of learning strategies/self-management techniques to accomplish their performance goals. For example, they were able to implement strategies set by the teaching artist, using goal-setting and organizational skills. They developed their own novel strategies as well. In Figures 4 and 5, a group of students developed their own novel strategy of alternating roles between choreographer/director and dancer in order to better critique and refine their group movement study.

Concluding observations

SEL competencies can be difficult to teach in non-arts environments, and they are skills that arts teachers have previously lacked a clear vocabulary to describe. We initiated the SEL Project after seeing prominent self-reporting from our school partners listing the attributes of SEL as observed improvements in the classroom. We felt that a formal project was needed to create a clear through-line between these stories told by our partner teachers and the academic research supporting student learning in SEL. The above vignettes provided examples of students’ abilities to set goals, persist with learning activities, establish productive relationships with their peers and develop their own strategies for achieving their goals. We developed a deeper understanding of the skills learned through the choreographic process, infusing
SEL skills within arts and academic curricula, enabling students to use both bodies and minds to learn and take their place in the world. Our hope is that this will further reinforce the policies in place in Chicago and beyond.

**Portrait #4: Social Emotional Learning in K-12 instrumental music education**

Adam Gohr

I teach instrumental music at a high-performing, upper-middle-class school in the northwest suburbs of Chicago, and we, as a band program and school, are making an aggressive push to include more Social Emotional Learning as an active part of our curriculum beginning this year (2019–2020). After 21 years in teaching, I can increasingly see SEL as a critical part of what we do as music educators; it has become part of our state’s curriculum (Illinois State Board of Education SEL Standards) but most of us in the education field have received little to no formal training in SEL and instructional practices, so find it difficult to implement in an authentic manner. The challenge for us as educators is to integrate the SEL instruction as a part of our daily curriculum, without it seeming like a distinct or unnatural addition to existing instruction. The band classroom offers us unique opportunities to do so, and this year has been formative and transformational in the way that we approach ensemble instruction.

The school in which I teach prides itself on being part of a high-performing public-school district. Rankings from national and regional publications, awards from the College Board and ACT/SAT, statistics about students continuing into four-year colleges, and other related metrics are the main talking points from district-level administrators and publicity representatives when recognizing and defining that success. Examining the demographics, it is not hard to see why these metrics exist—the student body of about 2000 is upper middle class, with a very low free/reduced lunch and nonexistent homeless population; the racial breakdown is fairly homogeneous, primarily white; and a low rate of mobility within the district both for students and teachers provides for long-term stability. Essentially, all of the privilege boxes have been checked that would predict a high level of academic success by both present and historic metrics.

Although there is a strong focus on quantifying academic success in defining what “high-performing” means in the district, some inroads have been made into addressing physical and emotional health as a part of the complete student. Three years ago, in a local-level policy initiative, a district wellness coordinator was hired as a full-time staff member; initiatives have been put into place addressing bullying (social-awareness), sexual violence, connecting new students with older peers for support, and the topic of student health (self-awareness and self-management) is a part of the daily discussion for both students and staff alike. In addition, committees have been formed at both high schools and at the district-level to address student health (both physical and emotional) as a critical component of the school experience in our district. While these initiatives are laudable, they have yet to reach the level of public recognition that the academic numeric metrics attract—perhaps since they are much harder to quantify, since no standardized testing or formal reporting exists in our current structure?

**SEL in the instrumental music education classroom**

In the instrumental music classroom, we have a unique opportunity to further SEL objectives over a
students’ secondary school career. As music instructors, we see the students daily throughout their four-year experience, and often on evenings, weekends, summer camps, and overnight trips, as well. We are uniquely situated by virtue of this close and enduring relationship to have perhaps the single most profound impact on a student’s social and emotional growth during the years we spend together.

This year in our ensemble classes, we are working with a local university educator with a directed focus on professional development targeted at SEL in the instrumental music classroom. This was initially met with some trepidation by myself and the other staff members; as with any new initiative in education, the potential positives are offset by the practical concerns about taking time away from time-tested instructional techniques. As our program is defined as high-performing by musical standards as well, the concern about losing a step, in terms of performance goals was a valid one. Conversations between staffers and our professional development guide reassured us that this was a worthwhile pursuit that would both enhance our students’ experiences while maintaining the high-performance standards we expect, and through the first concert cycle of the year this has been borne out.

The goals for the staff, as we proceed through this year of SEL training, are primarily to build the “educator’s toolbox” of techniques to use in the classroom. By discussing, revising, and refining specific strategies, we can smoothly integrate SEL into our preexisting curriculum and instructional style so that the expectations and consistency of the program are maintained. As we do this, we will become more aware of the role that SEL-centered instruction plays in the classroom, with the hopes that the cycle becomes self-perpetuating; that we as educators revise and refine the techniques as we see what works well and what needs further modification.

