

Breaking the Mold of Preservice and Inservice Teacher Education: Innovative and Successful Practices for the Twenty-first Century

Edited by Audrey Cohan and Andrea Honigsfeld

"These accounts of the implementation of best practices, including mentoring, social and emotional learning, teacher leadership, and community involvement, illustrate instances where the knowing-doing gap has been bridged to create positive outcomes for students. Thoughtful practitioners will be inspired by this compendium of innovative ideas that have been documented as breaking the mold of traditional ideas and practices in preservice and inservice teacher education." —Marilyn Johnson, Ed.D., assistant superintendent, North Bellmore UFSD, NY

This unique collection of chapters takes the reader on a tour to explore innovative preservice and inservice teacher education practices from many regions of the United States, Canada and the world. Each of the chapters offers an authentic, documentary account of successful initiatives that break the traditional mold of teacher education.

Section I presents unique preservice teacher preparation programs and initiatives. These chapters offer compelling ideas to readers who seek change in the higher education model of teacher training.

Section II features inservice education for both the novice and veteran teacher. The chapters included in this section of the book offer stories of innovation as professional development initiatives. Each of the programs describes the setting or context in which the innovation takes place and focuses on the role of teachers and students.

Chapters in Section III highlight the benefits of collaborative teacher education practices. Through the lens of community and with the tools of cooperation and support, innovative practices are described for the improvement of student learning.

Section IV offers less commonly presented diverse, global perspectives on teacher education. The sharing of ideas through global examples highlight the similarities in educational practices and common goals across the world.

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Promoting Teachers' Social and Emotional Competencies to Support Performance and Reduce Burnout

Patricia A. Jennings

Teaching is more socially and emotionally demanding than it has ever been in the past. Growing numbers of children come to school unprepared and often at risk of mental health and behavioral problems (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1999). Yet teachers are expected to provide emotionally responsive support to *all* students, cultivate a warm and nurturing classroom environment, model exemplary emotion regulation (sometimes in the midst of chaos), coach students through conflict situations with thoughtfulness and sensitivity, successfully (yet respectfully) manage the challenging behaviors of increasing numbers of disruptive students, and handle the growing demands imposed by standardized testing.

Given these high expectations and demands, it is surprising that teachers rarely receive training to address and successfully handle the social and emotional challenges of teaching. Since little, if any, professional development targets these important competencies, it is understandable that the rate of teacher burnout is increasing and that teachers are leaving the profession at an alarming rate. Indeed, teacher distress and its resulting attrition is a growing problem. In the United States, approximately half of all teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching, and teacher attrition costs U.S. public schools more than \$7 billion per year (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 2007).

Research suggests that when teachers cannot manage the social and emotional pressure of teaching, the classroom climate deteriorates and their students demonstrate lower levels of performance and on-task behavior (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). Furthermore, as the classroom climate deteriorates, it can trigger in the teacher a “burnout cascade” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 492). Teachers may become emotionally exhausted as they try to manage increasingly difficult student behaviors. Eventually, teachers may resort to reactive and excessively punitive responses that do not promote self-regulation and may reinforce a self-sustaining cycle of classroom disruption.

THE PROSOCIAL CLASSROOM MODEL

Social and emotional competence (SEC) is a broad construct viewed as an outcome of social and emotional learning (SEL). The widely accepted definition of SEC, developed by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), involves five major competencies: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision making, self-management, and relationship management (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004).

According to the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) (see figure 13.1), teachers’ social and emotional competence (SEC)

