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Capturing the Social/Emotional World of Students

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CAPTURING THE SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL WORLD OF STUDENTS

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Introduction

The Broad Aims of Education

Schools teach more than academic skills. They work to build character, social competency, and productive citizenry in students. The intention of a high school diploma is to represent this broad range. This includes mastery of the determined curriculum, as well as students' readiness for vocation and conscientious participation in a democratic society (Ravitch, 2013). This is reflected, to a certain extent, in the ways that schools operate. For example there are many services in schools designed to enhance social proficiency and to help students "recognize and manage their emotions, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish positive goals, make responsible decisions, and handle interpersonal situations effectively" (Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Resnik, & Elias, 2003, p.468). These non-academic competencies are a critical part of what schools do. It is also important to note that there is strong reciprocal relationship between the academic and non-academic goals of education. Social and emotional elements are both products and producers of the school experience for students. In this way, social and emotional competency promotes academic success in school, which then promotes further positive social and emotional development. (Almlund, Duckworth, Heckman, & Kautz, 2011).

Recognition of these broad aims of education is common within the rhetoric surrounding K-12 education. One example is the prevalence of the idea of student engagement within the mission statements and school improvement documents of school systems. However, recognition of the importance of social emotional learning has not generally been reflected in the way that schools assess youth development. While the collection of student data has proliferated over the past several decades, very little of the data collected has focused on the social and emotional domains of student growth. If there is some degree of truth in the adage that we tend to teach to the test, the lack of social emotional measurement may reflect a lack of emphasis in addressing these competencies within the curriculum and structure of schools.

The goal of this report is to explore the possibilities using student social emotional measures within K-12 schools. This will include (1) a discussion of what constitutes a social emotional measure, (2) an overview of commonly used measures, and (3) a discussion of how these measures may inform school improvement processes and promote the success of students at the classroom, school, school system, and community level.

Bridging Richmond

This report is supported by Bridging Richmond (BR), a regional partnership modeled after *StriveTogether*, a national network designed to promote regional, cross-sector collaborations around the cradle-to-career pipeline. Bridging Richmond's vision is that *'every person in our region will have the education and talent necessary to sustain productive lifestyles.'* To realize this vision, BR engages its regional partners from the education, business, government, civic, and philanthropic communities to (1) facilitate

community vision and agenda for college- and career-readiness, (2) establish shared measurement and advance evidence-based decision making, (3) align and coordinate strategic action, and (4) mobilize resources and community commitment for sustainable change. BR's region includes eight school divisions (Richmond City, Chesterfield County, Henrico County, Hanover County, Goochland County, Powhatan County, New Kent County, and Charles City County) serving over 160,000 students.

This report emerges out of a regional interest and need in establishing shared measures that can be used within regional conversations to guide collective action. To this end Bridging Richmond has worked in partnership with MERC over the past several years to explore possible social emotional measures and assess the value and feasibility of adopting a shared measure across districts. Part of this has involved support for piloting the Gallup Student Poll in several school divisions. BR has also facilitated partners from the out-of-school time community to develop some consensus around use of the SAYO in some collective areas. As a result, a few non-profits, including some mentioned in this report, have also begun to use the SAYO internally. This paper comes at the end of a current 3-year project to support a shared measure for social-emotional learning. For now, it is helpful to explore the value and potential of social-emotional learning through multiple instruments.

“MERC has prepared two papers that help capture the learning that Bridging Richmond partners have gained through a three-year project. As the project comes to its completion, there are many bright spots to celebrate, as the partners continue to agree that measures of student success and wellbeing must be broader than high stakes academic tests. This project would not have been possible without the contribution of partners including: school districts; MERC; The Community Foundation; ReadyBy21; and Gallup. On behalf of the partners, I extend our deep gratitude to project contributors and to the readers who will apply the learning to action in their communities.”

