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“It’s a pleasure to work for you.” That’s the way I ended every correspondence I sent out to my staff as a principal. In doing so, I discovered the most valuable thing I ever accomplished as a leader was in being seen as one member of the team. Yes, an important member with a certain level of authority, but a member nonetheless. When things needed to be done, I didn’t work the red tape, call my supervisor for approval, or follow a protocol flow sheet, . . . I just led. A team of teachers needed important supplies that couldn’t be ordered through our district? I went down the street to Office Depot. A kid needed to get home? I walked him. A family was struggling to make ends meet? I picked up dinner and dropped it off at their house. I have discovered that solutions are often found in the most obvious places while looking through the lens of a Servant Leader. Servant Leaders ask perhaps the most valuable question that any leader can ask, which is, “How would I want something done if I were in that person’s shoes?”

From our first days as new leaders, we are sometimes advised to lead according to classic cliché’s such as “Show them who’s the boss!” Truth be told, who can blame our colleagues for doing so. After all, the bulk of examples we see reflect that very thing. In sports, the manager or coach makes decisions about his or her team with little or no debate. In the business world, the necessity to grow the bottom-line often pushes aside the benefits of creating a collaborative culture. And the worst example of them all is in the political arena. Individuals who required our votes to get into office on election night, almost immediately forget their roots. But that kind of leadership isn’t for us. As an educational leader for nearly 25 years, I have come across five keys to being a servant leader.

1. Servant Leaders Seek Opportunities to Serve

While there are all kinds of personalities among our school leaders, most tend to fall into one of three categories. First, there are the leaders who follow a stringent daily routine as they conduct meetings, answer emails and phone calls, and schedule blocks of times to meet with students, parents, and staff. I call this group the Sovereign Leaders because they seem to get things done but are almost always strict about their schedules. In doing so, they can come across as lacking customer service and personality in general. Sovereign leaders often send a message that their service is a commodity that is in short supply and is only granted based on their schedule.

Second are the leaders who lack any kind of routine and are always in reactive mode. If you’re seeking a meeting with them, your best chance is to have your jogging shoes on, because it’s likely to be a “walk and talk”
session. I call these leaders Starbucks Leaders because they are the ones who always appear to be in search of their next dose of caffeine. Granted, I’ve met many Starbucks leaders who aren’t even coffee drinkers; they’re simply high-energy individuals with short attention spans. Starbucks leaders aren’t necessarily bad leaders; they simply need to slow down just a tad in order to make people feel supported. Because of this perception of a lack of support, they tend to miss out on building deeper working relationships with those who are willing and able to take on much of the work that keeps a Starbucks leader on the move in the first place.

Finally, there are leaders who have a strong base for multitasking and a certain routine, but are organized to an extent that still allows them to capitalize on opportunities to serve. These are Servant Leaders. A servant leader is highly motivated by results that, no doubt include, but go well beyond state testing and site-based assessments. They care about results related to how they are perceived by parents, students, and staff members. They also care about results related to how long it takes to fulfill a commitment, arrange successful outcomes for a new project, or fix problems as they arise throughout the day. Because of their penchant for problem solving, servant leaders must learn to be attentive, as their desire to fix can often trump their need to listen.

While sovereign leaders rarely find ways to serve and Starbucks leaders have a dash of service within their style, servant leaders base their entire style on the belief that they are one piece of the puzzle. Servant leaders have a strong drive to be a part of efforts that are exceptional. They are acutely aware that the best way to influence results on campus is to find ways to serve those who are working directly with students.

2. Servant Leaders Model the Behaviors and Attitudes They Want to See In Their Colleagues

Nobody likes a hypocrite, especially students. Our behavior as adults not only rubs off on one another, but it also models how today’s children should interact with each other as tomorrow’s adults. Being a servant leader isn’t just about what we do; it’s about how we do it. Perfect opportunities to model servant leadership might be:

- Choosing to work the worst job at the school fundraiser and doing so with a smile on your face
- Being the first to stack chairs after an assembly or school performance
- Surprising your office staff or colleagues with coffee after a tough week
- Giving up your principal parking space and turning it into a visitors spot
- Participating in training and professional development alongside your staff, even when it may not apply to you
- Greeting parents as they drop their students off at school.
- Apologizing and taking responsibility for mistakes
- Taking the time to interact with students during lunchtime as you serve in the cafeteria

One of the great guiding principles of life is to do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Servant leaders model behavior and attitudes that they want to see in their colleagues and in doing so they make the Golden Rule a reality.

