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SCALING UP SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING THROUGH TEACHER PREPARATION

New case study looks at a preservice and inservice programs preparing teachers to integrate social emotional learning into instruction

[Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning: A Case Study of San Jose State University and Lakewood Elementary School](#)

Social and emotional skills, habits, and mindsets—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, communication, compassion, and empathy—can set students up for academic and life success. Teaching social emotional learning (SEL) requires expertise, which is why some teacher preparation and inservice programs include a focus on teaching teachers how to integrate SEL into their instruction.

San Jose State University's (SJSU) teacher preparation program and Lakewood Elementary School in Sunnyvale, CA, are examples of such programs. They are the focus of a new report, [Preparing Teachers to Support Social and Emotional Learning: A Case Study of San Jose State University and Lakewood Elementary School](#), released today by the Learning Policy Institute (LPI).

While decades of research have made it clear that the mastery of social and emotional skills is essential to academic and life success, what is less clear is how to prepare teachers to develop these abilities in their students.

This new report, authored by LPI Research Analyst and Policy Advisor Hanna Melnick and Social Emotional Learning Consultant Lorea Martinez, provides concrete examples of how SEL can be successfully integrated into teacher preparation and into classrooms. In the SJSU program, new teachers are prepared for the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning before they get to the classroom. At Lakewood Elementary School, up-and-coming teachers (many of whom are SJSU graduates) gain experience through an in-service teacher development program that helps them to integrate SEL in their daily work with students.

LPI's two-part study offers information to policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators about how preservice and in-service teacher training can support good teaching practices and implement SEL in schools, while providing a picture of what SEL looks like when integrated into the school day. It is the first in a series intended to inform policymakers, practitioners, and teacher educators about the components of strong, SEL-focused teacher preparation and development programs.

"After decades of policies that focused narrowly on mathematics and reading test scores, there is increasing consensus that students must build the social and emotional skills, mindsets, and habits that set them up for academic and life success—and that schools have an important role to play in their development," said LPI president Linda Darling-Hammond. "Social, emotional, and academic learning are intimately related, and schools must attend to each of these dimensions if they are to effectively support the whole child."

"As we considered the needs of our candidates to become effective teachers, we recognized the importance of addressing both teachers and their students' SEL skill development," said Nancy Lourié Markowitz, Founding Executive Director of the Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child and Professor Emeritus at SJSU. "This shift toward explicit recognition of both teacher and student needs led to course content that addressed both." Markowitz helped integrate SEL curriculum into the university's Department of Teacher Education curriculum.

The LPI study makes the case that teacher preparation programs are a logical place to begin educating teachers on the role of emotions and social relationships in learning, appropriate expectations for children and adolescents' social and emotional development, and ways teachers can support students' growth in this area. When SEL is a key pillar of the school's mission, teachers can continue to grow their practices as they collaborate, learn from each other, and use SEL data to make instructional decisions, with the ultimate goal of nurturing students' social, emotional, and academic learning.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Implications for Preservice Teacher Education Programs

1. Develop teacher candidates' own social and emotional competence.
2. Help teacher candidates set the stage for SEL by teaching them to develop safe, inclusive, and supportive classroom environments.
3. Integrate the teaching of SEL into courses on academic curriculum.
4. Develop strong university-district partnerships to improve a focus on the social and emotional dimensions of teaching and learning throughout the teacher preparation process.
5. Provide time for faculty to integrate practices that support SEL effectively in their coursework.

Implications for Schools

1. Teach SEL explicitly and integrate it with academic teaching.
2. Start with the social and emotional learning of the adults.
3. Create explicit opportunities to generate buy-in and engage teachers in making decisions about SEL implementation.
4. Create professional development on SEL that is explicit, sustained, and job-embedded.
5. Provide ongoing support to educators using SEL assessments for instructional purposes.

Implications for Policy

1. States can include the knowledge and skills teachers need to support students' SEL in state teaching standards.
2. States and institutes of higher education can adopt performance assessments that require teacher candidates to demonstrate SEL-focused skills and knowledge as a condition of teacher licensure.
3. Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels can invest in university-district partnerships that strengthen teacher candidates' field experiences
4. Federal, state, and local efforts can support school and district leaders' learning about SEL and administrators' role in supporting teachers and students.
5. Policymakers can provide schools with resources and technical assistance
6. States and districts can provide well-validated tools to measure SEL, school climate, and related school supports.

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About the Learning Policy Institute

The Learning Policy Institute conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness.

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