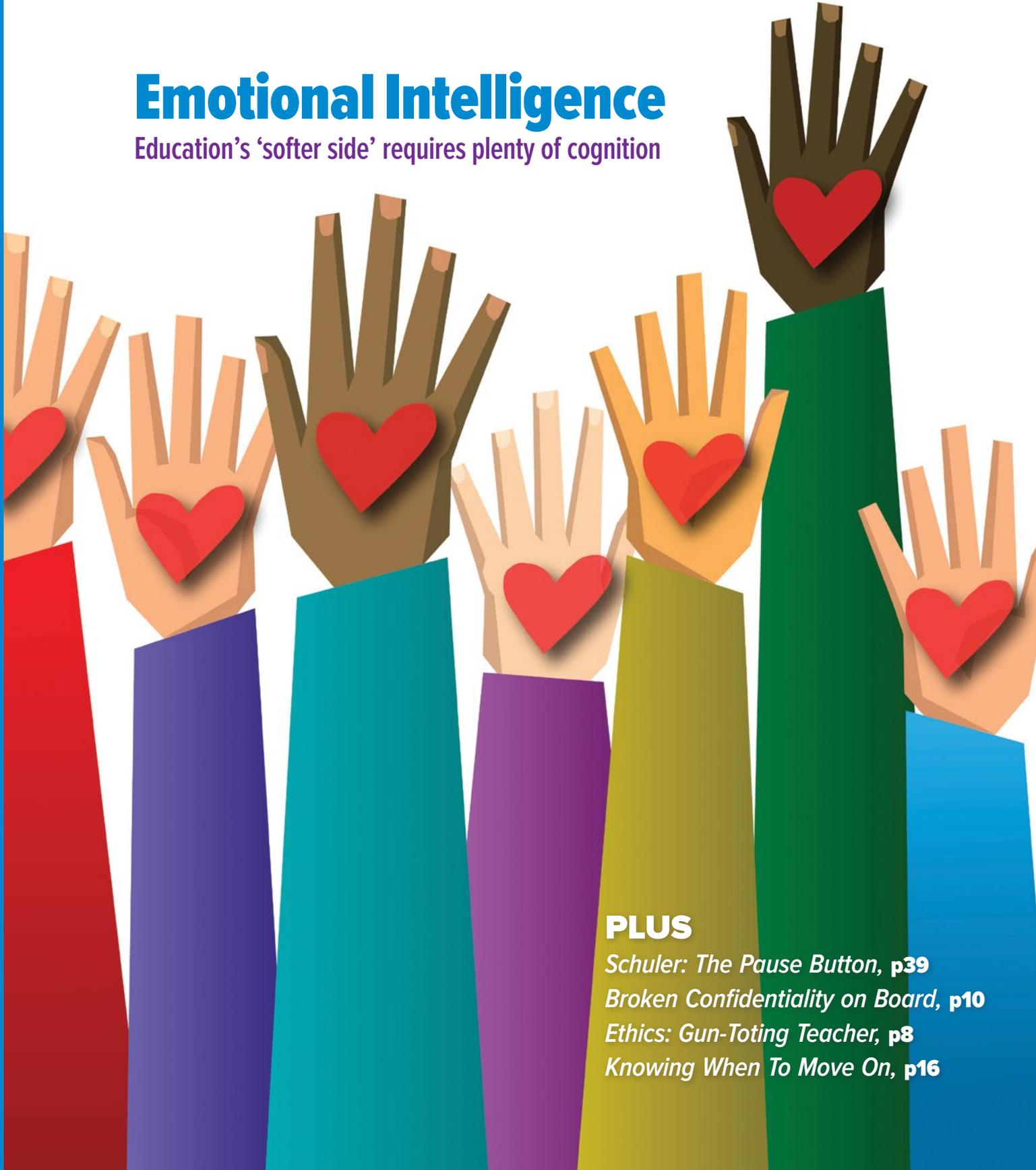


Emotional Intelligence

Education's 'softer side' requires plenty of cognition



PLUS

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Broken Confidentiality on Board, p10
Ethics: Gun-Toting Teacher, p8
Knowing When To Move On, p16

An illustration on the left side of the page shows two hands. The top hand is brown with a red heart on its palm. The bottom hand is orange with a red heart on its palm. The hands are positioned as if holding something together. The background behind the hands is a vertical gradient from green at the top to blue at the bottom.

