



SEL AND THE BRAIN: WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

Welcome!

Our values



We believe....

- ❖ All children need social and emotional skills to succeed in life.
- ❖ All adults should intentionally and explicitly teach children social and emotional skills.
- ❖ Children with strong social and emotional skills will become contributing adults who make our world a better place.
- ❖ Young people are resilient and it is imperative to identify and foster their core strengths.
- ❖ Engaging in SEL will improve the job satisfaction of those who work with children.

What makes us different

- ❖ We strive to offer a model of service based on evidence-based practices, sustained collaboration, relationships, and flexibility
- ❖ We provide training, consultation, and supports grounded in research and informed by data
- ❖ We conduct participatory and action-oriented research that is informed and co-developed by practitioners
- ❖ We aim to transform systems by transforming individuals
- ❖ We work across multiple settings that serve children to achieve systemic change

What we do



- ❖ Programs and services
- ❖ Research and evaluation
- ❖ Systems change

SEL and the Brain: What's the connection (*...to practice*)?

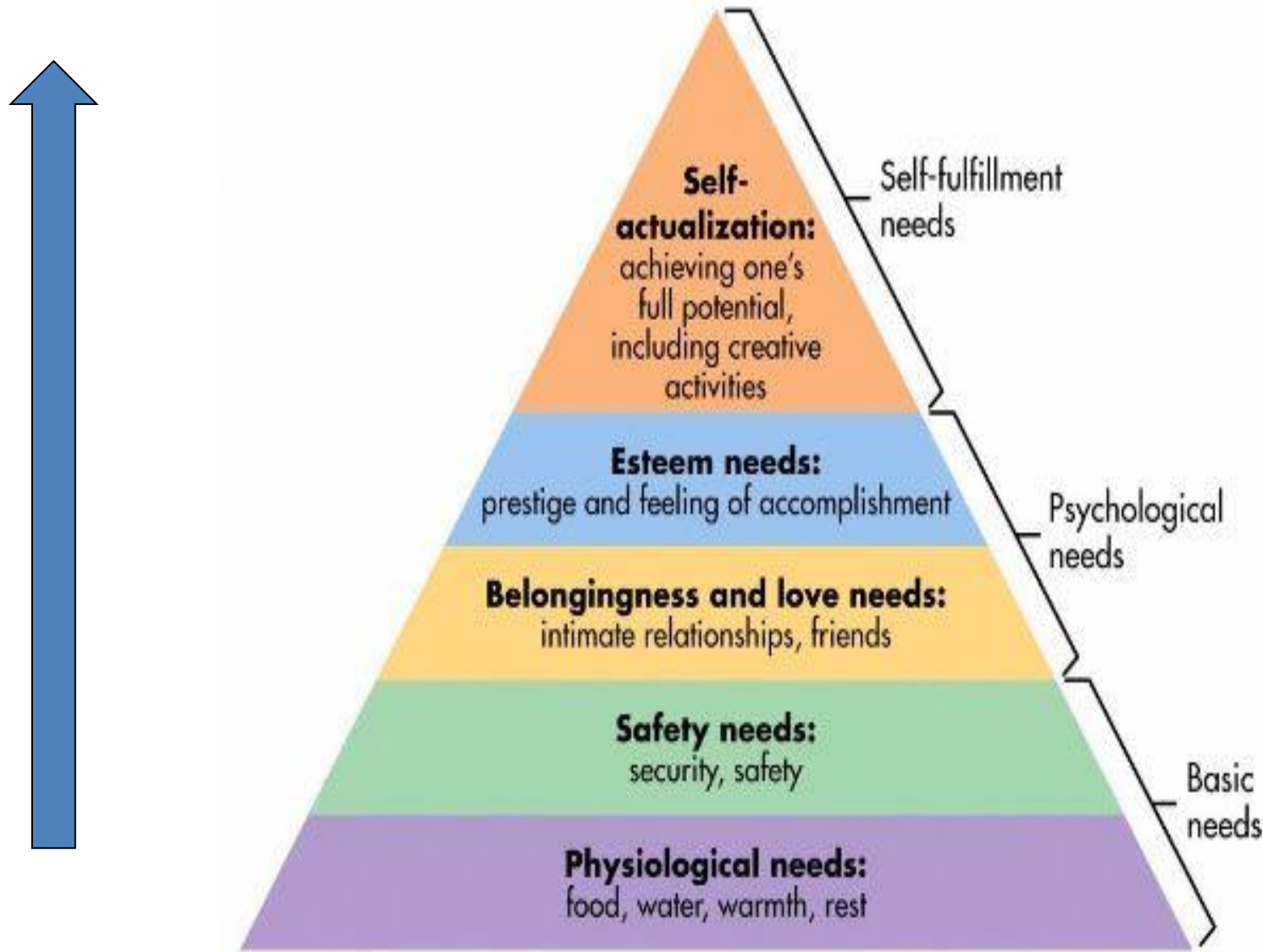
*Children's Institute
Speaker Series*
November 8, 2017

Charles Smith
David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality

Ambitious and Urgent Work


Rochester Initiatives... GRASA, ROC the Future ELO CAN, Children's Institute and SEL Center, Health Foundation implementation task force and Healthy Futures, and more...