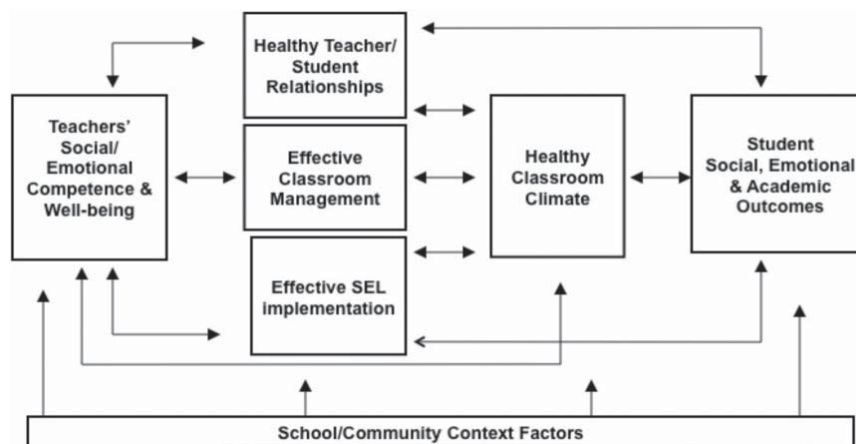


Figure 13.1. The Prosocial Classroom Model

and well-being play vital roles in their ability to cultivate a prosocial classroom climate linked to desired student social, emotional, and academic outcomes. SEC provides the necessary skill base and dispositions that help teachers form supportive relationships with their students, manage their classrooms effectively, and successfully implement social and emotional learning (SEL). These three factors are described with case vignettes that provide examples of their application in a classroom setting.

Teacher–Student Relationships

Supportive teacher–student relationships make a significant contribution to a healthy school and classroom climate, students’ connectedness to school, and academic and social-emotional outcomes. When a teacher recognizes and understands students’ emotions and the roles they play in the students’ behavior, the teacher can more effectively respond to the students’ needs and instill trust and respect. For example, because Mrs. Rivera understands that Joe’s challenging behavior and difficulty with self-control result from emotions stemming from the troubles he faces at home, she can show empathy and concern for his situation. Her caring, yet firm response may be more effective in helping Joe learn self-control and on-task behavior than if she were to resort to punitive or coercive tactics that often provoke resentment and defensiveness.

Classroom Management

Decades of research on learning and behavior have supported a move toward more proactive and democratic intrinsically motivated approaches to classroom management. These approaches encourage cooperative and prosocial behavior through the establishment of warm and supportive learning communities, firm guidance, and limit setting, as well as preventative strategies that promote student autonomy rather than controlling negative behaviors through punitive measures (Brophy, 2006).

The successful implementation of these approaches requires a greater degree of social and emotional competence (SEC) than do more authoritarian approaches. Socially and emotionally competent teachers’ keen understanding of classroom dynamics and conflict situations help them cultivate a caring, supportive community of learners collectively committed to

maintaining a positive classroom climate. They proactively use their emotional expressions and support to engender enthusiasm and joy of learning. They are also able to guide and direct students while avoiding intractable power struggles.

For example, Joe has a history as the class scapegoat; sometimes his peers intentionally provoke him to see him overreact, causing a class disruption. Last year, Joe was quietly sitting at his desk in Mr. Martin's class when Susan stabbed him in the arm with her pencil. Reacting automatically, Joe swung out his arm, hitting Susan hard. Susan collapsed in a pile of tears, attracting Mr. Martin's sympathy. Because of his history with self-control problems, Mr. Martin assumed Joe was at fault. Applying an authoritarian approach, Mr. Martin reinforced Joe's scapegoat status and his peer's bad behavior by punishing Joe and rewarding Susan.

Mrs. Rivera is more socially and emotionally aware than Joe's previous teacher and she recognizes the social dynamic underlying such situations. When a similar incident occurred this year, she helped Joe communicate his feelings to Susan more appropriately while also identifying and responding to Susan's provocative behavior with firm limits. Joe's peers are now much less likely to intentionally provoke him; thus, the classroom climate is generally calmer and the students are more productive. Joe is also building more successful relationships with his peers and he is enjoying school more than he did in the past.

Social and Emotional Program Implementation

Teachers with high levels of social and emotional competence (SEC) are well prepared to effectively implement social and emotional learning (SEL) by modeling skills and behavior in naturally occurring everyday situations. For example, when Mrs. Rivera introduced skills to regulate strong emotions, she later demonstrated the technique when she was upset with disruptive classroom behavior.

"I am beginning to feel very frustrated by the talking because no one can hear me and I don't want to raise my voice," she calmly remarked. "I am going to take some deep breaths to calm myself down and wait for everyone to be quiet so I can continue." Not only did she show her students how to calm down in the midst of an emotionally heated situation, she also

took full responsibility for her emotional state and gave her students the autonomy to take responsibility for their behavior so she could proceed with her lesson.