Creating Emotionally Intelligent Schools

Training in social and emotional learning skills begins with educators

BY MARC A. BRACKETT AND JANET A. PATTI

“Great student achievement cannot be sustained without developing the social and emotional skills of children and all the adults who serve them.”

Fran Rabinowitz, Interim Superintendent, Bridgeport, Conn.

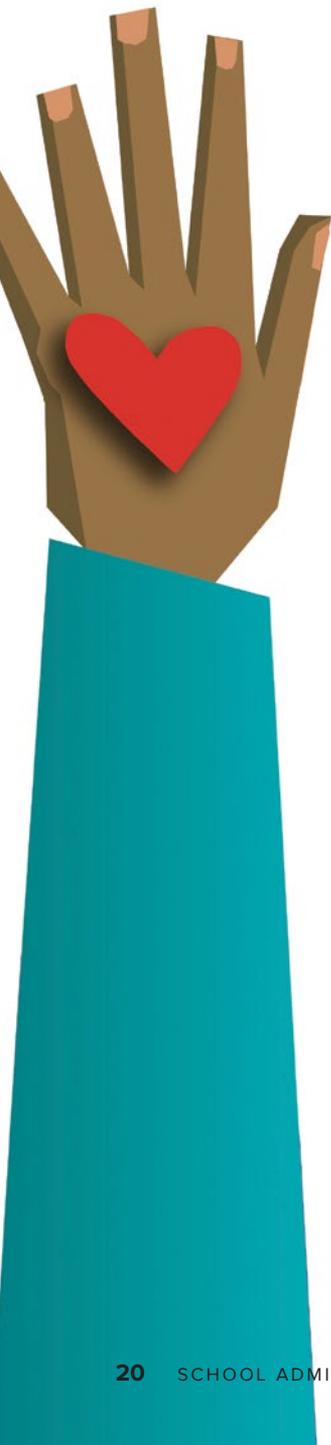
Educators and students experience a wide range of emotions daily. Think about it. Each day as a superintendent you experience dozens of pleasant and unpleasant emotions from the minute you open your eyes to the moment you fall asleep. Emotions matter for attention, memory and learning; for sound judgments and decision making; for maintaining healthy relationships; and for well-being.

Our ability to use emotions wisely can make the difference between our success or failure at home, school and work. That’s why more and more superintendents are recognizing that a formal

education in social and emotional skills is a prerequisite to personal, social and academic growth.

Benefits Cited

Historically, emotions were viewed as being disruptive to reasoning. In 1990, Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer wrote a seminal article that both challenged the then-disparate fields of emotion and intelligence and synthesized them into a unifying theory. They introduced emotional intelligence as “the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.” That



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article, appearing in *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, a quarterly research journal, paved the way for a great deal of research and school-based reform efforts.

In the mid-1990s, a group of researchers, advocates and educators interested in the healthy development of children formed the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (www.casel.org). Its goal was to provide a framework for schools to teach social and emotional learning, or SEL, so that all children could develop the skills necessary for school and life success. These skills include self- and social awareness and regulation, responsible decision making and problem solving, and relationship management.

The benefits of SEL are now established. A 2011 meta-analysis of more than 200 studies showed that students in schools using SEL programs (as compared to students in schools that did not) had a 22 percentile increase in social and emotional skills, an 11 percentile increase in academic achievement, a 10 percentile decrease in emotional distress, a 9 percentile decrease in behavior problems and 9 percentile increases in both positive attitudes about school and prosocial behavior. Research conducted by our team extends these findings to include positive shifts in classroom climate and teacher instructional quality.

What does this mean for those who lead school districts? While social and emotional learning has been shown to influence important outcomes, without institutionalizing SEL practices through training and garnering support from all stakeholders, even the best programs eventually disappear



Janet Patti

or fail. Moreover, little attention is paid for professional development for educators who implement SEL programs.

While recommendations for teaching SEL are increasingly visible in state education policies, funding efforts to support the standards are minimal. Furthermore, most teacher preparation programs do not have dedicated training in SEL, and only a few school leader preparation programs do.

