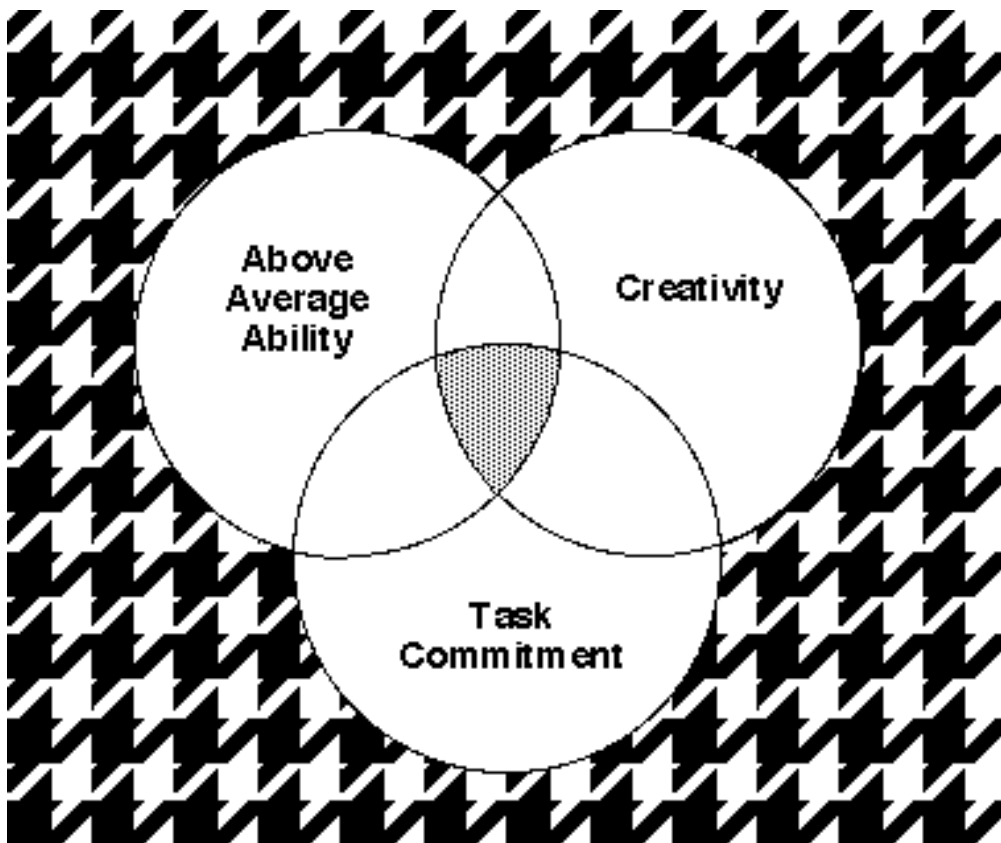


Introduction to Social and Emotional Competence

Modern Conception of Giftedness:

The conception of giftedness used by a school system is the foundation for all subsequent decisions made about issues such as identification, curricula, and programming. Giftedness is socially constructed and is influenced by the interactions between personality and environment. Although there may be differences among different cultures in their descriptions of giftedness, for the purposes of this course, giftedness is defined according to **Joseph Renzulli's Three-Ring Conception**. Renzulli distinguishes between schoolhouse gifted, those students who merely excel at testing-taking and learning school lessons, and those students who truly exhibit gifted behaviours as creative producers, whose giftedness manifests itself through the development of original products that have an impact on society. (Creativity will be explored in detail in a later lesson.) It is important to note that, according to Renzulli, gifted behaviors take place in certain people, at certain times, and under certain circumstances.



The three rings of creative-productive giftedness arise from three interdependent factors: above-average ability (top 15-20% of any group), task commitment (energy expended on a specific problem or performance), and creativity (originality of thought, curiosity, openness to experience).