Maslow for Managers, Staff, Students



Long view (& *circa 1975*)

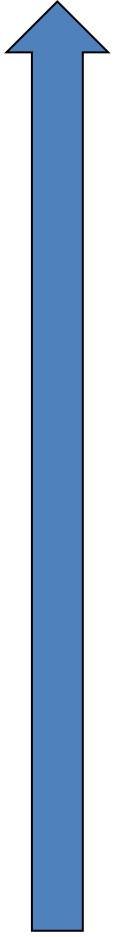
Children learn & develop when they:

- 
- Are engaged to plan and reflect on their skills and work
 - Are supported to learn skills and practice skill transfer
 - Feel safe, valuable, and interested

Epidemic of Stressors for Children

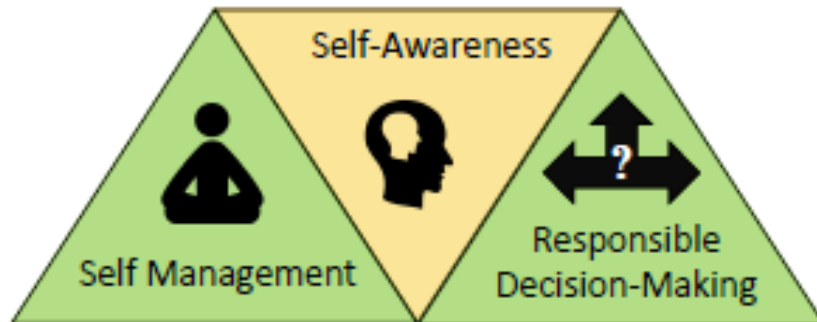
- **Poor Nutrition and Fitness**
 - ☐ Obesity related diseases
- **Loss of Family Members**
- **Adverse Social Environments**
 - ☐ Neglect
 - ☐ Low access to learning
 - ☐ Exposure to violence
- **Adverse Physical Environments**
 - ☐ Lead
 - ☐ Air pollution
 - ☐ Noise and crowding
 - ☐ Isolation

SEL Updates since the late 90s... “Caring for your self”






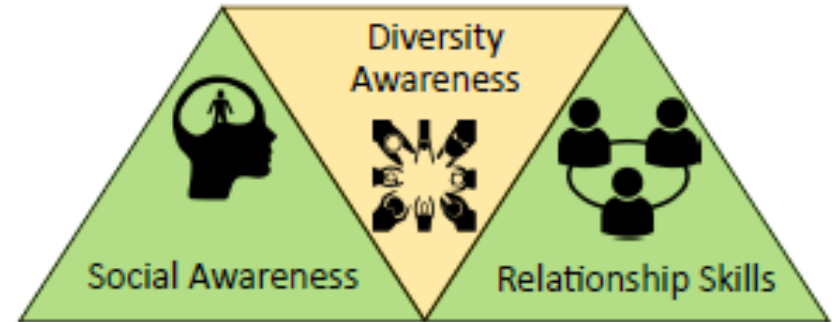
- *Executive Functions* – Critical part of ultimate desired outcome (i.e., agency)
- *Beliefs and Skills* – SEL should be taught (i.e., described, modeled, practiced in different settings)
- *Basic Regulation* – Provide “safe space” supports for stressed learners

Core SEL Competencies






Intrapersonal Skills

| | |
|--|---|
|  | Regulate and monitor own behavior, feelings and impulses; manage stress; maintain focus; achieve goals. |
|  | Recognize and understand own personal identity and feelings |
|  | Make constructive and respectful choices about behaviors and well-being of self and others |



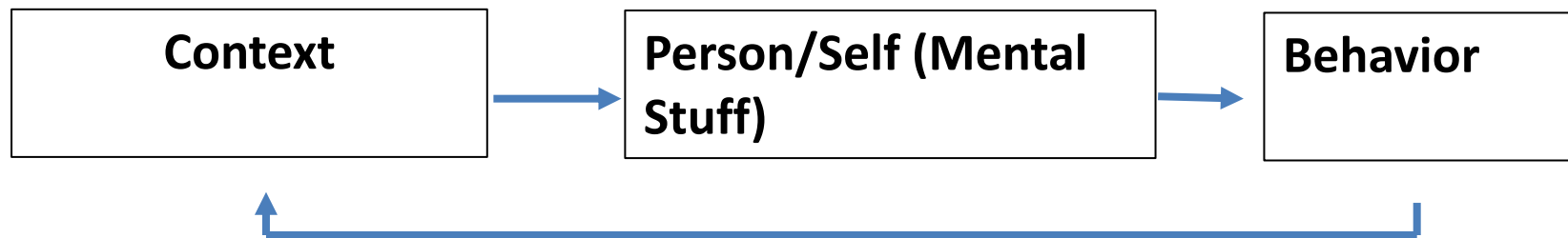
Interpersonal Skills

| | |
|---|---|
|  | Have empathy; understand social and ethical norms for behavior; recognize supports in family, school, community |
|  | Consider and appreciate the diverse feelings, perspectives and personal contexts of others |
|  | Use effective communication and collaboration skills to establish and maintain positive, productive relationships |

