Social Emotional Engagement: The Fuel for a Child’s Learning

Social engagement provides the fuel for the brain to grow

Falling in love with the social world
Seeking out social connections with words

Succeeding in a range of social settings

**Unique neurodevelopment in our classrooms**

…may create barriers during this learning curve

- Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) show limited neural sensitivity to social stimuli and tend not to look toward people’s faces.

- Other developmental differences and the caregiving environment also impact social and emotional neurodevelopment.
Neuroscience highlights that children with autism have differences in the process of orienting toward social stimuli and, ultimately, understanding the "thoughts" of others.

Unique neurological differences in social competence

Children "at risk" engage in less gaze shifts between people and objects.

Predicting others' actions becomes more challenging along with initiating bids for engagement, comfort and support.

As children with vulnerabilities in these areas mature and "brain architecture is formed," neuroimaging has shown that social stimuli tend to processed in regions typically used to process images and sounds that are non-social.

This makes predictions of actions, intentions, and emotions more inefficient and intellectualized.
Falling in love with the social world

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Succeeding in a range of social settings.

Student Success & School Climate

- Creating an equitable learning environment that offers successful outcomes for every student relies on an understanding why children may or may not be compelled to actively engage in the classroom.

- Research in the neuroscience of social emotional engagement fosters our ability to create a universal design for learning.

Ensuring social emotional engagement for all children - Student Engagement Ladder
A universal design for learning can foster social connections for all children

- A. Foster Engagement
- B. Provide information in multiple ways
- C. Encourage child expression

All children benefit

A. FOSTER ENGAGEMENT
Recruit students’ interests through special interests

B. PROVIDE INFORMATION IN MULTIPLE WAYS
Coaching & Mentorship to Embed SEE-KS in Lesson Plans

Coaching is not about what's wrong....it's about what's next...

-Eric Sandberg, Ph.D
Social Emotional Engagement Knowledge & Skills (SEEKS) fosters this universal design across development

A universal design for learning can foster social connections for all children

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-Eric Sandberg, Ph.D
Educational Outreach Program (EOP)  
Building Systemwide Capacity to Foster Social Emotional Engagement

- The EOP provides technical assistance for Social Emotional Engagement – Knowledge and Skills (SEE-KS).
- Our program is designed to build the capacity of our school systems to support the success of all children.
- SEE-KS plays a critical role in our effort to provide a positive learning climate.

Educational Outreach Program (EOP)  
Building Systemwide Capacity to Foster Social Emotional Engagement

- By using a universal design for learning framework, our aim is to impact the social and emotional engagement of all students in these systems.
- SEE-KS is designed to ensure social emotional learning is embedded with increasing fidelity in classroom lesson plans.
- Success of the program is based upon increased student engagement during academic instruction.

Educational Outreach Program (EOP)  
Building Systemwide Capacity to Foster Social Emotional Engagement

- The EOP has started Year 4 here in GA.
- We have grown from serving 3 school systems in Year 1 to 17 school systems in Year 4. Access to rural districts is enabled through onsite professional learning paired with web-based coaching.
- Each system is forming its own internal district team and a cohort of school teams to ensure sustainability and replication. 8 out of the 17 school districts participating are active PBIS districts in Georgia.
- The SEE-KS Implementation Scales is used to measure a district’s path toward sustainability.
Effective Mechanisms for Educational Outreach
Step by step planning for changes in school system infrastructure

- Identify internal leadership and coaching teams at the system level
- Create materials and resources for use by system staff for future training
- Identify leading school communities as focus sites
- Conduct trainings focused on Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3
- Develop sustainable mechanisms at each site

Marcus Autism Center
Educational Outreach Program
Supporting Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) by Creating a Universal Design for Learning for All Students


- 4,600 Total Students with Participating Districts
- 2 years old to 21 years old
- 4,000 Students with ASD
- 2 years old to 21 years old
- 1,700 Educators, Therapists, and Related Service Providers
- 36 Focus Schools
- 18 School Districts
- 1,500 Total Students within Participating Districts
- 3 years old to 21 years old

Educational Outreach Program (EOP)
Measuring the Impact – Data from the 2014 – 2015 School Year

- Student engagement is correlated with greater academic achievement and less adverse behavior on campus in students with ASD as well as all learners.
- Following EOP support, participating school districts demonstrated a 25% increase in the use of instructional strategies to foster social engagement.
- SEE-KS fidelity rubric data showed that teachers “not yet” using strategies to foster social engagement shifted to “emerging,” from “emerging” to “proficient” or, on occasion, from “proficient” to “exemplary” ratings.
Following EOP support, student engagement in targeted classrooms increased by an average of 19% across all students served, based upon criterion-referenced measures of whole class initiation, independence with tasks, and emotional investment.

To learn more about the Educational Outreach Program at the Marcus Autism Center, contact: 
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