Above Average Ability

***Above average ability* students are in the upper range of potential and represent the top 15-20% of your student population within any given area. There are general abilities and specific abilities.**

General ability may be demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- High levels of abstract thinking, verbal and numerical reasoning, spatial relations, memory, and word fluency
- Adaptation to and the shaping of novel situations encountered in the external environment
- Automatic information processing; rapid, accurate, and selective retrieval of information

Specific abilities may be demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- The application of various combinations of the above general abilities to one or more specialized areas of knowledge or areas of human performance (e.g., the arts, leadership, administration).
- The capacity for acquiring and making appropriate use of advanced amounts of formal knowledge, tacit knowledge, technique, logistics, and strategy in the pursuit of particular problems or the manifestation of specialized areas of performance.
- The capacity to sort out relevant and irrelevant information associated with a particular problem or area of study or performances

Examples of specific abilities are chemistry, ballet, mathematics, musical composition, sculpture, and photography. Each specific ability can be further subdivided into even more specific areas (e.g., portrait photography, astrophotography, photo journalism).

Task Commitment

Task commitment represents energy brought to bear on a particular problem (task) or specific performance area and is demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- The capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm, fascination, and involvement in a particular problem, area of study, or form of human expression.
- The capacity for perseverance, endurance, determination, hard work, and dedicated practice. Self-confidence, a strong ego and a belief in one's ability to carry out important work, freedom from inferiority feelings, drive to achieve.

- The ability to identify significant problems within specialized areas; the ability to tune in to major channels of communication and new developments within given fields.
- Setting high standards for one's work; maintaining an openness to self- and external criticism; developing an aesthetic sense of taste, quality, and excellence about one's own work and the work of others.

Creativity

Creativity may be demonstrated by one or more of the following:

- Fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought.
- Openness to experience; receptive to that which is new and different (even irrational) in the thoughts, actions, and products of oneself and others.
- Curious, speculative, adventurous, and "mentally playful;" willing to take risks in thought and action, even to the point of being uninhibited.
- Sensitive to detail, aesthetic characteristics of ideas and things; willing to act on and react to external stimulation and one's own ideas and feelings.

As is always the case with lists of traits such as the above, there is an overlap among individual items, and an interaction between and among the general categories and the specific traits. It is also important to point out that all of the traits need not be present in any given individual or situation to produce a display of gifted behaviors. It is for this reason that the Three-Ring Conception of Giftedness emphasizes the interaction among the clusters rather than any single cluster

Definition of Gifted:

The term 'gifted' refers to students who give evidence of outstanding performance capability in areas such as intellectual, creative, artistic, or leadership, or in specific academic fields. Gifted and talented students perform at or show the potential for performing at high levels of accomplishment in one or more areas when compared to others of the same age, experience, or environment.

Definition of Talent:

Talents develop over time within interest areas if an individual is provided opportunity, experience, support, and encouragement. Talents develop in stages, and therefore, may be latent, emergent, or manifest in children and youth. Manifest talents are those that are easily observable. In order to bring latent and emergent talents to the final stage, students need exposure to and hands-on experience in many and various domains.

Students with Gifts and Talents:

Students with gifts and talents are found within all races, national ethnic or aboriginal origin, color, religion, gender, socio-economic strata, learning or physically challenged. Students with diverse gifts and talents express, or have the potential to express their gifts and talents through a wide range of behaviors, abilities, interests, and personal characteristics. Though they are a diverse group, there are certain commonalities in their experiences and characteristics. While types and levels of giftedness may differ, many of their social and emotional needs are similar, and must be recognized and addressed to avoid negative consequences.

Definitions of Social and Emotional Competence / Social and Emotional Learning:

Social and emotional competence is the ability to successfully manage life tasks by understanding, managing, and expressing the social and emotional aspects of one's life, including self-awareness, impulsivity control, working cooperatively, and caring about self and others. The basis of social and emotional competencies and the foundation for academic learning is the awareness of self and others, including a sense of self-worth, communication and collaboration with others, and responsible decision-making and problem-solving.