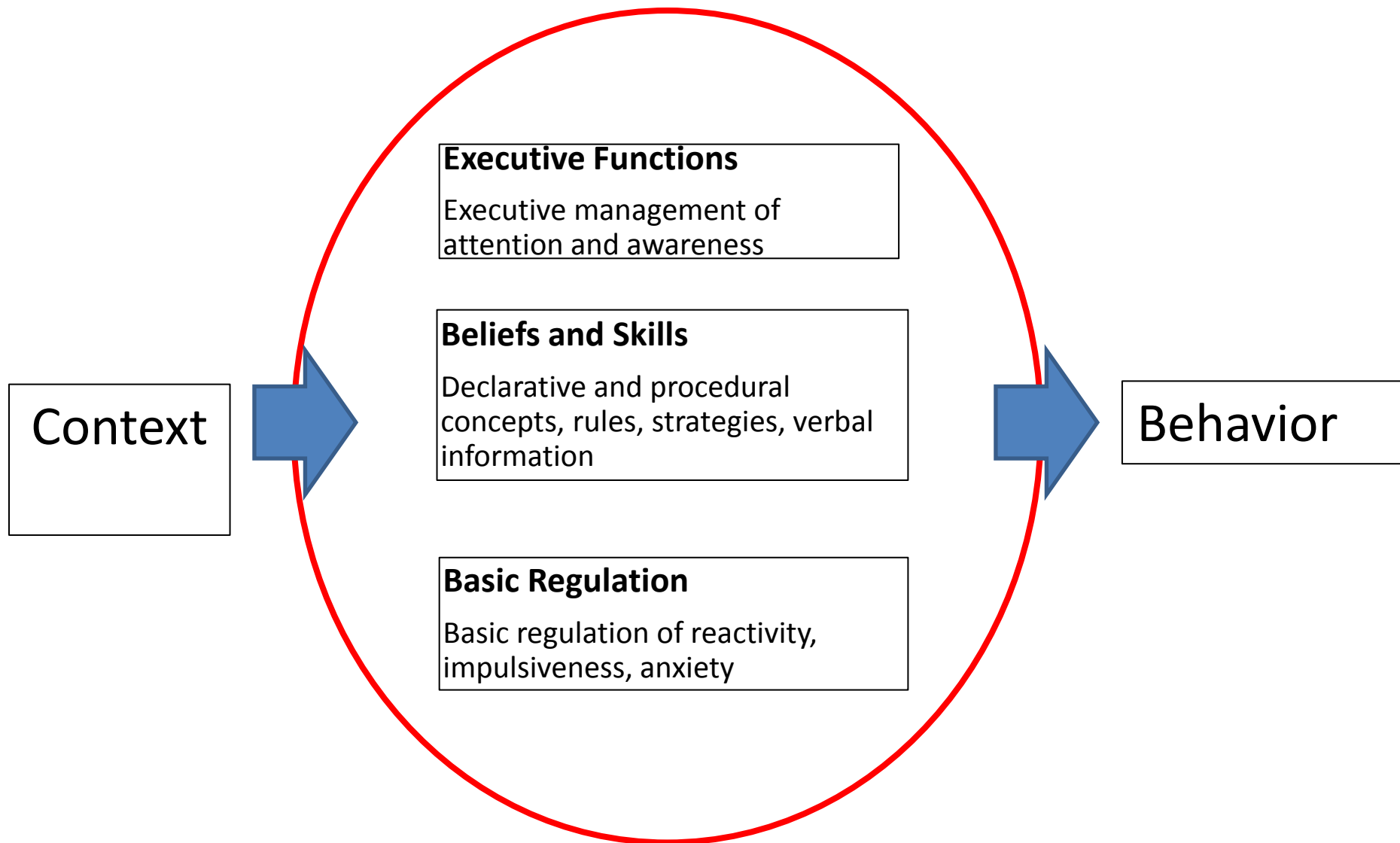
Part I. Context-Person-Behavior

Seeing SEL stuff skill more clearly

Context > Person > Behavior



The Person/Self System... Mental and Physiological



I.a. Basic Regulation

Baseline reactivity, impulsiveness, anxiety

Centered in the brain stem and limbic system

...as genetically-endowed temperament &
experience-generated sensory-affective-motor
schemas

