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## Session #2

# Choice Theory and Social-Emotional Learning: Why Teach Social-Emotional Skills?

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### LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By watching the video for this session and completing this session's learning activities, you will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of need to teach students social-emotional skills.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the five dimensions of SEL and how they relate to instruction.
- Apply what you have learned in your own teaching situation or complete an alternative application assignment.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your application experience

### PREPARATION:

In order to focus your thinking as you begin this session, please read the following articles:

#### **How Your Child's Emotional Skills Affect His Marks in School**

By Dr Patricia Porter

Success in school is all about being able to do schoolwork, right?

Wrong.

New research proves that it is the student with good emotional skills (EQ - Emotional Intelligence) who gets the best grades by far. In fact achievement scores for students who had taken part in courses where they learned how to develop their social and emotional skills were between 11% and 17% higher than their classmates.

Just imagine if your child could improve their scores by that amount, their grade level would shoot up.

And it is not rocket science. The research found three reasons why student's achievement scores increased.

1. There was a decrease in behavioral issues.

Students knew how to handle arguments and how to avoid conflict. Students who have self-esteem and self-confidence have the ability to walk away from trouble and to calm themselves down when they get upset.

2. Attendance went up

When students have the emotional skills to handle social situations and to not feel threatened by classmates they are more likely to feel like going to school and less likely to make excuses for staying away.

3. Students enjoyed school more

When a student has the emotional skills he or she needs to be able to handle the school situation, and to have the self-confidence to know that they can learn, school suddenly becomes a much more manageable and friendly place to be.

But why should a decrease in behavioral issues, better attendance, and more enjoy-

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ment of school lead to an increase in a child's ability to learn?

When your child is behaving badly, or not enjoying school his brain is busy trying to work out his emotions. There is less brain-power left for classroom learning. When he has the skills to manage his emotions his brain is free to concentrate on helping him do his class work.

Increased attendance? That speaks for itself; children miss class work and learning when they are not in school.

If your child is underachieving, if you think your child 'could do better', you need to check his or her emotional skills. It could be that it is not lack of learning but lack of emotional skills that is causing your child to find learning difficult.

Not sure how to do this?

Fortunately there is an answer. The Leading to Learning 5 Step System for Success has a whole section where you can assess your child's emotional skills.

I feel rather smug knowing that I understood the importance of emotional learning skills even before this research came out.

*Dr Patricia Porter*  
(<http://www.leading2learning.com/>) believes that parents have the power to help children learn and succeed in school. In fact, she believes that children can only reach their full learning potential when parents are actively engaged in helping children learn. Her research and experience confirmed that, while all parents want to help their children succeed, many are not sure how to help them succeed in school. By understanding the special role that parents play in their child's education Dr Porter is able to provide parents with information and advice that helps them choose the best way to help their child learn so that they can reach their full learning potential.

Article Source:

[http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Dr\\_Patricia\\_Porter](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Dr_Patricia_Porter)

## **Classroom Respect, Behavior & Learning**

By Mick Jackson

Stand on the playground during recess or in the hall during lunch and you'll hear the usual conversations about boys, girls, sports, homework, teachers, and student life in general; but what you're also likely to hear are many disrespectful comments being made by one student to another. Generally these are not scathing comments that will scar an individual for life, but they are rude, disrespectful, sarcastic, and basically inappropriate comments for anyone to make to another.

Sometimes as teachers we forget that our job is not only to provide the opportunity and information to learn—it is also our job to provide a safe and positive school and learning environment where learning may take place. Most of us are quick to stop outright aggressive behavior or violent talk, but far too often the more mild disrespectful and sarcastic comments are allowed to go unchallenged.

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we are behavioral models for all students. If we allow or ignore disrespectful comments between students, regardless of how mild, we are sending the message that these types of comments are acceptable. Our ignoring or refraining from commenting upon these comments actually reinforces this behavior, increasing the likelihood that such comments will continue to be made. As teachers, we can't control what happens in a student's life at home, at work, or even in the hallway—but we can control what happens in our classrooms (Beamon, 2001; Daniel and Benton, 1995).

As educators, it is our job to insure that all students are treated with basic respect while in our classroom and in our presence.

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According to Valerio (2001), a classroom is a "theatrical stage" that must be designed in advance to make students feel comfortable with their instructor, peers, and environment. How we structure our classrooms and what types of behaviors and conversations we allow has a significant impact on the perceived safety of our classroom.

