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Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills

Thursday, December 8, 2016

Join in online!

It's still not too late if you'd like to contribute an op-ed style article for the session report, or a personal reflection blog post for our website. Email your questions or submission directly to Salzburg Global Editor, Louise Hallman lhallman@salzburgglobal.org.

If you intend to write for your own organization after the session, please make sure to observe the **Chatham House Rule** (information on which is in your Welcome Pack). If you're in any doubt, do not hesitate to contact Louise – and please share anything you publish with the group!

We'll be updating our website with summaries from the panels and interviews with our Fellows, all of which you can find on the session page: www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566

We're updating both our Facebook page www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal and our Flickr stream www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal with photos from the session during this week and also after the session. If you require non-watermarked images for your own publication, please let Louise know.

We will also be posting photos to Instagram www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal, and we encourage you to do so also, using the hashtag #SGSedu.



@toniacasarin: Good morning
@SalzburgGlobal! #SGSedu



John Lotherington's Trump impression raises a laugh from Tonia Carasin (and most of the audience)

“Make schools great again!”

To promote social and emotional learning in schools, it is vital to secure the support of a wide variety of stakeholders from parents to policymakers – but how?

On the fourth day of *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills*, in an effort to test their arguments and rhetorical skills, participants took part in a mock debate and prepared a mock memo to a so-far-unconvinced Minister of Education.

Those working to promote social and emotional learning (SEL) often face arguments against implementing SEL programs. Such arguments include:

“We’ve lost discipline and order! Children need to know their place... Life is tough, not ‘fun’ or ‘soft.’ Students need to be ready for that and have hard skills – not soft.”

“Social and emotional learning programs are an invasion into our private lives. The moral education of our children is the responsibility and choice of parents, as well as churches and communities – not schools. Entrusting our children’s SEL development to schools makes them too powerful, and minimizes role of wider community.”

“Data collection of personality tests leads to profiling! And these tests can be faked or manipulated.”

“Social and emotional learning programs are promoting a liberal, globalized agenda, and trying to universalize morals and values.”

“Schools are for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic; SEL programs take valuable time away from this.”

Knowing what reasoning can counter these arguments – and which messages resonate with different audiences – would help significantly advance SEL in schools, homes and the wider community [see back page for more].

When dealing with politicians, key points to keep in mind are that the Minister of Education may not have much of a background in education (beyond their own personal experience many years ago) and politicians can often be short-sighted and more focused on their re-election than long-term change. Developing programs that can be easily explained and communicated to a wider public and offer some immediate evidence of improvement – while appealing to their ego and legacy! – might persuade skeptical ministers.



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Ayelet Giladi: SEL is important for everyone – from children and parents to soldiers and refugees

Israeli early childhood expert reflects on her own SEL development and her work in the field

Chris Hamill-Stewart

Much of the discussions at the session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills* has centered on the importance of the education system in delivering social and emotional learning, but for Ayelet Giladi, manager of Early Childhood programs at the Research Institute for Innovation in Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, it is just as important to engage families.

Many participants in the session have diverse and dynamic backgrounds, but few can boast a story like three-time Salzburg Global Fellow Giladi's. From joining the Israeli Army as a commander at eighteen, becoming a Hebrew teacher for soldiers who struggle with language, to now, where she uses Social and Emotional (SEL) skills to combat child abuse and to help families across the social, religious and cultural boundaries in Israel and beyond, Giladi has not had a conventional career path.

Her time in the army was formative; Giladi commanded a unit of soldiers with little writing or reading ability, and she taught them Hebrew. She says she found herself “using a lot of social and emotional skills that I didn't know I had in the army.” Soldiers often did not want to be there, and they did not want to take part in lessons. Sometimes they threw chairs at her.

“It was their way of expressing themselves, but being an 18-year-old girl, trying to control 20-year-old, big and masculine men. It took a lot of skills,” Giladi recalls.

She believes experiences like this were important in her own personal development. They opened her eyes to how much influence she could have in other people's lives by using SEL skills.

Giladi's experience in the army, akin to a trial by fire in terms of teaching and using SEL, meant she transitioned well into her work using these same skills to work with parents of young children in Israel. She works with families “at risk” – those with children who may not have adequate early life upbringing – to give parents the tools to help their children, and give them



Ayelet Giladi

the early-life SEL skills they need to reach the first grade.

Giladi works with a diverse group of families – Arabs, Jews, Druze and Bedouins, and many religious or Orthodox families. Helping such diverse groups bring challenges. For example, “Orthodox families could have ten or twelve children, which means they might not all get the attention they need,” and she works with some mothers from the Muslim community who were married very young.

