

# How Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Supports Regulation: Executive Functioning Considerations

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## Why are we here today?

- To learn why SEL is an evidence based practice that teaches executive functioning (problem solving, emotional control, awareness and reflection or metacognition) needed for regulation.
- To learn the role that executive functioning plays in regulation.
- To learn the role that regulation plays in executive functioning.

## This presentation will:

- Review social emotional learning, self-regulation, the stress response, sensory processing, and the relationship of executive functioning.
- Explain the benefit of SEL for students with disabilities learning within a classroom.
- Review findings in SEL research that indicate its impact on self-regulation.
- Share self-regulation lessons that have been developed and implemented in classrooms.

## Course objectives

After completion of this presentation, participants will:

1. Understand several origins of dysregulation in students.
2. Explain why students with self-regulation do better at school.
3. Identify how executive functioning supports self-regulation.
4. Name strategies in SEL lessons that support student self-regulation.

## Welcoming activity- SEL signature practice

I would like to know more about what has brought you to this workshop. Please share with me your name, where you work, and your interest in Self-Regulation and Executive Functioning. Please share with me in the Chat what you would like to learn from this workshop.

## The background of SEL

### What is Social Emotional Learning?

- A Mental Health Intervention
- Uses mental health promotion and prevention principles and follows the Collaborative for Academic Social Emotional Learning standards (Bazyk, et al., 2013; CASEL, n.d.)

## What SEL looks like in practice

Uses the 3 signature practices:

1. Welcoming Opening
  2. Brain Break, Help with Transition, Engaging Activity
  3. Optimistic Closure (Durlak, et al, 2011)
- Uses SAFE Principles: Sequenced, Action-based, Focused Instruction, Explicit Goals (Durlak, et al, 2011)
  - Achieves the goals laid out in social and emotional learning standards using one or more of the four approaches (Durlak, et al., 2015).

## Randomized Control Studies

Level 1 and 2 evidence in Social Emotional Learning that supports regulation and executive functioning.

## Using Social Emotional Learning to Improve Regulation

1. SEL develops classrooms that are psychologically safe (Dowling, et al, 2019).
2. SEL develops student's social emotional skills (Muratori, et al., 2017)

## Using Social Emotional Learning in Improve Regulation

3. SEL teaches students social-emotional problem-solving skills (Lochman, et al., 2017).
4. SEL improves teachers experience of teaching and classroom management skills (Domitrovich, et al, 2015).

## Transition Activity: SEL signature practice

Using self-calming and affirmation statements:

- Although I am attending a Saturday conference for Charting the C's, I am happy to learning more about executive functioning and self-regulation on my day off from work.
- I can take deep breaths or take stretches in my chair if I need to reenergize myself.

## Why we are here today...

To learn the role that executive functioning plays in regulation.

# Self-regulation

## What is self-regulation?

- The ability to regulate sensation, emotion, and behavior used for goal-directed behavior.
- Has a neurobiological base that varies between individuals
- Four components of self-regulation: sensory processing, emotional regulation, cognitive regulation (executive functioning), and social perspective taking (Kuyper, 2013)

## SEL: Development of a coordinated brain

- Self-regulation can be described at the neural, behavioral, and social level. Some characteristics of self-regulation are bottom up processes, such as: genetics, stress physiology, and emotional reactivity. Other characters of regulation are based on top down characteristics such as: emotional competency, use of executive functioning, and motivation for goal directed behavior. (Durlak, et al., 2015)

## SEL: Development of a coordinated brain, *continued*

- Use of executive functioning is a top down skill that is developed and requires effort and practice. Strategies in executive functioning over ride physiological and emotional reactions (Durlak, et al., 2015).

## Why we are here today....

To learn the role that regulation plays in executive functioning.

## Architecture of Self-Regulation

- Controlled Executive Functioning (working memory, inhibitory control, attention flexibility)
- Attention (alerting, orienting, executive)
- Emotional Reactivity and Regulation (positive and negative emotions)
- Stress physiology (sympathetic, parasympathetic, and HPA)
- Automatic Genes (neuromodulator receptor functions). (Durlak, et al., 2015).