Jason Smith, Partnership Executive Director

Social/Emotional Learning

Naming the Category

Over the past decade a range of non-academic outcomes have gained popularity within discussions of K-12 education. These include ideas such as student engagement, motivation, hope, grit, self-control, and trust to name a few. However, one of the challenges that arises when researching and discussing this domain of competencies is the general lack of consensus around the proper name for the category. In some cases, the category is placed under the broad label **non-cognitive**, signifying that it includes the measurement of all non-academic competencies. However, this label is problematic for two reasons. First, we might question the utility of a label that defines a category only in terms what it is not. Second the term non-cognitive gives the false impression that there are measurable qualities of human behavior that are devoid of cognition, a questionable proposition.

In response, a number of other labels for the category have emerged including those that focus on the category's constructs as a set of **traits** (e.g. character education, dispositions, temperament), or as a set of **skills** (e.g., soft skills, 21st century skills). However, each of these approaches has its critics. The idea of the category being comprised of traits might suggest that the constructs are fixed qualities of individuals, a sense that many researchers and educators want to avoid. On the other hand, labeling the category as a set of skills seems to exclude beliefs, values and attitudes that are an important part of the domain (Duckworth and Yeager, 2015).

Another approach to naming this category – and one that is increasingly common in K-12 education – is to categorize this collection of constructs within the domain of **social emotional learning**. As Duckworth and Yeager (2015) point out, this term “highlights the relevance of emotions and social relationships to any complete view of child development” (p. 238). Due to its prevalence within K-12 education, social emotional learning is the term that will be used in this paper to describe this domain.

Defining Social Emotional Learning

Despite the lack of consensus over name, there are some generally agreed upon criteria that define the category. Social emotional learning includes constructs that are (1) conceptually distinct from cognitive academic ability, (2) perceived as beneficial to students and society, and (3) relatively stable within individuals yet responsive to intervention. Reflecting these criteria, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), defines the domain of social emotional learning:

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary 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, p. 1)

CASEL goes on to define five distinct – but inter-related – competency clusters. These clusters define both interpersonal and intrapersonal domains (*National Research Council, 2012*). These are:

- **Self-awareness.** The ability to accurately recognize one's emotions and

thoughts and their influence on behavior. This includes accurately assessing one's strengths and limitations and possessing a well-grounded sense of confidence and optimism.

- **Self-management.** The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations. This includes managing stress, controlling impulses, motivating oneself, and setting and working toward achieving personal and academic goals.
- **Social awareness.** The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others from diverse backgrounds and cultures, to understand social and ethical norms for behavior, and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.
- **Relationship skills.** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. This includes communicating clearly, listening actively, cooperating, resisting inappropriate social pressure, negotiating conflict constructively, and seeking and offering help when needed.
- **Responsible decision-making.** The ability to make constructive and respectful choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, social norms, the realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and the wellbeing of self and others.

Why is Social Emotional Learning Important?

There are two strong arguments that support the focus on student social emotional learning within K-12 education.

First, as is evident in the definition presented above, social emotional learning is a valuable outcome for both individual and society. The core competencies of social emotional learning are critical for the development of healthy relationships and productive activity within communities, within the workforce and within civil society. A focus on social emotional learning is likely to lead to better students, better workers, and more engaged citizens.

A second reason for focusing on social emotional learning within K-12 schools is illuminated by a solid base of research that shows the strong relationships between social emotional competence and long-term academic success (Durlak et al., 2011). In fact, several recent studies on college and career readiness, draw connections between social and emotional development in middle and high school and post-secondary and workplace success (ACT, 2014; National Research Council, 2012).

Examples of Social Emotional Constructs

As a way of understanding the qualities of constructs within the domain of social emotional learning, we will explore three social emotional constructs in educational research: **grit**, **engagement**, and **mindset**. In this section we will (1) offer a definition of each construct, (2) explain how the construct is measured, (3) discuss its demonstrated connection with academic outcomes, and (4) present examples of strategies used to impact the outcome. It is important to note that this section is not a comprehensive look at all social emotional student traits, nor does it exhaustively explore all of the research available on grit, engagement, and mindset in particular. Instead, the intention of this section is to present these constructs as examples of social emotional learning. Grit, engagement, and mindset offer us a familiar entry into capturing the social/emotional world of students. The focus on these constructs in particular comes from their measurability, connection with student outcomes, and popularity in contemporary educational research and practice.