It is important to keep in mind that safety and trust are determined individually by each student in the classroom. Although we may believe our classrooms are safe and each student feels he/she can take risks in the academic and social environment, this may not be the case. Our students may be physically safe, but if basic respect is not mandated in our classrooms, then many of our students will feel emotionally unsafe, which will negatively impact social and academic growth.

When students enter the classroom, they are bringing with them years of experiences and issues from the outside world. They have interacted with each other on many levels outside of school. Along with these outside interactions come deep-seated feelings about certain classmates. Regardless of whether these feelings are warranted, it is unlikely that we can change them. What we can change is the behaviors students change in response to those feelings. It is our responsibility to ensure that our students give one another basic respect.

Basic respect should be a bottom-line requirement for all individuals, adults and students alike, which enter our classroom. Students do not have to like everyone in the class, but they should be required to give basic respect to everyone. Let me say that one more time. You (students, teachers, aides, administrators, parents, etc.) don't have to like everyone in the classroom, but you will afford them basic respect at all times. This statement should be the mantra in all classroom settings nationwide.

It is always wise to begin each school year with a classroom discussion about the rules and rituals that will be followed for the year. Many of the classroom rules and rituals should be developed by and in cooperation with the students so there is a feeling of ownership, but not all rules should be negotiable. Classroom safety and basic respect should not be negotiated, and it should be made very clear that violation of these two bottom-line rules will not be tolerated. Students need to know that rude, sarcastic, threatening, mean-spirited, or negative comments, whether said in jest or not, will be met with consequences.

Due to today's media, many students have learned to use sarcasm as a form of communication and humor. Sarcastic humor is one of the most sophisticated forms of humor and most students and adults do have the social and emotional skills to use this form of humor correctly. Many individuals use sarcastic humor to veil threats, belittle others, point out flaws, or improve their position in a social group, all under the guise of humor. To allow such "humor" in our classroom sets a dangerous precedent. It sends students the message that they cannot be openly disrespectful, but they may be covertly disrespectful if they cloak their comments with sarcastic humor.

Since many of our students have never been taught what basic respect is and how to give it, how do we help them understand this concept? A simple method is to make this part of the rules and rituals discussion at the beginning of the school year (or each new term if classes change). Have the students name some of the individuals they admire and would treat with the utmost respect. Remind them that you are not asking them who they idolize (rock stars, sports figures, movie stars), but whom they admire and would give the utmost respect to in all situations. The list might include judges,

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grandparents, priests, bosses, and military personnel. Then tell the class that any comment not fit to be made to one of these respected individuals should not be made to another person in or out of the classroom.

There is a high likelihood that not all faculty will hold their students to this high standard, and this will make your job that much more difficult. Obviously, if this were a school-wide policy, students would learn to be respectful in all school situations. The fact that all faculty will not enforce it should not deter you from requiring basic respect in your classroom and in your presence. If as teachers we hold firm to the basic respect rule, our students will feel safer, and that feeling of physical and emotional safety will afford them the learning environment that will maximize learning and positive academic outcomes.

*Mick Jackson is an Intervention Specialist with a Master's Degree in Special Education and Theory. Mr. Jackson has 15 years of combined experience in self-contained special education classrooms, resource rooms and hospital day treatment.*

Article Source:

[http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Mick\\_Jackson](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=Mick_Jackson)

## **Helping Troubled Teens Develop Skills to Deal With Their Own Problems**

By James Huinink

Some of the most popular solutions for "troubled teens" are boot camps or school discipline. However, several criticisms of this solution have come forward in the last few years. In addition, new data shows that there are effective treatment programs that avoid the pitfalls of boot camps and the twin revolving doors of school discipline or the justice system.

One of the leading critics of boot camps says they are becoming outdated because

they handle struggling teens "in ways that don't address their true difficulties." Ross Greene is a psychologist and author of the recently published, *Lost at School: Why Our Kids With Behavioral Challenges Are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them*. Ross notes that many schools are still focused on disciplining teens when what they need to do is identify and deal with the lagging skills that cause teens to fall into trouble.

Greene argues, "Well-behaved students aren't behaving themselves because of the school discipline program. They're behaving themselves because they have the skills to handle life's challenges in an adaptive way." According to Ross, "We're losing a lot of kids and a lot of teachers because we still view challenging kids the wrong way. It's an exercise in frustration for everyone involved."

"In other words, these kids have a development delay, a learning disability of sorts... in the same way that kids who are delayed in reading are having difficulty mastering the skills required for becoming proficient in reading, challenging kids are having difficulty mastering the skills required for becoming proficient in handling life's social, emotional, and behavioral challenges."

