Second Step®
SEL for Adults

REVIEW OF RESEARCH

Second Step® SEL for Adults

Introduction to the Research

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is most effective when it's embedded in the daily fabric of our classrooms and schools (Greenberg et al., 2003; Oberle et al., 2016). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has emphasized the importance of intentionally cultivating the social-emotional competence of adults in schools. Second Step SEL for Adults supports educator well-being and positive school culture by providing educators with the skills, knowledge, and resources they need to thrive in the workplace.

Attention to educators' social-emotional competencies is particularly needed because educators face a number of professional demands and challenges. Teaching consistently ranks among the highest-stress professions, second only to nursing (Gallup, 2017), with 41 percent of educators leaving the profession within the first five years (Ingersoll et al., 2018). Teacher stress imposes a significant burden on the educational system, where teacher turnover costs $7.3 billion annually (Barnes et al., 2007). Stress and burnout can significantly impair the instructional effectiveness and classroom climate of educators who stay in the profession, which in turn can affect the social-emotional and academic growth of their students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Socially and emotionally resilient teachers are more likely to actively monitor the classroom, engage students in learning, demonstrate patience, listen attentively, and maintain their composure during challenging student encounters (Beltman et al., 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Kunter et al., 2013). Conversely, teachers suffering from stress and disengagement talk with students less, are less likely to model prosocial behaviors (behaviors intended to help others) and coping strategies, and have classrooms that rate lower on emotional climate, organization, and instructional quality (Irvin, 2012; Jennings, 2015). Students in these classrooms exhibit higher rates of disruptive behaviors and

concentration problems and lower academic achievement (Herman et al., 2018; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). In a study of 730 classrooms, researchers found teacher psychological variables were stronger predictors of classroom quality than were teacher educational attainment and experience (La Paro et al., 2009).

Program Overview

Second Step SEL for Adults applies research-based best practices for professional development in a way that's compatible with how teachers learn in the real world. Adults have unique learning needs. They learn best when they're self-directed, when they understand the relevance and personal significance of what they're learning, when new learning builds upon preexisting knowledge, and when theoretical knowledge is grounded in actual events (Bransford et al., 2000; Knowles et al., 1998). Teachers in particular benefit most from professional learning when it's job-embedded (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011), that is, when it's rooted in their day-to-day teaching practice and integrated into their workday, and engages them in finding solutions for authentic problems of practice (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). Teachers engage in a variety of daily informal learning practices on an ongoing basis, including reflecting on their own practice, sharing ideas with coworkers, reading professional literature, and conducting observations (Kyndt et al., 2016). Moreover, educators prefer these modes of learning over full-day workshops and consultation from experts (Thacker, 2017). Unfortunately, typical professional learning is the single-dose, expert-led model of seminars, webinars, and other one-time learning experiences.

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The instructional model of Second Step® SEL for Adults leverages best practices in adult learning and is designed to be ongoing and collective. Educators first engage in independent learning that's spaced out to provide opportunities for practice and reflection, improve long-term retention, and allow for consolidation of knowledge (Becker & Jensen-Doss, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Kennedy, 2016). Videos of real-life educators implementing the routines are used to demonstrate best practices. Small-group discussions with colleagues on a regular basis afford educators the opportunity to share and consolidate their learning, celebrate successes and troubleshoot challenges, and discuss the implication of their learning for the overall school community.

Leader Track

Building-level leadership is a critical determinant of the implementation success of school-based programs (Brackett et al., 2012; McIntosh et al., 2016). In one evaluation of an SEL program (Banerjee, 2010), differences in follow-on implementation monitoring and implementation climate accounted for 49.8 percent of school-level variance in academic attainment. Programs that school leaders systematically monitor can obtain effect sizes that are two to three times as large as unmonitored implementations (DuBois et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2004). For programs that aim to improve teacher well-being, implementation leadership plays a particularly important role as leadership can create structures, expectations, and norms that support teacher well-being. Support from building leadership is correlated with teacher satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment, as well as teaching effectiveness (Price, 2012; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). School leadership can make a positive impact by creating a supportive school climate, building structures for teacher learning and collaboration, providing clear roles and expectations, and soliciting teachers' input on decisions that affect their jobs (Bryk et al., 2010; Hoy et al., 2002-2003).