ENGAGEMENT

“The concept of school engagement has attracted increasing attention as representing a possible antidote to declining academic motivation and achievement.”

(Fredricks, Blumenfield, & Paris, 2004, p. 59)

What is Engagement?

Engagement is a popular construct in education, though its complexity may not always be recognized. It is common to categorize engagement into three distinct domains: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Wang & Eccles, 2012). **Behavioral engagement** involves attentive participation, positive conduct, and school attendance. **Emotional engagement** refers to a sense of belonging in school due to a positive affective attitude towards it. **Cognitive engagement** involves self-regulated learning through the use of meta-cognitive strategies. When describing a student’s engagement, it is important to be cognizant of the type of engagement being discussed.

How is Engagement Measured?

There are many measures that include items related to engagement, including the **Gallup Student Poll**, the **Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes (SAYO)**, **ACT Engage**, and the **Middle and High School Survey of School Engagement (MSSSE and HSSSE)**. Each of these instruments is featured in the "Measures" section of this report. Some **sample items** from the HSSSE include:

- *I can be creative in classroom projects and assignments.*
- *My opinions are respected in this school.*

Why is Engagement Important?

Engagement in its various forms has been demonstrated to predict academic outcomes (Green et al., 2012). Behavioral engagement is characterized by homework completion, attendance, and class participation, each of which are positively connected with academic achievement (Green et al., 2012). Emotionally engaged students tend to use more self-regulatory strategies in their learning (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

How Can Schools Promote Engagement in Students?

When promoting engagement it is important to focus on the different levels of engagement in students: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. It is possible that a student may be engaged in one way but not another. Schools that work to address student engagement consider practices that could enhance student attention and connection. It is important to remember that behavioral engagement includes foundational components like school attendance. Obviously an absent student is unlikely to be an engaged student. Within schools it is also important to consider the level of engagement among the staff. Students are more likely to be engaged in schools with engaged educators (Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Leppescu, & Easton, 2010).

GRIT

“We suggest that one personal quality is shared by the most prominent leaders in every field: grit”

(Duckworth et al., 2007, p. 1087)

What is Grit?

According to Duckworth and colleagues (2007) **grit** is passion for and perseverance toward long-term goals. It involves persistent effort over time in pursuit of a desired outcome, despite any adversity, failure, or decrease in progress that one experiences. When others interpret boredom or disappointment as criteria for giving up, those with grit maintain effort toward a future goal. “The gritty individual approaches achievement as a marathon; his or her advantage is stamina” (p. 1088). Duckworth and her team have shared this research in a variety of settings, from education to business to the military, as they believe that its principles are valuable for promoting achievement in multiple contexts.

How is Grit Measured?

The primary measure for grit is the **Grit Scale** (Duckworth & Quinn, 2009), which comes in both standard (12 items) and short forms (8 items). Each item presents a statement with which the respondent either identifies or not. The five point response scale goes from 5 (“Very much like me”) to 1 (“not like me at all”). The scale contains both positively and negatively worded items with reverse scoring to indicate both the presence and absence of grit. Some sample items include:

- *I finish whatever I begin.* (presence of grit)
- *My interests change from year to year.* (absence of grit)

Why is Grit Important?

Duckworth and Gross (2014) identify a number of demonstrated connections between grit and various positive outcomes. Higher levels of grit are associated with greater likelihood of on-time high school graduation. Grittier novice teachers are more likely to persist in their positions. Grit is associated with greater effort and dedication to practice, with evidence of its benefits from national spelling bee participants to West Point graduates.

How Can Schools Promote Grit in Students?

Schools can promote grit by encouraging students to have long-term goals that they can work towards right now in school (e.g. making good grades will help you get into college). The key element of grit is persistence, so when students inevitably encounter difficulty, it is important for schools to help them find ways to maintain effort. Having desirable, attainable goals and encouragement to stick with them when times get tough helps promote a gritty disposition in students.

