



SALZBURG  
GLOBAL  
SEMINAR

# Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

## Join in online!

If you're interested in writing either an op-ed style article for our website or the session report, or a personal reflection blog post while you're here this week, please let Salzburg Global Editor, Louise Hallman know or email your submission directly to [lhallman@salzburgglobal.org](mailto:lhallman@salzburgglobal.org).

If you do intend to write for your own organization either whilst you're here or 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.

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](http://www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566)

You can also join in the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag [#SGSedu](https://twitter.com/SGSedu) and see all your fellow Fellows and their organizations on Twitter via the list [www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-566](https://www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-566)

We're updating both our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal) and our Flickr stream [www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://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](http://www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal), and we encourage you to do so also, using the hashtag [#SGSedu](https://twitter.com/SGSedu).



@toniacasarin:  
I'm so excited to start the day  
[#SGSedu](https://twitter.com/SGSedu)

Use the hashtag on Instagram and Twitter and we'll share your photos with the rest of the session in the newsletter!



Ann Mroz and Michaela Horvathova

## The past, present & future of SEL

**Has social and emotional learning (SEL) been overlooked in the past? What place does it have on curricula at present? And what greater importance might SEL have in the future?**

These were just some of the questions facing the opening panel on the first full day of the Salzburg Global session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills*. Bringing perspectives from the UK, Costa Rica, Slovakia and Korea and from across sectors including the media, public policy and research, opinions varied greatly.

While the formal categorization of SEL might be recent, skills such as grit, resilience, communication, and empathy have long been present in schools' curricula, argued one Fellow. These skills used to be developed through participation in the arts and music. However, these subjects are being squeezed out and sacrificed in place of greater emphasis on more "valued" subjects such as math, science and literary. "We're removing the 'joy of learning,'" warned one Fellow. "You can teach a child to recite a poem but that won't give them empathy."

The *social* aspect of SEL should also not be overlooked, pointed out another Fellow; the whole school environment is

a vital component in nurturing SEL, with the principal especially important in establishing a school's ethos.

The importance of the more cognitive skills-based subjects has partly been driven by the importance of their assessment and the subsequent rankings of schools and whole countries' education systems in various national and international league tables. This has led to the proposal that perhaps SEL would be taken more seriously if it were quantified, tested and measured. Whether SEL can – and indeed *should* – be tested is still very much the subject of heated debate, as was seen in Salzburg.

While the assessment of SEL would likely help raise its profile and perceived value, it could also lead to a narrowing of skills or a universal understanding and expectation of students' "soft skills" regardless of cultural or country context.

It must also be recognized that assessment is not the only motivation for teachers (or students). As one Fellow remarked, the ultimate goal is not to quantify and measure SEL but to nurture these skills. What other alternative incentives should be considered and adopted? "Do we teach it for the sake of teaching or teach because it can be measured?"



#SGSedu @SalzburgGlobal



facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal



instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal

# Graham Robb – “You’re giving a language to children to manage their conflicts or turmoil”

Former head teacher discusses an alternative to traditional punishment

Chris Hamill-Stewart

**In the UK, racism and extremism are on the rise. Hate crimes have increased 58% in 2016 compared to 2015. This trend is mirrored in other countries such as the US, where there is also a spike in hate crimes. Applying the traditional justice system to crimes of this nature is difficult to execute, and unlikely to yield significant results.**

Graham Robb, Chair of Trustees at The Campus School, believes a new approach to administering justice and discipline is the answer. While attending the Salzburg Global session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills* he shared his thoughts on how to better use Social and Emotional (SEL) skills in this area.

Robb advocates for “Restorative Justice,” (RJ) a process in which someone who does harm to another person, rather than being punished or treated as a criminal, is invited to take part in a conference involving them, the victim and other important figures, including parents and teachers. The conference follows a clear script with all participants fully briefed in advance; consideration is given to the time-frame after the incident in which the conference should take place, and even the order of participants’ arrivals is choreographed to minimize the possibility of further conflict. It is an opportunity for those involved to discuss their feelings, come to terms with the incident, and discuss how best to avoid it in the future. The process fosters empathy, and is designed to help people, particularly adolescents, understand other people’s perspectives of the incident and how it made them feel.