3. Servant Leaders Always Go First

During the great recession of 2008, the United States government allotted $700 billion to bail out failing banks.
And while you and I were offering our hard-earned tax dollars to save these multi-national companies, executives at the top of those very same organizations were awarding themselves nearly $20 billion in bonuses. A more contrary behavior to servant leadership I cannot imagine. But corporate fat cats aren’t the only ones who offer examples of selfish leadership. Our schools also have plenty to choose from.

We often have administrators and teacher leaders who show up late and leave early on a regular basis. From something as simple as returning an email to something as important as leading important initiatives at your school, these types of leaders always tend to spend their time being “too busy” while the rest of us are actively running the school. After serving as a school administrator for eight years, I know of the abundance of expectations that school leaders need to fulfill. I know there are times when meetings take place off site or when events require us to leave the school for days at a time. I’m not talking about those situations. I’m talking about habitual decisions that may lead to a perception of elitism from the staff toward the leader.

Servant leaders always go first in a totally different way. They must be the ones who volunteer their time first, do the grunt work first, challenge the status quo first, display candor and hold people accountable first, take down the roadblocks first… you get the picture. John Maxwell said, “A leader without followers is just a guy taking a walk.” You don’t get followers by assigning people to do the work that you don’t want to do. You get followers by modeling servant leadership and working alongside them.

4. Servant Leaders Work to Accumulate Small Wins

Patience is not my strong point. In fact, it’s one of the worst attributes of my personality. I have a low tolerance for projects that don’t get done on time and behavior that may be perceived as procrastination and laziness. Servant leadership comes with an understanding that the end result may not be done today or even tomorrow, but growth toward that result should take place every day.

Accompanied by this attitude is a desire to celebrate small wins along the way. As part of my efforts with schools across the country, I often come across principals who hire me to work on improving collaboration among their teams. Many times, the need to facilitate change is absolutely dire. Forget about teams working together when they don’t even show up at the same time or same place. When they do show up, they all too often have zero systems in place for the way they manage their time or outcomes during meetings. One of the first things I do is to help them create an exceptional system for collaboration that can be put into place immediately. As part of that system, there are often four to six commitments that teams make to improve their work together. Once those commitments are made, it is my job to teach the principal a style of servant leadership that both models each individual commitment and, here’s the key, celebrates the progress made along the way. In short, a dysfunctional team is not going to wake up one morning and immediately start modeling exceptional collaboration. They will, however, make progress along the way that can be built upon. If you as the servant leader celebrate those small wins, you are far more likely to encourage continued effort on the part of your colleagues toward your school’s goals.

5. Servant Leaders Give Credit to Others

As the leader of the No Excuses University Network of Schools, I get way too much credit for the success of our endeavor. All too often, people come up to me after a keynote speech and say things like, “It’s amazing what you have done!” I’m always very honored by their words, but I am quick to share with them that their praise is far from being accurate. There’s no way in the world I could have created a network this big that has affected nearly half a million students without the active participation and support from hundreds, if not thousands, of other educators. I’ve never had my IQ checked, but I promise you it’s within the average range at best. The only thing exceptional about my intellect is that I know it is limited. Knowing this, I try to be wise
enough to hang out with others far smarter than me. Because I am aware of such limitations, it’s key that I pass on the credit to the ones who continue to do the heavy lifting . . . those in the classroom working with students.

Practicing servant leadership doesn’t mean that you abandon the credit for your role in a school’s success. It does however require that the focal point of how you interact with others involves humility and a healthy understanding of what truly makes an organization successful. Remember: The success of your school will never be determined by how others serve you as a leader, but instead by how you serve them.

About the Author... Damen Lopez

In 2004, Damen Lopez founded the No Excuses University Network of Schools to help build a bridge for all students to attend college. Starting in pre-kindergarten, NEU begins promoting a comprehensive college and career readiness model. Fifteen years after Damen first began sharing this message with tens of thousands of educators across the country, there are now nearly 250 schools leading the No Excuses University revolution. To date, this work, which is now influencing the lives of more than 150,000 students in 19 different states, has received national attention and has been featured in numerous television and newspaper stories. Damen has received his alma mater’s highest honor, the Point Loma Nazarene University APL award and is also the youngest educator to be awarded the University of San Diego Remarkable Leader in Education Award. Today, he works with schools, districts, and educational organizations throughout the country. In addition to his new book *No Excuses Leadership: Nine BOLD Choices Exceptional Leaders Make*, Damen is also the author of *No Excuses University: How Six Exceptional Systems Are Revolutionizing Our Schools*. Damen’s enthusiasm for providing leadership so every student, especially those living in poverty, will be both academically successful and college ready is widely respected.