Social and Emotional Learning is the process through which children and adults acquire the skills to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging situations effectively. This skill set provides the foundation for academic achievement, maintenance of good health, and civic engagement in a democratic society. SEL is essential for developing resilience, forming healthy relationships, improving academic performance, coping with stressful life events, being successful and productive in the workplace, learning thinking skills for problem solving and decision making, and infusing interest and challenge into the curriculum.

More information on SEL can be found at the website for **The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)**, a university-based nonprofit organization co-founded in 1994 by Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence*. <http://www.casel.org/basics/skills.php>

Five Core Social and Emotional Competencies:

CASEL has identified five core groups of social and emotional competencies. They are as follows:

- **1. Self-awareness**—accurately assessing one’s feelings, interests, values, and strengths; maintaining a well-grounded sense of self-confidence

With regard to *self-awareness*, children in the elementary grades should be able to recognize and accurately label simple emotions such as sadness, anger, and happiness. In middle school, students should be able to analyze factors that trigger their stress reactions. Students in high school are expected to analyze how various expressions of emotion affect other people.

- **2. Self-management**—regulating one’s emotions to handle stress, control impulses, and persevere in overcoming obstacles; setting and monitoring progress toward personal and academic goals; expressing emotions appropriately

With regard to *self-management*, elementary school children are expected to describe the steps of setting and working toward goals. In middle school they should be able to set and make a plan to achieve a short-term personal or academic goal. High school students should be able to identify strategies to make use of available school and community resources and overcome obstacles in achieving a long-term goal.

- **3. Social awareness**—being able to take the perspective of and empathize with others; recognizing and appreciating individual and group similarities and differences; recognizing and using family, school, and community resources

In the area of *social awareness*, elementary school students should be able to identify verbal, physical, and situational cues indicating how others feel. Those in middle school should be able to predict others’ feelings and perspectives in various situations. High school students should be able to evaluate their ability to empathize with others.

- **4. Relationship skills**—establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships based on cooperation; resisting inappropriate social pressure; preventing, managing, and resolving interpersonal conflict; seeking help when needed

In the area of *relationship skills*, in elementary school, students should have an ability to describe approaches to making and keeping friends. Middle school students are expected to demonstrate cooperation and teamwork to promote group goals. In high school students are expected to evaluate uses of communication skills with peers, teachers, and family members.

- **5. Responsible decision-making**—making decisions based on consideration of ethical standards, safety concerns, appropriate social

norms, respect for others, and likely consequences of various actions;
applying decision-making skills to academic and social situations;
contributing to the well-being of one's school and community

Finally, with regard to *responsible decision-making*, elementary school students should be able to identify a range of decisions they make at school. Middle school students should be able to evaluate strategies for resisting peer pressure to engage in unsafe or unethical activities. High-school students should be able to analyze how their current decision-making affects their college and career prospects.

Why is there a need for Social and Emotional Learning in Schools?

Human relationships are the foundation of an education system. Learning is a socially constructed act that involves establishing relationships with learners. In effective school pays attention to the relationships between teachers and students, as well as the relationships among the staff, among students, with parents, and with the school community in general. Learning is made real by building on the actual social relationships between teachers and students, the human interaction in the classroom. The need to include social and emotional learning (and training such as this course) is clear from educational research. *Once a child starts school, teachers may become the most influential adults—besides parents—in the child's life.* Research shows that the quality of children's early relationships with teachers during the first years of school is crucial in shaping children's school success over time.

Educators must “go beyond the brain” to develop students – intellectual growth should not take precedence over social and emotional growth. Instead, personal development should be integrated into academic development. *In schools, we should care about thinking and think about caring.*

Humans learn best when they feel safe and secure, when they are not afraid or stressed (physically or emotionally). Students who feel that they belong and that someone cares about them will perform better academically. If they feel good about themselves and their chances for success, they will be healthier and happier in school, and in life.

