Research has shown that implementing SEL programs in preK-12 classrooms can be fruitful. A meta-analysis concluded that such programs have improved not only social and emotional skills, also “attitudes, behavior, and academic performance” (Durlak et al., 2011), and positive effects have since been traced into adulthood (Taylor et al., 2017). Many states have adopted standards for SEL and schools are already implementing various programs to promote SEL. For this special issue, authors are invited to submit manuscripts that consider the Association for Middle Level Education’s call for middle schools to choose “educators who value young adolescents and are prepared to teach them” and create a culture and community in which “the school environment is inviting, safe, inclusive, and supportive of all; and health and wellness are supported in curricula, school-wide programs and related policies” (National Middle School Association, 2010 p. 14). As the attention to SEL continues to increase, there is an important opportunity to view these efforts through an equity lens (National Equity Project, n.d.). Social and emotional skills are culturally rooted, and therefore we should examine how SEL programs can be culturally sustaining (or not).

Submitted manuscripts should discuss ways that schools can support social and emotional competence for students and teachers, and examine SEL related standards and pedagogical practices from a critical lens through:

a. Analysis of SEL standards and/or practices through an equity lens (inclusive of culturally responsive or culturally sustaining pedagogy, etc.)
b. Implementation of high quality, evidence based SEL programs in the middle school context that prioritize educational equity in traditional and/or alternative educational settings
c. Examination of equity-based outcomes for students immersed in SEL programs
d. Exploration of the potential for SEL to allow individuals and groups to acknowledge, address, and heal from the ways they have been impacted by systemic oppression such as racism
e. Examples of school responses to support students’ SEL during general crises (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, or traumatic events)
f. Descriptions of successful partnerships between middle schools and community-based organizations that foster or enhance opportunities for SEL
g. Professional development for teachers focused on avoiding equity pitfalls in their implementation of SEL work with students

Submit by September 1, 2020


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