Don’t miss Damen Lopez when he presents “No Excuses University: How Six Exceptional Systems are Revolutionizing Our Schools” on Monday, October 28 at the Texas ASCD 2019 Annual Conference at the Irving Convention Center.
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Execution, or the ability to accomplish goals and plans, is one of the greatest challenges organizations face. Businesses, government agencies, nonprofits, and schools are generally competent at developing strategies, but they often struggle to execute those strategies and produce concrete results.

Our company, FranklinCovey, has studied the topic of execution within all types of organizational settings for more than 15 years. In 2012, we distilled our collective learning into a book titled The 4 Disciplines of Execution.

Our research has taught us that there are two types of strategies. The first type, which we call “stroke of the pen” strategy, is easy to execute because it involves a one-time decision. Consider, for example, a company acquiring a new business or a district selecting a new curriculum. These strategies are accomplished with a “stroke of the pen.”

The second type of strategy, however, involves a change in human behavior. Consider, for example, a company trying to get frontline employees to provide better customer service or a school encouraging teachers to build stronger relationships with students. The execution of these strategies is dependent on workers doing something different than they had before. It is in the execution of these strategies that we find a significant “execution gap.”

The 4 Disciplines of Execution® (4DX®) is a methodology that helps organizations close the execution gap. It is based on timeless, universal principles of human effectiveness, and on deep insights into why organizations fail to achieve their objectives. 4DX has been used in tens of thousands of organizations worldwide, including schools, districts, and state-level education departments. In fact, the Leader in Me community of schools uses them on a daily basis. The four disciplines are described in detail below.
**Discipline 1: Focus on the Wildly Important**

How many goals can an organization accomplish at a time with excellence? In our experience, no more than two or three. Most organizations, however, have dozens of goals they are pursuing concurrently. An average school improvement plan, for example, may contain many goals, with no clear prioritization of which are most important. For example, if you ask members of a typical school’s faculty or staff to identify the one or two most important goals their school is trying to accomplish, chances are you will hear a variety of answers.

To address this lack of focus, we advise principals to narrow their focus to between two and three “Wildly Important Goals” (WIGs) each year. While each person within the school may be pursuing individual goals as well, elevating a few schoolwide goals helps everyone align their actions toward the highest priorities.

WIGs should be specific and measurable. We recommend writing them in the format “From X to Y by When,” where X represents where you are today and Y represents the target you hope to achieve within a specific time frame.

**DISCIPLINE 1 IN ACTION**

A school wants more students to read at or above grade level. After considering its curriculum and an available formative assessment tool, the school chooses to focus on reading levels and begins to align grade-level teams, classroom teachers, and students toward the goal.

*School WIG:* Increase percentage of students reading at or above grade level from 60 percent to 75 percent by December 2018.

*Grade-Level WIG:* Grade 3 will increase the percentage of students reading at or above grade level from 40 percent to 75 percent by December 2018.

*Class WIG:* Mrs. Smith’s third-grade class will help 100 percent of students achieve their academic WIG and thereby increase the percentage of students reading at or above grade level from 50 percent to 75 percent.

*Student:* I will improve from reading level D to reading level F by December 15th.

**Discipline 2: Act on the Lead Measures**

Once schools have narrowed their focus to just two or three WIGs, the next step is to understand which key behaviors will help them accomplish those goals. These behaviors, which we call “lead measures,” lead to the accomplishment of the WIG, or the “lag measure.” If Discipline 1 is about focus, then Discipline 2 is about leverage.

The following example illustrates the difference between lead and lag measures. Imagine a man with a WIG to “drop from 180 pounds to 170 pounds by August 1.” One hundred seventy pounds is the lag measure—the ultimate target. To achieve that target, however, he must identify strategies that, if implemented consistently, would lead to his accomplishing...
the lag measure. These are his lead measures. In this example, diet and exercise would be prime candidates for lead measures.

Because it’s not always clear how to accomplish a lag measure, identifying lead measures can take time, experimentation, and insight. We recommend concentrating on only two or three lead measures at a time for each WIG.

**DISCIPLINE 2 IN ACTION**

The classroom teacher brainstorms with colleagues to identify lead measures for the reading level WIG, such as:

- Increase differentiated practices during reading lessons.
- Create intervention and enrichment groups that meet twice a week.
- Schedule one extra guided reading session per week with at-risk readers.

The student who had the WIG to “improve from reading level D to reading level F by December 15” will work with a teacher to identify lead measures such as:

- Read every night for at least 20 minutes.
- Share what I read with my parents or a reading buddy.

**Discipline 3: Keep a Compelling Scoreboard**

Have you ever been playing a sport casually when someone suggests keeping score? Immediately, the exertion and determination levels increase for all involved. People naturally want to perform well and win, and a scoreboard keeps track of this performance. The scoreboard at a high school basketball game, for example, can tell you whether your team is winning or losing, what the gap is, and how much time is left.