I.b. Beliefs and Skills

Declarative or verbal information; procedural concepts, rules, strategies

Centered in the neocortex

...as relatively-enduring beliefs, goals, & values

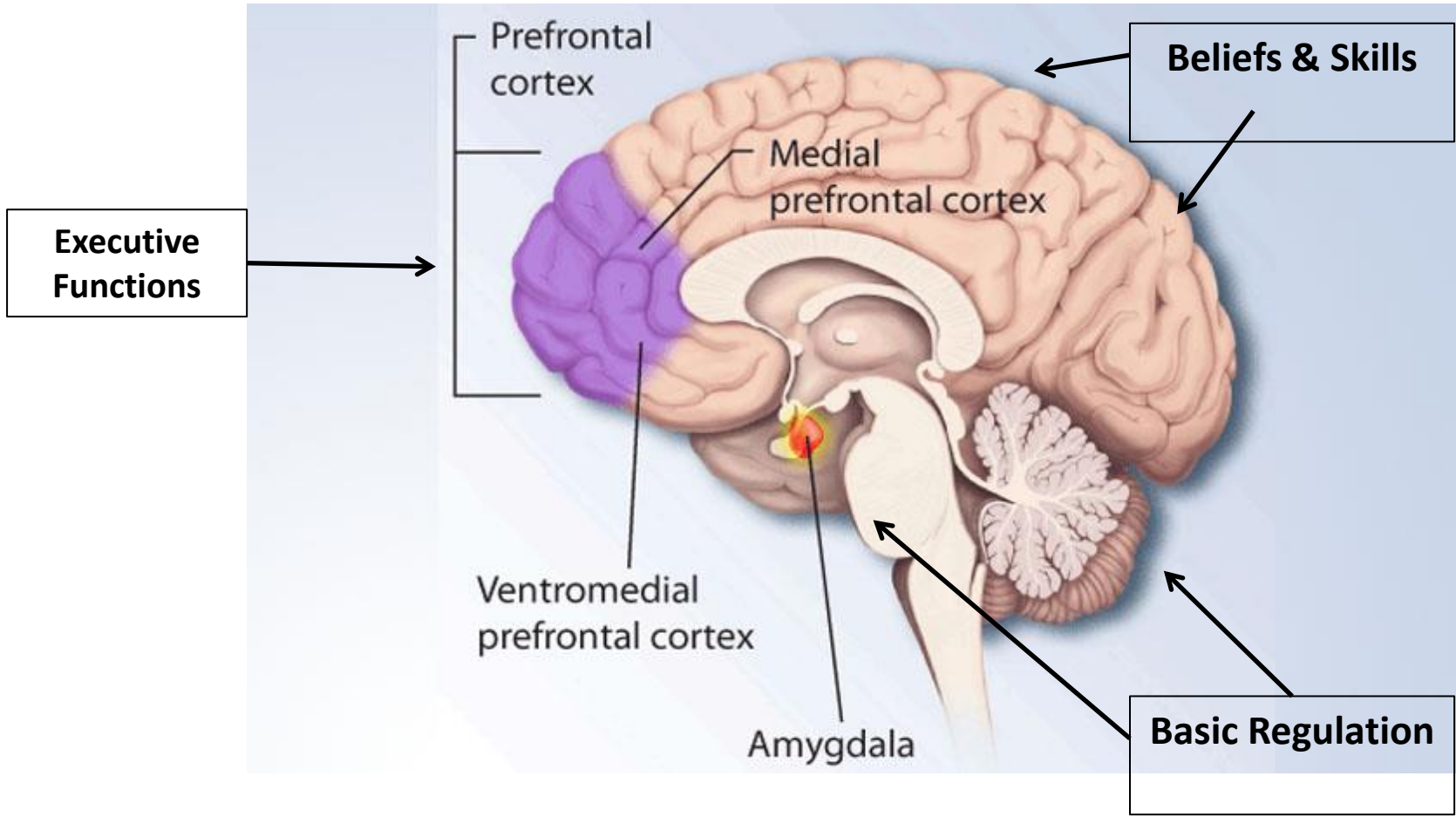
I.c. Executive Functions

Executive management of attention and awareness

Centered in the prefrontal cortex

...as the interface between awareness and activated beliefs and schemas

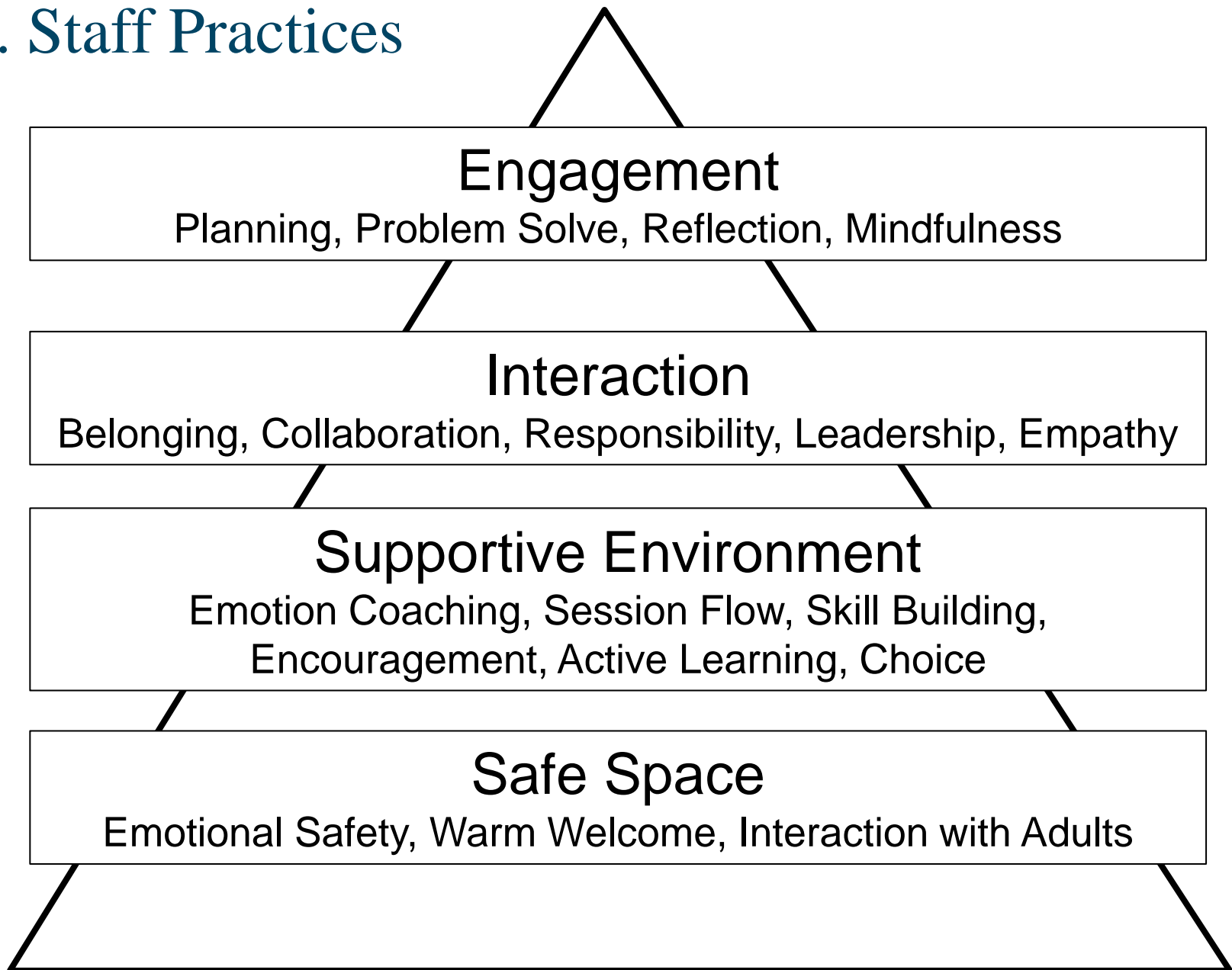
The Neuro Person



Part II. Practices and Skills

...For the Neuro-Person

II.a. Staff Practices



Practices that influence basic regulation skills

Safe Space

2. Principles that all are different, equal, and important, in which people actively care for, appreciate, and include each other.
3. Learning from mistakes and failures is highly valued.
4. Consistent routines, activities, roles, or procedures to provide a structured and predictable experience.

Responsive Practices

1. Staff observe and interact in order to know youth deeply.
2. Structure for check-ins to actively listen to and receive feedback from individual youth.
3. Staff coach, model, scaffold, and facilitate in real time as challenges occur.

Practices that build SEL beliefs and skills

- **Basic skill building (AKA “Active Learning”)**
 - ☐ Clear structure, materials, models
 - ☐ Concepts and verbal information
 - ☐ Encouragement through failure and mistakes
 - ☐ “Just high enough” expectations
- **“E” skill supports**
 - ☐ Body/face language (i.e., vicarious learning)
 - ☐ Cultural referents

Practices that build executive skills

Planning-Action Cycles

(PS3) Youth engage in planning including:

- a) Brainstorming and generative planning
- b) Thinking strategically about the purposes, methods, content, and outcomes of the project
- c) Anticipatory thinking, if-then thinking (e.g., about how the work and various constraints interact), and contingency planning

II.b. Student SEL Behavioral Skills

Staff Rating of Youth Behavior, 14 items, four scales

In the last 4 weeks how often did the youth... “1” = None of the time, “5” = All of the time

In the last 4 weeks, how well... describe his/her behavior? “1” = Not at all like this youth, “5” = Exactly like this youth

DISPLAYS GOAL-STRIVING MASTERY

Create plans with a few steps or guidelines.

