

Practicing What We Teach: Ensuring PD Opportunities Reflect a Commitment to Social and Emotional Learning

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The University of Vermont

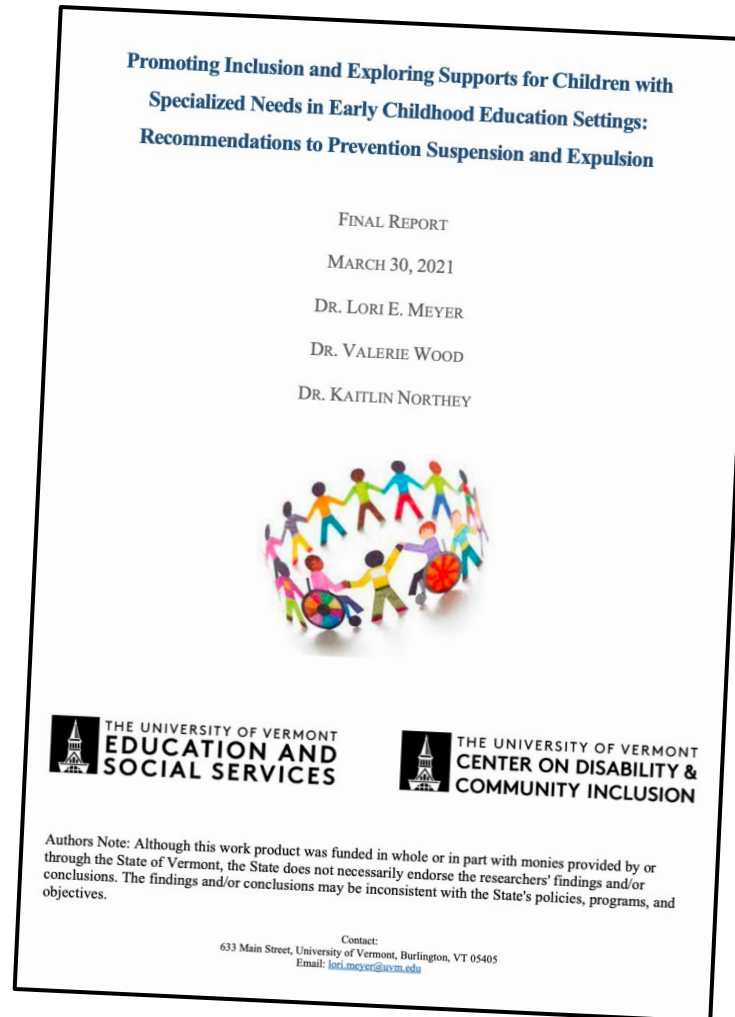
Introduction

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Objectives for this Session

After this session, participants will be able to:

- Describe why and advocate for early childhood professionals need learning opportunities focused on children's social and emotional development;
- Report on their connection and goals related to supporting teachers' well-being in professional development and incorporating children's social and emotional development in trainings;
- Identify and employ practices that support early childhood professionals' social and emotional learning



Presentation Plan

- Mindfulness
- The Field's Commitment to Children's Social and Emotional Development
- Why Professional Development Should Include Social and Emotional Topics and Approaches
- Practicing What We Teach
 - The Field's Commitment to Teachers' Well-Being
 - Teachers' Well-Being and Professional Development
 - Practices for Social and Emotional Learning with Adults
- Translating Our Learning Into Action



Let's Get Started!



Meditation

allows us to
quiet our
thoughts and
bring stillness to
our bodies.

Body Scans

allow us to
notice tension,
relax the body
and develop
non-reactivity





What's sustaining you or keeping you going?

- What strengths did you recognize in your current early childhood work/practices?
- What's sustaining you or keeping you going?
- How are you hoping to grow your practice today?



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The Field's Commitment to Social and Emotional Development

NAEYC believes **early childhood educators are responsible for**, “planning and implementing intentional, developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate learning experiences **that promote the social and emotional development**, physical development and health, cognitive development, language and literacy development, and general learning competencies of each child served” (NAEYC, 2020b, p. 7)



The Field's Commitment to Social and Emotional Development

"Learning is a social process profoundly shaped by culture, social interactions, and language. From early infancy, children are hardwired to seek human interaction. They construct knowledge through their interactions with people and their environment, and they make meaning of their experiences through a cultural lens" (NAEYC, 2019, p. 13)

"Positive, caring, supportive relationships and interactions [are] the foundation of early childhood educators' work with young children. [Teachers] understand that all teaching and learning are facilitated by caring relationships and that children's lifelong dispositions for learning, self-confidence, and approaches to learning are formed in early childhood"

(NAEYC, 2020b, p. 17)