The same principles apply to goal achievement in schools. Using a scoreboard to track progress toward the school’s WIGs and lead measures allows teachers and students to visualize their progress and motivates everyone to perform at their best. Most importantly, it viscerally shows students that work and effort lead to accomplishment.

**DISCIPLINE 3 IN ACTION**

School Scoreboard: The school may put a scoreboard in a public area, using bar graphs to demonstrate how the entire school is improving each quarter in its reading level WIG.

Grade level: Grade-level teams generally review scoreboards in private, in an area that’s inaccessible to everyone but grade-level teachers and administrators. Such privacy allows them to track the growth of small groups and individual students on scoreboards that can be color-coded by student, grade, intervention strategies, etc. These scoreboards allow the teams to see patterns, collaborate to find solutions, and make every child visible.
Classroom Teachers: A classroom teacher may have two types of scoreboards:

1. Private scoreboards showing the WIGs and lead measures for their class. These allow them to track the progress of the group as whole and each child individually.
2. A classroom scoreboard designed to motivate students to work together and individually to accomplish their WIGs.

Student: The student uses a private notebook to track his or her efforts on the lead measures and progress toward the WIGs.

**Discipline 4: Create a Cadence of Accountability**

The final discipline promotes continual progress by helping teams develop a “cadence of accountability” that is regular and consistent. For example, the first 15 minutes of staff or grade-level meetings could be devoted to reviewing the progress toward WIGs and lead measures, celebrating growth, adjusting as necessary, and making future commitments. Imagine identifying WIGs and lead measures, developing scoreboards to track progress, and then never talking about it again. A cadence of accountability ensures people feel accountable for their efforts and results.

**DISCIPLINE 4 IN ACTION**

Classrooms and teachers: Hold weekly or biweekly meetings to review the scoreboards and discuss progress toward WIGs and lead measures.

Students: Some schools have established “accountability buddies” so that students can check up on each other and motivate each other to accomplish their goals. Schools can also involve parents by having students share their WIGs and scoreboards at parent-teacher conferences or on a more regular basis.

Achieving strategic goals that require changes in human behavior is never an easy task, but following some simple guidelines can help you succeed.

1. Focus on a few critical goals.
2. Identify and carry out high-leverage activities to achieve those goals.
3. Use scoreboards to increase engagement and monitor progress.
4. Hold people accountable through regular check-ins.

As you apply the timeless principles embodied in The 4 Disciplines of Execution, you will discover greater capacity to both accomplish your school’s objectives and help your students learn goal-achievement skills they can use throughout their lives to accomplish their own great purposes.
About the Authors...

Sean Covey, MBA, president of FranklinCovey, Education Division leader, international leader, co-author of the book *The 4 Disciplines of Execution*, and author of *The Leader in Me: How Schools Around the World Are Inspiring Greatness, One Child at a Time*, will be the keynote speaker at the Texas ASCD 2019 Annual Conference.

Lynne Fox, MS.Ad, MS.Ed, is FranklinCovey director for international education. She is a 25-year educator with experience as a teacher, school leader, curriculum and assessment developer, district administrator, and instructional and leadership trainer and coach both in the United States and internationally.
The EQ Intervention:  
Shaping a Self-Aware Generation  
Through Social and Emotional Learning  

by Adam L. Sáenz, Ph.D., L.S.S.P.

How We Got Here

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) could save your life. Literally. Consider the case of Jason Seaman.

Mr. Seaman, a 29-year-old science teacher at Indiana’s West Noblesville Middle School and former defensive lineman for Southern Illinois University, entered his classroom on May 25, 2018, starting his day off like any other. His students would take what would be their final science test of the school year.

I can’t say for sure, but I’m willing to bet that Mr. Seaman had engaged his students or colleagues in discussion about the shooting in Santa Fe, Texas that left 13 dead and 10 injured just a week before. I know that 130 miles to the northeast of Santa Fe, we in Bryan/College Station, Texas were still processing the event and at various stages of grieving.
As Mr. Seaman’s students took their test that morning, one student asked to be excused from class. He probably just requested a restroom break, but the details aren’t clear. What we do know is that moments later, that student returned to the classroom armed with .22 and .45 caliber handguns and immediately opened fire.

“Mr. Seaman started running at him,” a student witness reported, “He tackled him to the ground. We were all hiding in the back of the classroom behind some desks, and then Mr. Seaman was yelling to call 911, to get out of the building as fast as we could, so we ran out.”