In discussing the popular option of "boot camps for troubled teens," Dr. Edward Latessa essentially echoes Greene in decrying a root problem with these: their focus on discipline over treatment and rehabilitation.

Latessa writes, "What are they teaching you in boot camp? Drills, ceremony, discipline, how to say yes sir, no sir. Well the problem is that's not related to delinquent behavior." Latessa counters that good programs focus on behaviors, attitudes and coping skills that help students face and deal with real world problems. Today's successful treatment programs focus on practical skills as simple and straightforward as how to avoid risky situations and negative friends and remain-

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ing assertive with peers intent on leading them astray.

"If teens practice these skills then they have the ability to deal with situations when they get into them. Good programs teach those things and they do it in a way that it is modeled, practiced, and reinforced."

Indeed, a recent study backs up his claims. Treatment programs that focus on behavior and attitudes and are properly licensed have documented success. The National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSP) surveyed 1027 adolescents within a year after discharge from one of its member programs. Analysis showed that "adolescent problems improve significantly during private residential treatment and that, with only a few exceptions, discharge functioning and in-treatment change are relatively similar, regardless of adolescent background, history, problems, and treatment factors."

In order to be a member of NATSP, treatment programs must be "licensed by the appropriate state agency authorized to set and oversee standards of therapeutic and/or behavioral healthcare for youth and adolescents" or the program must be "accredited by a nationally recognized behavioral health accreditation agency." In addition, its therapeutic services must have "oversight by a qualified clinician."

Changing behaviors and attitudes is the key to helping teens deal with their own troubles, far more effective than discipline imposed by any outside agent. Today's effective programs are focused on attitude changes and bestowing practical skills so teens avoid trouble. As Gordon Hay of Venture Academy, a school and summer camp for troubled teens in Ontario, says, "Boot camps are heading toward extinction."

*Jim Huinink is Director of Web Strategy for ourkids.net a portal on Canadian private schools that features private school listings and advice for parents including lists of and advice about private boarding schools for boys and girls and schools for troubled teens.*

*Article Source:*

*[http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=James\\_Huinink](http://EzineArticles.com/?expert=James_Huinink)*

## **PREPARATION:**

Please consider the following questions with respect to the above reading. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, reflect upon the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

1. Consider this statement from the first article, "New research proves that it is the student with good emotional skills (EQ - Emotional Intelligence) who gets the best grades by far." What has been your own experience with respect to students with good social-emotional skills? Have they been more successful learners? Explain your answer.
2. The first article seems to suggest that social-emotional learning could be an answer to the problem of bullying. Do you agree or disagree? Explain your answer.
3. In the second article, with reference to students' disrespectful comments to each other, the author writes, "Our ignoring or refraining from commenting upon these comments actually reinforces this behavior, increasing the likelihood that such comments will continue to be made." Do you agree that ignoring can reinforce disrespectful behavior? Support your an-

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swer with examples from your own experience.

4. Consider this statement in the second article, "Since many of our students have never been taught what basic respect is and how to give it, how do we help them understand this concept?" Do you believe that your own students understand what respect is and how to give it? Explain your answer.

5. With respect to the third article on boot campus for troubled teens, is the author suggesting that boot campus are all about controlling kids and they should really about teaching kids to control themselves? Explain your answer. How does this article relate to social-emotional learning?

6. Consider your responses to 1-5 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

### **VIDEO PROGRAM:**

View the video program for this session entitled, "**Why Teach Social-Emotional Skills?**" The running time for the video is approximately 25 minutes.

### **VIDEO PROGRAM OVERVIEW:**

In this video, Jon Erwin explains why social-emotional skills are essential for our students' success both in school and in life. He explains why social-emotional skills must be systematically taught and why leaving their learning to chance is a dangerous proposition. In his discussion of social-emotional learning and character, he examines the traits that can lead to our and our students' success.

### **VIDEO AND READING FOCUS QUESTIONS:**

Please consider the following questions with respect to the information presented in the

reading assignment and video program for this session. If you are taking this course as a member of a study team, discuss your answers with your colleagues. If you are taking this course as an individual, consider the implications your answers might have for your teaching situation.

1. Take a moment and reflect on your own successes in life and on a piece of paper list the character traits that were instrumental in your achieving those successes.