Monitor progress toward goals.

DISPLAYS SOCIAL ROLE MASTERY

Monitor team progress on a task.

Seek timely help from other youth or staff when roles become too challenging.

BEHAVIORALLY MANAGES EMOTIONS

Manages positive emotion with confidence that doesn't belittle or exclude others.

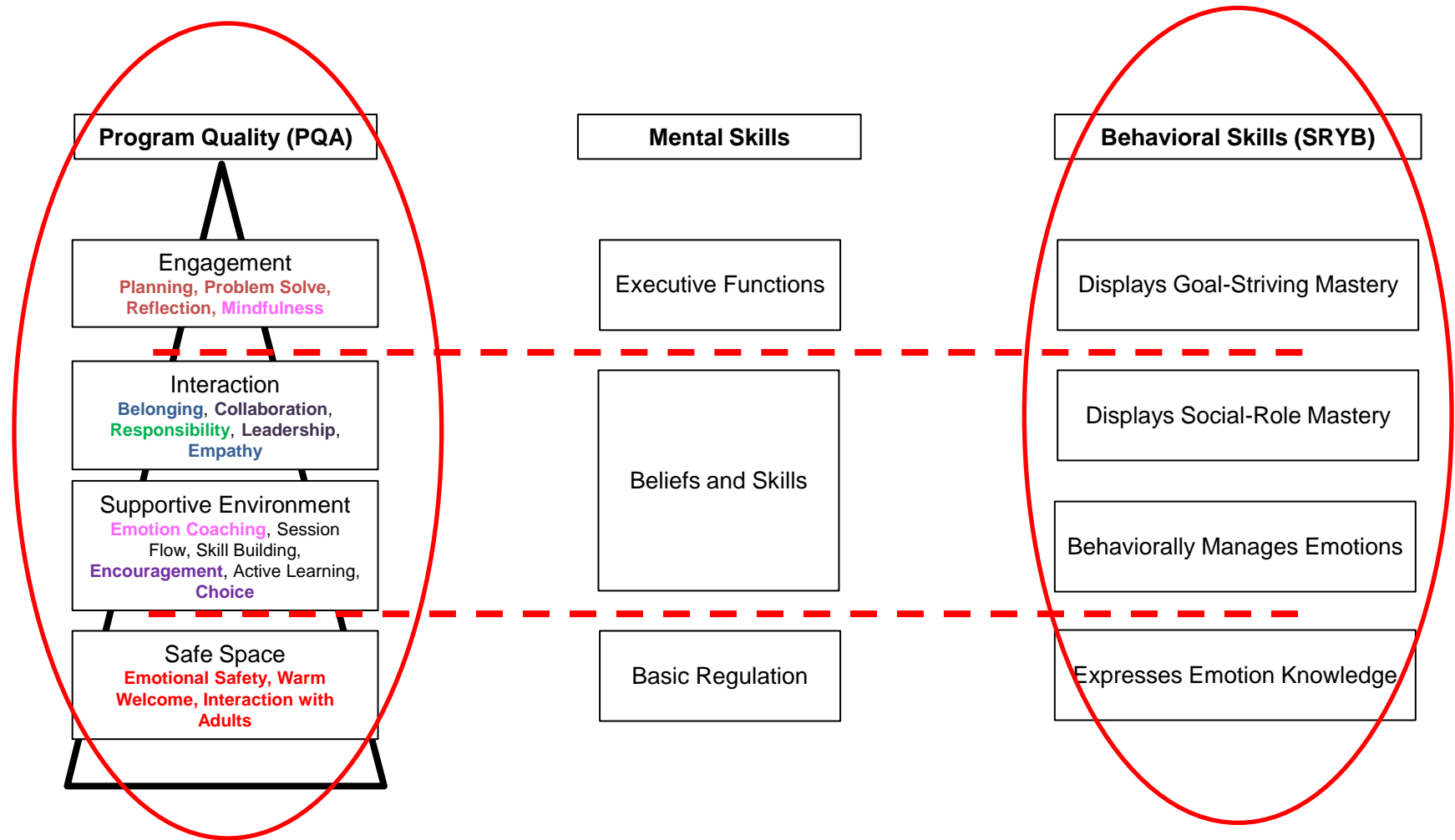
Accepts feedback non-defensively.

EXPRESSES EMOTION KNOWLEDGE

Identifies and names emotions.

Describes own emotional needs.