Robb, who has implemented the system in the high schools at which he served as head teacher, has seen “very high levels of satisfaction from the victims and perpetrators of incidents – they say it’s a fair process.” He continues, “Importantly, it’s proven to lead to a reduction in future behavior that causes harm.” Genuine feelings of remorse and freely offered apologies

are common – an often-absent outcome of traditional disciplinary measures involving children and teenagers.

RJ promotes and amplifies the perpetrators’ SEL skills development. When used in schools, “the child realizes the impact they have on the people around them – that’s empathy straight away,” says Robb. It helps to give people, especially children and teenagers, a voice in ways they didn’t have before. As Robb explains: “You learn to name emotions; you’re giving a language to children to think about constructive ways to manage their conflicts or turmoil.” The SEL aspect of RJ is undeniable, and critical to its effectiveness: “It’s about communication skills, managing conflicts, managing emotions, empathy and problem solving.”

Robb believes RJ would be especially effective in countering the trend of hate crime – a crime that evidences a distinct lack of SEL skills. However, he acknowledges some challenges in the wider implementation of the process; the media especially presents an obstacle.

“They’re likely to attack [RJ], saying people get away with crimes with just a ‘slap on the wrist’ or an apology,” explains Robb. This creates political pressure, and politicians are forced to respond to it. “This isn’t what RJ is about.” RJ is not about retribution but rather preventing similar behavior and incidents from happening again, and promoting understanding. Unfortunately, viewing RJ as “soft” remains an obstacle for its wider implementation.

Despite difficulties in implementation, the advantages are clear: it is an alternative to the “adversarial system” of the courts, one that reduces re-offending, can be evaluated, and is seen favorably by victims and perpetrators alike. In contemporary times, when the world seems to be in great need of empathy and other SEL skills, the value of Restorative Justice is evident.

In addition to improving the SEL skills of the individuals involved in



Robb delivers his workshop at the session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills*

the process, RJ can also provide wider societal benefits, especially when it is pursued instead of escalating a matter to the police and courts. Keeping potential young offenders out of the judicial system and improving their behavior helps to reduce future costs in court proceedings and incarceration.

Robb presented RJ as a case study at the session in Salzburg. Following his interactive workshop, which involved Fellows “hot-seating” him on his experiences of implementing this process in schools, Robb in turn appealed to Fellows to give him curricular advice and guidance for the new school – The Campus in north London, UK – that he is helping to establish. The school will exclusively serve students who have been removed from the conventional education system for behavioral reasons and aims to provide students with a “holistic” and supportive learning environment where “Your past can be history, not a career plan.”

As session co-organizer Catherine Millett of ETS remarked: “This is exactly what a Salzburg Global Seminar program is all about.” Exchanging knowledge and best practice the world over.



## What evidence do we have and what do we need to promote SEL?

The day's second panel considered "How do we 'make the case' for social and emotional learning (SEL)?"

Positive attitudes and behaviors towards self, school and society are developed through SEL. Research has shown that students who took part in controlled SEL programs saw improved classroom behavior, had better self-esteem and management of their stress, and fewer instances of depression. Evidence increasingly shows the importance of social and emotional learning and its impact on other, cognitive skills – or as a discussant on the second panel put it: "If we invest in the heart, that will help the head."

Researchers also expect that future employers will put greater emphasis on "human" skills such as communication, collaboration and creativity as we enter the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," making SEL vital for success in the workplace of tomorrow as well as the classroom of today.

Yet ambivalence towards SEL remains with some parents, educators, policymakers, and students questioning how much, if any, time it should be given in the curriculum. There is also a persistent ignorance about where SEL skills are most needed and valuable. SEL is not just necessary in schools – these skills must be practiced elsewhere also, and used throughout a person's life, not just their education. How can we produce better evidence to support stronger arguments for the promotion and nurture of SEL?

Hundreds of SEL programs are currently being studied, but it is not enough to know *if* SEL programs work, but how, why and for whom as different results can be found in different contexts. Why is it that students who took part in a music-led SEL program exhibited greater empathy than those in the control drama-led SEL program? SEL programs alone do not see positive effects – they need to be well-planned, well-taught, and well-implemented.

Research has also shown that SEL programs are more effective when they are integrated in to the general curriculum and taught by classroom teachers rather than external experts. While they benefit hugely from such programs, adolescents often find it hard to engage in top-down SEL programs; educators need to engage them in both the program design and implementation.

