Social Emotion Engagement Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS)

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Abstract

Research in social neuroscience fosters our understanding of the development of social and emotional competence in the classroom. This translates into essential instructional elements for students with autism while creating a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) for all students. The outcomes of the Social Emotional Engagement Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS) focus on ensuring that learning strategies are implemented by fostering student engagement, presenting information in multiple ways, promoting student participation and ensuring equitable access for students at various developmental stages.

Keywords

System-wide; Coaching; Engagement; Learning strategies

INTRODUCTION

The Social Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS) program includes dissemination of the most current social neuroscience related to the social, communication and emotional development in children with social emotional learning differences such as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The use of a normative social and emotional framework provides a mechanism that enhances the provision of educational programming for **all** students by enhancing a universal design for learning. This increases the impact and utility of the program; while 1 in every 68 students is now being identified as having an ASD (Baio, 2014), 67 students do not have this disability. By ensuring that evidence-based practices for fostering critical social and emotional milestones in this population are addressed, but doing so in a manner that is accessible and ecologically valid to classroom settings, the SEE-KS initiative addresses critical social and emotional competences that promote student engagement and academic success in all students.

BACKGROUND

Neuroimaging has shown that children with social emotional differences tend to process social stimuli in regions typically used for processing images and sounds that are non-social. These differences may compromise an intrinsic desire to engage in classroom activities and may make predicting the actions, the intentions and the emotions of others inefficient (Chevallier, et. al., 2012). All too often, social emotional learning programs are developed as a separate curriculum to the academic content already required by our school systems. The SEE-KS initiative is unique in that these social emotional competencies are addressed within natural routines of the classroom. As social and emotional engagement increases during content lessons in math, sci-

ence, and language arts, academic scores increase and costly challenges associated with disengagement decrease. To address these challenges, SEE-KS tools and resources promote the use of inquiry to acknowledge the current educational practices of its educators; highlight the perceptions of each educator's knowledge, skills and disposition within the UDL framework; and mirrors the CAST's UDL Implementation Process to build system-wide sustainability.

SEE-KS IMPLEMENTATION

Significance

Since the passage of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) educators have been charged with a mandate to teach *all* students by making learning universally accessible in elementary through high school settings with same age peers (IDEA, 1975). It is only now that we can begin to reflect on the significant impact IDEA has had on individual lives and also the benefits to society as all persons become college, career and life ready. The Center for Project Improvement (CIPP) outlines literature that supports building the capacity within organizations to fund technical assistance with this common goal. Wisconsin has been selected as a recipient of the State Systematic Improvement Plan (SSIPs) funds through OSEP to support an initiative related to Results Driven Accountability (RDA). Part B funded programs, like Wisconsin, have chosen to focus on assessment data, aligned to Indicator 3 for the State Identified Measurable Results (SIMR). Launched in October, 2014 the NCSI multiyear cooperative agreement is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and plays a major role in helping states achieve a national vision of RDA for special education. As a result, the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) will work together to provide necessary resources to deliver more effective monitoring, policies and technical assistance. When interventions in the classroom setting are provided to ensure that all students find academic activities engaging, predictable, and interactive, these supports not only benefit students with social and emotional learning differences but also reduce barriers to academic access for all students in that system.

Resources for Implementation

The collection of tools and resources for SEE-KS include the following:

• The SEE-KS Self-Assessment which is an online measure completed by staff members participating in the project to measure their initial knowledge, fidelity of implementation, and beliefs with respect to nine critical instructional elements consistent with universal design with an emphasis on fostering social emotional engagement.

•The SEE-KS instructional rubrics, which is a fidelity tool that measures teachers' implementation of supports appropriate for the developmental stage of their students; these rubrics include ratings of insufficient to exemplary and are relevant for mainstream conversational students to self-contained classrooms serving students with minimal symbolic language.

• The SEE-KS Coaching Fidelity Rubric which is a tool that leadership level staff in each district and focus site can use to determine whether staff members are using best practices with respect to coaching and engaging in peer to peer mentorship. The Student Engagement Ladder (http://complexld.SSAtrust.org.uk) is also used within the SEE-KS initiative as a measure that school staff can use at no cost. This tool provides criterion referenced rating of each student in the class with respect to the degree of their active engagement in the lesson.

The SEE-KS is dedicated to the provision of community viable models of professional development for educators and related service providers through an emphasis on building the on-site capacity of each system served, resulting in more sustainable outcomes for school-aged children and their families. A particular focus of our program is placed on financial sustainability and reducing the impact of disparities created by socioeconomic status and geographic location (i.e. urban vs. rural) by supporting the development of internal coaching teams and utilizing web-based learning for ongoing mentorship to reduce costs and to shift the responsibility for systems change to internal leadership in each district. This implementation shift is monitored using the SEE-KS Sustainability Scales (Appendix A). This tool is designed to ensure that school districts are not only implementing the instructional strategies to fidelity, but also coaching and mentoring each other in an effective manner, and are able to gather and analyze their own data on instruction and student engagement.