MINDSET

“It is often assumed that once students have a well-stocked arsenal of strategies, they are all set, but this is far from the case. In our work, we see many highly able students abandon these strategies just when they are most needed. Why does this happen?”

(Dweck & Master, 2008, p. 31)

What is Mindset?

Like grit and engagement, **mindset** has been receiving considerable attention in educational research and practice. It represents a student’s perception of his or her intelligence as either being a fixed or malleable. Students with a fixed mindset tend to believe that they are born with a certain amount of ability or intelligence that does not change much over their lifetime, despite effort. Conversely, students with that see intelligence as malleable – growth mindset – see the brain as a muscle that can be trained, meaning the amount of ability or intelligence that they currently have can change with increased effort (Dweck & Master, 2008).

How is Mindset Measured?

In her book *Mindset: The new psychology of success* (2006), Carol Dweck presents a scale for measuring one’s views of intelligence. It indicates the degree to which a person agrees with statements that represent a fixed or growth mindset. Some sample items include:

- *Your intelligence is something about you that you can’t really change very much.*
- *You can change even your basic intelligence level considerably.*

This measure is also available for free online at www.mindsetonline.com.

Why is Mindset Important?

Holding a growth mindset tends to alter the ways that students perceive learning. Believing that ability and intelligence are malleable is associated with having more of a mastery than performance orientation for learning, meaning students place higher value on the material that they gain from a class than the grade they receive (Dweck & Master, 2008). A growth mindset is also related with positive beliefs about effort, low feelings of helplessness, and positive strategies for success (Blackwell et al., 2007). Students with a growth mindset tend to believe that effort matters, regardless of ability, making them more likely to seek help and resources in the face of difficulty (Dweck & Master, 2008).

How Can Schools Promote Growth Mindset in Students?

One of the primary points of advocacy in promoting a growth mindset in students is to praise effort rather than intelligence (Mueller & Dweck, 1998). When schools recognize students for hard work rather than for being “smart,” students can begin to see value in the process of learning, rather than believing that their inherent intelligence is what makes them successful.

Social Emotional Learning Measures

“Our claim is not that everything that counts can be counted or that everything that can be counted counts. Rather, we argue that the field urgently requires much greater clarity about how well, at present, it is able to count some of the things that count.”

(Duckworth & Yeager, 2015, p. 237)

Schools maintain extensive records on students’ academic performance and behavioral engagement to gauge their progress from year to year. Evidence in the form of grades, standardized test scores, attendance and discipline are readily available and, therefore, much of the focus on student and school success comes in the form of these academic and behavioral outcomes. However, as suggested earlier, there is considerable value in measuring the social and emotional development of students. A number of instruments have emerged to meet this need. The following section profiles five of them: **ACT Engage**, the **Gallup Student Poll**, the **Grit Scale**, the **Middle Grade and High School Student Survey of Engagement (MGSSE and HSSSE)**, and the **Survey for Academic and Youth Outcomes (SAYO)**.

This selection of measures is only a sample of the multitude of available instruments. For information on additional measures, please refer to the “Additional Resources” section of this report. The following five measures are included here because of their accessibility and their practical application in school settings. These five measures represent a range in terms of constructs measured, and cost of administration.

The profile of each instrument includes information about the **constructs measured**, **target grade level**, **reliability**, **validity**, **administration format**, **length**, **national use**, and **cost**. Additionally, each profile includes website information for requesting ordering details for paid measures and to view and print materials for free measures.

ACT Engage

Put out by the ACT testing organization, ACT Engage is a measure of motivation, social engagement, and self-regulation. Nationwide there has been substantial use of ACT Engage. For example, GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs) – a program designed to improve post secondary access and success for first generation college students – used ACT Engage in 27 school districts and 7 charter school systems, in southern Texas to track the social/emotional progress of their students. Using this measure allowed for informed evaluation of their programming and thus improved the services they provided for their students by early identification of at-risk individuals, diagnosing strengths and needs, connecting students to corresponding interventions, and monitoring progress. The ACT website offers a number of similar case studies outlining the practical use of this measure both by itself and in collaboration with their other testing products. In 2014, there were approximately 1,400 ACT Engage surveys administered to students in Virginia.