Three factors—teacher–student relationships, classroom management, and SEL program implementation—support the cultivation of a healthy classroom climate that is conducive to desirable social, emotional, and academic student outcomes. Furthermore, a healthy classroom climate may reinforce a teacher’s enjoyment of teaching and his or her sense of efficacy and commitment to the teaching profession, resulting in a positive feedback loop that may prevent burnout and reduce costly attrition.

CULTIVATING AWARENESS AND RESILIENCE IN EDUCATION (CARE)

Building upon our most current understanding of the neuroscience of emotion and previous research applying mindfulness-based approaches to promoting well-being and reducing stress (Brown, Ryan, & Creswell, 2007), the Garrison Institute in Garrison, New York, began the development of a new intervention directed toward supporting teacher social and emotional competence (SEC) as a means of improving classroom climate and student outcomes. Cultivating Awareness and Resilience in Education™ (CARE) was designed by a team of educators and scientific advisors to help teachers manage stress and enliven their teaching and thereby promote improvements in relationships with students, classroom management, and social and emotional learning.

The CARE program involves a blend of instruction and experiential activities, including time for discussion and reflection. As field-based professional development, CARE is typically presented during the school year in four all-day sessions spread out over four to five weeks. It is also offered to the public every summer in the form of a five-day intensive retreat at the Garrison Institute. In the field, facilitators coach teachers by phone and e-mail between sessions to support them as they practice and apply the new skills they have learned. The Garrison Institute also works with schools to develop sustainability and ongoing support for teachers.

CARE Program Components

The CARE intervention utilizes three primary instructional components: (a) emotion skills instruction, (b) mindfulness and stress reduction practices, and (c) listening and compassion exercises.

Emotion Skills Instruction

Emotional exhaustion is a primary contributor to teacher burnout and can interfere with teachers' performance. To help teachers build emotional resilience, the CARE training introduces emotion knowledge and skills, combining direct instruction with experiential activities. This knowledge and experience helps teachers understand, recognize, and regulate emotional responses in themselves and in others with whom they work (students, colleagues, and parents).

Reflective practices and role-plays support teachers' recognition of emotional states and their exploration of their *emotional landscape*—their emotional habitual patterns, triggers, tendencies, and reactivity profile. These skills help teachers reappraise emotionally challenging situations and respond with greater clarity and sensitivity to their students' needs and the emotional climate of the classroom, resulting in more consistent, assertive, compassionate, and effective classroom management. It may also help teachers provide social and emotional support to their students through direct instruction, modeling, and practices such as coaching students through peer conflicts.

Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Practices

During the CARE program, teachers learn how to balance their work and personal lives to continually renew the inner strength they need to do their jobs well. To support emotion and attention regulation, to reduce stress, and to help teachers be more aware, fully present, and engaged with their teaching and students, CARE introduces a series of mindfulness activities. The sessions begin with short periods of silent reflection and extend to activities that bring mindfulness into everyday activities such as standing, walking, experiencing a quiet presence in front of a group, and in role-plays. Mindfulness-based physical activities drawn from the

martial arts have been adapted and integrated to promote teachers' strong presence and self-confidence.

Listening and Compassion Exercises

To promote compassion and listening, CARE introduces *caring practice* and *mindful listening*. Caring practice is a guided reflection during which one mentally offers well-being, happiness, and peace—first to oneself, then to a loved one, a neutral colleague or acquaintance, and a person whom one finds challenging (such as a difficult student, parent, or colleague). Fredrickson, Cohn, Coffey, Pek, and Finkel (2008) found that this practice enhances well-being and strengthens one's personal resources, resulting in greater life satisfaction. Mindful listening practice involves listening with full attention, without the need to respond. A common tendency while listening is to think about how to respond in order to provide a helpful suggestion or answer. Through this practice, teachers learn that simply being present and listening fully is supportive in and of itself.

These integrated program components are developed across sessions augmented by individual reflection through writing and other forms of expression as well as group discussion. Teachers are provided with CDs of recorded guided practices for use at home, and a series of homework activities is suggested to help teachers apply and practice the program skills.