Mr. Seaman’s actions were immediate and decisive, but the damage was done. Before Mr. Seaman could even reach the shooter, seven rounds struck a female student in the face, neck, hands and chest. As he rushed the student, Mr. Seaman was shot three times, once in the abdomen, once in the hip, and once in the forearm. He was able to disarm and detain the student until the school resource officer arrived to assist only moments after the initial shots were fired. Mr. Seaman was taken by ambulance to the Indiana University Hospital, where he made a full recovery. The wounded female student was also hospitalized in critical condition, yet she was expected to recover after having sustained collapsed lungs, a broken jaw, and significant nerve damage.

Let’s study the details of Mr. Seaman’s case in the context of SEL. Whether he was aware of the process or not, he demonstrated mastery of the five elements of SEL in a matter of seconds. First, he must have known the student was intensely angry, given the weapons in the student’s hands (social awareness/empathy). Since the urgency of the moment didn’t afford him the luxury of encouraging the student to simply talk through the feelings of intense anger (social skills), he knew he needed to intervene immediately and physically (responsible decision-making). He likely felt terror that a student was actively shooting (self-awareness), but he was able to control that emotion (self-regulation), as evidenced by his heroic actions.
What we learn from Mr. Seaman is that when we don’t have the luxury of time to consciously engage our SEL skills, our core-level beliefs—our deepest values, fears, biases and prejudices—drive our behavior automatically. Fortunately for the students in Mr. Seaman’s classroom that day, his core-level belief was that his students mattered above all, and it was that foundational belief that resulted in his automatic action to risk his life to save his students’ lives. There you have it, without hyperbole: the case of Mr. Seaman illustrates that the SEL skillset can save your life.

It is important for us to remember, though, that the SEL skillset is not centrally about preparing ourselves to deal with active school shooters. That kind of preparation, sadly, is more urgent now than it has ever been, but SEL has so much more to offer us. SEL is essential to our capacity to live adaptively in our daily lives—days that don’t involve hostage situations or active shooters. The classroom teacher dealing with postpartum depression as she returns to work from maternity leave? Exercise in SEL. The angry parent who uses social media to air his misinformed conclusions of you? Exercise in SEL. Your passive-aggressive neighbor who still leaves his garbage cans on your driveway even after you’ve politely asked twice that he not do so? Exercise in SEL. Your spouse, who twenty-three years later still doesn’t know the correct direction to mount the toilet paper roll? Exercise in SEL.

The list could go on, even down to each moment-to-moment interaction we have with any other human being who, in whatever way and for whatever reason, evokes within us a potentially conflict-producing emotion. In every case, the successful return to mental well-being is dependent on our ability to know and regulate ourselves, and to understand and interact with others. SEL is the oil in the gears of any relationship machine.

The Gap Is Growing

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration’s (2014) study revealed that 20 percent of adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 will experience a severe mental health issue. While that statistic is staggering, note that the study specifically identifies adolescents
with severe mental health issues; it is difficult to determine how many more will experience just mild adjustment disorders. The study offers further findings: in 2014, less than half of the adolescents who experienced depression received treatment for it, and suicide was the second leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 34. The national trend is that our students are living in a culture characterized by what social scientists have identified as increased volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity—terms originally used by the United States Army to describe the multi-lateral world that resulted from the end of the cold war (Allen, et. al., 2016).

These adolescents, Espeleage, Page and Polinin (2016) note, are entering classrooms led by teachers who report feeling untrained to identify or intervene with even mild mental health issues. Adding to the sense of urgency is the reality that even when delivered in the context of positive behavior support, the traditional stick-and-carrot behavioral interventions commonly used in schools to shape student behavior (e.g., office referrals and suspensions) have proven ineffective as interventions for students with significant emotional issues.

The growing gap between students’ high emotional needs and teachers’ limited training to meet those needs drives the challenges administrators face each day and at the end of each year. Teachers grow discouraged about their ineffectiveness meeting students’ emotional needs. Chronic teacher discouragement leads to burnout. Burnout leads to staff turnover. Staff turnover grows a culture of relational instability (Caruso, 2013; Bayar, 2016).