Social and emotional skills can be taught and competence developed. Adults in schools can serve as instructors, role models, mentors, advocates, and allies for gifted children. Social and emotional skills are often referred to as “people skills.” Knowing how one works best, and how to work well with people are skills much in demand by employers in almost every occupation.

Impacts of SEL

SEL and School Attitudes:

Students' attitudes towards school have a major impact on their educational accomplishments. When schools integrate social and emotional learning with academic learning, students feel a stronger sense of community. They learn to see teachers as caring adults, and in turn, will feel more motivated to succeed. Developing positive rapport with students is an important building block for SEL and for student well-being. Many educational experts believe that success as an educator is more dependent on positive, caring, trustworthy relationships than on any skill, idea, tip or tool on effective teaching strategies. Once students recognize that school is not just about learning facts and formulas, but is also an institution that values students' personal development, they begin to adjust their attitudes towards school. If they learn appropriate behaviours and coping strategies, then they can take responsibility for themselves, making wiser decisions. School is often a very stressful environment, especially for gifted children. Parents and teachers expect more of gifted children, in academics and in behaviour. It is essential that we teach gifted children how to cope with the many stresses they will encounter.

SEL and School Behaviours:

Placing emphasis on the positive social and emotional growth of children not only affects their attitudes, but also their behaviour in school. When their own feelings are considered and they feel emotionally and socially "safe", they are more likely to attend school, be more engaged in classroom activities, and perform better academically. They are also more aware of others' feelings, an important step to creating and maintaining positive relationships. Feeling connected to others is shown in their classroom interactions, or lack of interactions. Students who learn to understand and manage their own emotions are also less likely to become disciplinary problems in school. Good teacher-student relationships are a significant factor in classroom management. This inhibits difficult situations arising in the first place and provides a cushion when challenges do arise. Relationships are made by what is said and not said and messages that are given about values and expectations.

SEL and Academics:

Social and emotional competences also affect students' academics in very specific ways. Students who are self-aware feel more confident. They know what they can and cannot do, what they must work on harder, and how to develop their intellectual capacity. Research has shown that lessons about social and emotional skills also improve math, language arts, and social studies skills. Most social and emotional skills emphasize self-reflection, consideration of the perceptions of others, decision-making, and acting rationally. These skills are all important in academics as well. Using higher order reasoning is essential to problem-solving and planning. With improved skills comes higher achievement. Creating emotional connections between teacher and student and between

student and subject matter will improve student well-being and academic achievement.

Why don't educators teach social and emotional skills?

It is impossible to ignore the many benefits of adding SEL to the school curriculum and environment. However, the reality is that many schools do not do so, and teachers are uncomfortable getting involved with students' social and emotional lives.

In my own research in the United States during my doctoral studies, I interviewed teachers and observed in schools across the country to find out why social and emotional development was not integrated into academic lessons and. I found four major categories of reasons:

1. Lack of time

- ❖ Large class size
- ❖ Short class duration
- ❖ Non-teaching duties
- ❖ Mandated curriculum standards
- ❖ Focus on school achievement scores

2. Lack of training

- ❖ Lack of training/unprepared
- ❖ Unaware of the issues/lack of knowledge
- ❖ Fear of making mistakes
- ❖ Not knowing what to do

3. Fear of “overstepping boundaries”

- ❖ Teacher's place / responsibilities
- ❖ Administrative, legal restrictions
- ❖ Conflicting with parent views/values

4. Focus in teacher pre-service training/teacher education training

- ❖ Preparing teachers to become content experts, to prepare lessons and lectures.
- ❖ Instructional strategies in which teacher as “expert” cause the teacher to be very directive
- ❖ Classroom management, which is often easier if individuality of students is not considered or addressed
- ❖ Teachers are trained to be diagnosticians who find weakness and errors to correct or fix.