SEL Performance Measures



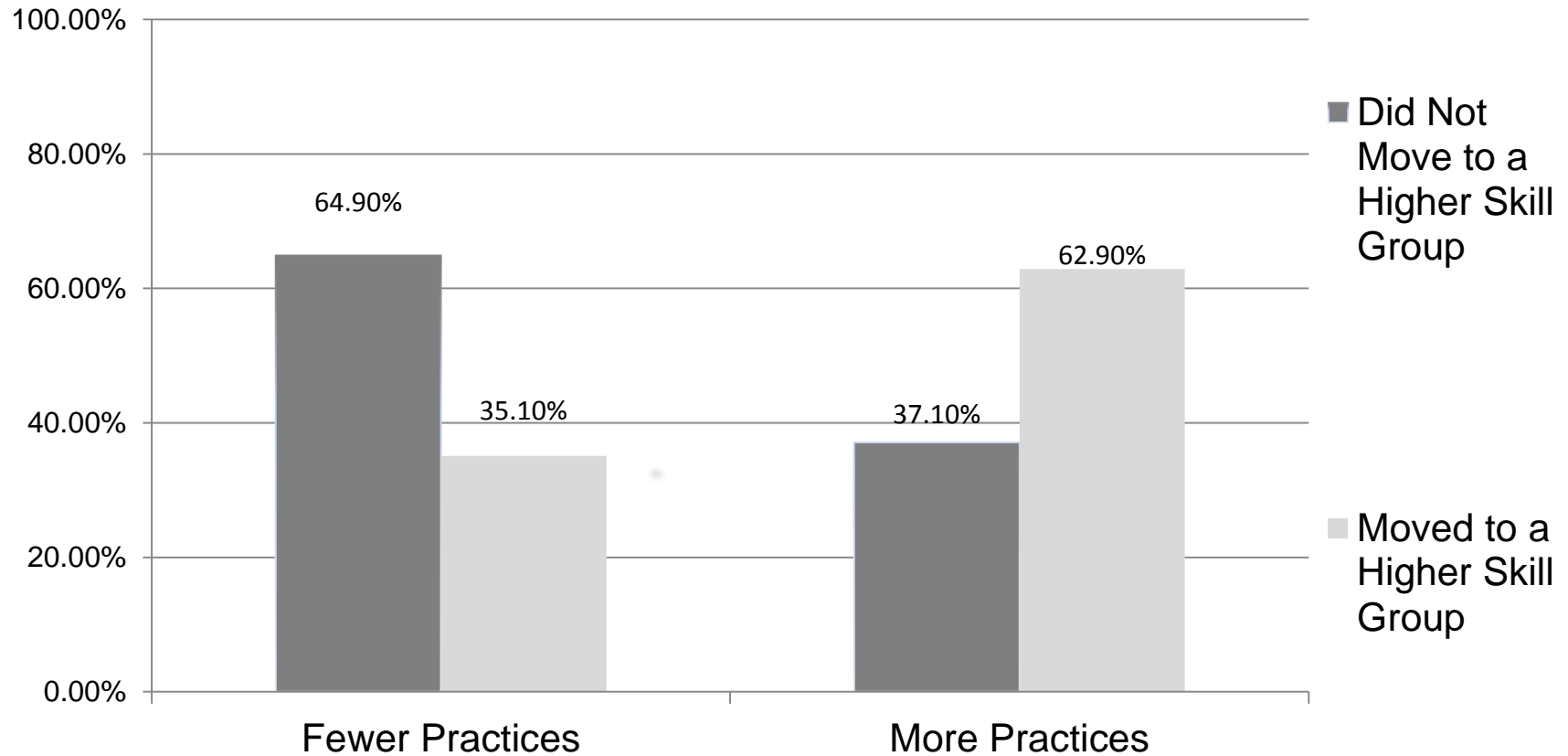
Part III. Evaluating Practices and Skills

