SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING
Comparing Frameworks

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The 2013-2016 cycle of the Minnesota 4-H Foundation's Howland Family Endowment for Youth Leadership Development is dedicated to understanding social and emotional learning and its contribution to closing the achievement and opportunity gaps. This series of issue briefs is designed to help people understand, connect and champion social and emotional learning in a variety of settings and from a variety of perspectives.

INTRODUCTION

If you took a quick look at what youth outcomes are most frequently measured and discussed, it could be easy to conclude that learning academic knowledge and skills should be the main focus of schools, out-of-school programs, and families. But there is increasing recognition that graduating from high school and being prepared for college and career success requires a much broader skill set. Content knowledge and academic skills are certainly important, but what about knowing how to work well with others, persevering when faced with challenges, or recognizing when a new strategy is needed to solve a problem? Young people need to develop these and many other skills not covered by the standardized tests that are often used as gauges of success.

In fact, many of these skills provide better predictors of college and career success than do achievement test scores[1]. Not only do social and emotional skills support achievement in these other areas, they also make it less likely that youth will participate in risky behaviors related to bullying, drug and alcohol use, and gangs[2]. Fortunately, these skills are gaining recognition as important contributors to positive youth outcomes.

NAMING AND FRAMING NON-ACADEMIC COMPETENCIES

There is growing consensus that young people need to develop competencies in many areas besides academic content and skills. A handful of frameworks have been developed that name and organize these skills in different ways. These frameworks include a variety of skills needed for navigating life's challenges, maintaining healthy relationships, and managing one's own emotions and behaviors.

Four frameworks are particularly useful for thinking about what skills young people need to develop in order to navigate the challenges along the path to high school graduation, college success, career satisfaction and engaged citizenship. This brief reviews frameworks about *21st Century Competencies,*

Noncognitive Factors, and two frameworks specifically for *Social and Emotional Learning Competencies.* Each framework and supporting report contributes unique and helpful ways of thinking about what skills are important, how they contribute to positive outcomes and how they can best be taught to young people.

21ST CENTURY COMPETENCIES – *National Research Council*

Along with mastery of academic content in core subjects, business and political leaders are calling for schools to help young people develop the skills that will help them succeed in their careers—skills like problem solving, critical thinking and working with others. In response to calls from private foundations, policy makers and educational organizations, the National Research Council conducted an extensive investigation of what young people need to learn in order to meet future challenges successfully.

The 21st Century Competencies framework described in The National Research Council's report *Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century* includes three domains: cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies[3]. This framework intentionally uses the word 'competency' in order to include both skills and knowledge related to each domain.

Types of 21st Century Skills
The cognitive domain focuses on reasoning and memory. Competencies in the interpersonal domain enable individuals to express ideas and understand what others are communicating. The intrapersonal domain focuses on competencies that help an individual manage emotions and behaviors towards the pursuit of goals.
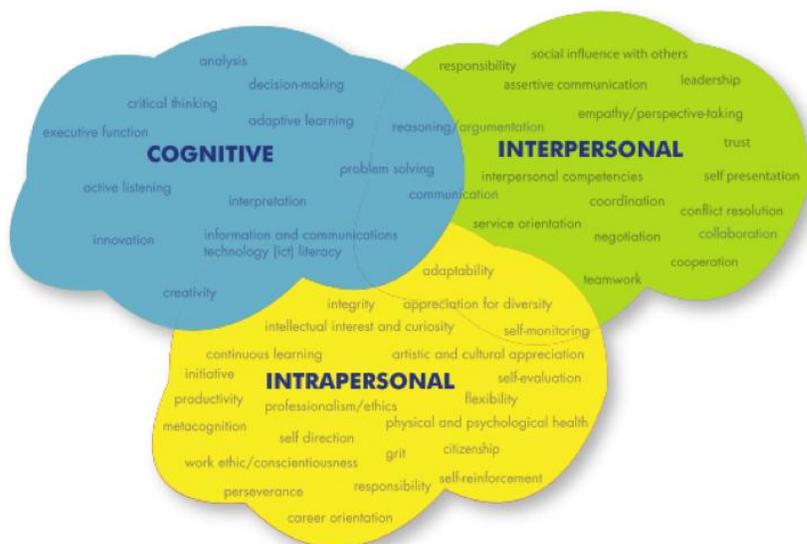
"21st century skills" grouped into three broad domains

This framework is especially useful for thinking broadly about the array of competencies contributing to positive outcomes. Cognitive competencies show positive, moderate correlations with desirable educational, career and health outcomes. The report calls for more research to understand the contributions of interpersonal and intrapersonal competencies, but conscientiousness is the 21st century skill that most highly correlated with positive outcomes.