The Promising Practice of Social and Emotional Learning

Research is clear: high emotional intelligence—the ability to accurately understand and adaptively manage the thoughts and feelings of self, other, and the group—drives transformational leadership in schools (Flippo, 2016; Zins, et. al., 2004). Campus and classroom-level educational leaders who demonstrate high emotionally-intelligent leadership skills benefit on multiple fronts: they serve in their capacities
with greater success, and they are more sustainable. Perhaps most importantly, though, emotionally-in-
telligent school leaders establish the relational culture necessary for effective learning—for both teachers
and students (Moore, 2009). Students demonstrate academic and behavioral gains in schools in which
SEL is consistently modeled by classroom-level leaders (i.e., instructional staff); classroom-level leaders
consistently model social-emotional learning on campuses in which campus-level leadership demon-
strates a commitment to emotional intelligence by modeling social-emotional learning (Domitrovitch,
et. al. 2017). Where stick and carrots have failed, SEL offers hope.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is a national clearing-
house that supports educators and policy leaders, enhancing the experiences and outcomes for PreK-12
students. Over the course of the past 25 years, CASEL has monitored effective SEL interventions, not-
ing that the best outcomes are realized from SEL interventions that address the following five key ele-
ments: 1) self-awareness; 2) self-management, 3) social awareness, 4) relationships skills, and 5) respon-
sible decision making.

Figure 1: The five essential elements of social and emotional learning, from the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL).
Our Findings: Theory and Practice

As mental health providers, our clinical team sought to develop a therapeutic approach to serve students in schools well before a referral for outpatient treatment was initiated. In light of the promising research on SEL, could we develop an infused SEL curriculum that would empower educators to meet student needs? What if we could teach students to recognize and manage their emotions in age-appropriate ways? What if we could teach students empathy and effective conflict resolution? And what if we had teachers and administrators on campuses that purposely modeled those skills? Surely that would represent an inside-out approach to school safety. After an in-depth review of relevant research, our clinical and research team developed The Heart-Smart Classroom, an infused SEL curriculum that was based on the research that served as the foundation for The EQ Intervention and was designed to empower educators to know and model emotional intelligence.

Fortunately, emotional intelligence is not a static personality trait (like IQ), but a fluid, skill-based construct that can be grown via mindful practice (Goleman, et. al., 2004; Corrie, 2009; Hurley, 2012; Hughes & Terrel, 2013). Since what we can grow, we can measure, our team also developed a psychometric tool that is used as the backbone of the Heart-Smart Classroom curriculum. The Educator Assessment of Social and Emotional Learning (EASEL), is an online assessment tool that measures personality style, capacity for emotional intelligence, and vulnerability to stress. Educators begin The Heart-Smart Classroom SEL training by completing the assessment to learn their personality style, capacity for emotional intelligence, and vulnerability to stress.

Our clinical team at The Applied EQ Group partnered with Dr. Myeongsun Yoon—an absolutely brilliant psychometrician in the Department of Educational Psychology at Texas A&M University—to conduct a psychometric analysis of the EASEL’s reliability and validity. As we’ve
analyzed the data collected in norming the EASEL, we’ve been amazed at the correlations that emerge between teacher and administrator personality types, stress management styles, and innate capacities for self-awareness and empathy.

Our research team also partnered with Dr. Gwen Webb-Hasan, associate professor in the departments of Education and Human Resource at Texas A&M, to ensure that our curriculum bore the quality of social and cultural sensitivity. We have been delighted to have the material incorporated into her graduate courses as she equips the next generation of educational leaders, particularly by challenging them to become more aware of their biases in diverse populations. Diverse populations, in the context of SEL, refers not only to the standard demographic variables, but also to personality types and coping styles.

**Conclusion**

Our initial findings based on pilot case studies in Texas, New Hampshire, Indiana and Arizona school districts offer hope. Educators report that as they understand the strengths and weaknesses associated with their personality type, they are more equipped to self-regulate, positioning them to intervene more effectively with troubled students. They also report that as they grow more proficient recognizing the sources of their stress, they are more equipped to engage in adaptive, helpful (versus maladaptive, toxic) responses based on the fight-or-flight model. These points of personal growth merge to create faculties and campus cultures that are better equipped to meet the increasing emotional needs students bring to our classrooms and campuses.

Since educational leaders face demands at both macro and micro levels, they face unprecedented levels of stress in the workplace as educational leaders. Projections suggest that this is the new normal. While such stress can literally steal life vitality, the emotionally-intelligent leader possesses the unique skills set that converts that stress into a fuel for increased effectiveness and sustainability. American psychologist Rollo May noted that
“responsibility is the ability to respond appropriately to the demands of one’s environment” (May, 1971). As student mental health needs in the school environment increase, SEL offers an approach to empower educators with the ability to respond appropriately. The introspection required by SEL is not necessarily easy, but it invites us to make a difference in the world by becoming the best version of ourselves in both our professional and personal lives.

About the Author...

Dr. Adam L. Saenz is a licensed psychologist and CEO of The Applied EQ Group, a clinical and research group based in College Station, Texas. He is the author of The Power of a Teacher and Relationships That Work. His forthcoming book on social and emotional learning, The EQ Intervention: Shaping a Self-Aware Generation Through Social and Emotional Learning will be released in February 2020 via all major outlets by the Greenleaf Book Group: Austin Texas. Dr. Saenz is a keynote presenter at the Texas ASCD 2019 Annual Conference.

