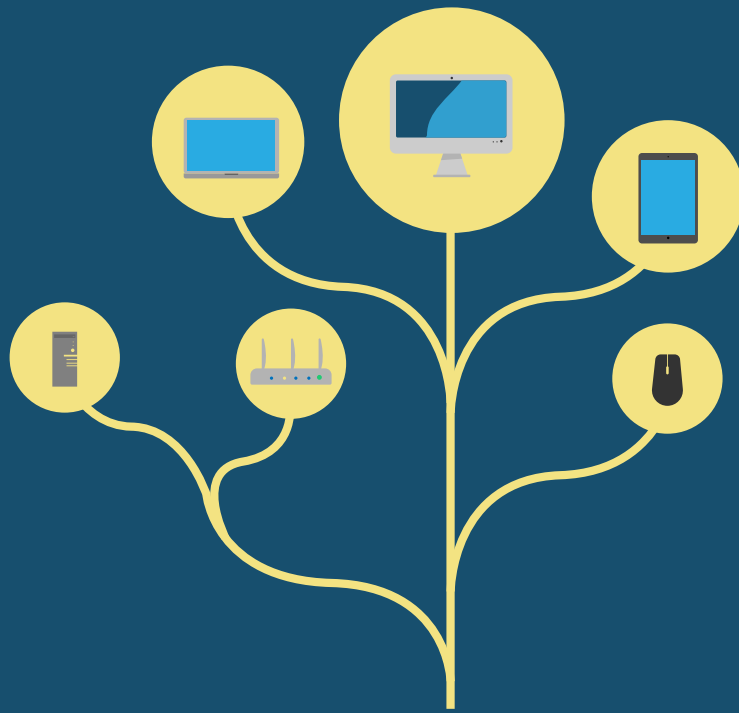




Digital Social Emotional Learning

Addressing Student
Mental Health in the Classroom

Camp Timber - Review of Research

What is Social-Emotional Learning

There has been an explosion of interest in social and emotional learning (SEL) over the past few years as researchers and educators have learned more about the developing brain and the impact of social and emotional skills on a child's success in the classroom. The ability to regulate one's emotions and engage cooperatively with others directly impacts a child's academic attitude, his/ her ability to functionally adapt in school, and to form successful relationships throughout life (Elias et al, 1997; Durlak et al., 2011; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. Winter, 2004). Over the last two decades research has increasingly demonstrated that social and emotional learning can improve academic achievement and have a lifelong impact on students. (Zins et al, 2007). Research studies have also demonstrated that all forms of learning, whether academic, social, or emotional, are inextricably linked (Zins et al, 2007; Jones & Kahn, 2017). There is enough evidence to suggest that non-academic skills and competencies should therefore be a central part of all children's education "because of their intrinsic value to society . . . and because they may help to reduce achievement and behavior gaps and mitigate exposure to stress" (Jones et. al., 2017, p. 50).

Social and emotional learning refers to a broad range of skills, attitudes and behaviors that have been shown to be critical to a child's success in school, both academically and personally (Greenberg et al., 2003; Payton et al., 2007). From getting along with peers, to regulating one's attention, to managing one's emotions, these skills have been defined and conceptualized in a variety of ways. According to the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2004), the core features of emotional development include an "ability to identify and understand one's own feelings, to

accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others, to manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner, to regulate one's own behavior, to develop empathy for others, and to establish and maintain relationships" (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, p.1).

The idea of social and emotional learning has been around for more than twenty years and has been referred to by many names: emotional intelligence, noncognitive skills, soft skills, and character education to name a few. While some of these terms have been created in an effort to categorize and define SEL skills in a comprehensible way, others are based on different theoretical perspectives and constructs. For example, Stephanie Jones, Associate Professor in Human Development and Urban Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education, organizes the skills into three main strands: cognitive regulation skills which are needed to direct an individual towards attaining a goal: often referred to as executive functioning skills. Emotional processes are the skills which help individuals to identify and regulate their emotions, and social and interpersonal skills which enable an individual to correctly interpret social behavior and engage positively with others (Jones, Barnes, Bailey & Doolittle, 2017). CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, describes five core areas of SEL competence: Self-awareness: knowing your strengths and limitations, Self-management: having the ability to stay in control and persevere through challenges, Social-awareness: understanding and empathizing with others, Relationship-management: being able to work with others and manage conflict, and Responsible decision making: having the ability to engage in problem solving and to make ethical and safe choices. (Refer to www.casel.org for more information on the evidence supporting these social-emotional competencies.) One of the more recent attempts at creating a framework for understanding the importance of these skills was made in 2014 by Laura Bornfreund at the New