A variety of activities have been included in our instruction, ranging from the formal to the extremely casual; some intentional, and some, as we had hoped, began as planned events and have transitioned into automatic, unconscious interactions with students as we proceeded throughout the year. A formal SEL committee was one of the more structured activities, as volunteer students participated in an extracurricular monthly meeting with our university co-op; this provided us both with outstanding feedback about specific SEL strategies, and also allowed for some small group discussion in a more casual setting than an in-class interview would afford. A technique to help everyone’s voice be heard, where students shared with their neighbor before responding to the class with either their or their neighbor’s thoughts helped to contribute to classroom discussion and tended to increase variety in the responses; this technique began as a pre-planned event, but became a regular event whenever “on-the-fly” discussion was needed, and was even expanded to musical examples.

For our students, the goals remain the same, but priorities may shift a bit as we apply a social emotional lens to our instruction. High-quality, engaging performance is always a priority, as well as enabling students to become lifelong performers and consumers of music; however, an increased focus on SEL shifts attention to the life skills that develop as a natural outgrowth of the ensemble experience. The ability to frame both short- and long-term goals, to take directed, individual criticism and respond immediately in a positive and demonstrative manner, and the increased self-confidence and independence necessary to become great performers can all be greatly enhanced by SEL-focused instruction.

As we proceed through our year of on-site professional development for Social Emotional Learning in the instrumental ensemble classroom, early returns predict positive future results. Students have become more open in their discussions about challenging emotional topics such as performance anxiety, personal goals, and satisfaction with their current trajectory, and we have seen an anecdotal increase in both the number and variety of responders in our classrooms when engaging in classroom discussion. Our hope is that a seamless integration of this focused instruction into what is already a high-performing school, both academically and musically, will serve as both a case study and model program for future schools looking to incorporate social emotional instruction as part of their curriculum. SEL is an integral part of what we already do as music instructors; by turning an intentional eye toward the specific techniques and practices we use in daily instruction, we can address SEL in a more systematic and robust manner while still maintaining a rigorous, high-achieving ensemble performance program.

**Portrait #5: SEL in visual arts teacher preparation: Local implementation in New Jersey**

Carolina Blatt-Gross

In spring 2018, several pre-service art education students at The College of New Jersey elected to take a community-engaged art course in which they worked
closely with the residents of nearby Trenton to participate in two community-driven projects: 1) JR’s InsideOut, a global photographic street art project and 2) a double-sided mural and bilingual signage for a local community garden. Through the process, they developed connections with members of the community, which shed light on their own experience, preconceptions, and engagement. A concurrent study of the outcomes revealed these interactions resulted in increased self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills for the students. Further, the students reported that even a year after the course concluded, their work in the class was among the most meaningful they had done in their entire program of study because it fundamentally changed the way they thought about their work and their perception of the context in which it was made. Most of the outcomes they cited emphasized their personal growth as well as art-making skills. Rather than associate the merits of their projects with a grade, students perceived the value of the work as determined by the reception of the members of the Trenton community, arguably a paramount judgment because of its authentic real-world applications. Indeed, the outcomes of this intensive community engaged experience embody SEL intentions for students to “understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, n.d.), all through navigating collaborative strategies toward the collective making of large-scale, public artwork. While the project was inspired by an NJM Urban Innovation grant and the college’s dedication to community engagement, concurrent to its development, New Jersey’s DOE was revising the visual arts standards along with an SEL overlay to be implemented in fall 2020. These impending additions to state standards made the context of this project particularly relevant to teacher training for future NJ educators.

Ultimately, it was the human element that made students more connected to their collective project and to each other, demonstrating empathy for their peers as well as the community with which they partnered. In a prime example of the social-awareness and relationship skills that resulted from the projects, one pre-service educator even said that before the class she had a hard time talking to people and now she “talks to everyone.” She concluded with a laugh: “It changed me.” Prior to the projects, students expressed fear and trepidation about even going to nearby Trenton, citing stereotypes about crime and danger. After the class, students expressed pride in their work and a protective attitude toward the city and its citizens, often defending it to friends and family who espoused the same stereotypes. Several pre-service art educators opined that a community-based course should be required for all future teachers because it transformed the way they think about teaching, and about the value of learning to work collaboratively toward a common goal, suggesting that policy changes not just for acting K-12 teachers, but for teacher preparation programs might be necessary to require and support this kind of study. Working within a real-world context, laden with real social connections and emotional content, lends itself to far more powerful social, emotional, and cognitive outcomes than classes in which the final projects are destined to land indefinitely in a professor’s drawer.