Evidence to support SEL can be found and built upon from many sectors beyond just education: much can be learned from studies focusing on neuroscience, psychology, health and economics, such as the impact of SEL on physical as well as mental health (mindfulness reduces heart pressure) and how cost effective this can be for society-at-large.

Responsibility for building this evidence base lies not only with policymakers and researchers, but also NGOs, teachers and parents. These adults too need to have their SEL developed.

## Music and PTSD

The arts can play a huge role in enhancing and nurturing SEL, none more so than music.

Neuroscience shows that music activates all four parts of the brain: the frontal lobe that controls behavior and emotions; the parietal lobe that integrates sensory and visual information; the temporal lobe that processes language and stores long-term memories; and the occipital lobe, home to the visual cortex.

It is partly for this reason that music has been used in helping war veterans with PTSD.

Working together with gold-selling and Grammy Award-winning songwriters, US veterans taking part in the "Songwriting with Soldiers" initiative draw on their experiences in war and the difficulties of returning home to produce not just music but songs with powerful lyrics.

Every time a person remembers an incident it moves from long-term memory to working memory. The process of recalling troubling memories and traumatic experiences and turning them into songs enables the PTSD-suffering soldiers to change how they remember such experiences. "Songwriting is a unique way of encoding a memory," explains neuroscientist, musician and law school dean Harry Ballan.

Music therapy has been shown to be beneficial in other areas. Research has shown some non-verbal autistic children can become verbal through musical exercises that help expand parts of the brain.

If music is to be adopted into SEL programs, it is important to recognize that creation holds more benefits than appreciation. Even just six weeks of piano lessons has greater cognitive benefits than attending weekly music concerts throughout a lifetime.





As well in print here in Salzburg, you can find all our Daily Newsletters online on the session page too: [www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566](http://www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566) Share the PDF with your colleagues! We can also provide you with more print copies if needed.



Check out our Facebook page to read more about Tonia and why she wrote “I Have Monsters in my Tummy” in our *Faces of Leadership* photo series

## Hot Topic: “Who should take the lead and be responsible for children’s SEL development?”

Yeji Park

“We have to move from a position where SEL development is seen as a responsibility of the individual teacher in teaching it, to the responsibility of the whole school, in partnership with the parents of the children at the school and also the community around the school – because children are social beings, and social learning takes place in all of those contexts, not just the school context.”

**Graham Robb**

*Chair, Trustees of the Campus School, UK*

“Society and state should be responsible for promoting and making it possible for SEL to be accessible in families, schools, communities, and also services – for example, in rehabilitation centers for substance users or in prisons. I think the state should take responsibility for making this accessible and available, but then, it should be done in partnership with all the stakeholders involved, especially with kids as well.”

**Carmel Cefai**

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

“The development of SEL starts pretty much from the time you were born. A lot of that happens intuitively – the conditions at home drive a lot of that development. But the key is how you nurture that once you go into formal education. That’s the challenge. And that’s where we need a really good and informed group of people to nurture the development, so that it becomes complete..”

**Baldev Singh**

*Director of Education, Imagine Education, UK*

“I don’t think any one person or group is responsible. I think there are a lot of people who need to take part in it. Parents, teachers, family members, people in the community, and we also need to make sure that our policy makers and government officials are thinking about it, even though they might not have a direct influence on children.”

**Catherine Millett**

*Senior Research Scientist, Policy Evaluation and Research Center, ETS, USA*

“If we take everything into account, there are a lot of partners that are connected to child development. SEL development can start with parents, educators or people in the community. We need to ask parents to understand

the meaning of child development in their social and emotional skills, and give them tools to do it in at home and outside of the school. It’s also important to use a lot of professional bodies, such as NGOs, that will bring their knowledge into the school and help them achieve their goal.”

**Ayelet Giladi**

*General and Academic Manager, NCIW Research Institute for Innovation in Education, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel*

“It depends on the time and dimension of development. Before the children enter primary school, their family plays the main role in SEL development. However, once their formal education begins, school environments have a greater impact on it. It also depends on the aspects of development we are looking at. For example, children’s home environment affects the development of emotional stability, while their school environment has a greater impact on the development of morality.”

**Meesook Kim**

*Senior Research Fellow, Korean Educational Development Institute, Republic of Korea*

Have an opinion? Tweet @SalzburgGlobal using the hashtag #SGSedu