The Field's Commitment to Social and Emotional Development

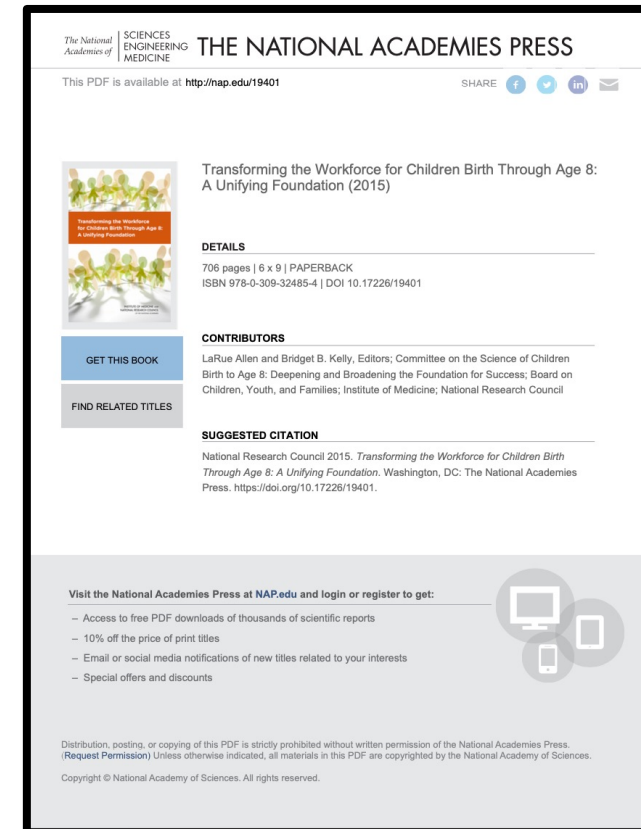
- Young children's social and emotional learning and development affects their sense of self and identity, their relationships, their well-being, their behavior, their physical health, their development in other domains (physical, cognitive, linguistic), and their learning (e.g., Yoshikawa et al., 2013).



The Need for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development

“National surveys indicate that **the field of early education is in need of effective training that can help educators develop skills in promoting socioemotional development.** For example, faculty in teacher training institutions reported that, compared with practices across other developmental domains, their graduates **were least prepared to address the needs of children with challenging behavior** (Hemmeter et al., 2008)”

(National Research Council [NRC], 2015, pp. 271 – 272)



The Need for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development

Fostering Social and Emotional Development: Implications for Professional Learning

- *Early care and education professionals need training to foster socio-emotional development and create supportive learning environments for all children.*
- *Professionals in education, health, and social services need training to recognize when children need specialized support for their socio-emotional development, to provide that support directly and through linkages to specialized services, and to connect to multigeneration intervention approaches that take into account the mental health and well-being of the adults in children's lives instead of viewing children in isolation.*

(NRC, 2015, p. 275)



Why the Push for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development?



Why the Push for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development?

- **Updates to the professional knowledge base**
 - Recognition that child development theories and research have reflected, “normative perspectives of White, middle-class children without disabilities educated in predominantly English-language schools” (NAEYC, 2019, p. 6)
 - Evolving understandings and expectations for adults’ roles in helping to manage children’s challenging behaviors. In addition to seeking to understand children’s behavior and adjusting routines and environment, educators also recognize the need to, “reflect on their own behaviors and expectations and the ways in which these may affect children’s behavior” (NAEYC, 2020a, p. 16)



Why the Push for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development?

- **Promotes more responsive teaching practices and reduces suspension and expulsion**
 - Professional development focused on young children's social and emotional development increases teaching practices associated with children's prosocial behavior and implementation of individualized supports and strategies, and reduces the use of discipline policies such as suspension and expulsion



Why the Push for Trainings on Social and Emotional Development?

- **What teachers do matters**
 - Children's learning and classroom quality is shaped by *teachers' practices, well-being, and knowledge and attitudes about child development*
- **Ongoing professional development and support effects what teachers know and do and how they feel about themselves and their work**
 - Professional development can positively influence ECE teachers' practices, well-being, and knowledge
 - Certain professional supports (e.g., curriculum supports and mentoring/coaching) can reduce ECE teachers' stress, resulting in less burnout, turnover, and higher job satisfaction



Are We Practicing What We Teach?

Education settings for all ages are encouraging growth in students' social-emotional and academic competencies (Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, 2012) to encourage resilience and the development of protective factors (e.g., relationship and social skills, self- and social awareness, responsible decision making).

How are **we** supporting early childhood professionals' social-emotional competencies in our preparation programs and ongoing professional development?



How are we supporting early childhood professionals' social-emotional competencies in our preparation programs and ongoing professional development?

Reflect.



Thinking about your own early childhood work and practices – what comes to mind for you when you consider this question?