America Foundation. Bornfreund refers to skills such as self-regulation, goal-setting, planning, and flexibility as Skills for Success (Tooley & Bornfreund, 2014).

Jones and Doolittle (2017) believe that part of the problem that has arisen in trying to interpret the evidence around social-emotional learning has occurred because of these different conceptual variations. They explain, “Lack of precision with respect to core SEL competencies and how to measure them makes it harder to translate research findings into beneficial practices to support SEL in schools” (Jones, Barnes, Bailey & Doolittle, 2017, p.6). Jones and her colleagues believe these skills are best referred to collectively as social and emotional learning due to the important implication that these skills can be taught and learned. They also cite recent market research conducted in 2016 by Loeb and colleagues (Loeb et al, 2016) that reveals that the term social-emotional learning is most preferred by parents, policy makers and practitioners (Jones, Barnes, Bailey & Doolittle, 2017).

Regardless of how social-emotional skills are defined and interpreted it is clear they are highly interrelated and dependent on each other. Students do not learn in a vacuum or alone, but rather with their peers and teachers in collaborative settings (Zins et al., 2007). For example, when a child is listening to her teacher read a story aloud to the group she is focusing her attention, ignoring distractions from nearby peers, regulating her internal emotional state, and managing the impulse to call out. In September 2017, the Council of Distinguished Scientists of the Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development issued The Evidence Base for How We Learn—a brief on the connections among social, emotional, and academic development. Drawing from research in brain science, medicine, economics, psychology, and education, these 28 scientists concluded that learning, by its very nature, is both social and emotional. Cognitive abilities, emotional competence, and social and interpersonal skills interconnect in the learning process because strengths or weaknesses in any one area will impact development in another area. Academic learning is best achieved when all three are addressed. Tooley

& Bornfreund (2014) assert that while high-quality early childhood programs have long recognized the importance of teaching both pre-academic and social and emotional skills, once children move into their elementary school years a continuing focus on the skills needed for success in life is often stopped.

The integration of academic with social-emotional learning has the potential to positively impact school climate and teacher effectiveness, as well as to benefit children regardless of their racial/ethnic background, their socio-economic status, or where they live. “Children exposed to adversity, trauma, and stress are particularly susceptible to challenges in these areas, and those with different geographic, socioeconomic, gender, and racial/ethnic backgrounds can experience the same environment differently. [Therefore], this work is especially relevant for supporting low-income or at-risk students, providing them with a set of skills that can buffer exposure to adverse experiences or difficulty in school” (Jones & Kahn, 2017, p. 12). The emotional health of young children has been found to be closely related to the environments in which they grow up. Children who are raised in homes and communities impacted by adult “mental-health problems, substance abuse, or family violence face significant threats to their own emotional development” (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, p. 3).

Benefits of Social-Emotional Instruction

Research over the past two decades supports the need for explicit, evidence-based social-emotional instruction within the school setting. As detailed below, social-emotional instruction has been shown to result in numerous benefits for students and teachers within a school setting as well as within the community at large. According to Greenberg et al. (2017), school-based SEL programs can positively impact students’ sense of personal competence, can improve their academic

achievement, and can decrease the likelihood of future behavioral and emotional problems. They contend that the integration of universal, social-emotional programming should be part of a comprehensive public health initiative since schools are optimal locations for providing interventions for children. A comprehensive public health approach to education is one which attempts to improve the overall wellbeing of the general population. In this context, SEL programming delivered at the universal level would not just target those students who are already impacted by specific mental health or behavioral problems, but also include “a range of prevention or competence-promotion strategies that could benefit many more students” (Greenberg, et al., 2017, p. 18).