Adult Development

At the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (www.ei.yale.edu), we recognized early on that developing leaders is critical before SEL could be implemented effectively in the classroom. RULER (an acronym for the emotional intelligence skills of recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing and regulating emotion) is the center's evidence-based approach to SEL that is grounded in emotional intelligence theory and systems theories.

RULER (www.ruler.yale.edu) is built upon decades of research showing that emotional intelligence is essential to effective teaching, learning, parenting and leading. The five key skills of emotional intelligence that we teach to youth and adults are:

- ▶ *Recognizing emotions* refers to identifying emotions in the face, body and voice of others and in our own thought process and physiology.
- ▶ *Understanding emotions* pertains to the causes and consequences of different emotions, including their influence on thinking and behavior. For

example, anger occurs when we perceive something as unfair, whereas disappointment arises as a result of unmet expectations.

- ▶ *Labeling emotions* refers to having a rich vocabulary to describe a wide range of emotions, including basic ones like happiness and sadness and complex ones like shame and elation.
- ▶ *Expressing emotions* is the ability to communicate different emotions appropriately and effectively with different people across multiple contexts and cultures.
- ▶ *Regulating emotions* involves the use of effective thought and action strategies to enhance joy, decrease stress or improve contentment.

RULER tools and strategies provide schools with the opportunity to shift school climate, create a common language, and develop the emotional intelligence skills of all stakeholders — school administrators, teachers, support staff, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, parents and students.

Influential Skills

Emotionally skilled teachers are more likely to demonstrate empathic behavior, encourage healthy communication and create more open and efficacious learning environments so students feel safe and valued. Teachers' emotional skills also influence student conduct, engagement, attachment to school, academic performance and even their own job satisfaction.

Leadership is second to teacher effectiveness on student outcomes. For this reason, RULER begins with educating superintendents in emotional intelligence. Together with the educators, staff, families and students in their districts, they model emotional intelligence in everyday interactions. This increases the possibility of effective implementation and lasting results for students.

Most superintendents indicate they spend more time dealing with relationship issues than on any other task. Emotional intelligence is at the core of a superintendent's capacity to build and maintain positive and trusting relationships.

Soon after Alexander (a pseudonym), superintendent of a district with about 7,000 students on Long Island, N.Y., completed his training and coaching in emotional intelligence, the principals and school board members in his district commented on the positive changes they saw in his ability to manage stress and difficult conversations. He was able to move from using ineffective

Getting in Touch With Your Emotions

Developing a greater understanding of emotions can help you to take better care of yourself, make more informed decisions, support your team and create the best possible climate and culture in your school district.

To build greater emotional awareness, ask yourself these questions:

- ▶ How do I feel most mornings? Tired, rejuvenated, stressed, energized? Consider your morning routine and commute to work.
- ▶ How do I feel throughout the workday? Frustrated, inspired, disappointed, grateful? Consider your e-mails, phone calls and meetings.
- ▶ How do I feel at the end of the workday and evening? Exhausted, relaxed, tense, joyful? Consider your commute home, time with family and required attendance at events.
- ▶ Are your emotions working for you or against you in your role as an organizational leader? In what ways do your daily feelings influence your effectiveness?

— MARC BRACKETT AND JANET PATTI

emotion-regulation strategies, such as assigning blame and negative self-talk, to using effective strategies. These included positive self-talk and cognitive reappraisal — that is, putting a positive spin on a situation, which helped him pause and build empathy before he acted.

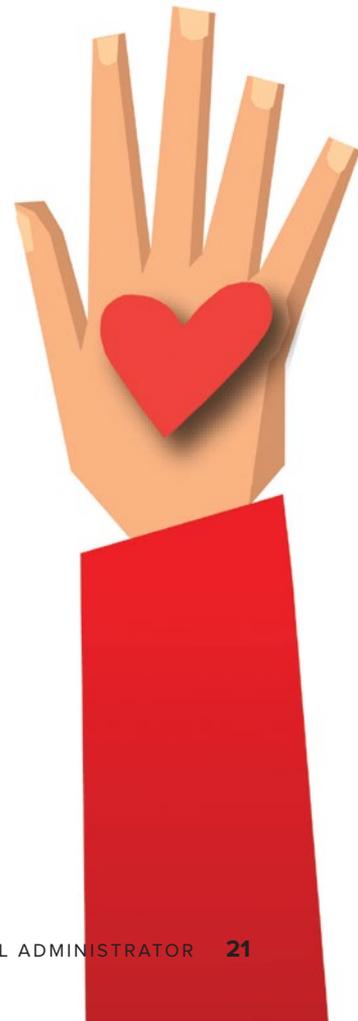
When Alexander was ready to adopt RULER districtwide, he didn't struggle with getting buy-in from key stakeholders because he walked the talk. Research in his district showed that RULER had a positive impact on students' well-being, leadership skills, behavior grades and academic performance.