Constructs Measured		Grades 6-9	Grades 10-12
	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Discipline Commitment to School Optimism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Discipline Commitment to College Communication Skills General Determination Goal Striving Study Skills
	Social Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Attitude toward Education Family Involvement Relationships with School Personnel School Safety Climate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social Activity Social Connection
	Self-Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managing Feelings Orderly Conduct Thinking Before Acting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic Self-Confidence Steadiness
Target Grades	6-12		
Reliability	Strong reliability		
Validity	Moderate validity		
Administration	Online		
Length	30 minutes		
National Use	Approximately 100,000 surveys assessed nationally in 2014		
Cost	Pay only for completed surveys (test materials are free) \$6 per survey administered		
Website	www.act.org/engage		

Gallup Student Poll

Developed by the Gallup Organization, the Gallup Student Poll is designed to measure the social emotional development of students in grades 5 through 12. The poll was introduced nationally in the fall of 2009 and has been administered on an annual basis to an ever-growing sample of students across the country. According to Gallup, over 850,000 students completed the poll in fall of 2014. The poll – which was originally designed to measure student engagement, hope, and wellbeing with 20 individual items – has undergone a significant rewrite for the 2015 administration. The GSP has replaced the measure of wellbeing with two new constructs: entrepreneurial aspiration and financial/career literacy. The poll now has 24 items.

Goochland County Public Schools in Virginia recently used the Gallup Student Poll with support from a Ready-by-21 Grant from the Forum For Youth Investment. The division used the data to inform school improvement processes at a division, school, and individual teacher level. Locally, Chesterfield County, Hanover County, Henrico County, and Richmond City have used the division/school level reports from Gallup as well.

Constructs Measured	Example Items
Hope	“The ideas and energy we have for the future” (Gallup, 2015)
Engagement	“The involvement in and enthusiasm for school” (Gallup, 2015)
* Wellbeing	“How we think about and experience our lives” (Gallup, 2015)
** Entrepreneurial Aspiration	“I will invent something that changes the world.” (Gallup 2015)
** Financial/Career Literacy	“I have a bank account with money in it.” (Gallup, 2015)
Target Grades	5-12
Reliability	Hope: moderately strong Engagement: moderately strong Wellbeing: moderate Entrepreneurial Aspiration and Financial Career Literacy: no data available.
Validity	Moderate validity
Administration	Online
Length	10 Minutes
National Use	Completed more than 2 million times nationwide since launch in 2009
Cost	Currently free for general district or school level report More detailed reports available through contract with Gallup
Website	www.studentpoll.gallup.com

* dropped from the poll starting with the fall 2015 administration

** added to the poll starting with the fall 2015 administration

Grit Scale

The Grit Scale has received considerable attention and use in both school and non-school settings. Having a measure of one's passion and persistence toward long-term goals offers a means of comparing individual's level of "grittiness" with a number of outcomes. In a 2009 article, Duckworth and Quinn used the short version of this scale (Grit-S) in a series of studies with both West Point Academy cadets and Scripps National Spelling Bee competitors. They found that this scale predicted retention among cadets and final round attainment in spelling bee participants. The spread of these positive results indicates the scope of application for the construct of grit, as well as the usefulness of this scale in diverse settings. Note that the website for the Grit Scale emphasizes that this measure is not to be used commercially, nor is it appropriate for high stakes testing situations. It is simply valuable for assessing the level of grit in individuals and comparing those results with other desired outcomes.