Some of the key findings supporting social emotional instruction include:

- In a critical study of SEL programs across K–12 settings, students who received social and emotional instruction and support programs gained 13 percentile points in academic performance. They also showed increased abilities in social and behavioral skills and improved attitude over students who did not receive these programs (Taylor et al., 2017).
- Children who are able to “master” SEL skills are able to interact more positively with children and adults, do better academically in school, and demonstrate more positive mental health and physical outcomes as adults (Jones & Doolittle, 2017).
- In a 2011 meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL programs involving 270,034 students spanning kindergarten through high school, researchers found that SEL participants demonstrated improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance with an 11-percentile-point gain in achievement (Durlak, et al., 2011)
- A number of correlational studies found a connection between effective classroom functioning and increased student learning when children are able to focus their attention, handle difficult emotions, manage their relationships with peers and adults, and persevere when confronted with difficult situations (Jones et al., 2017).
- Poor emotion regulation can negatively impact children’s thinking, thereby compromising their judgment and decision making (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).
- A recent meta-analysis found that students who received explicit SEL skills instruction with evidence-based SEL programs demonstrated improved attitudes and behaviors, including a greater motivation to learn, improved relationships with peers, and a deeper connection to their school (Durlak et al, 2011, cited in The Missing Piece: A Report for CASEL, p. 8).
- Social and emotional learning has been shown to have positive long-term effects over a person’s lifetime. The Perry Preschool Study evaluated the impact of social emotional learning when introduced early in a child’s life. The study found that on average, those children who participated in a preschool curriculum which incorporated social-emotional programming were more likely to be employed, had committed fewer crimes and were more likely to have completed high school than their counterparts who did not have the preschool’s SEL-oriented experience (High Scope, 2005).
- High-paying jobs increasingly require social-emotional skills: a growing body of work in economics documents the labor market’s return to “noncognitive” skills, including social skills and leadership skills (Kuhn & Weinberger 2005).
- Social and emotional skills have been identified as crucial for future leaders. Skills such as problem solving, collaborating effectively with others and persevering through challenges are essential in all aspects of the work place. Flexibility, initiative and creativity are just a few of the important skills workers will need in order to succeed in an ever-changing workforce. While social and emotional skills can be learned at any point in a child’s education, research suggests that the early childhood years are

a critical time for the acquisition of essential skills (World Economic Forum Report, 2016).

For a comprehensive review of outcomes related to social emotional learning refer to *The Missing Piece: A Report for CASEL*, Durlak, J.A., et al. (January/February 2011), Denham, S.A. and Brown, C. (October 2010).

Student Learning in the 21st Century: Technology in the Classroom

As educators recognize the growing importance of teaching social-emotional skills, the method of instruction must evolve to meet the changing needs of students. Visit nearly any school in America and it is easy to see that technology is everywhere. As of 2016, public schools in the United States provided at least one computer for every five students and spent more than \$3 billion per year on digital content (Herold, 2018). Led by federal and state governments, the United States has been in the process of an enormous effort to “make affordable high-speed Internet and free online teaching resources available to even the most rural and remote schools.” Beginning in 2015-16, more state standardized tests for the elementary and middle grades were administered via technology than by paper and pencil (Herold, 2018). According to the National Science Board’s 2018 report on the use of computers and other technology devices in K-12 classrooms, policymakers and researchers believe that “modern technology may have the potential to transform education” (National Science Foundation Report, 2016, p. 1). Since President Obama pledged to connect 99% of American students to next-generation broadband and high-speed wireless in their schools and libraries by 2018 as part of his ConnectED initiative in 2013, the United States has made substantial progress in reaching this goal. The percentage of school districts with high-speed broadband has increased from 30% in 2013 to 88% in 2016. Furthermore, according to 2017 data released by

the Federal Communications Commission 39.2 million students and 2.6 million teachers have reached or exceeded the minimum recommended connectivity level for digital learning (Marwell, 2017).