Neuro-person in local context

Local Data...Thirty-one Programs in Two Networks Doing CQI focused on SEL

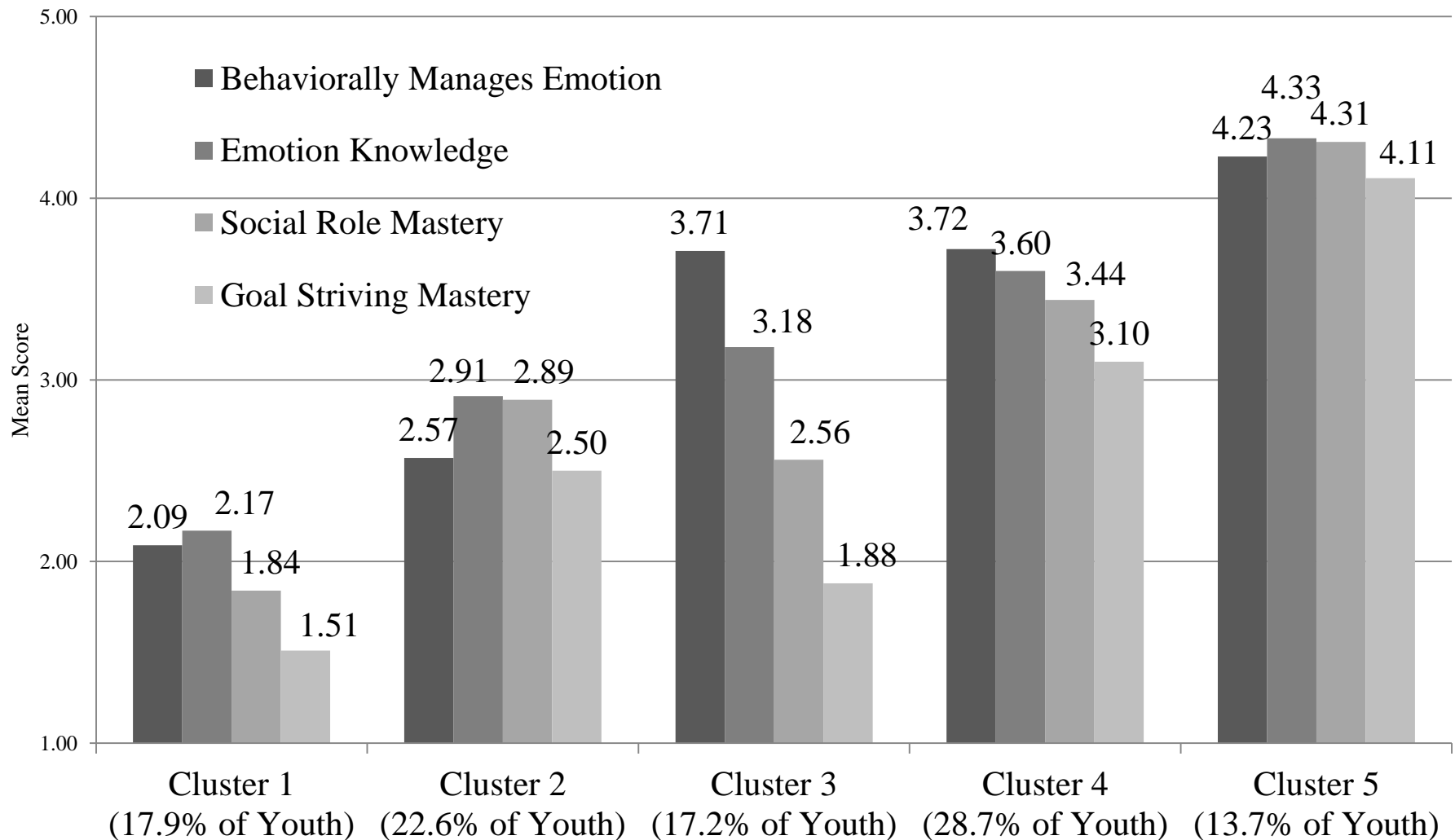
- ❑ **29%** of programs high SEL practices
- ❑ **19%** of programs low SEL practices
- ❑ **14%** of students have high SEL skill at entry
- ❑ **41%** of students have low SEL skills at entry
- ❑ Proportion of students in each program setting with low SEL skill at entry ranged between **8% and 69%**

Students with Lower Skill Gain More With Exposure to More Practices



N=163

Wide variation in SEL Skill (N=408)



Parallel Process

Supports for Staff

The organization recruits youth who will benefit from the offering.

There is more than one staff member in every program session with the ability to implement responsive practices.

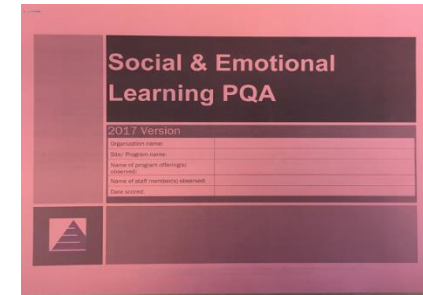
Staff work together before each program session to plan and collaborate on the session activities and regularly debrief following each session to discuss youth progress, staff response, and adjustments for future sessions.

Staff are supported to grow professionally and rejuvenate energy for the work.

Staff are supported by their organization to reflect on and improve their practices through a continuous improvement process.

Thank You!

- Send questions or comments about the presentation to: Poonam@cypq.org
- For information about the SEL PQA
- contact: sel@cypq.org
- Information about the SEL Challenge is available at:
- <http://www.cypq.org/SELChallenge>



Cross-Sector Panel Discussion

Moderator

Elizabeth Devaney

Director, SEL Center

Panelists

Brian Brooks

Principal, Palmyra-Macedon Primary School

Danette Campbell-Bell

Director, Strings for Life

Ida Perez

Director of Children and Family Stability Services, Ibero American Action League



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