Constructs Measured	<i>Grit</i>	Consistency of Interest
		Perseverance of Effort
Target Grades	8 Item Grit Scale (children-grades not indicated) 12 Item Grit Scale (older students and adults)	
Reliability	Strong reliability	
Validity	Moderately strong validity	
Administration	Paper/pencil (print from website) or take online	
Length	About 10 minutes	
National Use	Widely used in a variety of school and non-academic settings	
Cost	Free	
Website	https://sites.sas.upenn.edu/duckworth/pages/research	

Middle and High School Survey of Student Engagement (MSSSE and HSSSE)

Developed in 2003 by the Center for Evaluation and Education Policy at Indiana University, the Middle and High School Surveys of Student Engagement (MSSSE and HSSSE respectively) are two versions of a survey of student engagement and other school climate issues. The MSSSE and HSSSE have seen nationwide use, with implementation in nearly every state, as well as in Canada. Locally, 23 Virginia schools have used this measure, including 12 schools within the MERC region. Chesterfield County's use of the HSSSE is profiled on the Indiana University website. Indiana University also offers program evaluation around this measure at an additional cost.

Constructs Measured	Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The levels and dimensions of student engagement in the life and work of high schools.” • “The extent to which high school students are involved in activities associated with high levels of learning and development.” • “The strength of the connection between students and their school community.” (HSSSE, 2015)
Target Grades	6-12	
Reliability	Contact hssse@indiana.edu for information on reliability.	
Validity	Validated by HSSSE Technical Advisory Panel	
Administration	Online	
Length	30 Minutes	
National Use	More than 400,000 students took the survey in over 40 states from 2006 to 2013	
Cost	Free (HSSE and CEEP must be cited in documentation) Contact hssse@indiana.edu for ordering.	
Website	http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/index.html	

Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes (SAYO)

Developed by the National Institute of Out-of-School Time (NIOST), the Survey of Academic and Youth Outcomes Youth Survey (SAYO Y) is designed to measure the social emotional development of youth, especially in out-of-school programs. The SAYO has gained local attention recently. Schools and enrichment programs alike have recognized the value of the multifaceted data provided by the measure and have made the one time investment of \$200 to undergo training and personalize the survey to the needs of their programs. For example, the Peter Paul Development Center in Church Hill uses the SAYO to evaluate the social/emotional development of their 4th -8th grade students. SAYO is also used by the Greater Richmond YMCA for program evaluation purposes. The data provides supplemental perspective to their academic enrichment and allows for them to measure student growth in new ways. A version of the SAYO is also available for staff and teachers (SAYO-S&T).

Constructs Measured	<i>Program Experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement and Enjoyment • Choice and Autonomy • Challenge • Perceptions of the Social Environment • Supportive Relationships with Staff Members • Responsibility and Leadership
	<i>Future Planning and Expectations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Planning- My Actions Expectations • Aspirations and College Planning
	<i>Sense of Competence</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Competence in Reading • Sense of Competence in Writing • Sense of Competence in Math • Sense of Competence in Science • Sense of Competence as a Learner • Sense of Competence Socially
Target Grades	Grades 4-8 and Grades 9-12	
Reliability	Substantial reliability evidence (Wilson-Ahlstrom et al., 2013)	
Validity	Moderate to substantial validity evidence (Wilson-Ahlstrom et al., 2013)	
Administration	Online	
Length	30 Minutes	
National Use	Over 600 youth programs in 33 states and Canada.	
Cost	Pay \$200 one time for survey training (test materials are free)	
Website	http://www.niost.org/Training-Descriptions/survey-of-afterschool-youth-outcomes-youth-survey-sayo-y	

Using Social Emotional Learning Measures

The increased recognition among K-12 educators of the value of social emotional learning has led many schools and school divisions to adopt measurement tools that offer information at the individual, school, and district-level. However, one of the significant challenges for school leaders is what to do with the data on students' social emotional development once it is collected. Having a valid and reliable source of data that indicates, for example, that a student or group of students is not engaged is valuable only if there is a clear plan of action for addressing the need. In many cases, receiving information about student social emotional growth has not led to action at the school or system level.