Research studies point to a wide variety of benefits supporting the integration of educational technology into classrooms, often referred to as blended learning. Blended learning has been described as a strategy to combine “technology-based instruction with traditional, teacher-to-student lessons” (Report Summary: *Breaking Down Barriers to Blended Learning*, 2015). Using a blended learning approach in elementary schools enables students to develop confidence in using new devices and readies them for higher levels of education and jobs that require advanced computer skills. This is especially true for students who do not have access to computers at home. It is also believed that even more than simply building computer literacy, computers can be used at the elementary school level to complement traditional instruction and make learning more engaging (Mercer, 2018). According to Pape (2010), benefits of blended learning have been noted to include “providing students with a way to demonstrate their knowledge while appealing to diverse learning styles and fostering independent learning and self-directed learning skills in students” (Pape, 2010, p. 23). Additionally, the use of a variety of multimedia formats and applications that allow students to pause content are valuable in early childhood education especially since students come to school with different levels of competency, styles of learning and speeds for absorbing information (Pape, 2010). Utilizing computer technology in the classroom may also help to reduce the amount of time teachers are currently spending grading and reviewing print-based materials and may help teachers better identify their students’ unique strengths and weaknesses, similar to the type of experience students receive during individual tutoring situations.

Educators have long struggled with the challenge of finding new ways to engage their students and increase their motivation to learn. According to Chickering & Gamson, “Learning is not a spectator sport. Students do not learn much just by sitting in class listening to teachers, memorizing prepackaged

assignments, and spitting out answers. They must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, apply it to their daily lives. They must make what they learn part of themselves” (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, p. 4). These words written three decades ago, still hold true. The only difference today is that with the advent of the digital age, students have more ways than ever to actively engage with their learning and apply it to their daily lives. Research has shown that active learning leads to higher-order critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as well as, improved communication skills (P. A. Johnson, 2011).

Teachers who utilize computer technology in their classrooms have an abundance of means to engage their students. Interactive activities introduce a kinesthetic element into instruction. Traditionally, instruction has been delivered verbally by the teacher. Students were expected to listen and make sense of the content based on what they heard. However, students have many different learning styles and the traditional mode of curriculum delivery does not work for everyone. Employing a number of different modalities increases retention of new concepts. Edgar Dale’s research in the late 1960s demonstrated that students learn more when they are engaged in active learning experiences (Dale, 1969). This suggests that “students need to be involved in “doing” real experiences related to the content they are learning” (Kitchens, 2018, p. 59).

Integrating engaging technology can lead to an increase in motivation and interest that encourages students to want to learn more. Additionally, computer technology can make resources available to students who might not otherwise have access. Many teachers have not had formal training in the delivery of social and emotional instruction as part of their teacher training and, as a result, they may not include curriculum in this area due to their own lack of confidence and competence with the subject material. Utilizing a computer-based learning approach can provide teachers and their students with access to curriculum that has been created by experts in the field.

As noted in the New Vision for Education: Fostering Social and Emotional Learning through Technology

(World Economic Forum Report, 2016), the thoughtful use of technology has great promise in helping to teach 21st century skills, including social-emotional skills. Technology has the ability to “personalize learning, engage the disengaged, complement what happens in the classroom, extend education outside the classroom, and provide access to learning to students who otherwise might not have sufficient educational opportunities” (World Economic Forum Report, 2016, p. 11).

Within a typical school setting social-emotional lessons are generally developed through three primary approaches: a dedicated SEL curriculum, social and emotional skill development that is embedded within an existing academic curriculum, and teaching practices such as project- or inquiry-based learning (World Economic Forum Report, 2016). As the authors note, although a variety of programs exist for teaching SEL skills, to-date most of those programs use technology in an extremely limited way, if at all. While many ed-tech products exist for teaching core academic areas such as math and literacy, few have been created for instruction in the area of social and emotional learning.

According to CASEL, an SEL intervention is determined to be “comprehensive” when schools, families, and communities work together to promote students’ development across the five competence clusters: Self-awareness, Self-Management, Social-Awareness, Relationship Management, and Problem Solving (Greenberg, et.al., 2018). Furthermore, well-designed social-emotional skills programs “can be characterized by the acronym SAFE, which stands for sequenced—having a connected and coordinated set of activities to foster skill development; active—using active forms of learning to help students master new skills; focused—emphasizing the development of personal and social skills; and explicit—targeting specific social-emotional skills” (Greenberg, et al., 2018, p. 18).

