SEL Appendix B: School Environment

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Where does SEL fit in the Molenda-Subramony Framework (Molenda and Subramony 2021)? See SEL Appendix C for a discussion of that issue overall.

One way of looking at SEL within Molenda-Subramony Framework is to see it as a set of specifications for creating a School Environment that is conducive to the development of healthy emotional and social responses to everyday living.

The Moral Education school of thought would tend to fall into this category.

They would see Ryan & Deci's "Self-Determination Theory" (Ryan and Deci 2016)as a useful framework for understanding why building a sense of community would enable students to flourish. Individuals have basic needs for competence, relationship, and autonomy, so the School Environment should be set up to allow these needs to be met. Schools should be places in which students feel they belong and are part of a community. This includes:
- Their activities should encourage collaboration with each other
- They should have opportunities to make decisions about policies and practices that affect their lives.

> As Greenberg, Kusché, and Riggs (2004) put it:
> "…the creation of meaningful real-life opportunities to use skills and the establishment of structures to provide reinforcement for effective skill application." (p. 174)

Note also that Brookfield and Preskill in their book about Discussion (Brookfield and Preskill 2005) emphasize that the purpose of discussion is not just to allow processing of the cognitive content being discussed, but, more importantly, to get students practicing the basic skills of democratic civilization—listening to other, keeping an open mind, disagreeing without be disagreeable, etc.

To me, one of the open questions regarding SEL is the extent to which the goals of SEL could be met through the creation of a School Environment that supported all the social and emotional outcomes that they advocate. This would seem to be a task for **applied behavior analysis** (think of Skinner's "Walden Two").

> In my research on this topic so far, I have come across few references to the application of behaviorist theories and practices to SEL.

> Further study is needed.

Works Cited

Brookfield, Stephen D., and Stephen Preskill. 2005. *Discussion as a Way of Teaching.* 2nd. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Greenberg, Mark T., Carol A. Kusché, and Nathaniel Riggs. 2004. "The PATHS Curriculum: Theory and Research on Neurocognitive Development and School Success." Chap. 10 in *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning: What Does the Research Say?*, edited by Joseph E. Zins, Roger P. Weissberg, Margaret C. Wang and Herbert J. Walberg, 170-188. New York: Teachers College Press.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. 2016. "Facilitating and Hindering Motivation, Learning, and Well-Being in Schools: Research and Observations from Self-Determination Theory." In *Handbook of Motivation at School, 2nd edition*, edited by Kathryn R. Wentzel and David B. Miele, 96-119. New York: Taylor & Francis.