This report and framework are particularly helpful in stepping back and looking at the wide variety of competencies that are a part of what youth need in order to succeed, especially competencies that go deeper and beyond knowledge content and basic academic skills.

NONCOGNITIVE SKILLS - *University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research*

The University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research provides another framework for thinking about these skills in *Teaching Adolescents to Become Learners: The Role of Noncognitive Factors in Shaping School Performance*[4]. The authors use the term 'noncognitive' to refer to skills that are not directly related to academic content or what is typically involved in standardized testing. This terminology is used by economists and has become more common across disciplines though the authors note that all of these skills indeed have a cognitive component. The non-cognitive framework, however, focuses more narrowly on factors that predict academic outcomes, many of which are similar to those in the 21st Century skills framework as well as in social and emotional learning frameworks.

> **The noncognitive framework focuses on five categories of factors affecting academic performance:**
> 1. *Academic behaviors* include regularly attending class, arriving ready to work, paying attention, participating, and devoting out-of-school time to studying
> 2. *Academic perseverance* refers to the tendency to complete assignments thoroughly and on time, as well as one can, despite obstacles or challenges
> 3. *Academic mindsets* are attitudes and beliefs about oneself in relation to schoolwork
> 4. *Learning strategies* are tactics employed to facilitate thinking, remembering, and learning
> 5. *Social skills* include cooperation, assertion, responsibility, and empathy

Beyond listing the five categories, this framework is especially useful in understanding the relationships among these factors (see diagram below). It describes how the different concepts connect based on reviewed theory and evidence. For example, academic mindsets affect academic perseverance, which impacts academic behaviors. These academic behaviors are also influenced by social skills as well as learning strategies.
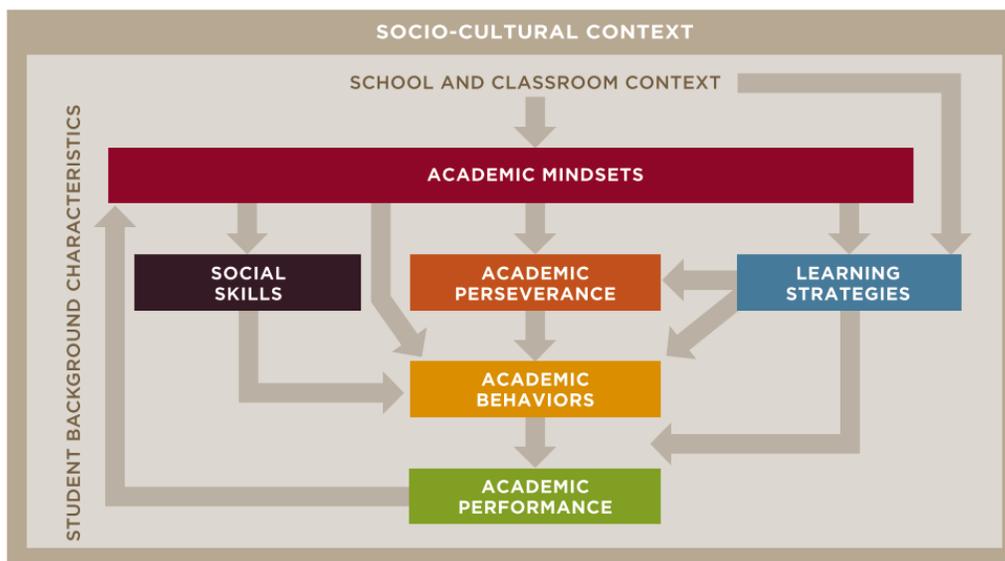
The report notes that because disparities in noncognitive skills correlate with the racial/ethnic gap in school achievement, investments in these skills may help to reduce this gap. Addressing the development of these skills is vital—in the absence of developing students as learners, other educational reform efforts are unlikely to succeed at increasing students' readiness for college.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING - *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*

The next two frameworks focus in more narrowly on social and emotional learning, or SEL. Perhaps the most widely recognized conceptualization of these competencies is that of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Their definition and framework for core competencies includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationships and responsible decision-making as depicted below.

CASEL defines social and emotional learning as "the processes through which children and adults acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to recognize and manage their emotions, demonstrate caring and concern for others, establish positive relationships, make responsible decisions, and handle challenging social situations constructively" (www.casel.org).

Over the past decade, much attention has been paid to the idea of focusing on social and emotional learning as a way to reduce a wide array of risky behaviors while also providing young people with the means to develop skills that will help them reach graduation and be prepared for future success. Much of the research relating non-academic competencies to important youth outcomes has used a social and emotional learning framework. Strong empirical evidence indicates the importance of social and emotional learning for achievement, healthy development, and college and career success. The skills developed through social and emotional learning contribute to important educational outcomes and also have value in and of themselves throughout college and careers[5].