Using Technology to Support Social-Emotional Learning: Camp Timber

Although a variety of product elements have been identified as “essential” when using technology and digital games for teaching SEL (World Economic Forum Report, 2016), there is no documented evidence that these elements have been integrated into the creation of a comprehensive solution which directly teaches social-emotional skills to students. . . until Camp Timber.

The Camp Timber Suite is a digital solution created to **actively** and **explicitly** teach SEL within the classroom. As previously discussed, research shows that digital curriculum is increasingly being used in classrooms across the country to enhance students’ ability to master core academic content and acquire educational skills. The Camp Timber Suite provides a blended learning approach in which students, regardless of different competencies, learning styles, and speeds for absorbing information, are able to receive in-depth exposure to highly engaging social-emotional curriculum.

Camp Timber has been conceptualized to encompass the broad spectrum of understanding that exists regarding SEL. Because there is a great deal of overlap in how agencies define social emotional skills Camp Timber does not align with just one theoretical perspective. “All models of SEL encompass three broad categories: thinking skills, behavioral skills, and self-control skills” (McKown, 2017, p.157). It is possible to find common ground among differing perspectives by considering social-emotional learning to include skills “such as the ability to infer others’ thoughts and feelings (thinking skills), the ability to initiate a positive interaction (behavioral skills), and the ability to stay calm when upset (self-control skills) (McKown, 2017, p.157). The Camp Timber curriculum supports this model of thinking and is based on a comprehensive review of all SEL state standards which currently exist in the United States. Additionally, the specific SEL skills which are taught via Camp Timber are correlated

with the five core areas of competence as set forth by CASEL, the world’s leading organization working to integrate social, emotional, and academic learning in children from preschool through high school.

In order for students to learn new concepts in an efficient and sustainable manner it is crucial that instruction occur on an ongoing basis. Whether it is learning to read or write or play a musical instrument, students do not learn skills with just a few minutes of instruction on an irregular basis and without repeated opportunities to practice with guidance. The same is true for the acquisition of social-emotional skills. Children cannot be expected to learn the essential skills needed to succeed in an ever-changing world without being provided direct and repeated instruction. It is not surprising however, that with all that must be accomplished in a typical school day, school staff and administrators struggle to carve out sufficient time for social and emotional skill building on a scale that reaches all of their students.

As noted previously, there are other high quality social-emotional curricula which currently exist for elementary-aged students, including *Second Step*, *Paths*, *I Can Problem Solve*, and *The Incredible Years Series* to name a few. Though some of these programs include a small degree of digital delivery, their formats are primarily didactic in nature. Camp Timber takes SEL instruction a step further by bringing it into the digital age of the 21st century.

The Camp Timber Suite is designed to provide an array of instructional practices to foster and support social-emotional instruction within the elementary school classroom. It complies with the characteristics of a SAFE social emotional program (Durlak et al., 2011): it is focused and explicit while incorporating active and engaging forms of learning to target specific social-emotional skills. In their *2013 Guide: Effective Social and Emotional Programming*, CASEL identifies key factors that characterize high-quality SEL programs. These include a well-designed curriculum that is classroom based, the inclusion of all five of CASEL’s core competencies, repeated opportunities for practice, and structured support for continued skill development over multiple years. CASEL also

advises for the inclusion of initial training and ongoing implementation supports. The Camp Timber Suite provides personalized training to schools prior to initial administration, as well as integrated professional development and support throughout implementation via Timber Tips which are included with each lesson.

At Camp Timber, social-emotional instruction for K-3 students takes place digitally within a typical summer camp setting. This location was chosen because of its play-based nature, providing a neutral setting in which children can learn and practice SEL skills. Friendly, animated cartoon ‘monsters’ and real-life student models are employed as part of Camp Timber’s engaging delivery of essential SEL concepts. Via interactive participation with the Camp Timber campers and counselors, elementary students and their teachers engage in cooperative group experiences and have opportunities to learn about, and observe prosocial behavior on a repeated basis. Active learning opportunities abound as students listen to stimulating ebooks, sing along with professional musicians, and participate in pair-share practice and problem-solving with classmates, and teacher-facilitated group discussions.