References


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Serving the Needs of Young Learners

By Dalane E. Bouillion, Ed.D.

Pre-Kindergarten is more than en vogue; it has become a priority, recognizing that early childhood education supports the formal foundational requirements for future success. The readiness skills that continue to develop and that are used throughout life are experienced during this delicate time of childhood. Early Childhood Education is generally grounded in a constructivist approach, which is a theoretical understanding of cognition or how young children begin to construct knowledge and begin to understand their own meaning of the world. Constructivists subscribe to the philosophy that “knowledge comes neither from the subject nor the object, but from the unity of the two.”1 Meaning, students have the ability to use their experiences and self-reflection to build schema; schema, in turn, allows for deeper understanding.

Young children make sense of their world by connecting the known to the unknown. With each new experience, perception changes and builds more complex understanding. Constructivism implies active learning, where students are recognized “as thinkers with emerging theories about the world.”2 Jean Piaget, was a Swiss psychologist known for his four Stages of Cognitive Development.3 Based on his observations of young children, he classified cognitive stages into four distinctions, described in the table below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sensorimotor</td>
<td>Basic motor and sensory experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Birth to Two Years</td>
<td>Object permanence - objects exist although they can’t be seen</td>
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<td>Names and words attached to objects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preoperational</td>
<td>Pretend play</td>
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<td>Two Years to Seven Years</td>
<td>Egocentrism</td>
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<td>Language development</td>
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<td>Concrete Operational</td>
<td>Beginning of logical thinking, but often very rigid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven Years to 11 Years</td>
<td>Struggle with abstract and hypothetical</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Begin to consider how others think and feel</td>
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<td>Formal Operational</td>
<td>Can identify multiple potential solutions to a problem</td>
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<td>Adolescence to Adulthood</td>
<td>Use deductive reasoning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conceptualizes the abstract</td>
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Piaget, as he observed young children, thought of them as “little scientists” because they were comfortable making observations and responding to the success or failure of the manipulation of
objects in order to learn. This notion supports evolving instructional practices that our newest generation is requiring. Methodologies have evolved to support active learning, and lesson design teaches with precision, the attributes that help create the conditions for students to volunteer their time, attention, and commitment in order to engage in academic content.\(^4\) Regardless of the pedagogical approach, students are required to inquire in order to master today’s standards. They must experience and then reflect on their experience to build schema that can be translated into mastery learning.

The intellectual development of children, together with curricula, should drive the design process for an early education facility. By understanding the evolution of the acquisition of knowledge and how to introduce academic content, early childhood learning centers can set young students on a path for a successful educational career. Understanding how children perceive and interact in the world is critical to the space we create for them. Specialized learning centers have become commonplace in order to provide preoperational-stage students areas of discovery while at school. What is learned in small group settings builds on schema in order to master real-world concepts. The soft skills learned here also support the interpersonal needs of all individuals and teams.

Architects and educators should be working together to design space for student experiences that will expose them to future careers early in life through their classroom experiences in order to assist them with choices. Some might say this is too soon to think about careers, but in the 8th grade all students in the State of Texas must declare their intended high school endorsement or area of concentrated study based on their areas of interest. Knowing this, let us revisit some of the traditional learning centers that have defined early childhood classrooms. Although educators value the use of this type of active learning, no special architecture usually exists to support this type of learning experience. Educators are accustomed to looking at the four corners of the room they inherit and deciding how to best use their assigned space. One corner becomes a reading area, one for dramatic play, one focused on language arts, and one on science. Then, they find a place to incorporate math and social studies into the designated space. How can we best design for future classrooms that will support the learning requirements of future generations?

The dramatic play station allows students to understand symbols and explore roles such as family member, societal figure, historical character, artist, animal, etc. This learning area can be located within each classroom or it could be designed as a larger shared space where multiple classes are scheduled for use. Think of a modified small black box theatre area that allows for costumes and the use of props in order for students to build upon their prior knowledge and develop communication skills. It could have a small portable raised platform for more formal drama play or for presentations that culminate an intended instructional purpose. This modified space builds a set of soft skills that the theater arts industry continues to request of their new hires. With a small black box theatre, we can create a specific space where students can respond to a given situation or use as a free play opportunity to allow for creativity. These experiences build understanding regarding key literary concepts such as setting and time periods. No longer will dramatic play be dependent on “home center” content where everything revolves around the wooden kitchen. This specific center supports fine arts and humanities while providing for the next generation of thespians.
The blocks station should become much more than a place in the corner of the classroom where boys want to watch a tall stack of wooden wedges fall. It should recruit both boys and girls, and it should be designed as a part of the classroom with future architects and engineers in mind, using delineated flooring with a soft surface so that self-designed skyscrapers can be built. A multitude of building materials should be available in sturdy well-designed storage spaces that allow for creativity. Here, properties of physics can be experienced. The beginnings of geometry are discovered. Design should be the intent of the station and students should be able to work to replicate drawings and diagrams of famous landmarks. White boards should flank the area, allowing students to draw and think as they build.