Program Evaluations

Since 2007, CARE has been piloted in the field with groups of teachers in Denver, San Francisco, and Philadelphia. The results of program evaluations suggest that CARE is attractive to teachers and has succeeded in helping them deal with the emotions of teaching. Between 2007 and 2009, CARE was offered as summer retreats at the Garrison Institute in New York and to teachers at a private school outside of Philadelphia. In April 2009, Wellspring Consulting conducted an evaluation of these CARE programs. The eighty-five participants with valid e-mail addresses (out of ninety-three total participants) were sent an e-mail with a link to the survey.

Most participants who responded found CARE to be valuable, and over 90 percent are highly likely or likely to recommend CARE to a colleague.

Eighty-four percent said that CARE was highly important or important for their professional development; 87 percent strongly agreed or agreed that all teachers should receive this training. Comments included the following:

- “I now have a calm and unshakable feeling that is deep within me, and this helps me to stay present, grounded, focused, creative, and thankful for each of the little miracles that I experience each and every day!”
- “I found the time to be some of the best spent time on training that I have had. I have implemented the strategies that I learned throughout a very difficult year and have offered some of the ideas to my colleagues and my student teachers.”
- “The interpersonal (listening) work was very powerful. Most professional trainings lack this type of experiential component, which is the type of learning that stays with me.”
- “I am much more present with my students throughout the day. I’m aware when emotions start to take over in a positive or negative way. This awareness helps me respond rather than react to a situation.”

One teacher explained how CARE helped her be more responsive to a disruptive student:

CARE has given me the tools and skills to be more calm and centered. In a particular situation, I can act in response to what is needed in the moment, rather than reacting to it. Taking deep breaths, I can calm myself down and notice what feelings his comments are triggering in me. I can see beyond his behavior (shouting, swearing, and interrupting the class) into his feelings and the needs behind those feelings which triggered his reaction. This way of relating to myself and others is a more compassionate way that leads to open and honest communication. This provides a model to the student of how to relate to himself and to others with compassion. It creates an atmosphere of confidence, trust, and more joy in the classroom.

In 2009, the Prevention Research Center at Pennsylvania State University was awarded \$932,361 from the U.S. Department of Education Institute for Educational Sciences with a subaward to the Garrison Institute to complete the development and evaluation of CARE in the context of

urban and suburban districts in Pennsylvania. This two-year project is currently underway and CARE has been refined and modified in response to teachers' feedback, although the primary components have remained the same. The project will culminate in a randomized, controlled pilot study of this final version with elementary teachers. Outcome measures will include self-report measures of well-being, mindfulness, time urgency, burnout, and efficacy as well as observational measures of teachers' behavior and classroom climate.

CONCLUSION

Although teacher burnout and attrition is a growing problem, promoting well-being and social and emotional competence (SEC) may help teachers manage the daily stresses of teaching. As a result, they may successfully cultivate supportive and caring relationships with their students, establish and maintain classroom environments that are conducive to learning, and more effectively implement social and emotional learning curricula. Successfully creating and maintaining a classroom learning environment where students are happy and excited to learn reinforces teachers' efficacy and enjoyment of teaching, thereby preventing burnout and attrition.

Thus far, CARE appears to be a promising program to help teachers cultivate well-being and social and emotional competence (SEC) by teaching them about emotions and how they affect teaching and learning, and promoting mindfulness-based skills to reduce stress and promote self-awareness. However, this field is in its early stages of development and there is a need to articulate the constructs of well-being and SEC more clearly and to address how to measure these constructs in the context of an educational setting.

In the coming years, it will be important to explore more fully whether teachers' participation in CARE results in improved student outcomes. Furthermore, future work should explore the potential mediating effects of teachers' well-being and SEC on classroom and student outcomes. Preliminary research suggests that promoting teacher well-being and SEC—without explicitly applying these skills and dispositions to classroom practice—may have limited effects on classroom outcomes (Jennings, Foltz, Snowberg, Sim, & Kemeny, 2010).

This novel approach to supporting teachers' professional development has important educational policy implications. Teacher quality has come to the forefront in discussions of school reform. However, in previous research, neither years of education nor years of experience have predicted good teaching. Perhaps social and emotional competence (SEC) is a critical contributor to what makes a teacher highly successful. If so, promoting SEC in teacher professional development may improve teaching and, as an added benefit, promote efficacy and teachers' commitment to the profession.

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