The Camp Timber curriculum is designed to be delivered within a general education classroom setting by the classroom teacher two to three times weekly. Each lesson takes from five to fifteen minutes to complete. This method of delivery was intentionally selected to provide a proactive and preventative approach to SEL instruction. According to Greenberg et al. (2017), until recently SEL research and intervention has focused primarily on those students who are already demonstrating mental health or behavioral problems or are at high risk for future problems. Schools have focused fewer resources on a preventative and universal approach. Because it is delivered within the classroom by the teacher, Camp Timber impacts ALL students by providing instruction to every child, not just those at risk. Not only does this allow students in need to learn from their positive peer models, but it also decreases the chance of stigmatization when identified students are pulled out of their classroom to receive instruction in an alternate setting (Greenberg et al., 2017). According to Jones et al., “Teachers and

their classroom practices are integral to successful program implementations . . . [and] also play a pivotal role in classroom dynamics and in the lives of students” (Jones, Barnes, Bailey & Doolittle, 2017, p. 60). Camp Timber’s implementation model supports this perspective, providing direct instruction within the classroom by those adults who are most directly involved with their students’ day to day growth.

Active teacher engagement is a critical component of Camp Timber and is continuously reinforced via frequent and easily accessible tutorials. Cues are provided so that the adult facilitator knows when to provide additional instruction for an activity, engage students in a discussion, or facilitate a pair-share activity. Simple “Rise and Shine” exercises begin each exercise in order to provide students with additional opportunities to develop cognitive or executive skills such as impulse control, sustaining attention, and working memory. They also provide frequent practice for developing mindfulness and physiological regulation. Educators using Camp Timber in their classrooms are encouraged to embed the common language and key concepts into their daily curriculum throughout the week in order to facilitate optimal retention and integration of skill acquisition.

Why Now?

The stakes are incredibly high for children who do not innately have strong social-emotional skills and are not provided with the opportunity to learn these skills beginning at an early age. As noted previously, results of the Perry Preschool Study identified positive long-term effects of early exposure to social-emotional programming, including increased high school graduation rates, higher adult earnings and increased employment, and reduced crime (Schweinhart, 2013). A 20-year retrospective study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and published in the July 2015 issue of the American Journal of Public Health, suggests that kindergarten students who are more inclined to exhibit “social competence” traits such as sharing, cooperating,

understanding others' feelings, resolving problems on their own, and helping peers without prompting may be more likely to attain higher education and well-paying jobs. In contrast, students who exhibit weaker social competency skills may be more likely to drop out of high school, abuse drugs and alcohol, and need government assistance (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). Findings from this important study demonstrate that teacher-rated social competence in kindergarten was a consistent and significant indicator of both positive and negative future outcomes across all major domains: education, employment, criminal justice, substance use and mental health (Research Brief: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015). According to Kristin Schubert, program director at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation which funded the research, "This study shows that helping children develop social and emotional skills is one of the most important things we can do to prepare them for a healthy future" (Report Summary: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2015, p.1).

The need for effective universal social-emotional supports is particularly pressing at this time in society. Increased prevalence rates of mental health disorders and trauma exposure put more children at greater risk for negative outcomes. In addition, challenging socio-economic circumstances compound these issues and can further inhibit a child's health and life success. Social-emotional instruction provides important life skills that can lead to positive life outcomes even in the face of great challenges.

- 20% of teenagers, ages 13-18, and 13% of school-age children, ages 8-15, have a mental health disorder severe enough to impact his/her daily activities (National Alliance on Mental Health, 2018). Of youth ages 13-18, 11% have a mood disorder, 10% have a behavior or conduct disorder, and 8% have an anxiety disorder (National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2017). Data reported by Mental Health America (2017) demonstrates a significant increase in the number of depressed youth in the United States over time. In addition, a recent study conducted at San Diego State University points to dramatic increases in anxiety and depression — in children

as well as adolescents and young adults — over the last five or more decades. (Gray, 2017).