A small dedicated library works to define comfortable reading and research spaces so that all students begin to connect content to context and the use of technology for almost all answers in their world. They can write and publish in this space using technology and paper/pencil as well as practice their oratory skills with peers. This space should function as the hub for all other stations, centrally located to allow research for all student interests and curricular foci. It should be flexible with inviting furniture that allows the lesson design to dictate the organization of the area. Small, yet inviting displays, should be designed within the area to allow for literature that helps capture the lesson intention. Reading nooks should foster both independent reading and partner reading. Future autobiographies start here. Book clubs are born here, as well as the initiation of an appreciation for classic literature.

The science station allows for independent discovery and clearly connects with our future scientists. This area should be designed with natural light, allowing for the best possible life science environment. Students use their senses here; they use the scientific method. They predict how tall their lima bean stalk will grow and they identify each of the plant parts. They understand basic needs of the plant and they learn to record data. They chart the weather and they begin to build schema around seasons. By designing an area where the floor is delineated for both wet and dry capabilities and where water is accessible, a student quickly learns the difference between sinking and floating, and schema develops to start the prediction process of various materials as they are placed in water. Displacement concepts are born in this center, and so are the primary thoughts around matter, mass, and weight. This area helps to support students who are drawn to the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), knowing also that the foundation for future hydrologists and oceanographers are born here.

Each of these learning areas encourages intellectual development, supports the building of schema, and provides for needed vocabulary. For each of the described learning centers, vocabulary and experience work together to build schema which provides knowledge. Memorable and engaging experiences lead to mastery learning. By providing the most appropriately designed spaces, teachers can quickly plan for relevant, real-world lessons and complex learning experiences. It is never too soon to provide the best experiences for students. Exposure to learning experiences that promote thinking, questioning, and require complex reasoning can never occur too soon.
About the Author...

Dr. Dalane E. Bouillion received all three of her educational degrees from Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. Her 23 year public education career includes serving as teacher, assistant principal, principal and associate superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Most recently, Dalane translates her educational experience into school architecture as a member of the design team at VLK Architects, ensuring current methodologies are considered throughout the design process so that academic program needs are realized.

References


This article was previously published in Educational Facility Planner: Bouillion, D.E. (2019, April). Destining for the pre-operational student. Retrieved from https://efponline.a4le.org/2019/04/11/designing-for-the-pre-operational-student/
# PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CALENDAR 2019

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<tr>
<th>SEPT 2019</th>
<th>OCT 2019</th>
<th>NOV 2019</th>
<th>DEC 2019</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Curriculum Leadership Academy - Frisco ISD Exclusive</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: September 19-20 (4 of 4)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Frisco ISD Career and Technical Education Center Frisco, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Five Day Math</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: October 8-9 (1 of 3)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Bamberg Professional Development Resource Center Houston, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Instructional Rounds</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: November 5-7&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: RR Profesional Development Round Rock, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Five Day Math</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: December 11 (2 of 3)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Bamberg Professional Development Resource Center Houston, Texas</td>
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<td><strong>Instructional Rounds Lamar CISD Exclusive</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: September 24-26&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Lamar CISD Rosenberg, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Curriculum Leadership Academy - HEB</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: October 10-11 (1 of 3)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: HEB’s Pat May Center Bedford, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Instructional Rounds Round Rock ISD Exclusive</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: November 12-14&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: RR Profesional Development Round Rock, Texas</td>
<td><strong>Curriculum Leadership Academy - HEB</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: November 21-22 (2 of 3)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: HEB’s Pat May Center Bedford, Texas</td>
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<td><strong>Transformative Principal Leadership Academy - Round Rock</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: September 24-25 (2 of 3)&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Round Rock ISD Old Hopewell Building Round Rock, Texas</td>
<td><strong>2019 Annual Conference</strong>&lt;br&gt;and <strong>Transformative Principal Leadership Academy</strong>&lt;br&gt;DATE: October 27-29&lt;br&gt;LOCATION: Irving Convention Center Irving, Texas</td>
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Employer ____________________________________________________ Date  _______________________________________________________