A meta-analysis of 213 social and emotional learning programs shows that compared to control groups, participants in SEL programs demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, as well as improved academic performance as reflected in an 11% gain in achievement[6]. Fortunately, social and emotional competencies are not fixed entities that individuals either possess or lack. These skills can be learned and can improve over time, especially when they are intentionally taught to young people.

One advantage of this framework is that it is easier to use than the more comprehensive frameworks noted above. However, it does not include some social emotional skills that are gaining recognition as important contributors to positive youth outcomes, such as mindset and perseverance.

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL LEARNING - *Strive Cradle to Career Network*

With the growth of collective impact approaches and recognizing the need for greater clarity on how social emotional competencies affect achievement and how these competencies can be measured and improved, the Strive Network recently released a report, *Beyond Content: Incorporating Social and Emotional Learning into the Strive Framework[7]*. They approached this task by focusing on social and emotional competencies that have an evidence-based relationship to achievement, that are malleable, and that are measurable. They also recognized the need for definitional clarity when designing programming to improve these competencies and when developing and selecting measures to improve social and emotional outcomes.

THE STRIVE NETWORK FOCUSES ON FIVE SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING COMPETENCIES:

1. ACADEMIC SELF-EFFICACY

2. GROWTH MINDSET/MASTERY ORIENTATION

3. GRIT/PERSEVERANCE

4. EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE

5. SELF-REGULATED LEARNING/STUDY SKILLS

In the Twin Cities, Generation Next, our local member of the nationwide Strive Network, also recognizes the importance of developing social and emotional competencies for educational and post-secondary success. Their Noncognitive Task Force has recommended a sixth goal be added: "All seventh graders are socially and emotionally equipped to learn." This proposed goal refers to learning in and out of the classroom, and to persistence in learning. If adopted, it would complement the five original goals related to academic readiness and proficiency.

This report has particularly useful summaries of the research related to each competency and the overlap between skills, as well as detailed information on measures that could be used to assess each.

HOW ARE THESE FRAMEWORKS SIMILAR AND DIFFERENT?

Reaching greater consensus on the importance of these types of skills, what particular skills matter most, and how to assess them is an important step towards improving efforts to help young people develop the skills they need for future success. Furthermore, young people are developing in an increasingly data-driven climate where outcomes are more likely to be prioritized and targeted for change if they can be measured.

What unites the frameworks of social emotional learning, 21st Century skills, and non-cognitive skills is the recognition that there is a broad set of skills young people need for success. That includes success in completing high school but also for a wide range of college, training, education and career opportunities, as well as improved health outcomes. These skills go beyond academic content. Instead, these frameworks emphasize the importance of skills related to healthy relationships and effective communication, as well as recognizing and managing one's own emotions and accomplishing goals. Though the specific terminology varies across these frameworks, all four emphasize the importance of developing skills that have traditionally been under-emphasized, but are increasingly seen as pivotal to future success.

Looking across the frameworks (see table below), the language of 21st century skills is the broadest and includes a wide variety of competencies. This framework places greater emphasis on cognitive or thinking processes associated with 21st century learning needs such as problem solving, reasoning, and memory. When the Chicago Consortium discusses noncognitive factors, they begin to narrow down the way of

looking at these skills in relation to academic outcomes and focus less on cognitive dimensions. This approach focuses on the individual and social aspects of these skills as ways of thinking and acting that affect academic performance, although specific social skills are not emphasized.

In contrast, the CASEL framework is more focused on defining social and emotional learning and describing its different components. In doing so, it emphasizes the self and social dimensions but also includes responsible decision-making. It noticeably leaves off the mindset, mastery, and perseverance dimensions that are more explicit in both the Chicago and Strive frameworks. The Strive framework, however, does not explicitly include the social dimension, although some of the empathy dimensions of emotional competence overlap with social awareness skills.

21st Century Competencies	Noncognitive Factors	Social and Emotional Learning Competencies	
National Research Council	Chicago Consortium	Strive Network	CASEL
Intrapersonal	Academic mindset	Growth mindset/ mastery orientation	
		Academic self-efficacy	
	Academic perseverance	Grit/ perseverance	
	Learning strategies	Self-regulated learning/ study skills	Self-awareness
	Academic behaviors	Emotional competence	Self-management
Interpersonal	Social Skills		Social awareness
			Relationship skills
Cognitive			Decision making

In summary, each of these frameworks brings value to better understanding the variety of skills, competencies, attitudes and behaviors that affect both learning and development. They differ in emphasis and scope. A major issue in moving work forward in this area is building a stronger and clearer consensus on the types of competencies that community efforts as well as schools should explicitly assess and intentionally seek to improve. Hope and opportunity lies in that consensus and action.

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