Second Step SEL for Adults provides embedded guidance for school leadership to successfully implement the program. The goal of its leader track is to help administrators monitor implementation, create a supportive climate for staff, and scale individual and small-group learning schoolwide. Guided implementation planning helps school teams articulate how Second Step SEL for Adults supports the well-being and achievement of the entire school community and how it aligns with other initiatives. Further, the planning helps leaders assess and mitigate staff concerns, and design and communicate an implementation plan that protects staff time for independent and small-group learning (Lyon et al., 2018; Youngs & King, 2002).

As teachers engage in learning throughout the year, school leadership engages in a parallel set of individual and small-group learning activities designed to achieve three goals: understand program concepts so leadership can model them, monitor and support staff progress, and create schoolwide routines and structures to support staff well-being. School leadership is provided with guidance for facilitating whole-staff discussions of the program between modules (approximately 30 minutes per semester). These discussions set expectations and provide the rationale for the upcoming module, as well as provide time to consolidate learning and solicit staff input about the previous module.

Program Content

Relationships

Teachers' relationships with colleagues promote a supportive working environment and have a positive effect on teacher well-being and instructional quality. Teachers who actively collaborate with colleagues are more motivated; experience a lighter workload, less isolation, and more emotional resilience; and also display more self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and improved retention (Vangrieken et al., 2015). This in turn leads to improved student learning and performance (Egodawatte et al., 2011; Goddard et al., 2007).

Decades of research indicate that positive teacher-student relationships support positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes, with moderate to large effect sizes on both achievement and behavior (Hattie, 2015; Marzano & Marzano, 2003). Positive relationships can facilitate high-quality instruction and mitigate factors leading to poor school performance (Crosnoe et al., 2010; Pianta et al., 2008). Warm and supportive teachers provide students with the security to explore new ideas, take risks, and persist with challenging tasks (Murray & Greenberg,

2000; Watson & Ecken, 2003). Evidence also shows that strong teacher-student relationships promote teachers' well-being and sense of professional efficacy (O'Conner, 2008). Connecting with students is often named as the number one reason why teachers stay in the profession, and it's ranked as more important to their job satisfaction than job security, autonomy, or recognition (Hargreaves, 1998; O'Connor, 2008).

Second Step˚ SEL for Adults aims to strengthen teachers' relationships with their colleagues and their students. Module 1: Building Trust helps educators understand why trust matters for teachers' job satisfaction and student learning outcomes, recognize the signs of low- and high-trust schools, reflect on their own relationships with colleagues and students, and integrate routines to build trust with colleagues and students into the fabric of the school day. The routines emphasized in Second Step SEL for Adults, such as Warm Welcome, morning meetings, and Emotional Check-Ins, are research-based and feasible (Cook et al., 2018; Elias & Weissberg, 2000). Teachers are encouraged to try the routines and reflect on their effects.

Emotions and Stress

Teaching is an inherently emotional endeavor and emotion regulation is integral to teaching (Sutton et al., 2009). Teachers need to regulate their own emotions to encourage a desired emotional state in others, safeguard the emotional well-being of their students, and model successful emotional control (Hargreaves, 2000).

Teachers' emotion regulation is related to their instructional effectiveness because it can increase their use of effective instructional strategies and enhance student engagement (Sutton, 2005). For instance, teachers who experience more positive emotions are more likely to use student-focused teaching approaches (Trigwell, 2012), provide adequate examples, give clearer and more comprehensible explanations, make connections between the subject matter and the real world, and teach with greater enthusiasm (Sutton, 2005). Finally, teachers' emotions are related to teacher well-being, health, job satisfaction, and burnout (Taxer & Gross, 2018).

Second Step SEL for Adults Module 2: Managing Stress supports educators' stress management by supporting

educators' self-care (such as sleep, nutrition, and physical activity) and helping educators identify and reframe unhelpful thoughts, pay attention to positives, practice mindfulness, and act in alignment with their values and intentions (Rasmussen et al., 2009; Siegel, 2007; Wahl et al., 2017).