“Mothers aged 14-16 don't know themselves so well, let alone how to be a mother,” explains Giladi.

One way of helping is to guide “mothers and fathers.” by teaching them how important it is to “speak to babies as soon as they can – to play with them, take them out, be with them in the house, rather than just in front of the TV.” This fosters SEL development and it helps prepare the children for relationships with other people in their future.

While her work is primarily focused in Hebrew-speaking Israel, Giladi

emphasizes how important it is that her programs are taught in Arabic. With so many Arabic-speaking refugees currently seeking safety in countries across Europe, she believes that the work she does is a gateway to helping them and their host countries.

“When you give refugees, who are staying in an unknown country, tools in their own language, you can connect them with the country... If you help them like this, they will appreciate what the country is doing for them.” It approach will help the children, and make the families feel welcome, and want to contribute even more to their new communities and countries.

Giladi's inspirational experiences taught her that “empathy is very important in the teaching of SEL skills, and it's an important SEL trait to have.” Having empathy for the most vulnerable people – refugees, young mothers and poor families who lack the privilege of a good education – and coming to their aid “helps the individual, helps the families, and it helps the communities.”

Hot Topic: “What would be the most effective argument we could use to convince Minister of Education to promote SEL?”

Yeji Park

“What governments like is evidence. You need to have evidence showing that social and emotional skills in children can have an impact on school achievement and also building a more just society. But we need to show them how as well. We need to provide them with compelling examples of how we can do it, from which they can be inspired, and can try to integrate into their own system.”

Aline Villette

Senior Initiatives Manager, LEGO Foundation, France

“The main way to convince a minister is to think about what parents and teachers really care about. It is obviously the academic success of children, but it is also about their wellbeing. Many examples of bullying, cyberbullying or, in extreme cases, suicide, have been shown the lack of wellbeing among students these days. Sharing these indicators would help to show them why SEL is an important topic.”

Artur Taevere

Founder and CEO, Beyond, Estonia

“I don’t think there is a single answer to the question, as it really depends on the context. The arguments I would use in a high-income country would be very different from the ones I would use in a low-income country or for education in emergencies. So it depends on the context, on the education system and place – whether you go for the economic argument, whether you go for the argument that is about foundational skill for enabling cognitive learning or a holistic child development.”

Gerhard Pulfer

Grant Manager, Porticus, Austria

“First of all, SEL helps, besides the individual, to build empathy between people and cultures, which will lead to social cohesion and interculturalism. Secondly, it will be very cost-effective on the budget, because less money will be spent on remediation and we will spend very little money on prevention. Finally, we need quality education that is more relevant to today’s society. These could be three main arguments why we need to promote social and emotional learning.”

Carmel Cefai

Director, Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta, Malta

“When we talk to policy makers about SEL, there are three important aspects to the argument. First, SEL correlates strongly with employability skills. A range of studies shows the importance employers attach to this kind of skillset alongside traditional subject knowledge. The second argument relates to a country’s capacity to engage with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Research shows that the population needs SEL skills to better deal with the challenges that SDGs are meant to mitigate. The final argument relates to education attainment. The impact SEL can have on student wellbeing and confidence correlates directly with it.”

Dominic Regester

Senior Schools Adviser, British Council, UK

Have an opinion on any of our hot topics this week?

Email Salzburg Global Seminar Editor
Louise Hallman

(lhallman@salzburgglobal.org)

with either a short 50-100 word response or a 500-750 word article and we will consider it for publication in the report to be published in early 2017!



#FacesOfLeadership

“Participating in the Salzburg Global Seminar has changed my life in numerous ways. I first came here for a session about the neuroscience of art in 2015. There I met several people who work to use music as a therapeutic intervention for trauma. Not only was I able to begin remarkable collaborations with neuroscientists I met there, but also I was able to develop friendships that have become central to my life. The session and its aftermath helped me to see that I could, in a small way, make a contribution to use neuroscience to help people...”

This session is another opportunity to see what I can learn from others, and what kind of friendships and collaborations can emerge. I agree with what Clare spoke about on our first day: that we are in an interdisciplinary and deeply human place. We are encouraged at Salzburg to approach life not as a series of discrete problems to be solved, but rather as an opportunity to help people, using whatever disciplines can help – and that is both interdisciplinary and deeply human.”

Harry Ballan

Dean and Professor of Law, Touro Law Center, USA

Harry Ballan shares how coming to Salzburg has been a turning point in his life. With expertise in law, neuroscience, and music, he is passionate about interdisciplinary cooperation.

Read more profiles in our series of #FacesOfLeadership online:

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