In this section we will outline practical uses for social/emotional measurement data within schools and school systems. This includes using data from social emotional assessments to (1) inform curriculum and instruction, (2) plan professional development, (3) engage in strategic planning, (4) engage in continuous improvement efforts, (5) evaluate existing programs, and (6) engage in community conversations around collective impact. Included through this section are specific examples of schools and school divisions that have used social emotional data effectively. These suggestions and examples offer a variety of approaches to using this information to improve schools and enhance student learning. By incorporating what we know about child development into our work with students, we are able to work more efficiently and intentionally to help students grow through a supportive and invested school environment.

However before proceeding with these practical suggestions for data use, it is important to put forward a word of caution concerning the use of this these data. In a recent article on social emotional measures in education, Duckworth and Yeager (2015) remind us that validity is not an inherent quality of a measure, but rather is related to the use of the measure. They argue, "policymakers and practitioners in particular should keep in mind that most existing [social emotional] measures were developed for basic scientific research. We urge heightened vigilance regarding the use-specific limitations of any measure, regardless of prior 'evidence of validity'" (p. 243). Their subsequent discussion of this point suggests that our use of social emotional measures in education is in its infancy, and we should proceed with caution when using these data to make decisions about policy and practice.

Inform Curriculum and Instruction

As with regularly collected measures of academic achievement, the results of social emotional measures could be used to inform decisions among teachers and school teams about curriculum and instruction. This could lead to the development of curriculum specifically targeted toward social emotional competencies or the development of these competencies could be thoughtfully integrated into the delivery of the standard academic curriculum. For example, a project within a class could include goal-setting, social awareness and responsible decision-making components. To facilitate this work it would be important to have social emotional data available to educators at the class and student level. It would also be important to have the collection of the data occur on an ongoing basis, to allow for tracking of progress over time.

Examples of the Use of Social Emotional Data

Professional Development

The movement toward a focus on social emotional learning in K-12 is a relatively new phenomenon. For this reason, it is important that schools and school divisions build a common vocabulary among their professional educators around social emotional learning, and work with the school-based professionals to develop techniques for the integration of social emotional learning into classrooms and schools. With this in mind, one potential use of social emotional data is for the planning of professional development. Identified needs within particular classrooms or schools, could lead to the delivery of targeted professional development programs.

Strategic Planning

It is regular practice within K-12 education for schools and school systems to use strategic planning processes to develop annual and multi-year school improvement plans. Generally these plans are targeted toward improving the academic performance and outcomes of students and schools. Bringing social emotional data to the table during the strategic planning process would potentially enrich the discussions of school improvement strategies. At the system-level, an analysis of social emotional data may lead to the re-distribution of resources and the development of new programs. Social emotional measures could also be used on a regular basis as a critical measure of system success.

Continuous Improvement Efforts

Recently there has been push with the K-12 community for the use of continuous improvement methods in schools. Of particular note is the use of the Networked

Using Data to Develop Programs

Cunningham Elementary School in Austin, Texas prioritizes social/ emotional learning in their work with students and staff. Once a month, the school staff develops school-wide social emotional learning programming and shares best practices for focusing on the education of the whole child. They incorporate information they receive from surveys of their students to improve the climate in their school and enhance the learning environment. As a part of the Austin Independent School District, Cunningham participates in a district-wide effort to incorporate SEL in a systemic way into the work that they do. Learn more at [http:// www.casel.org/snapshots/austin-independent-school-district](http://www.casel.org/snapshots/austin-independent-school-district)

Program Evaluation

In October of 2007, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District partnered with CASEL to increase their focus on the social and emotional wellbeing of its students in response to a shooting at one of their 26 high schools. They evaluated the climate and disciplinary practices of their schools and increased their measurement and focus on student mental health. In particular, they improved the attention they gave to the students who were struggling with disciplinary issues, offering them more support rather than just negative consequences for their behavior. As a result, their district saw considerable reductions in student misbehavior and an enhanced sense of security in their schools. Find out more about their efforts at [http:// www.casel.org/snapshots/cleveland-metropolitan-school-district](http://www.casel.org/snapshots/cleveland-metropolitan-school-district).