Sustainable Use

Emotionally intelligent superintendents understand that breaking through traditional mindsets about emotions is a prerequisite to effective, districtwide implementation of social and emotional learning. This includes challenging their own mental models about emotions and having the courage to challenge potentially longstanding organizational ones.

Implementation means keeping social and emotional skills front and center as part of the district's mission. It means integrating SEL into the district's core values, vision, strategic plan and expected performance goals for principals.

Recognizing this, Fran Rabinowitz, interim superintendent in Bridgeport, Conn., participated in



How Emotionally Intelligent Are You?

Answer the following questions to consider your own emotional intelligence skills.

- ▶ *Recognizing emotion.* Do I pay attention to my own and others' emotions? Do I read people accurately? Do I pick up on subtle cues to shift conversations?
- ▶ *Understanding emotion.* What makes me feel angry, stressed and excited at school? What are my top "triggers" at work? How do I tend to react when someone pushes my triggers?
- ▶ *Labeling emotion.* How advanced is my emotion vocabulary? Can I list 10 "shades" of happiness or sadness? Do I use a wide range of "feeling" words in my daily conversations?
- ▶ *Expressing emotion.* How comfortable am I expressing the full range of emotions at work, such as disappointment, frustration, pride and peacefulness? What rules have I created at work around emotions?
- ▶ *Regulating emotion.* How skilled am I at dealing with the wide range of emotions I experience as a superintendent? What strategies — both effective and ineffective — do I use to manage anger and stress? To inspire my team? To calm others after a tragedy?

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extensive training in SEL and then provided professional development for each of her principals, including coaching to implement RULER. She also hired two SEL coordinators to organize and provide continuous professional development for both school leaders and trainers at each school. That way the implementation process could be monitored through repeated inquiry cycles.

Similarly, but on a much larger scale, Carmen Fariña, the New York City schools chancellor, recently introduced emotional intelligence training and coaching for many of her newly appointed superintendents. With the broadening of their role from evaluator to instructional coach, the chancellor realized that emotional intelligence skills are tantamount to the superintendents' ability to support their principals' personal and professional growth.

A primary goal of the emotional intelligence training is to strengthen the communication and collaboration between and among superintendents and principals. The accompanying coaching provides opportunities for self-reflection on one's leadership skills and the space to problem solve, set goals, enhance their skills and prepare for the future implementation of SEL.

Dolores Esposito, executive superintendent

of leadership in the NYC Department of Education, says the chancellor wants to "empower NYC superintendents to embrace reflection as a habit of practice through emotional intelligence development and coaching. This opportunity has proven to be transformational."

Principals, after hearing from their superintendents, have now expressed interest in emotional intelligence training because, says Esposito, they see it as a critical component of their own and their teachers' growth, and most importantly, the academic and social-emotional growth of their students.

Rising Stress

In a recent study, we found that teens nationwide are not in the best emotional shape. They are experiencing negative emotions such as stress and boredom nearly three-quarters of the time they are in school, and their stress levels are edging beyond those of adults. These negative emotions are keeping students from achieving personal and professional success. Teachers and principals also are experiencing greater stress and burnout than ever before.

As a nation, we need to equip our students and educators with the skills they need to succeed. Superintendents are the gatekeepers of systemic change in their school districts. Our hope is that all superintendents will adopt evidence-based approaches to SEL to help cultivate a healthier and more effective and compassionate society. If we want young people to succeed socially, emotionally and academically, schools must be places that bring out the best in them. ■

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Additional Resources

To learn more about RULER, a districtwide approach to SEL developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, visit ei.yale.edu.

To learn more about CASEL, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, visit www.casel.org.

To access SEL-related resources for building a more positive school climate, visit [inspired.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com).