Building System-wide Capacity

While professional development is often provided to select groups of school personnel, we know that building capacity in a school community, ultimately, within the larger school system, requires active involvement of three levels of support (Figure 1). These include Level 1: School-wide communities; Level 2: Special education staff and related service providers; and Level 3: Leadership level staff within each school site and at the system level.
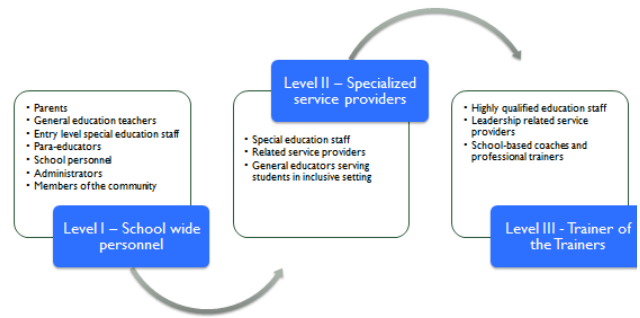

Figure 1. Effective mechnicims to build system-wide capacity

At Level 1, the Educational Outreach Technical Assistance Facilitator(s) provides training for all groups of people who interact with students, including parents, bus drivers and other school support staff, administrators, teachers, special education staff, lead clinicians, professional training staff and even first responders and police. Most other programs provide only selective training. However, if every person who regularly interacts with students does so in a knowledgeable way, these children's capabilities will increase dramatically. The program ensures that the content and format of this training is focused on creating a school climate that is supportive of social and emotional development for all students on campus and thereby improving access and success.

At Level 2, the Education Outreach Technical Assistance Facilitator will provide training emphasis on how neuroscience fosters an appreciation of the unique needs of students with different learning abilities and provides many practical, case study applications so that special education teachers and related service providers can deeply engage students in learning. The sustainability of this project within a system however is reliant on Level 3, which involves creating a well-established multidisciplinary team within each system and tailoring the content of the training to ensure that these leadership level teams develop effective training procedures and coaching methods to build capacity within targeted school sites. In other words, Level 3 teams require the knowledge and skills to deliver Level 1 and Level 2 professional development and engage in ongoing collection and analysis of data. A SEE-KS coaching fidelity rubric is utilized to ensure that best practices are being implemented to ensure teams are building capacity rather than relying on expert models of guidance.

With this support, system teams then become responsible for sustaining a universal design for social and emotional engagement by replicating the training across future focus schools. An internal district leadership team becomes engaged from the outset and, after involvement in a structured training, coaching and mentoring process, is prepared to conduct future system training by the third year of coaching and mentorship. Focus school sites are selected using a careful process of evaluating a willingness to implement and sustain the initiative and administrative support. SEE-

KS coaching teams are formed at each site and coaching fidelity is measured to ensure that these teams form professional learning communities that will be able to sustain not only fidelity of implementation but collaboration and replication with new personnel and more challenging student populations (Figure 2).
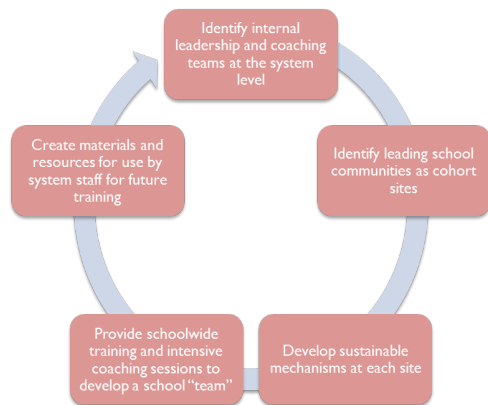
Figure 2. Planning cycle for system sustainability

The Educational Outreach personnel will establish and continually monitor performance standards within the SEE-KS program to ensure that the long-term goals of establishing sustainability with each school district and focus site are met and that school district staff can confidently replicate content in future sites. These objectives are measured at the district level, at the level of focus schools and whole class student data.

Pre- and post-test measures include the completion of the comprehensive SEE-KS Self-Assessment by teachers before the implementation of the SEE-KS program and after the implementation of the SEE-KS program. Fidelity measures designed to assess and monitor program implementation are an integral part of this study due to the need for performance feedback and continuous improvement. The SEE-KS instructional rubric will be completed regularly to measure fidelity of instructional strategies designed to foster social emotional engagement and whole class' level of active engagement. Implementation supports will be offered in multiple formats (on-site, on-site virtual, etc.) and include technical assistance, administrator support, coaching, and professional learning communities (PLC).