Using data to inform community conversations

In 2011, the Montgomery County Public School District in Maryland decided to make SEL a district-wide priority given the growing research on the importance of focusing on the holistic development of students. The district hosted community forums where students, staff, parents, and community members were able to collaborate on how to best incorporate SEL competencies into their curriculum. From these meetings they formed teams of school and community members to develop a strategic plan that incorporated building real-world skills that are necessary in becoming college and career ready. Ultimately, this led to an increased focus on teamwork, collaboration, and active problem solving in classrooms. As one educator reflected: "It's tough work but it's the right work." Find out more at <http://www.casel.org/snapshots/montgomery-county-public-school-district>.

Improvement Communities (NIC) model (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, LeMahieu, 2015; Senechal, 2015) to develop a learning community across multiple contexts to solve clearly defined problems of practice. At the center of the NIC model are school-based inquiry teams – comprised of multiple stakeholders – that define problems in context, take local action to address the problems, and then use practical measurement tools to assess impact. Social emotional measures could be used within NICs to examine the impact of school-based work on student social emotional learning.

Evaluation of Existing Programs

Schools and school systems are layered with both in and out-of-school programs designed to address student academic and social emotional success. In many cases these programs either lack solid evaluation processes, or they use evaluation processes with measures that are not aligned across programs or with school and division outcomes. If school systems had access to standard measures of students' social emotional development, one potential use would be in the evaluation of programs that specifically target these competencies.

Community Conversations around Collective Impact

One important distinction between academic and social emotional learning outcomes is the locus of influence. For example, while we might be safe in drawing connections between students' academic performance and the quality of the educational program they receive through schools, the attribution of social emotional outcomes is more diffuse. It is fair to say that the development of students' social emotional competencies has as much to do with their out-of-school experiences as with what happens in school. Students' home lives, out-of-school programs, faith communities, and forms of media exposure are likely to have some impact on the social emotional worlds of students. For this reason, if schools collect social emotional learning data, one potential use would be to use the data to engage parents, out-of-school systems, and the broader community in conversations around collective impact and positive youth development.

SEL and Education

There is much more to our students than we can accurately capture in academic outcomes. With a persistently growing focus on testing, it is imperative that we as educators remain oriented on the holistic development of students and not neglect the critical social and emotional elements that afford students readiness for a healthy and productive life after graduation. Educational research has turned its focus increasingly on the demonstrated benefits of prioritizing social/emotional learning (SEL) concurrently with the academic curriculum. This report has sought to advocate for the critical importance of SEL as a priority in educational policy and practice. Its recommendations only scratch the surface of the plethora of research and resources available. The authors of this report hope that its readers will use this information as a launching point into further inquiry into what SEL can do.

Additional Resources

There are a number of resources available that offer additional insight on social/emotional learning. This report drew information from a number of sources (see *References*) and in particular found helpful direction from the **Forum for Youth Investment (FYI)** and the **Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**. The authors highly recommend exploring these, and the other resources listed below for more perspective on capturing the social/emotional world of students and engaging the community in our collective task of educating our children.

Bridging Richmond

Bridging Richmond aligns business, government, and civic stakeholders to promote college and career readiness in students for the betterment of the future Richmond community. Bridging Richmond is the sponsor of this project.

www.bridgingrichmond.com

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL)

The nation's leading organization focused on academic, social, and emotional development in students, CASEL works to make evidenced-based development of these competencies an integrated component of student learning throughout school.

www.casel.org

Forum for Youth Investment (FYI)

The Forum for Youth Investment collaborates with local and state leadership to deliver programming designed to strengthen learning opportunities for students, making them "ready by 21" to be productive members of the community.

www.forumfyi.org

Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium (MERC) at Virginia Commonwealth University

The Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium at Virginia Commonwealth University provides research-based information that helps solve educational-problems identified by practitioners in local, partnering school divisions. MERC conducted research for this project and produced this report.

www.merc.soe.vcu.edu

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