While a full community-engaged course may not be possible within the scope of all teacher preparation programs, more moderate implementation of SEL objectives can be included in teacher preparation curricula by including connections to real-world people and settings, which feature authentic emotional content and social context. In a recent offering of Curriculum in Art Education, pre-service art educators partnered with the Institute for Social Justice through the Arts, with a focus on water-themed interdisciplinary work, particularly curriculum writing. Inspired by the eco-justice themes of Springs Eternal: Art, Water, Change, an exhibition in the TCNJ Gallery, and the participating artists who explore environmental issues from various perspectives, these pre-service art educators ultimately created issue-based lesson plans for K-12 art classrooms. These lessons are driven by “Big Ideas”– broad, meaningful concepts that cross disciplines and resonate with people of all ages (Walker, 2001). Using art-making to explore big ideas enables teachers to help students make connections globally, locally, and personally. This approach embeds new knowledge in significant contexts and facilitates transfer to other disciplines as well as application to real-world scenarios. As part of their lesson plans, these future art educators also partnered with graphic design students to generate instructional, developmentally-appropriate games that complement the content of the exhibition and support their learning objectives. These games were debuted in a game night in the gallery, which included a water bar and pop up musical performances by student musicians who composed and performed water-inspired pieces.

Using intersecting approaches and personal interactions allowed students to contextualize knowledge and enhances the visual arts outcomes that so closely align
with SEL goals—ultimately situating learning among networks of people and the social skills (such as clear communication) required to make those connections happen. The diversity of approaches also reinforced the ability to assume multiple and sometimes disparate perspectives, building self-awareness, social awareness and relationships skills.

While designed specifically to complement the content of the Springs Eternal exhibition, these plans could be easily adapted to address any number of environmental issues, suggesting ways in which the ideas of conservation, pollution, and our relationship to water could be incorporated into the classroom. Students also designed curriculum cards featuring summaries of the water-themed lessons that were made available on the gallery website and provided to local educators to invite and integrate authentic, inquiry-driven art-making into their classes. In this instance as well, a real-world application of content made the development of these learning segments particularly meaningful. Knowing that their work could potentially be used in actual classrooms by the teachers they had worked with provided a human connection and the authentic motivation to put forth one’s best work. In sum, working in an authentic context encourages students to grapple with the complexities of their surroundings, highlighting the need to navigate and develop the skills needed to untangle their social and emotional intricacies.

Ultimately, preparing pre-service teachers to facilitate SEL requires them to experience the benefits of it themselves and, like metacognition, teacher preparation must make visible the structures and opportunities that make such connections possible. It follows that policy for training our preservice teachers could better reflect the efficacy of SEL through the arts.

Conclusion

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Policy can include more explicit SEL goals within Arts Education standards, funding for more space or equipment needed for the arts, teacher education that explicitly conveys SEL competencies through arts lesson, and further education inclusive of cross-over with therapeutic models for dealing with trauma (while acknowledging the critical difference between artists, teachers, and mental health professionals). Policy at a local level is heavily influenced by district culture and school administration. Providing professional development for policy makers inclusive of the potency of arts education for SEL seems appropriate. In several of these portraits existing policy did not play a huge role, the arts are often left free to do as they please. Informed resources are needed for the students, the schools, the educators, and the administrators. Recognizing the value of the lessons, curricula, and community projects depicted could help drive policy. Through reading these portraits, rationales emerge for the need to enhance interpersonal collaboration, verbal, non-verbal and esthetic communication, collaborative creativity, and cultural awareness in teacher education, in curricular design, and school-policy.

These portraits represent a progression in Social Emotional Learning instruction and pedagogy. They highlight the need for self-reflection to isolate and expose the needs of students in a particular context and to respond accordingly. The authors of these portraits created and interpreted SEL based on local-level policy. While these portraits may resonate with others, pure duplication would not be advised. Adaptation, interpretation, and thoughtful implementation would be needed to ensure the initiative will meet the needs of the intended students. Utilizing policy as a motivation to secure resources and serve as a guide would allow for SEL to fit organically into the arts instruction. Especially amidst the universal trauma of COVID-19 and justifiable anger surging around the loss of black lives/Black Lives Matter/racial injustice, SEL will be front and center for many teachers, performing artists and presenters, and policy makers. The social and emotional needs of students, teachers, and artists will be primary as reentry into education occurs. Beyond the pedagogy, the art that could emerge from the pandemic and/or BLM or the racial injustice movement could be cathartic in and of itself. Students should be involved in creating the art that will define this moment in history, and it can be inspired by SEL.

Notes
1. https://casel.org/what-is-sel/approaches/
2. https://casel.org/core-competencies/
3. https://seelearning.emory.edu/resources-research
4. https://grandchallenges.education.wisc.edu
5. https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Social-Emotional-Learning-Standards.aspx

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