The Educational Outreach personnel work to establish and continually monitor performance standards within the SEE-KS program to ensure that the long-term goals of establishing a sustainability with each school district and focus site are met and that school district staff are confident in replication of this content in future sites. These objectives can be measured at the district level, at the level of focus schools and whole class student data. The Learning Objectives for leadership and service provides are listed below, followed by specific performance measures. The initiative is designed to occur over a three phases, that aim to be complete within a three-year period.

Leadership Providers

Objective #1: An internal multidisciplinary core team of leadership level service providers will be established for the provision of in-service training, coaching, and quality assurance at selected districts within the RESA / CESA and in each of the focus sites.

Objective #2: Internal core team members will have a sustainable plan for the provision of in-service training, coaching, quality assurance, and educational supports for families at each of the districts within the RESA / CESA and in each of the focus schools across the region.

Objective #3: Internal core team members will have developed materials, effective coaching techniques, and methods or measurement to support quality instruction at each of the targeted districts within the RESA / CESA and in each of the focus school across the region.

Objective #4: System level core team members at each of the districts will be provided with access to an online website with materials and videos; they will have engaged in a replication of a focus site by year 3 with plans for replication in year 4 and beyond.

Service Providers

Objective #1: Internal core team members at each of the districts and service providers at the focus sites will demonstrate knowledge of how social neuroscience informs us of the critical skills in the social, communication, and emotional development all students need to be active participants and engaged learning.

Objective #2: Internal core team members at each of the districts and service providers at the focus sites will recognize elements in classroom instruction essential for promoting student engagement in 3 content areas: 1) designing activities to foster active learning and social communication, 2) fostering smooth an independent transitions, and 3) fostering emotional identification and coping strategies.

Objective #3: Internal core team members at each of the districts and service providers at the focus sites will demonstrate use of classroom accommodations designed to enable universal design for learning through the provision multiple modes of instruction (e.g, pairing verbal language with written language, graphics, hands-on materials and role play).

Objective #4: Internal core team members at each of the districts and service providers at the focus sites will demonstrate use of classroom accommodations designed to enable universal design for learning by fostering multiple means of expression (e.g., fostering student expression through opportunities for sharing one's work through conversation, writing, role play/rehearsal and other means). Objective #5: Internal core team members at each of the districts and service providers at the focus sites will demonstrate use of classroom accommodations designed to enable universal design for learning by embedding developmentally appropriate materials into classroom instruction and activities (e.g., embedding academic curriculum

into meaningful and product oriented lessons related to student interests and cultural backgrounds, pairing lessons with hands-on materials, and for students with minimal language, addressing content through multi-sensory experiences).

Performance Measures May Include:
By the end of Year 3, 80% of targeted teachers in the SEEKS initiative will increase their percentage of SEE-KS instructional strategies in classroom lessons by 35% from their baseline, as evidenced by the SEE-KS Instruction Rubric.

By the end of Year 3, 80% of targeted teachers in the SEE-KS initiative will increase the active engagement of their students by 35% from their baseline as measured by the Student Engagement Ladder, a measure of whole class engagement and, in comparison, to non-targeted teachers will show significant gains in academic performance.

By the end of Year 3, 80% of participating districts within RESA / CESA will demonstrate a score of a 3 or above on the SEE-KS Implementation Scale, a measure of sustainability within their educational programs.

CONCLUSION
This paper focuses on how SEE-KS tools and resources support systems to build capacity of programs to support the diversity of learners variability in social, communication and emotional development in children with social emotional learning differences. The Universal Design Learning (UDL) framework has been shown in multiple research studies to improve reading comprehension and other educational outcomes (Dalton, Herbert, & Deysher, 2003, Casper, & Leuchovius, 2005). Additionally, the SEE-KS program emphasizes the need to implement UDL strategies in a manner consistent with a students' developmental level of social communication and emotional regulation. This is an essential aspect of educational programming that is often neglected, as service providers face different challenges when serving students who are not yet using words (i.e., not yet talking, using sign language, or using assistive technology), students who are at emerging language stages, and students who are at conversational level but not yet socially connecting using conventional means of engagement. Implementing social emotional programs proactively have been shown to reduce costs to school districts for related student support, reduced student attendance, discipline challenges, etc. (Belfield et al., 2015). SEE-KS at a district, building, classroom and/or educator level provides a mechanism for how to implement and sustain universal design for learning practices to enhance the provision of educational programming for ***all*** learners.

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