2. In the video, Jon presents the following list of character traits:

Respect  
Responsibility  
Honesty  
Compassion  
Kindness  
Strong Work Ethic  
Optimism  
Perseverance  
Dedication  
Integrity  
Consideration  
Confidence  
Self-discipline  
Patience  
Courage

Of the above traits, identify three that you feel are critical for your students' success in school and explain why you believe they are important.

3. With reference to the traits you identified in #2 above, how could you teach these traits to your students? If you have already taught them, how could you reinforce them?

4. What traits do you see lacking in your students (lack of compassion, lack of patience)? What could you do to correct this?

5. Modeling is an important way we teach values and character to students. What are some character traits that you model for your students?

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6. Consider your responses to 1-5 above. What implications do you see for your own classroom?

### **APPLICATION PROJECT:**

For this and each of the following sessions in this course, you will be asked to plan and implement a lesson or activity that furthers your knowledge of course content and/or tests the viability of that content in your own teaching situation. If you are not currently teaching and do not have access to a classroom, as an alternative to putting your plan into action, describe the results you might expect once implementation is possible. To ensure that this aspect of the course is relevant and useful to you, we are allowing you the option of doing an assigned application project or creating your own.

For this session, your options are:

**Option 1.** Use one of the activities demonstrated in the video with your students. The purpose of the activity is to have your students consider the character traits that are necessary for success in school and in life. One way of accomplishing this would be in a class meeting or class discussion. If you do not have access to a classroom, draw on your past experience and describe the results of the implementation that you would anticipate.

**Option 2.** Create your own application project. If you choose this option, please follow these guidelines:

#### **Guidelines for Creating Your Own Application Project:**

Some suggestions for the types of projects that you could create include:

*Application Assignment Suggestions:*

*Implement one of the lessons, activities, or assessment approaches suggested in the videos in your own teaching situation. Submit any modifications that you made for your students, summarize your students' reaction to the lesson and the results of the assessment. If possible, include samples of student work and/or assessment.*

*Modify one of your current lesson plans to better incorporate what you have learned in this course. Present your lesson in a "before and after" format. Include your rationale for any changes or modification you make.*

*Create your own lesson that is inspired by the course content. Submit a summary of your lesson plan along with an explanation of how it supports course content. If possible, include samples of student work or assessment.*

*Have a discussion with a group of your students regarding responsibility, relationships, behavior, or some subject related to social-emotional learning. After the discussion, have the students complete a project-based or performance-based assessment (e.g., a story, a picture, a poster, a collage, etc.). Submit a summary of the activity and how it relates to course content, your evaluation of its effectiveness, and a sample of the student's work.*

*Present the ideas in a session to your administrator or a colleague. Submit your outline of the presentation, your colleague or administrator's comments, and your own evaluation of your presentation. Conduct an Internet search for more in-depth information about one aspect of the course. Include a summary of your search, the results, and how you plan to use what you have learned in your classroom. In summary, your application assignments for sessions 2-15 in this course are to create lessons or activities that demonstrate your un-*

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derstanding of course content as it applies to your teaching situation. Be creative, let your imagination be your guide, and enjoy the projects!

### **Rubric for Progress Reports:**

As evidence of completing your application projects, you must submit a Progress Report for each project that includes the following three components:

**A Description.** Evidence that your application activity or lesson supports course content and including:

- A description of the goals of the lesson or activity.
- A description of the strategies to meet those goals.

**An Analysis.** Evidence that you have analyzed your experience teaching the lesson or conducting the activity including:

- Identifying the most successful aspect of the lesson or activity and your reasons for its success.
- Identifying the least successful aspect of the lesson or activity and your reasons for its lack of success.

**An Evaluation.** Evidence that you have evaluated the effectiveness of the lesson or activity including:

- an assessment as to whether the goals of the lesson or activity were achieved
- any modifications you would institute to improve the effectiveness of the lesson or activity

In addition to the above, **Progress Reports** are expected to be completed in a professional manner with attention to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

**An “A” (Excellent) grade** is earned if the evidence presented is comprehensive, convincing, and presented in a clear, professional manner.

**A “B” (Good) grade** is earned if the evidence presented is adequate and presented in a professional manner.

**Grades of “C,” “D,” or “F”** may be assigned to papers where the evidence presented is less than adequate or presented in a less than professional manner.

The **Progress Report** forms at the back of the book contain questions that will guide you in your submissions to ensure that above three components are addressed.

### **PROGRESS REPORTING**

After you have completed, created and implemented your application project, please turn to the **Progress Report** form for this session

### **Session Notes**