Equity and Belonging

Although the vast majority of teachers aspire to be equitable, only a small percentage of them feel they have the knowledge, skills, and resources to make this aspiration a reality (The Edweek Research Center, 2020). Educators who strive for equity face many challenges. Inequities exist along racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other demographic lines, and span nearly every measured outcome, including course grades, test scores, sense of belonging in school, access to educational opportunities, and school funding (Howard, 2010). Second Step SEL for Adults Module 3: Equity & Belonging aims to help educators begin their journey toward creating equitable learning environments.

Teachers who actively tackle equity issues show more proactive classroom-management practices and improved student classroom cooperation, and give fewer office discipline referrals, particularly for students of color (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2018). Students, particularly students from historically marginalized groups, experience many benefits in equitable classrooms: they're more likely to feel a sense of belonging in the school community, evidence improved academic motivation, and earn higher GPAs (Gaias et al., in press). Teachers who effectively tackle equity issues actively reflect on their own identity and sociocultural background and recognize how their cultural lens may affect their classroom practices and reactions to student behavior (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Cook et al., 2018; Gaias et al., in press). These teachers use perspective-taking, empathy, and emotion regulation to navigate cultural differences with students and act in accordance with their equity values (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Gaias et al., in press; Okonofua et al., 2016). They take steps to identify students' cultural assets and leverage those in their classroom practices. They hold high expectations for all students and are committed to providing students with the support they need to meet those expectations (Gay, 2014).

Second Step® SEL for Adults Module 3: Equity & Belonging guides educators through a process of reflection to explore the role of social identity and belonging in their lives and in the lives of their students. Then educators practice skills that will help them create the conditions for an identity-safe school for themselves, their colleagues, and their students. Finally, educators implement practices in their classroom designed to create an inclusive and safe environment for every student.

Resilience and Efficacy

Research consistently shows self-efficacy and resilience to be protective factors in both adults and children (Schwarzer & Warner, 2013). Self-efficacy is the belief in one's own ability to execute required courses of action (Bandura, 2013), and resilience is an individual's capacity to recover from adversity (Luthans, 2002). Protective factors are the internal and external resources individuals draw upon when faced with adversity. These include self-efficacy, mindfulness skills, emotional intelligence, social relationships, and help-seeking behaviors (Fenwick-Smith et al., 2018). Teachers with strong self-efficacy report lower job-related stress and higher levels of job satisfaction and are less likely to burn out (Betoret, 2006; Klassen et al., 2009).

Collective teacher efficacy, or the belief that the efforts of faculty as a whole will have positive effects on students, also promotes positive teacher and student outcomes (Goddard et al., 2000). Collective teacher efficacy is associated with commitment to school goals and sharing of ideas with colleagues (Angelle & Teague, 2014). Further, collective teacher efficacy buffers against stress and increases job satisfaction (Klassen et al., 2011). A recent meta-analysis identified collective teacher efficacy as the number one influence on student achievement (Hattie, 2015). Research shows that individual efficacy, collective efficacy, and group consensus on a goal or vision are all highly correlated (Kurz & Knight, 2003), and that teachers' efficacy increases when they adopt a collaborative mindset and practice. This in turn influences their individual and collective resilience as staff, as well as their students' resilience (Kunnari et al., 2018).

Second Step SEL for Adults Module 4: Resilience & Efficacy supports teachers' individual and collective efficacy in service of strengthening their resilience. Educators learn the science behind efficacy development, create stretch goals, and examine thoughts about their successes and shortfalls (Bandura, 1997). Educators also learn the conditions that create collective efficacy and commit to acting as a team (Donohoo, 2016). Finally, they put their learning to work in support of student efficacy by reflecting on and openly sharing their practice with others (Fisher et al., 2020).

Conclusion

Second Step SEL for Adults is grounded in the research discussed in this review and designed to support educators in building a schoolwide SEL community. Current and future modules of the program provide support for and strengthen educators' relationships, stress-management practices, efficacy, resilience, and equity work.

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