The Field's Commitment to Teacher Well-Being

“As reflective practitioners, **early childhood educators know that managing their own resilience, self-efficacy, mental health, and wellness is critical to the effectiveness of their work, particularly when addressing challenging behaviors.** They take responsibility for their own well-being and have strategies to manage the physical, emotional, and mental stress inherent in their profession in order to be healthy and to engage effectively and empathetically with children and families” (NAEYC, 2020b, p. 25)



Teachers' Well-Being and Professional Development

- People's emotions influence their learning. This can be positive (e.g., motivating) or negative and prevent the learning process (Simmons, 2019).
- Learning is a vulnerable process that can be challenging as it involves taking risks. Professional development opportunities can be especially anxiety-provoking for some participants.
- *RULER* facilitates teaching and learning about Emotional Intelligence: *recognizing* emotions in self and others; *understanding* the causes and consequences of emotions; *labeling* emotions accurately; *expressing* emotions for the given context and company; *regulating* emotions effectively (Rivers et al., 2012).
 - Remember, emotional norms and regulations vary by culture
- Developing emotional intelligence improves job performance, mediates stress escalation, and is associated with teaching practices that encourage social and emotional development.



Teachers' Well-Being and Professional Development

Teachers' own well-being and social and emotional skills influence how they understand and interpret content in trainings focused on social and emotional development (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). We need to consider how these skills differ in online spaces, where learners might feel alienated (Smith et al., 2001).

- If a teacher is experiencing stress in the classroom, they are less likely to take on new practices or interventions (Hamre et al., 2013)
- Participants in professional development often experience a temporary decline in self-efficacy, as they realize they don't know as much as they thought they did about a topic. This is normal! They can recognize their opportunities for growth and work to improve.

Well-being = how people think and feel about their life, including abilities and emotions. There are different aspects to well-being (e.g., self-efficacy, burnout and stress)



Teachers' Well-Being and Professional Development

For example, Roberts et al. (2020):

- During a 14 week online professional development course, preschool teachers benefitted from extra including:
 - access to up to five one-on-one telephone conferences with their instructor (got feedback, support) OR
 - reflective writing prompts that encouraged teachers to reflect on their practices and interactions with a specific child they found challenging, providing an outlet (no feedback)
- Teachers that did the online course without supports reported being significantly more emotionally exhausted and burnt out, than those that received supports, as well as less confident because they fixated on challenges. Their online discussion posts didn't receive praise as often as the other two groups.
- In contrast, coaching and reflective writing provided emotional outlets. These teachers expressed more positive emotions, and neither group experienced dips in self-efficacy or emotional exhaustion.





Practices for Social and Emotional Learning with Adults

- You share first – be vulnerable and start with a success story
- Build relationships – increases sense of belonging and identity
- Attentive listening – fosters learning, connection/relationship, empathy, and vulnerability
- Meaningful opportunities for feedback and talking – provides emotional outlet, social opportunities to express emotions and receive praise or validation for abilities
- Opportunities for personal reflection through expressive writing – has psychological health benefits in addition to opportunity to express emotions, which itself might increase well-being
- Mindfulness training or practices – fosters self-care, reduces stress and burnout, can help minimize implicit bias, help reduce reactivity and increase responsiveness (and other health benefits)



Practices for Social and Emotional Learning with Adults

- Design tasks to empower – frame assignments or tasks in ways that help teachers feel empowered and successful, provide opportunities for focus to be teacher-driven
- Highlight growth potential, positively focused feedback – focusing on positive changes and goals helps overcome dips in self-efficacy and challenges
- Strength-based thinking– intentionally cultivate this mindset so they know what to build on, can feel encouraged
- Acknowledge emotions are part of this work – teaching is a stressful and emotional job, learning is emotional work



Reflecting on the Strategies Used This Session

- Introductions: Name, role(s), feeling/emotion (acknowledging emotions are part of this work)
- [Success Story: I placed myself in this work]
- Mindfulness: Body scan, identified strengths, what sustains us, your goals and hopes for growth (participant-driven)
- [Meaningful opportunities to share: Chat]
- Reflective Writing: Identified connection to the question at the heart of this presentation



Translating Our Learning Into Action

- Topic and Training Selection
 - Select or design trainings focused on children's social and emotional development
 - Expect each training will have at least one learning objective related to children's social and emotional development (even if topic is in another domain)
- Embed aspects of children's social and emotional development into all trainings

Example:

- A training focused on teaching early mathematics could incorporate social and emotional skills and development by including learning objectives and content related to young children's self-efficacy, perseverance, creative thinking, self-regulation,



Translating Our Learning Into Action

- When Hiring Instructors, Ask:
 - How will they include children's social and emotional development in their training(s)?
 - How will they support the well-being, social emotional learning, and self-care of teachers in their training(s)?
- Adopt and Model Practices for Social and Emotional Learning with Adults
 - Consider the topic, audience, and modality when determining which practices are best



Conclusions

- If we want to support all children, our early childhood professionals need to have access to professional learning opportunities focused and inclusive of children's social and emotional development.
- The research suggests that professional development can positively influence teachers' practices, well-being, and knowledge and attitudes about child development, all of which are necessary for high quality early childhood experiences and environments.
- Successful professional development attends to teachers' well-being through practices associated with adults' social and emotional learning.
- Social and emotional skills and development are at the core of children and students' well-being and academic success, why would teachers be any different? Let's practice what we teach.



Thank You!

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