## Importance of Self-Regulation at School

- To feel successful in life.
- To be available and present for learning.
- To be available for relationships with others.
- To be able to adjust to current demands.
- To feel mental health.
- Students that are regulated do better in school (Casel, n.d.)

## Brain areas highly related to learning, regulation, and executive functioning

- Prefrontal cortex- reasoning, problem solving, comprehension, impulse-control, creativity and perseverance (Durlak, et al, 2015).
- Limbic System- the part of the brain involved in our behavioral and emotional responses, especially when it comes to behaviors we need for survival: feeding, reproduction and caring for our young, and fight or flight responses (Durlak, et al., 2015).

## A Closer Look at SEL Lessons

How do we improve regulation and executive functioning?

## The Stress Response

- How the receptors and neurobiology of stress impacts the primary learning areas of the brain.
- Students learn better when their brains are not experiencing stress.
- Stress can come from a disadvantaged background (i.e. poverty), emotional states, and difficulties with sensory processing.
- Co-regulation and responsive and sensitive relationships counteract the stress response.

## SEL: Lesson on becoming aware of stress

- Where do I feel stress in my body?
- Activities:
- Take Heart Rate
- Chart on a Body Chart where stress is felt
  - Facial Expression
  - Tone of Voice
  - Tight Hands

## SEL: Lesson on supporting self-regulation

- SEL Lesson using triggers and tools for my triggers.
- **Learning My Triggers**
- **Learning Personal Tools**

## Sensory Processing Needs: How to support Sensory Processing at School

- Movement needs (Dunn, 2013)
- Predictability and routine (Dunn, 2013)
- Interactions with staff and peers (Parham, et al., 2020)
- Teaching students about their sensory patterns and preferences (Dunn, 2013; Parham, et al., 2020).
- Develop problem-solving skills (executive functioning) (Kuipers, 2014; Williams, et al., 1996)



## SEL: Lesson on movement needs at school

- Student learning in their preferences for movement
- Using movement during your day to stretch, walk, do heavy work, exercise, or develop breathing skills.

## SEL: Lesson in noise and sound preferences

- Students learning their preferences for noise & sound
- Being aware of the noises that distract you, the noises that help you focus, and when you need to be in a quiet space (or use headphones) helps you feel good.

## SEL: Lesson in touch preferences

- Students learning their preferences for touch
- Not wanting other people to unexpectedly touch you, or get your hands messy can cause anxiety. Preferences for long sleeve and having difficulty holding a pencil can also happen with people who don't like light touch. Managing these things at school improve your well-being.

## SEL: Lesson in how to support my vision

- Students learning their preferences for what they look at
- If things catch your eye and you forget what you were doing, if too much information is on a page and the writing blurs together, if crowded places are overwhelming, it is helpful to manage these things. Your well-being and stress level are important to pay attention to and managing your visual world can help.

## SEL: Lesson in how to make transitions

- Students learning about what transitions during the day are difficult for them.
- Transitions happen when you move between activities, changing from something you like to do to something you don't like to do, changing classes, and coming and leaving school.

## Optimistic Closure: SEL signature practice

- What did you learn (or were reminded of) today that you will use tomorrow when working with students?
- Write in the Chat what you learned to day about regulation and executive functioning.

## Questions and Discussion

THANK YOU FOR COMING!

## Google Form Survey Link

Please share your learning experience with me by completing a [Survey](#).

If you would like to learn more about SEL and Regulation, visit my work at:

[Using SEL to Improve Regulation and Mental Health: Implications for School Based Practice](#)

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## Helpful Online Resources in SEL

- [What is the Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)?](https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/) (https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/)
- [The Minnesota Educational Association has SEL standards for student pre-K through 12th grade.](https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/safe/social/imp/) District SEL work is fully endorsed and supported at the state level (https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/safe/social/imp/)
- [Every Moment Counts website](https://everymomentcounts.org/) embedded mental health practices and more. (https://everymomentcounts.org/)