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016), over six million children in the United States aged 2 to 17 have, at some point, been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Before 1990, less than 5 percent of school-age kids were thought to have the condition. CDC data indicates that these numbers make it the most common childhood behavioral disorder.

- An increasing number of students have experienced at least one significant trauma in their lives and 1 in 10 students in a classroom have experienced "toxic stress" from three or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) (Sacks & Murphy, 2018). According to data from the 2016 Survey of Children's Health economic hardship and divorce/separation of a parent or guardian are the most common ACES found nationally. Sixty-one percent of Black children and fifty-one percent of Hispanic children have experienced at least one ACE, compared with 40 percent of White children and only 23 percent of Asian non-Hispanic children. In every region, the prevalence of ACES is lowest among Asian non-Hispanic children and, in most regions, is highest among Black children.

- Some traumatized children have ongoing problems controlling their anger and impulses and maintaining their attention and focus due to their decreased ability to regulate strong emotions. Because most brain development occurs during a child's early months and years when the brain is considered to be more "plastic," traumatic experiences in the early years, such as abuse and neglect and exposure to poverty and violence, can profoundly impact and limit brain development, resulting in cognitive losses, and physical, emotional and social delays, all of which undermine learning (Izard, 2016). Children who have experienced traumatic events may find it more challenging than their peers to pay attention and process new information, often have difficulty responding to social cues, and may

withdraw from social situations or bully others.

- In 2015, approximately 14.7 million children under age 18 were in families living in poverty and in 2006, 31% of America's students attended schools in "high-poverty" districts: i.e. 20 percent or more of the district's students lived below the federal poverty line (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). This pattern was observed for White, Black, and Hispanic children and for children of two or more races. According to Izard (2016), "Poverty influences the emotions, shapes behaviors, changes the structure and processing of the brain, affects cognitive capacity, and influences attitudes. Poverty's impact on the brain is especially visible in the student's executive function skills: attentional skills, working memory, ability to prioritize, and ability to self-regulate." The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2013) report that children from poor families (those living at less than 100% of the federal poverty level) are more likely to have had a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. Izard (2016) contends that because many students raised in poverty and those who have experienced a variety of adverse childhood experiences have often had little to no attunement in the first three years of life, they need to be taught empathy along with other social-emotional skills.

Final Thoughts

Young children are entering school at greater risk than ever before. Increased prevalence of mental health issues and traumatic experiences, in addition to reduced social competence and self-regulation skills, place children at ever increasing risk for future health, employment, substance abuse, and legal issues. According to a comprehensive ten-year report on how school principals and assistant principals perceive the current education climate, the top-ranked concern for 2018 was addressing the increase of students with emotional problems (Fuller et al., 2018) and the area of greatest

change noted over the past three years in terms of principal's responsibilities was "student mental health issues" (Fuller, et al., 2018, p. 83). Among those issues identified were the management of student behavior, student mental health issues, absenteeism, lack of effective adult supervision at home, and student poverty. None of these student-related issues had been identified as a major concern in a 2008 survey (Fuller et al., 2018).

Teachers are also impacted by the challenges they encounter in managing student behavior and mental health issues. Data indicates that teachers are leaving the profession at higher numbers than ever before. 50% of the teaching profession turns over every 7 years and 40-50% of teachers leave the profession within the first five years (Podalsky et al., 2016). Although a variety of reasons exist for this exodus, Podalsky et al. (2016) found that up to 1/3 of teachers report feeling stressed or extremely stressed in their work and nearly 2/3 of teachers surveyed feel their jobs are "always" or "often" stressful. Two causes of this stress are consistently mentioned: students' behavior and discipline, and workload (Educator Quality of Work Life Survey, 2017). In a national teacher survey of how social and emotional learning can impact students and schools (Bridgeland, Bruce & Hariharan, 2016) 95% of teachers believe that SEL skills are teachable and 97% believe that they will benefit students from all backgrounds. For those teachers who view school climate as a problem, 80% view SEL as a solution. The Camp Timber Suite provides a 21st century solution – a comprehensive and engaging blended learning approach for social and emotional learning in the K-3 classroom.

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